



you do the MAFs[®]

WORKING OUT WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU.

This Impact Report has been based on a full evaluation of the new mutual aid facilitation programme called 'You do the MAFs'. This abbreviated and illustrated version has been produced to introduce the key findings of the evaluation to a wider audience. It will outline some the evidence behind the headline figures, promote knowledge of the programme, explain how the programme works and extend an invitation to those interested to get in touch or consider adopting similar approaches.

Full evaluation can be found at: www.phoenix-futures.org.uk

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DearAlbert

Out of the participants who were spoken to a month after the programme, 55% were completely abstinent and had been for at least the last month.

Saying goodbye to drink and drugs

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The research department at Phoenix Futures found 'You do the MAFs' is effective at promoting a range of abstinence based solutions and increasing mutual aid attendance. The comprehensive six month evaluation concluded that the programme had facilitated reduced substance misuse and continued abstinence. These positive outcomes are thought to be the result of combining an innovative mix of creative coaching approaches to inform and encourage service users to develop their social and support networks. This 'cleverly' designed programme ensured that service users not only learnt about mutual aid but also physically experienced it.

'You do the MAFs' provides clear education, orientated within a therapeutic framework, about different abstinence based themes, concepts and approaches such as (but not restricted to) twelve step and self-management and recovery training (SMART).

A range of specific techniques are contained within the six session (each 2.5 hours) syllabus of the programme:

- Empowers participants to make informed decisions about mutual aid by introducing the full choice of recovery methods and teachings
- Comprises exclusive use of the powerful new UK recovery documentary Dear Albert
- Integrates an attractive incentive scheme (contingency management)
- Delivered by those living a life in recovery themselves
- Creates a particularly safe, non-judgemental environment for participants to openly explore and talk about what they have gone through.
- Adopts 'group free mapping' to reflect participant involvement, amalgamated with 'recovery slogans' to create hand-outs to enhance learning and participation
- Invites and supports participants to attend accompanied mutual aid meetings
- Integrated graduation and feedback session



"[MAFs] it's a taste... SMART didn't work for me, the fellowship does. I didn't know which until trying both; MAFs shows you what they are".

'Whilst the benefits of attending mutual aid have been accepted, actually getting service users to buy into and actively attend these recovery community groups has remained problematic (Gossop et al., 2007; Humphreys, 1999, 2004). Researchers have suggested that clinicians use specific techniques to support and promote mutual aid in order to increase attendance and active involvement in such groups, for example using mutual aid 'taster' sessions and intensive peer referrals (Manning et al., 2012; Timko & DeBenedetti, 2007).

For some participants 'You do the MAFs' was their first experience of maintained abstinence in a long time, highlighting the positive impact the programme had on the service users in the group:

Others had been trapped in the 'revolving door of treatment' for years without ever having a refined and professionally focused intervention to tactfully sell the benefits of mutual aid engagement.



"From doing MAFs, it taught me to be more open minded about MA groups, because I'd got a particular mind-set about AA."

'You do the MAFs' and Dear Albert: saying goodbye to drink and drugs.

A photograph of two men sitting in chairs. The man on the left is wearing a dark suit and is speaking, gesturing with his hand. The man on the right is wearing a green sweater and glasses, listening attentively. The background shows a window with a decorative lattice pattern.

"15 years ago I rang Samaritans and they suggested I go AA. I couldn't get through the front door, was on my own... This time, I was very apprehensive, the fact I met someone on the way was really good. I actually did a share... I couldn't have done it without other people with me"

"I've been in detox 4 or 5 times before and its never worked... they always left me on my own... If I hadn't have had this to come to or the groups I would be back on the drink again".

'You do the MAFs' and Dear Albert: mutual aid, mutual benefits, mutual respect.

Throughout the programme long-term abstinence based recovery is made visible; illustrated and promoted as an achievable ideal. The programme facilitates access to local, regional and national recovery communities and a range of positive social networks. Controlled exposure led to linkage and subsequent positive involvement with these communities and networks. The programme builds recovery capital, wellbeing and citizenship, enhancing probabilities of long term abstinence and a better way of living.

84% of the cohort were attending Mutual Aid by the end of the programme.



'Recovery' is characterised by wellbeing, citizenship and freedom from dependence (Home Office, 2010). The notion of 'Recovery Capital' is now often referred to as a way to inform treatment needs and assess outcomes in relation to recovery from substance misuse. Granfield & Cloud (1999) defined recovery capital as "... the breadth and depth of internal and external resources that can be drawn upon to initiate and sustain recovery from AOD [alcohol and other drug] problems (Granfield & Cloud, 1999, 2001). Agencies are now looking to ways to improve individual recovery capital as a way to increase recovery from substance misuse. An increasingly popular pathway in recovery is the use of formal recovery communities, such as Mutual Aid (ACMD, 2013; DoH, 2007; NICE, 2011,2012,2013; NTA, 2012; PHE, 2013a,b).'



