



Annual Review

2021-2022



Foreword from the Chair

This year Elmore has supported more than 1,000 people in Oxfordshire for the first time ever, and we have been commissioned for the first time to provide services in Buckinghamshire and Berkshire. In line with our new strategy, we will become a Thames Valley service provider.

This year has involved a significant focus by the Board on strategic issues such as managing Elmore's finances to be sustainable, tackling the significant demand for our services, introducing a Quality Framework to enhance service delivery, developing our equality, diversity, and inclusion work, and updating a wide range of policies.

Elmore continues to support clients by providing services, working alongside them to shape Elmore itself, and campaign on the issues that matter to them. Elmore has trained workers in the storytelling methodology and invested in data analysis, so that we publish more reports which shine a light on who we support, the needs people have, our interventions, and why Elmore's model works. Integral to our reports has been a mix of stories, case studies, and data analysis which shows that we save the public purse significant sums of money by providing our services in our own particular way. In line with the aims of the Board, Elmore is demonstrating its cost-effectiveness as well as its impact on people.

The Board has a strong set of skills and experiences, including senior operational management, medical and psychology clinicians, commissioning, domestic abuse service delivery, research into violence against women and girls, high intensity need, mental health and complex needs support, and quality assurance. We are adding Trustees to the Board and invite people who wish to support Elmore to apply via our website.

The Board of Trustees is a proud partner of the staff team at Elmore, and we are delighted by the work of our case working and management teams. Elmore is filling gaps that otherwise would not have been filled. Our team is supporting people excellently, and on behalf of the Board of Trustees, I want to commend the work they have done in this annual review.



Jack Lyons-Wainwright
Chair of the Board of Trustees



Foreword from the CEO

This year has been another big year for Elmore, and it's involved a lot of change.

We set a new strategy called 'Holding the Hope' which set out our shared values as a team, our mission and vision as a charity, and our plan for achieving our goals.

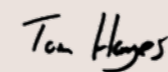
Elmore has continued to deliver long-standing services such as our tenancy sustainment service, set up new services such as Rise & Shine, and consolidate recently established services such as our Family Solutions Plus domestic abuse and mental health services.

We have continued to work in traditional ways, based in the community, and embed workers within multi-partner teams, for example with our FSP services and the embedding of complex needs workers in an Oxford homeless hostel. We have continued to emerge from COVID-19 and the working challenges thrown up by lockdowns and social distancing, embracing a new mix of home, community-based, and embedded care for clients.

We have worked within partnerships that we helped to found years ago, such as Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership, helped to strengthen newer partnerships such as Family Solutions Plus, and immerse existing services into exciting new partnerships such as New Beginnings for Adult Survivors of CSE entering the new Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance.

With the pandemic retreating into the background and the cost-of-living crisis rising in the foreground, Elmore's case working team has been supporting clients and each other through some of the most challenging times we'll know. In short, the whole team is exceptional, and I am very proud to be their Chief Executive. I know the team will continue to do everything within their means to support more people as they experience more difficulties.

Elmore was established to fill the gaps, so that people don't fall through them. The gaps are widening like never before and our team can and will continue to do its best to hold people. However, we will need your support and the support of others to do all we can. If you think you can help Elmore, please do get in touch via our website, newly launched this year.



Tom Hayes
Chief Executive Officer



The Elmore Difference

Our vision

Everyone is treated with dignity and humanity and feels able to look to the future with hope. Society meets the human needs we all share and becomes stronger as a result.

Services are sufficiently funded to flexibly engage and support people with complex needs, mental ill health, a lack of shelter, and trauma because of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and exploitation. Nobody feels pushed to the brink by the pressures in their lives.

Our mission

To hold the hope for people, supporting and standing alongside them, so that they know they aren't on their own and feel empowered to look to the future.

To provide clients with the tools and support they need to achieve their potential and facilitate other services to support people and close the gaps that they might fall through.

To help eliminate exploitation and increase understanding about people's needs and hopes.

Our values

The Charity is viewed by the team as skilled and unique. The sense of team is a distinctive feature of Elmore. So, too, is the feeling among frontline caseworkers and managers that they live their values through their service to Elmore and make a difference to lives.

