

Support outcomes / Case studies

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As a service, we love to see our clients grow in confidence, self-belief and independence. Our support approach is always to empower, never to deskill or over protect.

For many of the people we have supported over the years, becoming part of aebal provided them with the environment they needed to start feeling more positive about themselves and more open to new opportunities. Our support helped create the fresh perspective and optimism they needed to live fuller, more enriched and independent lives.

We have felt tremendous pride when clients have moved on from the service with the renewed hope and self-confidence to try some volunteer work, start a college course or to move into their own supported living accommodation for example.

We also encourage clients to acquire new hobbies and interests and have helped many friendships to form outside of the sessions, resulting in a reduction in their support hours. Setting independent friendships in motion when previously these individuals have been extremely lonely and isolated is a hugely rewarding element of our support.

Whilst we do all we can to help and improve independence levels, we also acknowledge that some of our clients may always need and depend on the support we provide. Without our ongoing support, their needs and disabilities would prevent them from safely accessing activities and opportunities in the community, they would remain socially isolated and they wouldn't be able to develop and maintain meaningful relationships.

Whilst we regard clients wanting to reduce their hours or feeling they no longer need support as a reflection of progress, we understand this is not always achievable.

Short-term and long-term outcomes

Independent travel and knowing the local area

Our support is all about introducing people to new opportunities and enabling them to feel part of their community. We have supported numerous clients to learn about their local area (and further afield on Saturdays) and gain the confidence and knowledge to expand their worlds beyond their home/college/day service.

For those capable, we have also helped them to improve their independent travel skills by supporting with transport training and encouraging them to meet us at activity venues or from their bus stops / tram stops.

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: We supported a client with Schizotypal Personality Disorder and severe social anxiety to access one of our small group sessions at Brookfield garden centre and develop an interest in tropical fish. We supported them to interact with the aquarium staff, helped them gain



the confidence to ask questions and then buy a suitable tank within budget. This client now has the confidence and knowledge to catch the bus there independently and continue this hobby without support.

Money management

As all our support is out in the mainstream community, our clients gain daily exposure and life experience when it comes to money management skills. Staff always encourage our clients to manage their own money on sessions and interact with employees at the various venues we attend. We also do 'simulated shopping' and practical exercises using real money during our Thursday evening sessions (see below).

We have seen huge improvements in the young adults we have worked with as they gain a grasp of the value of things, better understand how coins, notes and online money and card purchases work, they understand their own spending budgets and they become more independent when purchasing items.

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: We taught a young client with autism who had recently finished college, very rarely accessed the community and was heavily dependent on her Mum to manage her money. She was initially very impulsive and felt she needed to purchase things there and then and consequently became very upset and frustrated when she ran out of funds. Staff have spent 121 time with her developing attributes such as planning, organising and patience. She now understands the difference between day to day purchases and saving for larger, more expensive items.

Independent living skills

Each Thursday evening, we hire a community hall where we prepare and cook a meal alongside numerous other activities including board games and karaoke! All clients are actively involved with the various responsibilities and practice some important life skills. These include helping staff do the food shop prior to arriving at the venue; thinking of the ingredients, learning where the items are located and how to use the self-scanning checkouts.

Whilst at the venue we utilise the recently purchased food items and the receipt to undertake a 'Simulated shop' practical exercise. Staff provide clients with different scenarios and encourage the group to do some practical exercises together using real money. This might be choosing appropriate coins and notes for the value of items, working out which items they could buy with different quantities of money and deciding whether the staff member has given them the correct change! It's all done with a very fun and gentle approach and with the clients working together as a team. This really reduces the pressure many of them feel with understanding money and the daunting prospect of buying things from strangers. All the clients contribute and a great sense of team work and accomplishment is achieved along with some important life skills!

The session is completed with some domestic tasks such as peeling and prepping veg, cleaning surfaces, sweeping the floor, a washing up rota and help setting up and putting away the seating and tables. The Thursdays are a great combination of fun, socialising, responsibility, teamwork and food!

Independent friendships

Many of the people we support are more comfortable interacting with staff than they are with their peers. There is always a strong desire to find friendships and to become part of a social group, however knowing how to create and maintain these sorts of relationships can often be a source of anxiety, overwhelm and confusion for our neurodiverse clients. Our staff work tirelessly to bring individuals together through shared interests and values and then discretely help with the social skills necessary to form friendships. This might be to prompt conversation topics, create open and



trusting environments where clients can share thoughts and feeling with each other or simply help facilitate the exchange of phone numbers when clients don't have the courage to themselves. On a number of occasions staff have helped build the foundation for friendships within the sessions and then it has evolved into our clients meeting each other independently outside of aebal.

