



ESCAPE

Family Support

Impact & Service Review 2025/26

Supporting families, carers, children & young people across Northumberland



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Executive Summary

ESCAPE Family Support (Registered Charity Number: 1063500) is Northumberland's only specialist service dedicated to supporting families, carers, children and young people affected by a loved one's drug or alcohol use. For over 30 years, we have delivered trauma-informed, whole-family support that reduces harm, strengthens resilience and improves wellbeing and ensures nobody has to face addiction alone.

2025/26 at a glance

- 1,051 people supported across Northumberland
- 515 individuals received intensive, trauma-informed support
- 243 crisis helpline contacts, exceeding expectations
- 527 children and young people supported, through therapeutic work and positive experiences

This year represents our highest reach to date, reflecting both rising need and growing trust in ESCAPE's specialist support from families, communities and professional partners.

Major Achievements

- ⇒ Expanded reach across Northumberland, with significant growth in rural delivery & rising engagement from high-need communities
- ⇒ Strengthened trauma-informed support for adults and young people, with clear improvements in wellbeing, resilience and reduced isolation
- ⇒ Secured multi-year funding and strengthened capacity, enabling growth in ACEs programmes, peer-led support.
- ⇒ Community Fundraising increased from £13,192 in 2024/25 to £22,500 in 2025/26 (+70%)
- ⇒ Continued national recognition: IIP Platinum accreditation and national award finalist.

Key Challenges

- ⇒ Rising demand and increasing complexity across adults, carers and children's services, particularly within rural and high-need areas experiencing ongoing pressures.
- ⇒ The need to scale workforce capacity, training and infrastructure to support the expanded rural/local delivery funded by NCC alongside continued growth in ACEs programmes.
- ⇒ Operating in a competitive and uncertain funding climate, requiring ongoing income diversification and robust financial planning.
- ⇒ Managing a planned leadership transition while sustaining delivery quality, staff wellbeing and organisational stability.

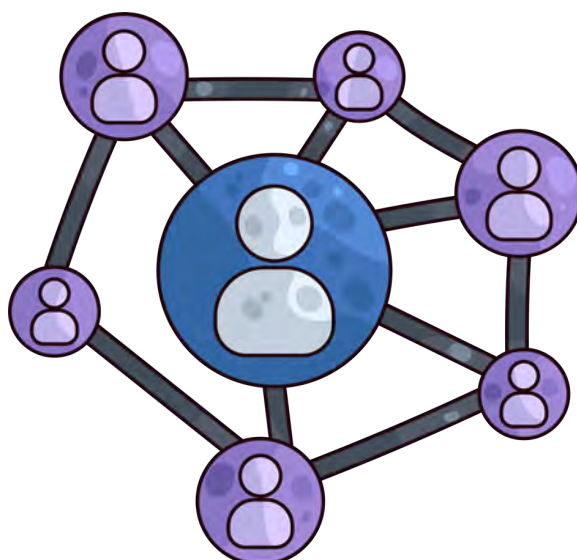
Priorities for Next Year

- ⇒ Deliver a well-supported and seamless **CEO succession**, with Janet continuing as a trustee to provide continuity, expertise and guidance through the transition.
- ⇒ **Expand rural delivery and ACEs provision**, improving access and outcomes for adults, children and young people
- ⇒ **Strengthen sustainability**, securing diverse funding and investing in workforce, data and quality systems.

Contents

- 2. **Executive Summary**
- 4. **ESCAPE in Brief**
- 5 & 6 **Strategy and performance**
- 7. **Who We Supported**
- 8. **Our Interventions & Impact**
- 9. **Young People's ACE Programme**
- 10. **Rural Delivery Project**
- 11. **Volunteers & Family Champions**
- 12. **Stories of Change**
- 13. **Data, Evaluation & Outcomes**
- 14. **Voices of ESCAPE**
- 15. **Funders**

This report shares the reach, impact and learning from ESCAPE Family Support's work across Northumberland during 2025/26.