Bespoke

We respond with creativity and flexibility to people's needs and circumstances and support them to achieve the things that matter to them (not what others may want them to achieve). Elmore provides the right support—no matter how big the challenge or how small our control and influence.

Non-judgemental

We never judge people because we believe in treating everyone with dignity and humanity and encourage others to do the same.

Tenacious

We won't give up on people and support clients to expand their options, opportunities, and choices. We always raise issues that may be uncomfortable through a problem-solving approach.

Integrity

We are honest with ourselves and those we work alongside and form authentic relationships as a result. Elmore is a trusted service provider, partner, and respected relationship builder with other agencies to ensure people get the right support when they need it.

Empowering

We think outside the box to support people to increase their sense of control over all areas of their lives. We find new ways to help people to increase their sense of self-determination and hold the hope until they can feel hopeful about their own future.

Our values were agreed this year in our new strategy for 2022-2025 called 'Holding the Hope'.

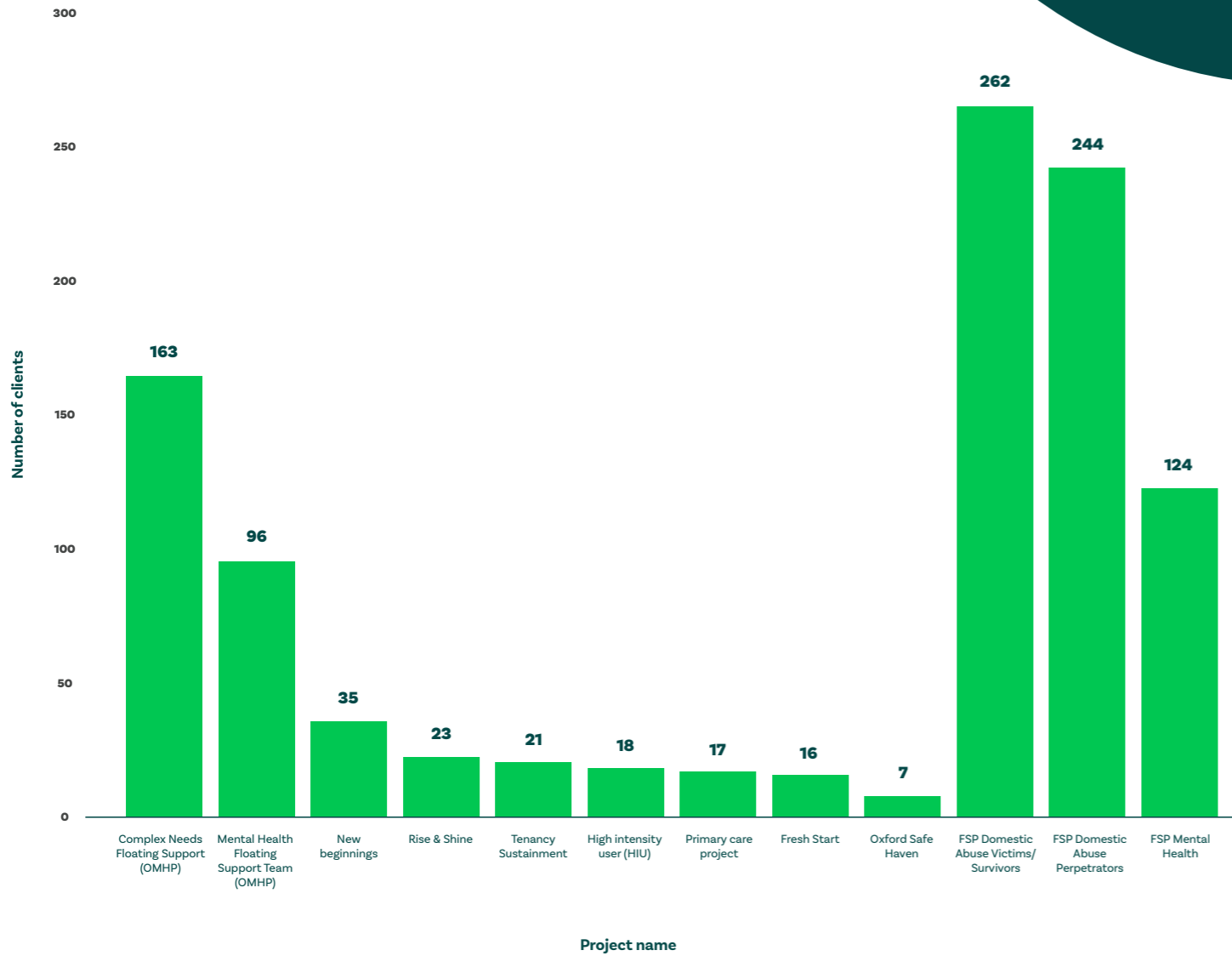
Holding the Hope



A year in charts

1,026

Total number of clients supported or intervention requested



Total number of clients supported or intervention requested

How does Elmore work?

Elmore has a flexible approach that seeks to engage people with multiple support needs who may slip through the net of services to make a positive impact on their lives. We seek to address the reasons why people may not fit easily into services and can be hard to engage.

Initial approaches by caseworkers may be rejected, but the worker will persevere, trying out different tactics to engage and build up trust, possibly for the first time, in an agency. This build-up of trust helps people who will be some of the most complex in Oxfordshire to achieve positive outcomes.

Elmore persistently makes all potential avenues for treatment and support open and accessible to people. It is routinely our role to make sense of the range of agencies that might be able to offer a relevant service, and to support people to access them.

Some of our services belong to our **floating support** team, whose clients benefit from longer-term interactions. This will be different to our new **brief interventions** team which have been developed around a model that relies on short interventions.

In our floating support team, work can sometimes go at a slower pace and our impact will be a 'slower-burn'.

Elmore is an accredited Oxford Living Wage and Real Living Wage employer