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: Three clients who attend our regular weekly pool and snooker social were supported to exchange numbers (and parent's numbers with their consent) and then practiced for a number of weeks, learning how to request a snooker table and the money needed to pay for the activity and food and drink etc. aebal staff built up a relationship with the venue staff so that they were aware there was a plan in motion for the three clients to attend on their own in the near future. 6 months on, they are all proficient at their extra Friday morning snooker session and have massively improved their snooker skills too!

Introductions to new activities and interests

We are extremely proactive with our community activities and always introducing new ideas based on our client's interests and suggestions. With our support, client's have discovered new interests such as badminton, swimming, karaoke, gym sessions and Warhammer. These activities and interests have become integral parts of their weekly routine and identity. There have also been numerous health and social benefits gained.

Communication and language skills

Our staff work alongside NHS Speech and Language therapists and receive annual training to ensure we are providing person centred approaches and appropriate techniques for our clients with limited speech and language skills.

For our clients with additional verbal communication needs our staff ensure this never prevents them from creating meaningful relationships within the service. We understand their communication challenges shouldn't impact their capacity to make their own day to day decisions and choices. We also promote understanding from other clients and help them to communicate appropriately so that everyone feels part of the group and socially accepted.

In addition to these techniques, we often incorporate playful word-based games, general knowledge and spelling quizzes into sessions for our more verbal clients to help broaden their vocabulary and build communication confidence.

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: We helped a client with autism and limited communication to discover a passion for Karaoke, which was quite unexpected! He was able to read well but didn't have much motivation to communicate with others. Karaoke has provided a real focus for his communication and vocabulary and he plans and practices his carefully selected songs each month. He loves to recite his song list, has improved hugely with his pitch variation in both spoken word and singing and this new hobby has also helped him form friendships through a shared interest.

Time management

A lot of the people we meet are heavily dependent on family to manage their time and weekly commitments. We encourage our clients to move into a more adult mindset and give them the confidence to start taking more control and more responsibility. This is especially true for our younger clients who are in the transition between child and adult services. We promote the use of mobile phones and text session details directly to all our clients when possible. We also implement some practical time-based exercises at our Thursday evening session, providing clients with a fun way to learn how to better plan and organise their time.



Volunteer work / collaborations

We work with several organisations across Nottinghamshire to provide new and exciting creative opportunities and projects as well as important work and life skills where possible. We actively seek these collaborations to broaden our activities and to introduce our clients and staff to an array of inspiring people!

EXAMPLE: We collaborate approximately twice a year with another service called Get Wise. They have a background in film and music and our clients have worked on numerous projects such as creating a pop song and music video and an animated short film.

Ongoing outcomes

Developing and maintaining meaningful relationships / friendships

We are always mindful of social dynamics on sessions and ensure group sizes are manageable for the individual needs of each client. This enables friendships to flourish and allows our staff the opportunity to sensitively offer guidance on client's behaviour and social skills. We can also adapt sessions to provide more of a mentoring approach if clients are struggling with some of the larger groups.

We understand how important and meaningful social interactions are in the way clients feel about themselves and our staff always work collectively to ensure positive social outcomes are achieved on every session. Staff are also encouraged to interact with the general public whenever possible and appropriate to help our clients integrate with their community and improve their social skills.

Support with challenging behaviour

aebal have successfully supported many individuals over the years with a history of challenging behaviour and who's support has broken down with other services.

We provide a much-needed alternative to day centre settings, supported living or 121 PA support and possess the skill set and experience to provide person-centred support approaches that work for our clients with more complex needs.

We carefully consider things like social settings, group sizes, activity duration and elements of 121 support to ensure risks are reduced, potential triggers are avoided and escalation is prevented.

Our support plans are also extremely detailed and comprehensive in identifying and preventing challenging behaviour and our staff undergo regular training to enable them to safely and confidently deescalate situations of heightened behaviour.

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: We have supported a client with challenging behaviour who struggled to remain in any other support service for longer than a few months. We recognised that physical tiredness, jealousy, and also frustrations around communication and independence were all major triggers for this person. Working closely with them and spending time building a trusting and meaningful relationship, we have supported them to understand their behaviour more clearly and implemented techniques to help them better manage their mood.

Instead of refusing to accept they were tired and feeling anger towards this suggestion, they are now able to independently express when they need some "recharge time" and need to go home earlier or have a day off sessions.