Who We Are



ESCAPE Family Support is a long-established Northumberland charity, founded in 1995 in Blyth by Janet Murphy MBE in response to the loss of her daughter and the lack of support available to families affected by addiction. Since then, ESCAPE has grown into the county's only specialist, trauma-informed service providing holistic support to families, carers, children and young people whose lives are impacted by someone else's drug or alcohol use. Working across all of Northumberland, our mission is to empower families, reduce harm, strengthen resilience and ensure that no one faces the complex challenges of addiction alone. Our specialist team of staff, volunteers and Family Champions bring lived experience, professional expertise and a whole-family approach to every aspect of our work.

What We Do

We provide a wide range of evidence-based, person-centred services designed to meet the needs of individuals and families at every stage of their journey:



Crisis support & 24/7 helpline

1–1 therapeutic interventions, including counselling, advocacy and personalised support

CRAFT, SPACE and ACE programmes for adults, parents, children and young people

Peer mentoring & accredited training, supporting confidence, skills and progression

Family Champions, offering lived-experience support and community outreach

Respite, wellbeing and family events, including workshops, activities and short breaks

Our Values & Approach



Our work is guided by a strong set of values and an approach that ensures families receive compassionate, high-quality support:

Trauma-informed – we understand the impact of trauma and prioritise safety, trust and empowerment.

Whole-family support – recognising that addiction affects everyone, we work with adults, carers, children and young people together and individually.

Evidence-based practice – our interventions use proven models and validated tools to measure progress and outcomes.

Community-led – our services are shaped by lived experience, local need and the voices of the families we support.

Strategy and performance

Goal	What We Planned	What We Achieved
Ensure financial sustainability	Strengthen and diversify funding streams; secure multi-year grants; expand statutory commissioning relationships	Increased statutory income; secured multi-year grants; grew community fundraising; improved funding stability
Expand reach across Northumberland	Improve service availability in rural areas; increase capacity in areas of highest need	Delivered expanded rural programme; increased referrals; strengthened presence in high-need communities
Strengthen trauma-informed, evidence-based practice	Improve monitoring systems, expand data tools, embed therapeutic models	Enhanced outcome measurement; demonstrated significant improvements across wellbeing scales
Develop and support the workforce	Invest in training; support staff progression; prepare for leadership succession	Increased accredited training; internal progression; maintained a high-performing culture
Grow volunteering and Family Champion pathway	Recruit, train and develop volunteers with lived experience; expand peer-led support	Trained new volunteers; developed Family Champions; increased peer-led delivery
Strengthen partnerships and community collaboration	Build relationships across statutory, VCSE and health sectors	Deepened partnerships with Commissioners, partners and community groups

Funding & Commissioning Landscape

ESCAPE continues to operate within an increasingly challenging funding environment, with rising demand for intensive support and ongoing pressure on statutory and charitable funding. Despite this, we successfully strengthened our financial position through a balanced mix of statutory contracts, charitable grants and community fundraising. Growth in statutory income reflects increasing recognition of ESCAPE's specialist expertise in supporting families affected by addiction, while new and renewed grants have enabled us to expand service provision, particularly in rural areas and high-need communities. Community fundraising and donated support also grew, strengthening our unrestricted income base and deepening local engagement.

Organisational Strengthening

Workforce Development This year we invested significantly in our team through accredited training, supervision and professional development opportunities. Staff and volunteers enhanced their skills across trauma-informed practice, therapeutic interventions, family-focused models and community outreach. In the last 3 years the staff base has grown from 9 to 14 (+55.55%) and trained volunteers have increased from 22 to 57 a 159.09% increase.



Strategy and performance

Investors in People / Platinum Accreditation

ESCAPE was re-awarded the Investors in People Platinum accreditation — the highest possible level, held by only 2% of accredited organisations nationally. This achievement reflects our deeply embedded values, strong leadership, commitment to staff wellbeing and our culture of continuous improvement. It also reinforces the quality and integrity of our services in the eyes of commissioners, partners and funders.