Artwork by an Elmore service user

Floating Support Services

163

Total number of clients supported or intervention requested in 2021/22

Some of our services belong to our floating support team, whose clients benefit from longer-term interactions. We seek to address the reasons why people may not fit easily into services and can be hard to engage.

Initial approaches by caseworkers may be rejected, but the worker will persevere, trying out different tactics to engage and build up trust, possibly for the first time, in an agency. This build-up of trust helps people who will be some of the most complex in Oxfordshire to achieve positive outcomes. In our floating support team, work can sometimes go at a slower pace and our impact will be a 'slower-burn'.

In **2021-22** Elmore's floating support team has included the following projects:

- We support people with complex needs who do not fit easily into other services to stabilise their lives and access services. Funded through the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership, we provide practical support, link people up to services, and emotional support—helping people to gain self-confidence and independence. This year the services supported 259 people.
- Tenancy Sustainment to ensure people can hold onto a home. We have worked alongside 21 vulnerable Oxford City Council residents to keep tenancies by supporting their mental health and giving advice and help with practical matters such as applying for (and staying on) social security entitlements.
- Elmore's Primary Care support, linking 17 people this year to support for social, emotional, and practical needs. In partnership with Oxfordshire Mind, Elmore's workers assist GPs and other primary care professionals.
- Elmore's New Beginnings service has supported 35 people who have experienced childhood sexual exploitation to get practical and emotional support to move on with their lives. We support survivors who often experience difficulties with mental health and relationships, substance and alcohol misuse, and poorer physical health. The severity of the experiences mean survivors often cannot access specialist help elsewhere. This year the service has been positively independently evaluated and we have published podcast conversations with our evaluator.
- Funded by Oxfordshire County Council, Elmore has embedded caseworkers in an Oxford-based homelessness hostel to provide intense face-face complex needs case working support to our partner Homeless Oxfordshire. This year we have supported 16 people with the Fresh Start project.

Brief Interventions Services

Some of our services belong to our brief interventions team which have been developed around a model that relies on short interventions.

