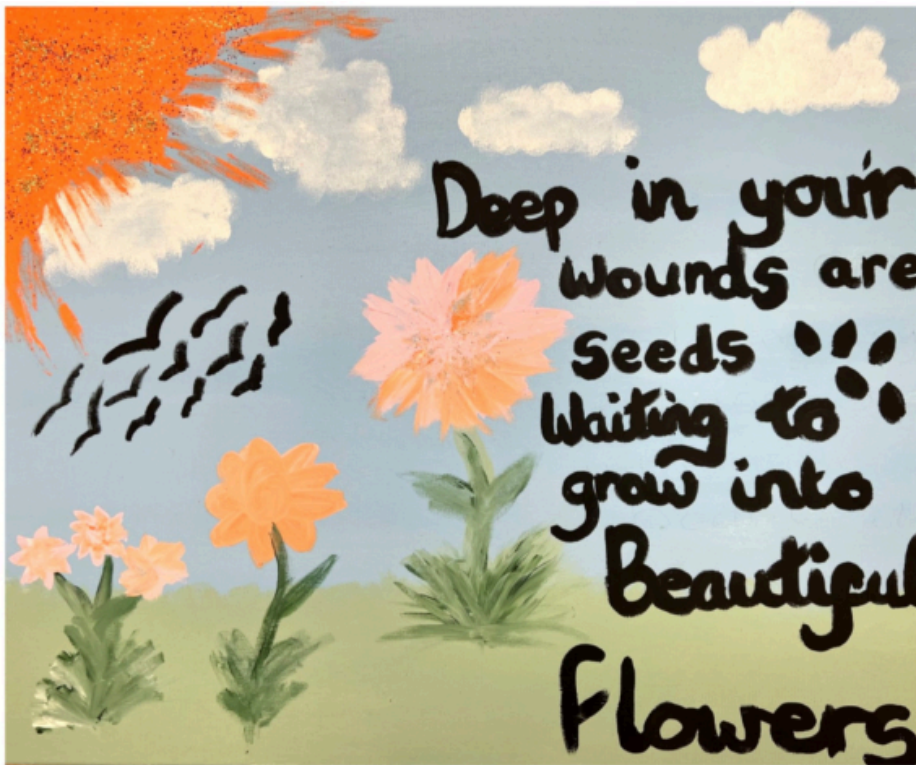


# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 – 2027



Artwork from a young person accessing ESCAPE Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) Programme

## OUR VISION

ESCAPE's focus for the future is on ensuring we continue to be a sustainable organisation capable of ensuring our unique service offer is available to those people who need it, when they need it

# Purpose

"At times I have been at breaking point, without ESCAPE I think I would have been totally broken"

FEMALE CARER, 42

**ESCAPE is the only specialist provision** for families, carers, adults, young people, and children of substance users throughout Northumberland. Founded in 1995 in Blyth by Janet Murphy MBE after her daughter died from drug poisoning. With nowhere to go for support ESCAPE was set up by carers for carers. ESCAPE exists to empower and improve their mental and physical health and well-being to reduce the impact of addictions, social and lifestyle pressures, and risky behaviours.

Over the past 29 years ESCAPE has continuously developed services that fill gaps in local provision and add value to commissioned services in Northumberland. We have demonstrable experience of working with this client group, exceeding targets and a proven track record of successfully collaborating with other organisations nationally, regionally, and locally. Our exemplar work has been recognised accordingly. **ESCAPE'S most recent accolades include winning Small Charity of the Year at the prestigious North East Charity Awards in October 2022.**

ESCAPE is a community led organisation whose service delivery responds to need by working together with statutory and voluntary sector agencies, examples: Health Inequalities Summit and Taskforce Group, Drug & Alcohol Steering Group, Carer partnership Board, Thriving Together, Blyth Better Together Partnership, Alnwick Town Youth Partnership. ESCAPE's delivery has the aspirations outlined in Government thinking: **"Recognised, Valued and Supported: next steps for the Carers Strategy"**. ESCAPE has built up partnership and referral arrangements with key stakeholders in Northumberland. Winning a Local Innovation Award in 2010 for our Strengthening Families partnership work with Northumberland County Council. ESCAPE's purpose fits with national and local strategies, and our trauma informed support services respond to known needs. **Locally we contribute to the:**

- **Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2018 – 2028)**

- \* Giving children the best start in life \* Tackling wider determinants \* Empowering people and communities \* Adopting a whole system approach to health and care

- **Northumberland's Commitment to Carers Strategy (2021-2023)**

- \* Supporting health and wellbeing of all carers living in Northumberland helping them to live a life outside of caring \* Actively promoting open and honest co-production of our services with carers

- \* Ensuring carers have a voice and are listened to

- **Northumberland's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy for Children and Young People (2022 – 25) Principles**

- \* Early identification and early prevention across all levels of work \* Raising awareness and increasing understanding of emotional wellbeing and mental health needs

- **Northumberland Inclusive Economy Community Partnership & the aims of the North of Tyne Combined Authority UKSPF Investment Plan**

- \* Enabling people to fulfil their potential by working to address issues at the earliest possible stage.