Governance Improvements

We strengthened governance through active trustee engagement, strategic planning and regular review of policies, systems and service outcomes. Trustees have overseen key developments including succession planning, risk management, financial oversight and quality assurance. During the year, ESCAPE reviewed its Risk Management Strategy and Risk Framework. Risk scores improved across key areas, demonstrating strengthened organisational control, reduced risk exposure, and improved governance oversight. We further strengthened safeguarding arrangements, including the development of new forums and processes to support consistent oversight and best practice across services. Our governance work ensures ESCAPE remains resilient, compliant and well-positioned to meet rising need across the county.

Succession Planning for the CEO

As part of our long-term sustainability planning, ESCAPE has set aside dedicated funding for the recruitment of a new Chief Executive during the next financial year. This planned transition ensures stability for the organisation and continuity for the families and communities we support. Our founder, Janet Murphy MBE, will continue to play an active role as a trustee, offering her experience and guidance to support a smooth handover and safeguard the values and vision on which ESCAPE was built.

Future Strategic Priorities

Looking ahead, ESCAPE is focused on securing long-term sustainability while continuing to meet rising levels of need across Northumberland. Our priorities for the coming year include strengthening leadership through the planned CEO transition, ensuring a smooth handover supported by Janet's continued involvement as a trustee. We will build on our recent growth by expanding trauma-informed services for adults, carers and young people, and continuing to develop our rural delivery model to reduce geographical inequalities.

We remain committed to enhancing the quality and impact of our work by investing in robust data systems, evidence-based practice and workforce development. Strengthening partnerships with statutory services, VCSE organisations and community groups will also be central to our strategy, enabling earlier intervention, better coordinated support and wider reach. As demand continues to grow, we will prioritise securing diverse, stable funding and expanding our volunteering and Family Champion pathways to ensure that every family who needs ESCAPE's support can access timely, compassionate and effective help.



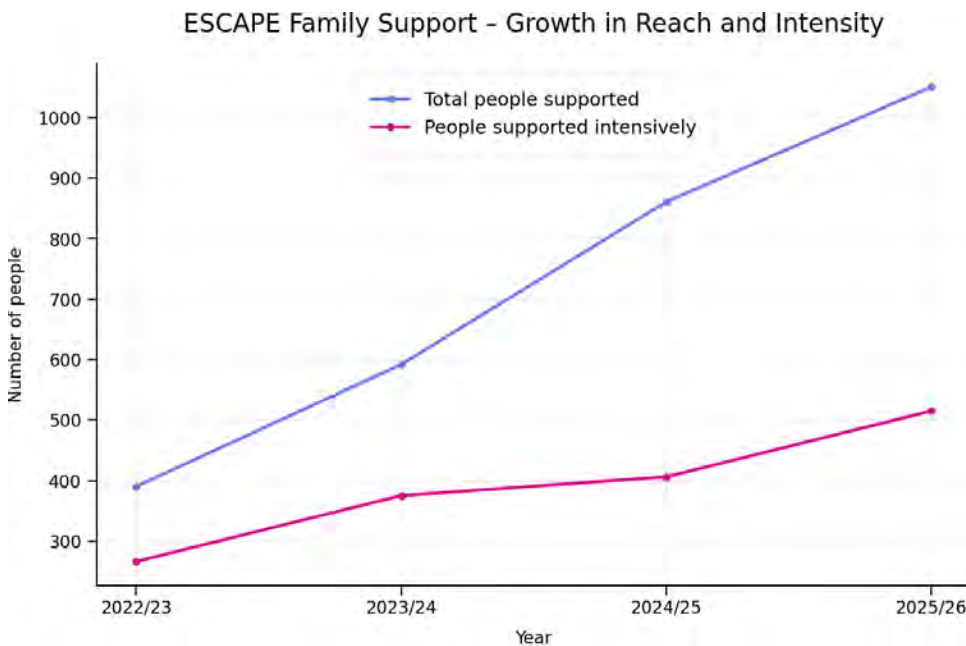
Who We Supported

In 2025/26, ESCAPE Family Support reached more people than ever before. Over the course of the year, we supported 1,051 individuals, a significant increase on previous years reflecting both rising need across Northumberland and the trust placed in our services by families, communities and professional partners.