In 2021-22 Elmore's Brief Interventions team included the following projects:

- Family Solutions Plus is made up of teams of Social Workers, Children's Practitioners, and substance misuse and Elmore adult mental health and domestic abuse workers to support children and families.
- Elmore delivers the mental health service alongside Connection Support and Oxfordshire Mind. In 2021-22 we supported 124 people.
- Elmore provides ten domestic abuse workers to work alongside perpetrators and victims/survivors of domestic abuse, in individual and group settings. In 2021-22 we supported 506 people (244 perpetrators and 262 victims/survivors).
- Elmore provides individualised approaches to ensure people who present frequently and/or problematically to urgent and emergency care services receive coordinated and consistent care and support. We have supported 18 people through our High Intensity User (HIU) Project in 2021-22.
- Oxford Safe Haven (OSH) offers out-of-hours support for adults experiencing mental health crisis, and Elmore is supporting its extension to become 7-days a week. Elmore has worked with Oxfordshire Mind to support 7 people referred to our community-based support.
- Funded by Oxfordshire County Council, Elmore and Connection Support has worked with 23 people with common mental health problems to access community-based support - through the Rise & Shine project.

Personality Disorder Services

Some of our services belong to our newly created personality disorder team. This is made up of the following projects which were being developed in early 2022:

Elmore's Structured Psychological Support (SPS) service is for adults living in Oxfordshire who have severe interpersonal problems and poor coping skills, provided through the Community Mental Health Framework (CMHF). The CMHF is a new way of working that will improve mental health services, so that GPs, mental health teams, and other support organisations in the community work better together.

Elmore's Assistant Team Therapists (ATTs) are working alongside the NHS Complex Needs Service to help reduce waiting times and co-deliver therapeutic groups.



Elmore's Partners and Commissioners

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|  | Complex Needs Floating Support in the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership (OMHP) |  | Publishing a ground-breaking report into the nature and extent of modern slavery in Oxford |
|  | Mental Health Floating Support in the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership (OMHP) |  | Supporting Oxford Safe Haven (OSH) |
|  | New Beginnings in the Oxfordshire Homeless Alliance |  | Supporting homeless people with complex needs |
|  | Tenancy Sustainment |  | Preventing homelessness |
|  | Working alongside clients to tell their stories |  | Rise & Shine |
|  | High Intensity User (HIU) Project |  | Community Mental Health Framework PD Services and Assistant Team Therapists in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire |
|  | Recruiting Trustees with lived experience of mental ill health and homelessness |  | Oxfordshire Anti-Slavery Network |

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Modern Slavery Research

Slavery is a crime which harms the very vulnerable. It doesn't just belong to a distant past or a faraway country, it's happening to vulnerable people right here, right now.

Elmore is working to support victims and survivors, help bring abusers to justice, and eliminate slavery.

Elmore is a co-chair of the Oxfordshire Anti-Slavery Network, representing the third-sector in our partnership. We also work alongside other services to support victims of modern slavery.

How Elmore is tackling slavery

Official figures for the number of slavery victims may be the tip of the iceberg. Ground-breaking research by Elmore, commissioned by Oxford City Council, has discovered a considerably higher number of victims than the number of police cases recorded.

To help more people learn about modern slavery, Elmore has hosted podcast conversations about modern slavery, including with our researcher and the then-Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner for the UK.