Part of the programme's success can be attributed to the comprehensive surround support delivered by Dear Albert:

Surround support (participant)

- Accompanied meets/transport to meetings provided/arranged
- Dear Albert's Recovery Hamper provided: NA/AA/self-help material and other helpful resources
- Trips to regional/national conferences/conventions arranged
- *Structured 1-2-1 counselling offered for those in need
- Latest apps for smart phones
- Extensive range of mutual aid literature
- Homework, 'Dear Albert letter'
- Unity days arranged
- Phone and text support
- Weekly readings 'Just for Today' and 'Daily Reflections'
- Introductions to recovery orientated social media.

Surround support (service)

- Participation suitable for staff and service users
- Attendance logs provide for each module
- Can be delivered on multiple sites
- Peer mentor placements/training
- Recovery practitioner liaison
- Use of Dear Albert signage and literature
- Trained, supervised facilitators
- Research and mapping
- Volunteer placements/training
- CORE10 and feedback forms provided
- University placements
- Staff training/ representation at staff meetings
- Referral support
- Implementation, supports services to illustrate how they build resilience in local communities.



"I think my feeling was that I would never attend AA or NA, but I have now started to attend them big time".

"I feel like it is a really valuable thing... knowing which one [mutual aid] is going to help you, through MAFS, is extremely important"

The programme is innovative in the way a choice of recovery methods and approaches are presented sat side by side; balancing information with guidance while empowering participants to make their own informed decisions.

The sessions creatively and actively promote meetings as a voluntarily attended and free local resource. Meetings are described as structured gatherings where emotional and informative support is provided by, and to, members of the group at any stage of recovery. A great emphasis is placed on the 'experiential' element of the mutual aid where each group member can offer support and advice to each other (Reissman, 1990).

'You do the MAFs' simply explains mutual aid as people coming together to share their experiences in order to help overcome addiction to drugs.'



"Wow... It was a wakeup call...it's been a long time since I done any courses, now I've been sober for 9 weeks, that never happened before"

"I probably would not have tried NA without MAFs, I was thinking NA was for people who used heroin, I didn't realise it was for addiction of any sort"

'Arranged meets organised through 'You do the MAFs' have been key in getting participants to attend mutual aid and have been vital in the development of meaningful relationships being forged with recovery networks. Comments from participants have shown that once they had got their foot through the door, their opinions on mutual aid changed and many were now attending mutual aid every week and really using this recovery community as a tool in managing their addiction'.

New learning techniques: the programme demystified fellowship teachings so that participants come to understand and appreciate approaches, and how they might be applied. Spending time to explore themes and concepts outside of a traditional 12 step arena, combined with an application of different modalities, facilitated a fresh perspective that promoted meaningful connectivity.

Example of a handout utilising free mapping combining recovery slogans with participant observations.

'The therapeutic value of one addict talking to another is without Parallel'



Working out what's best for you

The Essential 6 Core modules

1. Who are you and who are we? The story so far...

Warm introductions and programme orientation. This first module sets out the aims and objectives of the whole programme, including content, boundaries and expectations. Captures hopes and fears of participants. Brief production of groups norms. History of mutual aid. Cultural, social and economic perspectives of substance misuse. PowerPoint presentation and short burst lecture.

2. The Dis-ease Model, have you got it yet?

Is my body different to yours? In this module the dis-ease model is examined and discussed in detail with examples of 'symptoms' and 'signs' etc. Alcoholism/addiction understood as a threefold illness (emotional, physical, and spiritual). Mapping tools and discussion of the 3 elements. Alternative arguments presented and discussed. Importance of spiritual development, explore the path of the healing process.

3. Are You getting SMARTer?

'Mutual aid, mutual respect'. Full discussion on the different concepts including 'powerlessness' and 'empowerment' and some of the differences and similarities of the different mutual aid themes concepts. Inspirational guest speaker from SMART and Fellowships looking at main approaches. Look at developing core values to make better decisions.

4. Steps Sponsorship Service

'I can't, we can'. Get a commitment/get a programme. How to engage meaningfully with all mutual aid, fellowships, SMART and the importance of linking in with positive social networks. How being with others helps address the isolation and the self-centeredness of active addiction, how to deal with sobriety. Taking the responsibility and action to create a recovery programme that's right for you!