We provided intensive, trauma-informed support to 515 people, including 405 adult carers, 88 children and young people, and 31 service users, helping individuals and families navigate the emotional, practical and relational impact of addiction. Despite

increasing complexity, outcomes remained strong, with the majority of closed cases showing improvements in health, wellbeing, coping and resilience.

Alongside our therapeutic work, we continued to prioritise prevention, connection and positive experiences. **Through respite provision, family activities and community events, a further 439 children were supported during the year.** At times of heightened pressure — including school holidays and



the winter period — this wider support played a vital role in reducing isolation, relieving hardship and creating moments of stability and joy for families.

Together, this work meant that 527 children and young people benefited from ESCAPE's support in 2025/26. Supported by dedicated staff, volunteers and Family Champions, our services continued to combine depth with reach — ensuring that as we grow, quality, compassion and impact remain at the heart of everything we do.

The number of people supported by ESCAPE has increased by 250% since 2022.



Crisis support and 24/7 helpline - received 243 calls and those people accessed immediate advice and reassurance. Which at times of acute need, helps people feel heard, supported and able to take next steps



"It was the first time I felt like I wasn't dealing with this on my own. The person on the helpline was kind, patient, and helped me work out what I could do next."

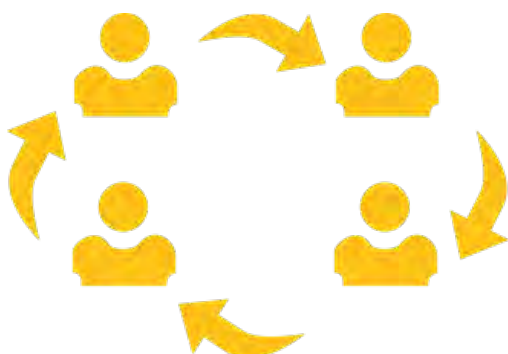
Our Interventions & Impact



Peer mentoring and accredited training

Enabling individuals to build confidence, develop practical skills and move forward positively, with 57 accredited qualifications achieved and 24 soft-skills such as motivation and boundary setting training accesses supporting improved self-belief, boundaries and progression opportunities.

"The qualification gave me the skills and confidence to support others properly, not just through lived experience but with real training behind me."



Family-focused programmes

Evidence-based interventions including CRAFT (8 carers supported) and SPACE parenting programmes (2 courses delivered), strengthening communication, confidence and family functioning.

"Before CRAFT I felt exhausted and stuck. The programme helped me understand what I can and can't control, and I feel stronger and more hopeful than I have in a long time."



1-to-1 therapeutic support

Ongoing personalised support for 515 adults, carers and young people, helping individuals manage emotional distress, develop coping strategies and improve relationships

"Having someone to talk to who really listened helped me make sense of everything. I don't feel as overwhelmed anymore."



Respite, wellbeing and family activities

Creating safe, positive experiences for families, including 57 children accessing caravan respite and 439 children supported through activities and events.

"It was the first time in a long while that we could just relax and feel like a normal family again."



Together, these interventions support individuals and families to feel less alone, more in control and better able to cope, contributing to improved emotional wellbeing, stronger relationships and more stable home environments.

GOV.UK
"In 2025, there
were over
400,000 UK
children in need"



Therapeutic Care & Time to Be Children



Children and young people living often experience anxiety, instability and children is rooted in a trauma-informed, whole-family approach, recognising that children need both safe therapeutic support and positive experiences away from everyday pressures. National Children in Need figures highlights the increasing demand for early, specialist support for vulnerable children and families.

with a loved one's substance use unspoken worry. ESCAPE's work with

88 children and young people were supported through intensive therapeutic and ACE-informed interventions, helping them make sense of their experiences, improve emotional wellbeing and build resilience. Support included 1-to-1 work and group sessions focused on self-esteem, emotional regulation, understanding addiction and reducing feelings of fear, guilt and isolation. The majority of closed cases showed positive improvements in emotional health and wellbeing.