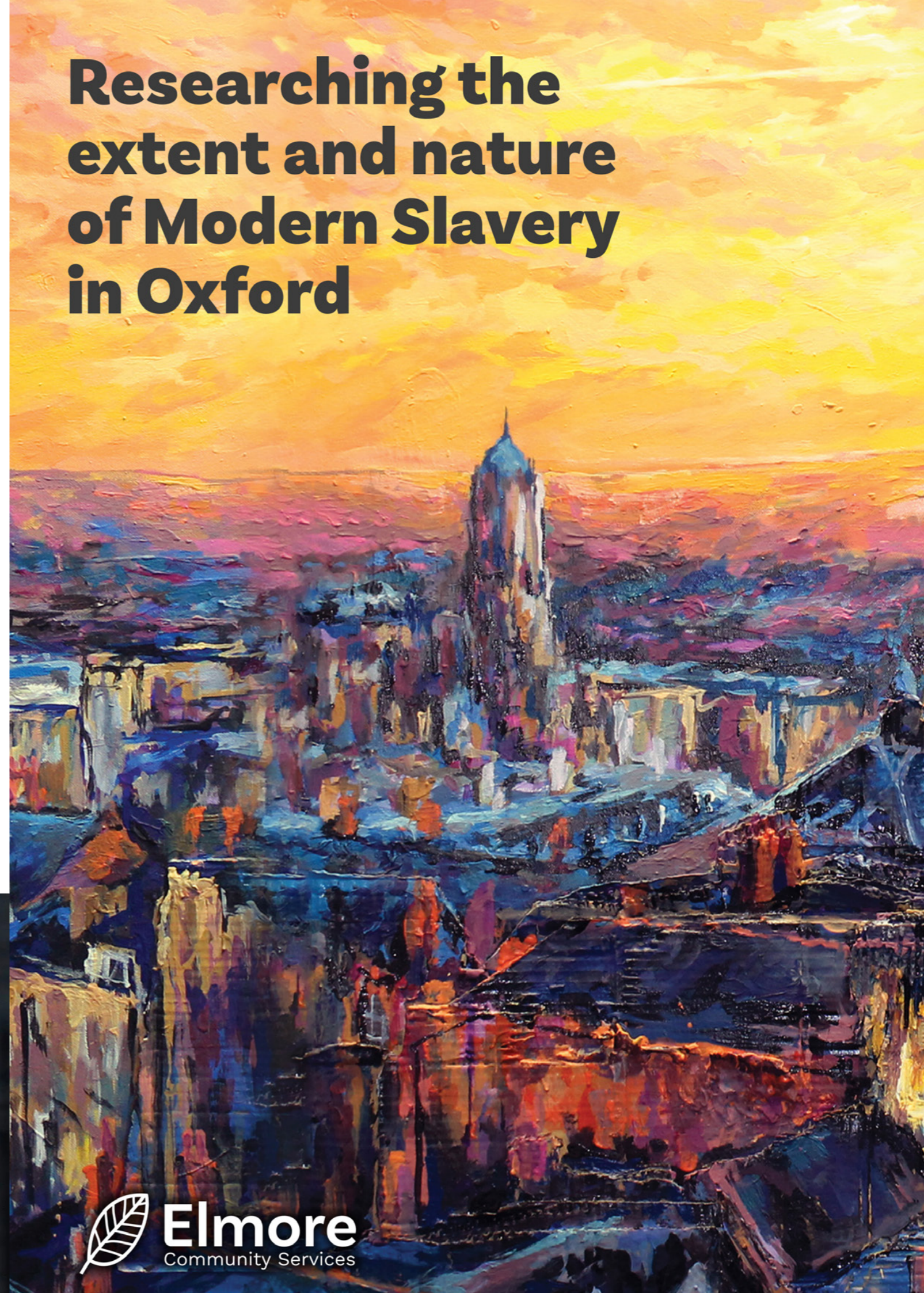
Responding to a recommendation in the Elmore research, we have published a multi-lingual explainer about how to identify and refer potential victims and booklets with useful knowledge about Albanian and Vietnamese populations, replicated from booklets by the West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network.

All of Elmore's work builds on our innovation of an Independent Trauma Advisory service for victims of modern slavery, which has been positively independently evaluated.

Former Prime Minister Theresa May MP spoke at the modern slavery summit co-hosted by Elmore and praised our report



Researching the extent and nature of Modern Slavery in Oxford



Podcasts



Podcasts are hugely popular and a great way to open up discussions.

Elmore is looking for new ways to stay in touch with our supporters and keep our partners in the know about our latest news. We have produced and published on our website a series of podcasts about the issues facing our clients and the services that we deliver. Our podcasts feature experts from inside Elmore and our networks.



Sarah Everard's death provides a teachable moment for men to be actively involved in new conversations to end misogyny. In response Elmore established a podcast to raise awareness about how men can think about their involvement in ending misogyny and violence against women.

With the podcast's encouragement to 'pass it on' to other men, **Flipping The Narrative** shows men that they can help each other to sit up, start conversations, and support each other and women.