5. Recovery Narratives- we do recovery. UK documentary film Dear Albert

Three and a half years in the making, this feature length documentary (world premier at the International Film Festival in Calgary on September 19th 2014) captures the trials and tribulations of the recovery process and has become an integrated part of the programme; raising issues that are then critiqued. This session explores concepts and themes such as failure as a creative force, reinventing self, and the role of life stories as a tool that can start helping us to get well. Also covers the importance of engaging with group work and recovery as a process.

6. The end of the beginning: successful graduation and feedback.

The final model offers a review of the programme and consolidates the individual and collective learning of the whole group. Shared reading of 'Just the One' poem and recovery art work (Recovery Mountain). Presentations of the Dear Albert Recovery Hamper and invitation to all participants to offer feedback on the experiences of the course. Includes 'pledge' to continue on the path of recovery and builds further commitment and resilience to continue engaging with mutual aid and the importance of remaining active members of positive social networks.



Recovery Hamper

A gift from the exclusive Recovery Hamper provides a positive incentive for participants. This is awarded at the end of the programme to participants who have attended all 6 sessions and have attended at least one mutual aid group since starting the course. The gift bag contains a combination of selected official mutual aid and other self-help literature, recovery t-shirt, selection of soft drinks, inscribed designer pen and PE/ shoulder bag.

The Hamper firms up the assertive linkage approach practised by the programme and have proved an affective tool to help promote participation.

'It was really only because they [facilitators] were saying you have to sort of go, so I went along anyway, I was surprised I did enjoy it. I will definitely carry on going'



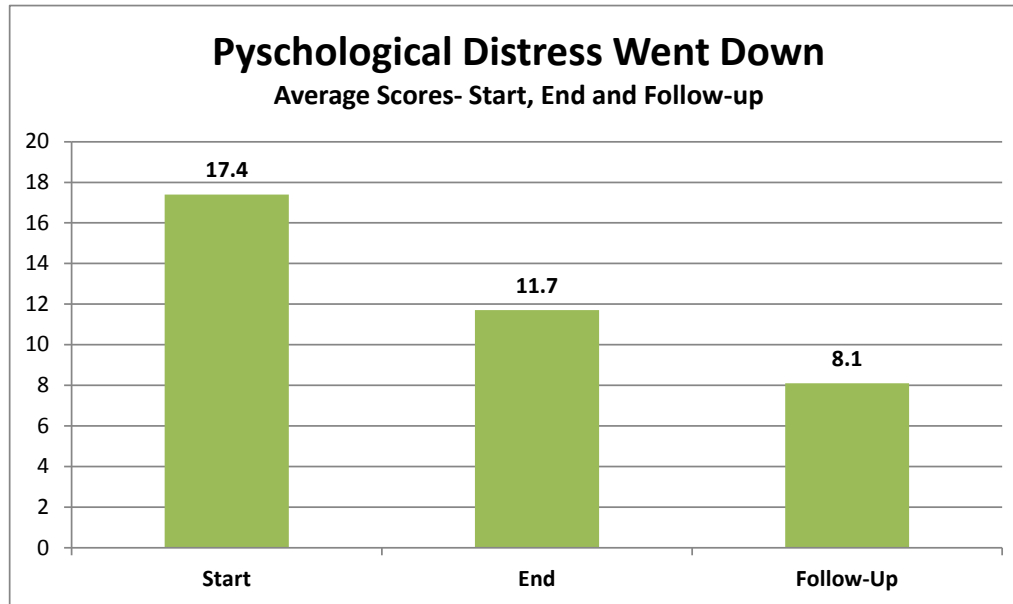
Lasting results: a particularly important finding of the evaluation illustrated the on-going benefits initiated by 'You do the MAFs' attendance.

The establishment of *on-going* mutual aid connectivity and *on-going* abstinence based recovery are the most striking findings of the evaluation and illustrate that 'You do the MAFs' and attendance at mutual aid goes some way to reduce substance misuse and support participants to pursue abstinence.