Alongside therapeutic support, ESCAPE provided vital respite and positive experiences for children and families. During the year:

- ⇒ 57 children accessed respite at the ESCAPE caravan
- ⇒ A further 439 children were supported through family events and activities
- ⇒ 165 children received Christmas gifts, with 70 families supported through food hampers

Activities such as Elf School, Santa's Grotto, Halloween events, family fun days, workshops and creative activities gave children the chance to feel safe, included and carefree — often for the first time in a long while.

By combining therapeutic intervention with joy, connection and relief from stress, ESCAPE helps children not only cope, but begin to heal and thrive.

"ESCAPE helped me understand that what was happening at home wasn't my fault. I finally felt like someone was listening."

"Seeing my children relaxed and smiling again meant everything. Those moments gave us hope."



Rural Delivery Project



Families living in rural and remote communities often experience the hidden impact of addiction more acutely than those in urban areas. Isolation, limited transport, fewer local services and the stigma associated with addiction can prevent families from seeking help until situations reach crisis point. ESCAPE exists to ensure that geography is never a barrier to support.

During 2025/26, demand for ESCAPE's rural services increased significantly. **We supported 252 people from rural areas across Northumberland**, representing a substantial rise compared to the previous year and reflecting growing awareness of ESCAPE's presence and accessibility. Referrals were received from across the county, including North, West, Central and rural South-East Northumberland, with families supported in over 60 villages, towns and remote communities.

Strong Outcomes Despite Isolation & Complexity

- ⇒ 82.16% of rural cases closed with planned, positive outcomes
- ⇒ Families reported improved wellbeing, coping skills and reduced isolation
- ⇒ 1–1 and group support in hubs and community venues

To meet rising need, ESCAPE strengthened its dedicated rural workforce. Alongside our established Rural Family Support Worker, we embedded an additional Family Support Worker within Berwick Community Trust, extending our reach across a 20-mile radius in North, Northumberland. This investment has strengthened local presence, improved response times and ensured continuity of support for the next three years.



Deep Community Presence in:

- ⇒ Community hubs, libraries, hospitals, schools and village venues
- ⇒ Open Days in Berwick - Delivery of groups such as Weigh, Walk & Learn, arts & crafts, coffee mornings & wellbeing sessions
- ⇒ Attendance at agricultural shows planned for 2026 (9 booked)

The 252 people supported across over 60 rural towns and villages, represents a 60% increase on the previous year and an 88% increase since 2023/24, reflecting strengthened staffing, increased outreach and strong partnership working. **Despite the challenges of isolation and limited local services, over 82% of rural cases closed with planned, positive outcomes, demonstrating improved wellbeing, coping skills and resilience for families affected by addiction in rural Northumberland.**



Volunteers & Family Champions

Volunteers are central to ESCAPE's work, bringing compassion, commitment and lived experience into everything we do. Many volunteers have first-hand experience of supporting a loved one affected by substance use and choose to use that experience to help others in similar situations.



During 2025/26, ESCAPE continued to invest strongly in volunteer development. 57 volunteers gained accredited qualifications, including 14 at Level 1 and 43 at Level 2 or above.

Volunteers also accessed training in safeguarding adults and children, alongside soft-skills training such as communication, boundaries and motivation, ensuring they are well-prepared to offer safe, trauma-informed support.

Our volunteer pathways support people to build confidence, gain recognised qualifications and move into more skilled roles over time. Volunteers contributed across a wide range of activities, including peer support, respite and family events, community outreach, fundraising and wellbeing activities.

Just as importantly, volunteering with ESCAPE offers structure, purpose and opportunity. Many volunteers report improved confidence, a renewed sense of self-belief and pride in their achievements.

"Getting my qualification made me feel proud of myself again. I didn't think I was capable of it, but the support helped me believe I could do more."

"Volunteering here wasn't just about helping others — it helped me rebuild my confidence and feel like I belong somewhere."

