

# Write to Freedom

Your Life • Your Story • Your Choice



## FINDING THE MENTOR WITHIN EVALUATION REPORT



### Summer 2014

Delivered in partnership with the Torbay Recovery Information Project

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“I gained a lot ... a sense of belonging, a part of something.  
I have always felt odd or on my own and the weekend helped me  
to connect to other people and to ground me.”

(FMW Participant, 2015)

Write to Freedom supports people in changing their lives through mentoring, self-empowerment, wilderness experiences and the power of personal stories.

## 1 KEY FINDINGS

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Finding the Mentor Within (FMW) was a project for people in recovery who were engaged with the Torbay Recovery Information Project (TRIP). FMW aimed to support participants in becoming mentors for other people in recovery, and to encourage them to connect with their own inner mentor.

The purpose of this evaluation was to explore the project's impact on the attendees' life effectiveness. The participants reported on their life effectiveness using the Review of Personal Effectiveness with Locus of Control tool (ROPELOC) (a summary of this can be found in section 3).

The FMW project has shown to be a very beneficial experience for those involved. The ROPELOC life effectiveness questionnaire was measured on three separate occasions throughout the project. The weekend residential and individual days were shown to have a positive impact on all areas of life effectiveness measured by this tool.

The impact upon the individuals involved ranged from a percentile change of 2% to 24%. The areas of highest impact and statistical significance were, **cooperative team work, leadership ability, self-confidence, social effectiveness, time efficiency, open thinking, stress management, self-efficacy and coping with change**. A breakdown of the data collected throughout the programme has been presented in section 5 of this report.

The participants were also asked to share their experiences and feelings about the FMW project and the activities that had been facilitated by Write to Freedom. Below are some of the comments recorded by the participants:

*"The silent time, I got a lot more from this than I was expecting."*

*"The highs for me have been reconnecting with nature."*

*"The weekend was amazing and I thoroughly enjoyed it."*

*"It gave me the chance to experience total peace."*

*"[FMW project] helped me overcome a lot of my anxieties."*

*"[I] felt so relaxed."*

*"Spending time out of my comfort zone was scary but very challenging."*

*"Group sessions...have helped me find out more about who I am."*

*"It was a very profound experience."*

## 2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

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This project was completed in partnership with the Torbay Recovery Information Project (TRIP), running from July to September 2014. TRIP is a peer support group; run by people in recovery, for people in recovery. It provides a drop-in service for those recovering from drug and alcohol abuse. A joint bid to the Torbay Peer Recovery Grant was submitted by Write to Freedom and TRIP and £3729.00 was awarded for the completion of the FMW project. This was partially matched with W2F core funding, which funded post-course mentoring and group sessions.

Service users from TRIP were invited to apply to participate in the project. Selection was through a group information session and one-to-one interviews, and was based on the individual's understanding of what was on offer, their availability for sessions, and their readiness and keenness to engage. Two applicants were unsuccessful at interview stage due to the limited number of spaces available and other commitments they had in place that would conflict with session dates.

Those that were accepted onto the project were invited to attend five group sessions at the TRIP premises and a residential weekend on Dartmoor. The session content was based around the book *Tribe Warrior*, group sharing, time out in nature, and physical activities in a wild location. The group were introduced to each other before the process began through an introduction session facilitated by W2F, thus helping the group to understand the commitment and expectations of the FMW project.

Initially thirteen participants were recruited, six males and seven females, ranging from twenty eight to fifty one years of age. Two dropped out after the first group session. Of the remaining eleven, five attended every session, two missed one session and two people missed two sessions. The remaining two left the course after the residential weekend.

Participants could sign up to additional 1-2-1 mentoring support by W2F for four sessions. Seven participants opted for this. From the thirteen participants, six have subsequently expressed their interest to continue working with W2F as mentors.

### **3 EVALUATION DESIGN AND FRAMEWORK**

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#### **Life Effectiveness**

ROPELOC was the main evaluation tool used for this project. It indicates a person's effectiveness in a variety of key life areas, and, since 2000, has become a widely used instrument for assessing personal change.

It assesses peoples' self-perceptions on 14 scales including personal abilities (self-confidence, self-efficacy, stress management, open thinking), social abilities (social effectiveness, cooperative teamwork, leadership ability), organisational skills (time management, quality seeking, coping with change) and 'energy' scale called Active Involvement, as well as an overall life effectiveness measure. The Locus of Control element of the tool measures tendency to take responsibility for self-actions and successes.

Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire at three points during the project; at the first, middle and end sessions, to allow for comparison of scores over time.