This person is now coming up to being in aebal for a year and has only had one challenging behaviour episode during this time. This has been life changing for them personally and also for their Mum, who has expressed this is the happiest they have been as a family for a very long time.

Preventing depression, anxiety and social isolation

Many of the people referred to us have had long periods of low mood, isolation and experienced suicidal thoughts. Our support acts as a bridge to help our clients overcome adversity, feelings of hopelessness and low self-esteem. We ensure our staff understand each and every person we support, how they think and how they feel about themselves.

Our sessions provide supportive environments, positive energy and a safe space for people to be open and honest with their feelings and emotions. This sense of belonging and trust is fundamental to our support approach and largely the reason aebal has made a difference to people's lives over the years. Our clients have expressed how much they look forward to receiving their weekly texts detailing their upcoming aebal sessions and how the activities they attend provide meaning and purpose to their week.

This is achieved by instilling a belief in all our clients that they deserve the opportunity to enjoy all of the things everyone else does - fun, a sense of purpose, accomplishments, social bonds - it should not be underestimated how valuable to a person's mental health being able to access the community in this way is.

aebal increase people's self-worth and self-confidence and provide a reason to look forward to their day. Without their aebal sessions, many of our clients would feel detached and isolated from the world outside their front door.

We are dedicated to not only enabling adults at risk to access the community but ensuring they are also *part* of their community.

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: A client who previously felt constantly scared and paranoid of getting himself into trouble with his support service due to his impulsive nature and unfiltered thoughts, has now found a place where he is understood and accepted. Their mental health and feelings of self-loathing had become so severe, they had previously considered taking their life.

They now regularly express how excited they are the night before an aebal session and how happy they feel being out in the community with their group. We recognised how integral humour and playfulness was to their self-worth and well-being so provided support that gave them a platform to entertain people and make them laugh.

Healthier habits and lifestyle choices

Unfortunately, in every corner shop or supermarket there are a relentless amount of easily accessible temptations for the people we support. Fast food, brightly coloured fizzy drinks / energy drink brands and endless vaping brands / flavours to name a few.

Our client's mental health conditions and learning disabilities mean they can often be more impulsive, lack self-control, become easily addicted and dependent, crave sugar due to dopamine deficiencies, crave fatty foods due to medication side effects or over eat due to depression and anxiety. Consequently, many of them are overweight and have physical health conditions such as diabetes or tachycardia.

Our staff work tirelessly to try and direct and divert our clients to healthier food options and lifestyle choices. Whilst we understand all our clients have mental capacity to decide what they put in their bodies, our approach is to educate them to the dangers of these foods, remind them of how certain foods impact their energy levels and mood and strongly encourage alternative choices which will improve their physical health and well-being.



CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: A client with schizophrenia, autism and ADHD and on numerous medications, constantly craves fatty and processed food and is extremely impulsive. They are very unhappy with being overweight but also have PDA and don't receive instructions or advice well. They are aware enough to recognise the impact healthier fresh food ingredients have on their energy levels and mood in comparison to deep fried or processed options and often immediately regret choosing something unhealthy to eat. With the client's consent, we voice recorded them explaining their regret for the decision they just made and they advised themselves to order a healthier option next time. This recording is played back to them at appropriate times and has proven to be very helpful strategy for the client and staff. Instead of feeling they are being controlled and told what to do, the advice is coming from themselves in their own voice. This client is also supported to go to the gym and swim every week which they are often reluctant to do, however, are always grateful and energised afterwards!

Our sessions give their days purpose, direction and the motivation to gain more self-discipline and self-reliance. We continue to try and find new and creative ways to help them overcome their unhealthy habits.

Maintaining mental and physical well being

Research has shown it is hugely beneficial for mental well-being when people engage in exercise and sports. Our weekly sessions involve numerous sporting activities and gym sessions to boost confidence and fitness as well as supporting people to try new sports and improve their skills! We also spend a lot of time around nature and animals on our sessions to help reduce anxiety, depression and troubling thoughts. We are advocates of mindfulness and understand how important it for good mental health to be present, grounded and immersed in nature.

Staying safe outside the home

Many of our clients require ongoing support in order to access the community safely. Whilst we work towards outcomes such as road safety, stranger danger and independent travel, for some of our clients, their disabilities and mental health needs will always prevent them from accessing the community without support. Our approach is always to empower and promote independence, however alongside this we ensure all client support plans and risk assessments are regularly read by staff to protect those clients more at risk and to prevent any potential harm or abuse from happening whilst in the mainstream community.