ESCAPE is supported by volunteers from all walks of life, bringing a wide range of skills, experiences and perspectives. Together, they help create a welcoming, inclusive service rooted in understanding, compassion and community connection.

Community fundraising continued to grow strongly increasing from £13,192



in 2024/25 to £21,946.85 a rise of **66.36%**. This growth reflects the creativity, commitment & energy of our staff, volunteers and supporters, who organised a wide range of events, including a successful community fashion show hosted at a local hotel. We continue to host a weekly pop up charity shop which is very well accessed.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our staff, volunteers and Family Champions who gave their time, energy and creativity to community fundraising throughout 2025/26.

These activities raised vital unrestricted income while building confidence, skills and community connection.

Stories of Change

Rebuilding Safety, Stability and Hope - A family was referred to ESCAPE at a point when several children were subject to safeguarding plans due to neglect and substance-related difficulties at home. Although multiple agencies were involved, the parent felt overwhelmed and struggled to engage with the support around them. ESCAPE provided steady, trauma-informed 1:1 help, practical guidance and structured programmes that focused on communication, safety and understanding the impact of addiction on family life.

Alongside emotional support, the team helped the family meet immediate needs during a difficult period, ensuring stability for the children. Over time, relationships improved, routines became more consistent, and the children showed better emotional regulation and engagement in school. As risks reduced and progress continued, the family successfully stepped down through statutory safeguarding levels—from Child Protection to Child in Need—and ultimately closed to Children's Services altogether.

The parent later reflected that having someone “who listened and stayed with us” made the difference. Their journey shows how early, consistent support can help families move from crisis toward safety and long-term stability.

⇒ **Outcome: Family stepped down from Child Protection and closed to services**



Building Emotional Resilience - Child A was referred to ESCAPE by Early Help due to escalating emotional and behavioural difficulties linked to early childhood trauma and parental substance use. After living with Mum during early childhood, Child A moved permanently to Dad's care following safeguarding concerns. Contact with Mum was limited and often inconsistent, with missed calls becoming a major trigger for distress.

At the time of referral, Child A was experiencing frequent meltdowns at home and school, struggling with friendships, and becoming increasingly withdrawn and overwhelmed by everyday activities.

Child A accessed weekly ACE-informed CYPS sessions with ESCAPE, learning practical strategies to recognise emotions, manage anger and communicate feelings safely. Dad attended sessions alongside Child A, enabling consistent support and improved responses at home.

The impact was significant. School reported fewer incidents and better emotional regulation. Child A grew in confidence, joined a local football team and formed new friendships. Dad later described Child A as “*happier, calmer and far more confident*,” with a greatly improved ability to cope with disappointment.

⇒ **Outcome: Increased confidence, improved emotional wellbeing and stronger relationships, enabling positive engagement at home and school**

Data, Evaluation & Outcomes



At ESCAPE, data and evaluation help us understand whether our support is genuinely improving the lives of families affected by addiction. The challenges faced by carers, children and young people are often complex, and progress is not always immediate or linear. Using robust evaluation allows us to recognise meaningful change, learn from experience and continually strengthen our services.