The ROPELOC scores between the first and third captures were analysed in Microsoft Excel. The percentile change in scores between the captures was calculated and the Student t-test was used to test for any statistical significance of observed differences

#### **Participant Feedback**

Participants were asked to provide feedback on the project by scoring different elements out of 5, and providing short comments on each. They were then asked to provide a paragraph summarising their experiences during the project, including any highs and lows they may have experienced. This was unstructured feedback, not led by any pre-determined questions.

#### **TRIP Staff Feedback**

Nine months after the project was completed, the lead worker on this project from TRIP was asked to provide feedback, reflecting on how they felt the project had impacted upon the group members. This long-term feedback was gained in order to assess any lasting impact on the individuals.

## 4 PROJECT AIMS & OUTCOMES

### Aims

To provide people in recovery from drug and/or alcohol abuse with an opportunity to focus on their recovery journey, and gain tools to take responsibility for their own recovery, supporting their intention and aspirations to change their lives.

### Outcomes

- To improve opportunities for people in recovery through self-reflection, inspiration and the creation or enhancement of peer relationships.
- To increase the chance of successful recovery through increased motivation, self-belief and self-motivation.
- To connect participants with local natural environments, encouraging their use as a wellbeing resource.
- To equip participants with mentoring skills that could be used to support others in recovery.

## 5 ROPELOC FINDINGS

Analysis of the ROPELOC data shows a statistically significant positive impact on six of the 14 domains assessed: cooperative teamwork, leadership ability, self-confidence, social effectiveness, time efficiency, and open thinking.

The graph below (fig.1) outlines the percentile change and effect size for each of the 14 domains (plus control items), between capture one and capture three:

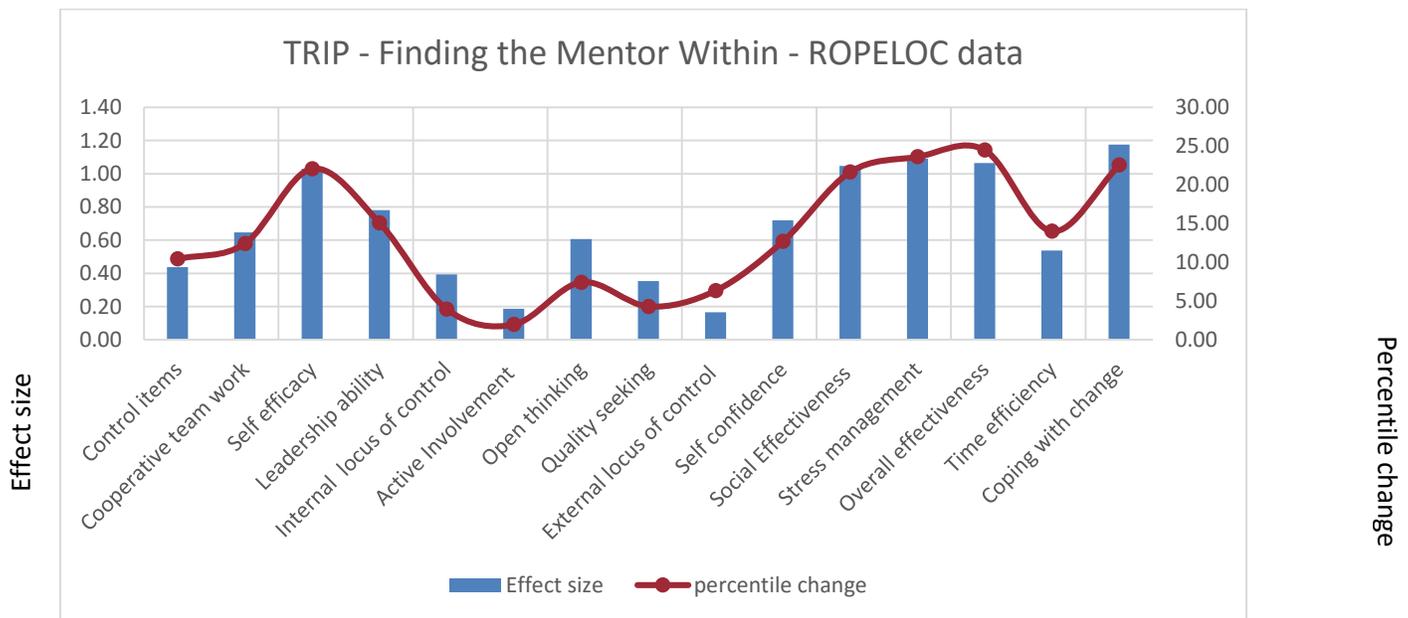


Fig 1. Percentile change and effect size between capture 1 and capture 3 of the ROPELOC scores.

The six domains where statistically significant change was evidenced are described further below:

## **OUTCOME: COOPERATIVE TEAMWORK**

Each individual's level of cooperation in team situations had increased. There was a positive percentile change of 12 for this measure, with an effect size of 0.6 (1dp).

