



THE
MERCERS'
COMPANY

Liberty RISE Family Project

Supporting the families of vulnerable women
and girls in Teesside

CASE STUDY

Prepared by Sarah Frost for The Mercers' Company, 2022.

Liberty RISE Family Project

“Enables families to provide encouragement and support to their female family members... instilling a sense of identity and purpose whilst inspiring hope that change is possible.”

In a Nutshell

A Way Out is a Christian charity supporting vulnerable women, young people and families in Teesside. The Liberty RISE Family project provides support to the families of women and girls who are accessing A Way Out’s Liberty and Blossom Services. Families are offered support in understanding the causes and consequences of exploitation, addiction and survival sex-work. This enables them to provide encouragement and support to their female family members and to build or rebuild relationships with them and the local community. Families are also supported to address the trauma they have experienced that has led to or been caused by the behaviour of their family member.

Making a Difference

The project offers one-to-one to families of Liberty and Blossom clients who have regular one-to-one support from the project worker. It uses outcomes stars, SWEMWBS, case stories, testimonials and client feedback to monitor and evaluate the work. Progress has been made towards the following outcomes:

- **Increased resilience, confidence and self-esteem** has helped family members develop better coping strategies, increasing the likelihood of resisting negative influences
- **Relationships have improved** through the development of increased tolerance, understanding and respect for their female relative. Families benefit from stronger, happier and more supportive relationships within their families and the local community
- **Improved mental health and wellbeing** of families and family members.

“I was told about this service after I had a breakdown. I have struggled with my mental health and everything that goes with it.... now I have got [my worker], she helps with every aspect of my life...if I had not got involved then I don’t think I’d be here answering these questions.”

Client

“The ongoing issues with my daughter were causing me worry and stress. I was a bit reluctant [to engage] at first as I didn’t think I needed support but [my worker] put me at ease and I now know I can go to her with any problems and concerns... it helps getting things off my mind. [My worker] has been amazing at supporting me nothing is too much trouble.”

Client

“Building relationships is absolutely crucial to the success of the project...we work with some of the most marginalised, discriminated and isolated clients... it’s really important for us to take time to develop the relationships and build trust... trust is a huge area.”

Project Lead

“You have given me hope and inspired change.”

Client

How Mercers' Support Helps

The Liberty RISE family project was awarded £63,659 from the Charity of Sir Richard Whittington over three years from January 2019. The Project Lead found Mercers" to be helpful, flexible, responsive and interested.

"I found the whole process really, really positive. Mercers' as a funder are very engaging, they really like to have open conversation... it allowed for development and growth, which was client led, which was absolutely the right approach." Project Lead

How the Work is Done

A dedicated project worker offers holistic support using a person-centred approach, tailored to each families' needs. This casework approach explores the current issues families bring as well as anything in their history or background they might want to work on. This may include any trauma they have experienced that has led to or been caused by the behaviour of their family member (e.g. domestic violence, sex-work, addiction issues).

Families are supported to overcome isolation, often caused by the stigma of addiction and sex-working, through building or rebuilding peer and wider community relationships, including connecting them to local community organisations. The project supports families to learn to identify and manage risk, and to develop strategies such as problem solving, boundary setting and self-care.

Driven by Christian values, A Way Out aims to meet people where they are, build hope and trust and empower them towards recovery. Their approach is enabling, trauma informed, compassionate, non-judgmental, persistent, consistent, flexible and empowering. Building positive relationships, establishing trust, focusing on individual strengths and being client led are central to their success.

COVID-19 and Other Challenges

During COVID-19 the project adapted their provision to stay connected with families through online support, delivery of well-being activity packs and outdoor 'walk and talks'.

In the beginning, engagement was difficult due to a number of reasons. Many of the Liberty women face complex and multiple issues and weren't in touch with their families. Another challenge to engagement was that some clients had negative associations with another client's daughters, which made being together and peer support challenging.

A further challenge to the work is the attitude and expectations of statutory agencies who often lack understanding of the complex needs of families who have faced, **'so much trauma, challenge, obstacles and discrimination in their lives.'**

"I've learned how resilient people are... and how to encourage and incorporate self-esteem in everything that we do, and not take anything for granted. Our clients really lead the way and they're amazing people."

Project Worker

The Future

A Way Out see a continued need for this important work. The current project worker is part time and the need for a full time worker is clear given the level of demand and amount of support families need. Another route to expand the project being explored is to support the families of female offenders. They are already seeing referrals via the CJS and expect this to continue.

<https://www.awayout.co.uk/rise>



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The Mercers' Company is a Livery
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philanthropic force for good

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