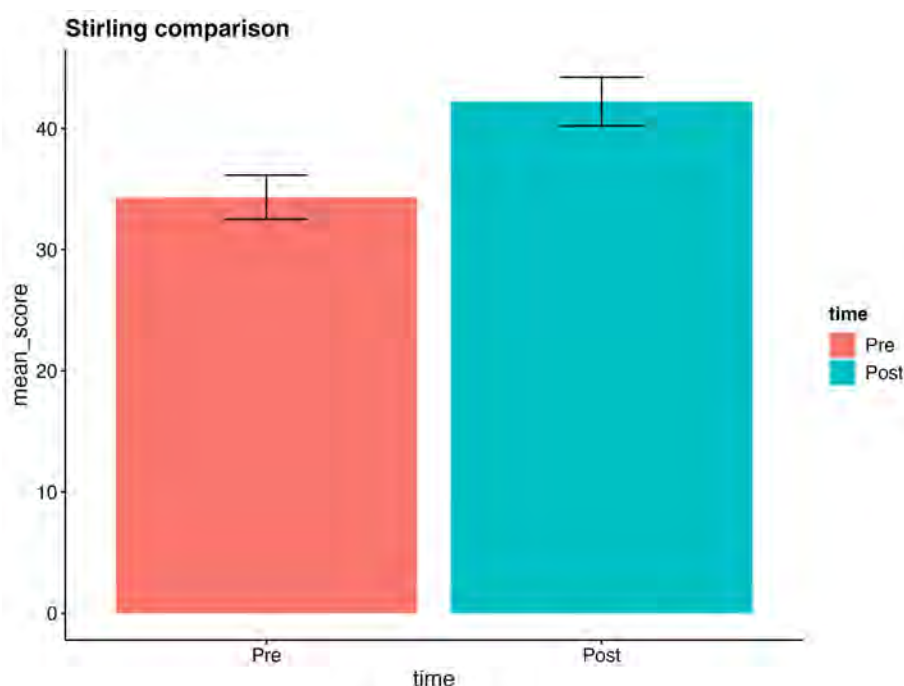


We use **recognised, validated outcome tools** to evidence improvements in mental wellbeing, resilience and coping. These include the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), the Carer Support Outcome Profile (CSOP), Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)-informed measures, and age-appropriate wellbeing and self-esteem tools for children and young people. These are complemented by personalised outcome action plans and qualitative service-user feedback.

Evaluation is embedded from initial assessment through to planned exit, enabling us to evidence progress over time and remain accountable to families, funders and partners.

We randomly sampled 18 closed cases for data analysis, using pre and post **Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale**. The data shows a clear improvement in emotional wellbeing for children and young people supported by ESCAPE. **Average scores increased from around 34 at the start of support to over 42 on completion, indicating a meaningful positive change over time.** This improvement suggests reduced emotional distress and increased wellbeing, confidence and coping among children and young people accessing ESCAPE's ACE-informed and therapeutic interventions.

The consistent upward shift in scores demonstrates the impact of trauma-informed, relationship-based support that combines one-to-one work with safe spaces for expression, understanding and positive experiences. These results reinforce the importance of early, specialist intervention for children living with the effects of parental substance use, helping them feel safer, more supported and more hopeful about the future



Voices of ESCAPE



Professional Feedback

"It was great to read that so many of your children and young people have started to experience progress or are already experiencing significant progress. Your case study really showed the importance of the children and young people getting the right support at the right time and highlighted the sensitivity which your organisation brings to working with children and young people. It was lovely to read that the family from the case study continued to thrive after they were discharged." -

Lyndsy Peacock, Impact Officer, BBC Children in Need



Young Person

"ESCAPE helped me feel safer and more hopeful about the future." **Young person, age 14**

Adult Carer

"CRAFT showed me how to set boundaries without guilt. That changed everything — for me and for my family." — **Adult carer**

Volunteer

"I never thought I had much to offer, but volunteering showed me I do." — **Volunteer**

Referrers

"ESCAPE provides consistent, trauma-informed support that families trust. Their whole-family approach makes a clear and lasting difference." — **Professional referrer**

"Referring families to ESCAPE gives confidence that they will receive compassionate, high-quality support. Communication is strong and outcomes are clear." — **Partner organisation**



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To those who made it possible

With our thanks - ESCAPE Family Support is grateful for the financial and in-kind support received during 2025/26 from the following organisations. Their contribution has helped us deliver vital services to families, carers, children and young people across Northumberland.



Northumberland
County Council



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Ponteland Town Council



Prudhoe
TOWN COUNCIL



**EAST
BEDLINGTON**
Parish Council



SIR JAMES KNOTT TRUST



BBC
**Children
in Need**



**Community
Foundation**

karbon
homes



**The Shears
Foundation**

**forv/s
mazars**



**The Percy Hedley
Foundation**

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Garfield Weston
FOUNDATION



THE RIDLEY FAMILY CHARITY

T H E
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T R U S T

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