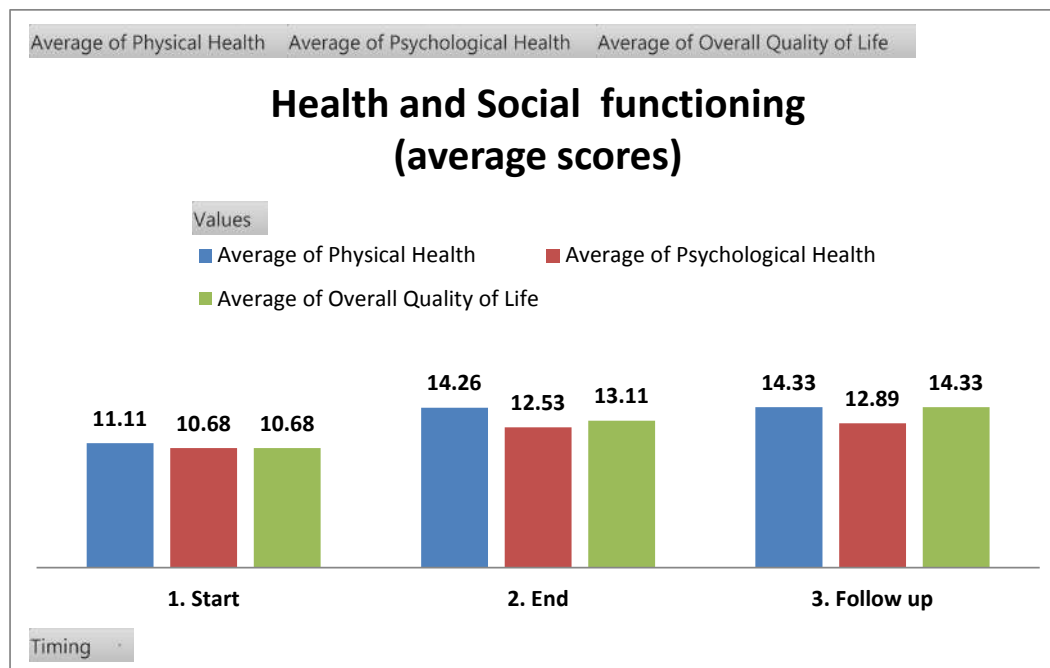
72% of the cohort had reduced their substance misuse by the end of the programme

You do the MAFs and Dear Albert: mutual aid, mutual benefits, mutual respect.



Graphs to show participant levels of psychological distress during and after the programme, as measured by the CORE-10 assessment.

Participants were recording much less psychological distress in their lives as they went through the programme. A significant finding was that their distress was still reducing a month after 'You do the MAFs' had finished.



Participants also reported significant increases in their health and social functioning during the 'You do the MAFs' programme. Again, improvements were continuing post programme.

These positive outcomes suggest that sustained attendance at mutual aid contributed to the significant improvements in psychosocial wellbeing.

Facilitators are made up of a small team of professional/ ex-service users and current service user volunteers/ peer supporters managed by Dear Albert. In addition, a placement was provided for a student on the foundation degree in drug and alcohol counselling and treatment run at the University of Leicester. The combination of lived substance misuse experience with professional facilitation and practitioner training provides a secure and knowledgeable base for this intervention. Participants gained support and guidance from the facilitators who, for some, had been in a similar position to them and who, for many, were still actively attending mutual aid groups.

'I got a positive outcome from it, it was very supportive and vitally, the people who were doing it had been through it themselves and could emphasise.'

*'It's only since doing MAFs that I've got into them {mutual aid}... John offered to take people to AA meetings that he was attending and 3 of us said we would go and 2 of us did go...that's brilliant support and the rest of the support came from the people themselves, R***** and W*****... I've made a lot of friends at that group; I see them at AA and SMART'*

'A clear message that emerged from the focus groups was that 'You do the MAFs' had kick started recovery for those who had attended the group and had attended the mutual aid groups as a consequence. The service users discussed having grown in self-confidence and developed their self-belief in their ability to beat their addiction. The support they received through 'You do the MAFs' and the continued support they found through the mutual aid groups had made a significant impact in their success in tackling their addiction and maintaining recovery from drink and drugs.'

The recovery consultancy ltd. trading as Dear Albert. Dear Albert is a social enterprise not affiliated with any particular mutual aid group or fellowship. We are specialist in meaningfully connecting our group participants with a range of recovery communities. Dear Albert is run by a voluntary board made up of people living a life in long term recovery.



Dear Albert



DearAlbert



Dear Albert would like to acknowledge the support provided by the Leicester Recovery Partnership and Phoenix Futures during the pilot and research study of 'You do the MAFs'. Special recognition is also extended to all the participants, thank you. Special thanks to Laura Aslan for her time and commitment.

Aslan, L., Parkman, T., Skagerlind, N. (2015). An evaluation of the mutual aid facilitation sessions pilot programme, 'You do the MAFS'. Manuscript submitted for publication. Important: please note evaluation did not include RCT (Randomised Controlled Trial) and was of modest sample size, therefore, the positive outcomes found may not all be attributable to the 'You do the MAFS' programme alone. Please see the full evaluation at: www.phoenix-futures.org.uk

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