## **OUTCOME: LEADERSHIP ABILITY**

There was a positive percentile change of 15 in scores for leadership capability, with an effect size of 0.7 (1dp). This shows that individuals felt more able to take on leadership roles and responsibilities by the end of the FMW project.

An example of evidence of change in this area includes:

*"One person who didn't have a lot of confidence in herself has now gone on to be a Volunteer in Services, a position that not everyone can aspire to or be accepted for." (TRIP Team Leader)*

## **OUTCOME: SELF CONFIDENCE**

This domain represents confidence and a belief in one's ability to be successful. There was a 13 point percentile change in this domain over time, with an effect size of 0.6 (1dp). This shows that participants' self-confidence was significantly affected by involvement in this project.

Some examples of evidence of changes in this area include:

*"I may not be as messed up as I give myself credit for" (LH)*

*"I am more aware and more confident in myself" (EK)*

*"The circle sessions...actually helped me overcome a lot of my anxieties and realized I was stronger and more confident than I knew." (EK)*

*"Strengthened my trust in people, my recovery and myself." (LS)*

## **OUTCOME: SOCIAL EFFECTIVENESS**

The results show that each participants' perception of their competence and effectiveness in communicating and operating within social situations significantly increased over the course of the project. There was a percentile change of 22, with an effect size of 1 (1dp).

Some examples of evidence of changes in this area include:

*"It helped me connect with others, which I hadn't done for a long time. I felt bonded and that I belonged somewhere." (EK)*

*Talking about the single gender sharing circles: "...brought the group closer together and made me a lot more trusting."(PM)*

## **OUTCOME: TIME EFFICIENCY**

Results showed that individuals felt better able to efficiently plan and utilise their time by the end of the project. There was a 14 percentile change with an effect size of 0.6 (1dp).

## **OUTCOME: OPEN THINKING**

Participants' perception of their openness and adaptability in thinking and ideas increased between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> capture points. This was the smallest significant change that was identified, with a 7% change and an effect size of 0.4.

Some examples of evidence of changes in this area include:

*"...it was life changing for my awareness." (LH)*

*"I'm pleased I stepped out of my comfort zone."(LH)*

*"I thought my heart was open but in reality the core of it was closed. The expression, 'no man is an islands' came to mind. It was time to share." (EK)*

*"The experience...has made me have more of a different outlook on my life. It's made me find out more about who I am." (KJ)*

*"Really saw my past self, felt sad at how I could never see my own blindness, didn't know I didn't know." (LS)*

There were a further four domains where large percentile changes were found between capture one and capture three, but the differences were not found to be statistically significant. These domains were overall effectiveness (24.5% change), stress management (23.6% change), coping with change (22.6% change), and self-efficacy (22% change).

As this evaluation and related statistics are based on a small sample size they should only be used as an indication of outcomes.

## **TRIP Staff Feedback**

TRIP's lead project worker provided feedback on how they felt the project had impacted on TRIP members, nine months after the project was completed. This feedback has provided an insight into any lasting impact that the project may have had upon the individuals involved.

Below are some extracts from this feedback:

*"When I first met with [W2F]... I was impressed by the possibility of what W2F could bring to the lives of people in recovery"*

*"To me it was exciting to think that this provision could bring support and understanding to each person's individual recovery journey"*

*"[I could] see the excitement begin to grow as time got nearer."*

*"Friendship and trust began to quickly develop. I am sure this was a major factor in the success of the weekend."*

*“On the Monday morning after the weekend people who had attended were coming into TRIP bleary eyed, full of smiles and immediately I noticed that positive phrases were being used in conversation such as:*

*“I didn't think I could do that but I did”*

*I found out a lot about myself”*

*“I want more of this - I want to go again”*

*“[The days after the residential] different people were coming in with their kit and telling their own story and retelling some fun, some scary bits and some not to be repeated bits!”*

*“The 4 sessions of mentoring that some of the group took part in were also well received”*

Reflecting back on the 9 months that followed this project, the lead worker believed there was a noticeable impact upon TRIP group members that were involved in FMW. Some of the impacts that were highlighted include:

*“One person who didn't have a lot of confidence in herself has now gone on to be a Volunteer in Services, a position that not everyone can aspire to or be accepted for.”*

*“1 person is in the process of applying for a similar role who...wouldn't have had the confidence to try 9 months ago”*

*“2 people have moved into their own accommodation following supported living...I have seen both people handle their situation more confidently than I thought they would have”*

*“Would I recommend it to others or plan to repeat it in the future- you bet I would.”*

## **References**

Neill, J. T., Marsh, H. W., & Richards, G. E. (2003). *The Life Effectiveness Questionnaire: Development and psychometrics*, Sydney, Australia.

Wager, E (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.