

Venture Scotland

An evaluation of what makes an effective support service for people's recovery from alcohol and drug use

Established in 1989, Venture Scotland aims to provide people with the tools and skills to enable them to lead a happier, healthier and more fulfilled life. In wilderness environments, the team deliver a trauma informed and person-centred development programme, for people who have endured traumatic experiences. There is an emphasis on adaptability, compassion and autonomy, aligning with the personal development needs of participants based on therapeutic practices.

Venture Scotland's Venture On programme, in partnership with organisations in the recovery community (Elevate Employability and Move On), is a 12 week programme supporting people from the drug recovery community with their journey to wellbeing and employment. This is achieved through regular group-based outdoor activities (e.g. rock climbing, hill walking, paddling and gorge walking), life skills sessions and remote residential activities.

Here, Healthcare Improvement Scotland staff evaluate the components that we believe Venture Scotland's success is built upon. We explore how each activity within the programme contributes to participant outcomes and what makes this service effective in supporting people during their recovery.



“ They are all very understanding. They bring the best out of us. ”

Methods

Two members of the Healthcare Improvement Scotland Evidence and Evaluation for Improvement Team interviewed Venture Scotland staff who run the Venture On programme and undertook document analysis of participant feedback from the first two cohorts.

This is the first in a series exploring what makes an effective substance use recovery service for people in Scotland. We present 5 key themes which appeared to contribute to positive outcomes during people's recovery, alongside representative quotes from participants.

Service details

Venture On is a 12 week programme for participants in the recovery community. It includes:

- Regular group-based outdoor activities
- Life skills sessions
- Remote residential activities
- Peer-support and voluntary opportunities
- Employability support and coaching with Move On
- Connections to the recovery community through Elevate

“ There were times when I felt anxious and worried about the issues in my life. I feel I was able to speak to the staff about them. ”

Five Themes:

Learning to manage feelings

Links to the recovery community

Trauma-informed staff

Co-production

Permissioning



Learning to manage feelings

A core component of the Venture On programme is the integration of social and emotional management skills with wilderness activities in a structured, but individualised way. Front-loaded discussions are used to introduce a tool or model, and activities are chosen to complement the theme of the day.

“It has had a brilliant impact on my attitude to new things, situations and sharing emotions.”

Links to the recovery community

By working closely alongside Elevate Employability and Move On, Venture Scotland enable participants in the Venture On programme to access multi-faceted and specialised expertise. This means that people’s needs are supported throughout their recovery and beyond the life of the Venture On wilderness programme.

“Move On are always available to talk to when needed. Brilliant in their encouragement and very good at what they do.”

Trauma-informed staff

Staff are how Venture Scotland connect with people and support their recovery journey. They are encouraged to take an interest in person-centred practice and work in a trauma-informed way. They act as role models by demonstrating how to deal with challenges as they encounter them.

Co-production

Participants were involved throughout design of two cohorts of Venture On and there are plans for more co-design in the future. Following completion of the programme, participants are offered voluntary opportunities – either working with future participant groups, or in other roles in the organisation.

Permissioning

The depth of interaction encouraged between staff and participants during activity planning and residential stays gives many opportunities for participants to step outside their persona and be their individual selves. This includes offering opportunities to discuss elements of their wellbeing and life in a psychologically safe way.

“I have been able to share more [with Venture On staff], without the feeling of not being listened to.”

“During this course I think I made progress on being more open, to be able to work as a team, to share my feelings and my emotions, to belong. I am very grateful for the change in me.”

Further information - get in touch

This is the first in a series of evaluations exploring the delivery of better outcomes for people by substance use recovery services in Scotland. To read about our work at Healthcare Improvement Scotland, [visit our website](#).

To find out more about Venture Scotland [visit their website](#), or get in touch with them at their [online contact form](#) or by phone at 07956 158 281.

To find out more about Move On, [visit their website](#) or get in touch with them at their [online contact form](#).

To find out more about Elevate Employability, [visit their website](#) or email elevate@glasgowcouncilonalcohol.org



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Photography and participant quotes provided by Venture Scotland.

www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org

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