- \* Developing skills and confidence, better basic skills for work. \* Building capacity in communities, and increasing social action.

- **Northumberland Inequalities Plan 2022 - 2032**

- \* Looking at everything through an inequalities lens \* Community strengths are considered first.

- \* Enhancing our services to ensure equity in access to opportunity.

**Without ESCAPE there would be no specialist support at all in Northumberland for families affected by substance use.**

# Offering

**“Building a better tomorrow”** with ESCAPE’s trauma informed support service for families affected by addiction. ESCAPE’s value proposition:

- We are passionate about what we do & we strive for service excellence
- We work to address stigma. We recognise the important role that families and carers play in their loved one’s recovery journey.
- We recognise and promote the families and carers need for support in their own right.

We deliver 24/7 helpline, crisis support, advice, information, advocacy, 1-1 support, counselling, bereavement support, befriending, peer support, family therapy & support groups. We have demonstrable success delivering Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT), a behaviour modification programme for carers to help their resistant loved ones get into treatment.

We deliver Adult Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) and our pioneering Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Programme with children & Young People (YP) helps “break the cycle” of harms within the families we work with and increases protective factors through therapeutic intervention. Outcomes include empowerment, resilience, coping strategies, reduced isolation, improved mental health/wellbeing and family relationships. *External evaluation report evidenced that all YP completing ACEs programme reported improvements to mental health and wellbeing and self-esteem.* (Barefoot Research 2022).

We deliver Supporting Parents and Children Emotionally (SPACE) the programme introduces parents to some of the factors that might account for challenging behaviour in their children. This programme focuses on using a trauma-informed approach, to enable adults to support children and young people who may be going through difficult times. As an AIM registered training centre we deliver accredited training including: Level 1 Befriending, Level 2: Peer Mentoring, Support Skills, and Level 3. Supporting Families. **Enabling those with caring responsibilities to fulfil their educational and employment potential, in line with the Northumberland Carers Strategy 2013-2016.** Our training and activities ensure beneficiaries are better placed to secure employment and contribute to the local economy.

Family intervention work is tailored to individual need and care plans including, respite and recreational activities, information, advice and training on issues including hidden harm, alcohol and drug education, nutrition, health, home hygiene, budgeting and finance. Other support is around welfare and benefits rights, criminal justice system support, kinship care and parenting issues.

Our work has been recognised at a national level national with a Queens Award For Voluntary Service in 2005, a Tackling Drugs and Changing Lives Award in 2006, two Glaxo Smith Kline Impact Awards, for Excellence in delivery of Community Healthcare, which disseminated our work throughout the UK. **Our CEO, Janet Murphy was made an MBE in Her Majesty the Queens’ Birthday Honours list 2007.** ESCAPE has held the Platinum Investor in People Standard since March 2022, the highest accolade that can be achieved against the Standard and is currently held by only 1% of IIP accredited organisations.

**“ ESCAPE have been invaluable support for a number of our higher need students at Bede. Everyday we see the consequences of ACEs for too many of the students we teach. Their access to learning and therefore their future life chances are significantly impacted by both past and on-going harms in their home lives. Schools require access to expertise in these areas to enable and promote the well-being, learning and opportunities for these students”.**

CAROLINE PARK - ASSISTANT HEAD OF STUDENT WELFARE, BEDE ACADEMY, BLYTH

# Beneficiaries

The lives of families we support are ravaged by drug or alcohol misuse. Parents, grandparents, partners, siblings, children, and kinship carers suffer multiple factors of disadvantage and deprivation, particularly health, social and economic inequality as well as damaged relationships/chaotic lifestyles and characterised by social determinants of inequalities including children taken into care, domestic violence, family breakdown, truancy, poor educational attainment, crime, antisocial behaviour, unemployment, trauma, mental health issues etc. Families suffer from negative attitudes, stigmatisation and prejudice within society that impacts on their daily lives, on community cohesion resulting in social isolation and financial hardship.

Our interventions and support focus on improving beneficiaries' life experiences and life chances through directly addressing the inequalities they suffer, including:

\* Confidence/self-esteem building \* Pathways to employment \* Up skilling, qualifications, experience \* Volunteering \* Well-being focus \* Empowerment \* Building resilience \* Social interaction, connectivity \* Hope, aspiration \* Community capacity building

Our beneficiaries find us in a number of ways, self-referral, word of mouth, walk-ins, family members, Facebook, Internet/ Website/Google, ESCAPE 24/7 Helpline, FRANK, Frontline platform, Northumberland Adult Services & Children's Services: Early Help, Social Workers, Family Hubs, Schools: Nurse/Welfare Officers, Crisis Team, GPs, Pharmacists, Social Prescribers, Colleges, NSECH Hospital (Specialist Alcohol), commissioned Recovery Services, Sorted!, Police, Carers Northumberland, Citizens Advice Bureau as well as voluntary community organisations across the county.

We involve our beneficiaries in shaping service provision, through our annual carer survey, service user questionnaires, Annual Away Planning Day and community activities. Family Champions our 'experts by experience' are a valuable asset. These people support us because they want to give something back and help others achieve positive change and in doing so they are able to provide us with community insight and beneficiary feedback.

We can therefore create value for each beneficiary through our tailored, person-centred, and holistic approaches. Our "Think Family" approach allows us to reduce and alleviate the negative effects substance misuse has, not only on individuals but also their families, carers, children/young people within the family setting, friends and communities. Our services build on the strengths of families, increasing their resilience and aspirations and the trauma-informed support packages we provide meet recognised need, so that families with complex needs receive intensive and appropriate support.

**"Children have seen their dad be violent to me and began to copy this behaviour .... ESCAPE taught me how to talk to my children when they are getting aggressive through modelling behaviour"**

**"It is so important to have somewhere like ESCAPE where people can come in, find there is support, they are not alone & they can, with help, learn ways to cope living with addiction."**

**"I have been isolated and excluded from family and friends who don't understand. I have even been accused of bad parenting. Lots of stigma."**



# Success

In order to ensure ESCAPE continues to be sustainable, we asked our staff, trustees and beneficiaries this question: **“If Escape is successful, what will it look like in 2027.”** The group described that vision in four broad areas:

## **ESCAPE will continue to deliver high quality services. There would be a wider range of services that would meet the needs of the people and communities we serve.**

\* High-quality evidence-based services - adopting and developing best practice. \*Developing skills and knowledge of practitioners/policymakers in partner organisations to increase understanding of addiction and our services. \*Our services will be marketed to a wider range of funders (for example mental health) \*We will be providing a one-stop shop for people in need, providing holistic services on a continuum of care.

## **ESCAPE will be financially secure.**

\* Statutory funding would be secured to deliver core services. \*Increase in community fundraising to enable us to do more. \*We would continue to operate efficiently with good cost control. \*We would achieve appropriate funding from a range of organisations.

## **ESCAPE will be structured to build sustainability.**

\* There would be a salaried CEO position. \*There would be more staff to deliver a wider range of services. \*ESCAPE would be a force for change and influential in the region. \*Retain IIP platinum and gain further awards. \*Have a strong Board of Trustees that met our succession plans.

## **There will be greater awareness of ESCAPE in the region.**

\* Escape would be widely recognised for its key services. \*We would be known beyond recovery – other professionals/statutory therapies. \*We would have achieved patronage. \*ESCAPE would have a higher profile with our key stakeholders.

The key success indicators are achieving financial security and organisational sustainability, without these **ESCAPE will not exist**. We will therefore make robust business cases to key statutory stakeholders, who do not currently contribute financially to the services we provide. Those partner agencies who refer to us for our specialist knowledge and trauma informed interventions. We know they do so because of the quality of the service we provide and the contribution we make to their individuals aims, goals and targets. We will empower our staff to deliver the agreed high priorities and regular performance reports will be scrutinised by our board. For Statutory Agencies who do fund us we will renegotiate contracts based on previous performance and over achievement of targets.

We cannot rely on charitable funding as this is increasingly difficult to secure and cannot be relied on to support contracted work. **Mission critical** for the charity is planning for the retirement of the voluntary CEO both in terms of securing funding for the CEO post and identifying a successor. This would ensure future sustainability and continuity of services in Northumberland.

**“The organisation provides an extremely valuable role in the social welfare of this vulnerable group in Northumberland, and they save local authorities, principally health and social care agencies from such costs as preventing children entering foster or residential care or reducing usage of emergency services. Other agencies benefit also including criminal justice agencies as better relationships within families translate into less substance misuse”.**

# Where the birds with broken wings go

It began with a heart broken & nowhere to turn.  
Now there's a place of comfort,  
where we can all come to learn.

Opening the door, that we couldn't find,  
helping hands reaching backwards to those struggling behind.  
Isolated, fearful, worn out and low.  
Yet a look was all it took, to feel yes, they know.

No judgements, no stigma,  
they know how we feel.  
Trying to cope with impossible lifestyles,  
that for us became too real.

Where the birds with broken wings go, looking for a way,  
to understand what is needed,  
to get us through another day.

“Birds with broken wings often try to help each other to fly”

**A Carer's Poem about ESCAPE Family Support by Margaret Walker.  
2022 winner of ADFAMs Family Voices Competition.**



**Artwork by a beneficiary for Carers week 2020**

## **ESCAPE Family Support**

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**[www.escapefamilysupport.org.uk](http://www.escapefamilysupport.org.uk)**