The series has the following episodes, each one covering a key theme:

<p>1 What it means to be a male</p> <p>Hear from Josh and Conroy about what they see as masculinity and how emotions get processed</p>	<p>2 Being a father</p> <p>Sam became a father at 19 and now has 4 boys. He talks about his experience of fatherhood</p>	<p>3 Misogyny in uniformed services</p> <p>Rod had been a senior police officer in the Met for many years and discusses the culture within the force which allows misogyny to exist</p>	<p>4 Does porn ruin or enhance relationships?</p> <p>Abi and Dan discuss the influence of porn on how sex and relationships develop</p>	<p>5 The role of masculinity in offending</p> <p>Dom talks about some of the reasons men commit crimes and the role socialisation has in this.</p>	<p>6 Addiction and Recovery</p> <p>Looks at how addiction can start, the impact on somebody's life, the process of recovery, and what life without addiction looks like.</p>
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Co-hosted by former Hollyoaks actor Luke Jerdy and the Domestic Abuse Lead for Oxford City Council and Elmore Trustee Liz Jones, 'Flipping the Narrative' was accompanied by a spoken word performance by Luke about ending misogyny and violence against women and girls across the UK. The series has been funded by Oxford Safer Communities Partnership and Elmore Community Services and produced by Sound Rebel UK.



“Empower & Enable” has three episodes produced for and by Oxfordshire’s minoritised communities focusing on mental health, accessing domestic abuse and sexual violence support, and power and gender socialisation. Each episode has an English- and Urdu-language transcription accompanying it. The conversations seek to build knowledge and awareness within communities and strengthen people’s confidence to speak about key issues.

They aim to support local and national professionals to develop their practice by better understanding how nuanced cultural factors impact upon people’s experiences and create barriers for those who may need to seek help and advice. The series has been developed by Elmore in partnership with Oxford Against Cutting and Oxford Safer Communities Partnership, and funded by the Police Property Act Fund, which is jointly managed by the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable in the Thames Valley.

Educating the Social Workers of the Future

Social workers strive to improve the lives of people in society. They listen to people's needs and help them to be independent and improve their quality of life.

Completing a placement is an essential part of the qualifying framework for social workers and Elmore Community Services has a long history of offering placement opportunities to social work students, going back many years.

The skills that social workers develop and strengthen during their placement with Elmore include how to communicate, problem-solving, empathy, teamwork, and how to make a positive impact in society.

We are proud of our contribution to the development of the next generation of social workers and excited to be developing yet more in the future.

The vast majority of students who have completed placements with us have been enrolled on Social Work degree courses, either undergraduate or postgraduate. We have supported students who have needed to complete a 70 or 100 day placement to qualify.



In their own words, social work graduates who have been on placement at Elmore say the benefits of working at Elmore are as follows:

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“I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to complete my final placement at Elmore Community Services; the charity's reputation is well-known in the services I have worked in, and I had always hoped that I would be able to work within the Elmore Team at some point in my career.

This placement provided me with many opportunities to develop my practice by working with diverse services and service users. In particular, my attitude and approach towards risk assessment and management has changed drastically.

However, I believe the most significant learning for me has been around self-esteem, wellness, and team-working. I have experienced significant difficulties in my personal life since the start of my final year of this degree, and I'm not sure I would have coped had I not worked in such a supportive team. This has taught me that self-care and wellness is more than a tokenistic notion encouraged by organisations in order to preserve its workforce by placing responsibility of maintaining resilience on the individual without providing the resources to do so. Instead, ensuring the wellbeing of a workforce is an essential, and arguably non-negotiable, part of the culture within organisations, in particular within those that support vulnerable groups.

This learning has been so valuable and impactful that I applied for a role within Elmore Community Services and am delighted to be joining the Domestic Abuse team this summer and remaining within Elmore. I'm incredibly grateful for what has not only been an informative and educational placement, but an inspirational and nurturing experience.”

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Service User Involvement

Co-production means working together as equals and making best use of our resources and strengths to find ways of doing things that benefit our community.

Co-production can improve the way Elmore's services are designed and delivered by putting an emphasis on a more equal partnership between professionals and people using those services. Working together as equals builds better relationships (based on trust, respect and understanding) and helps to create services that actually work for the people using them.

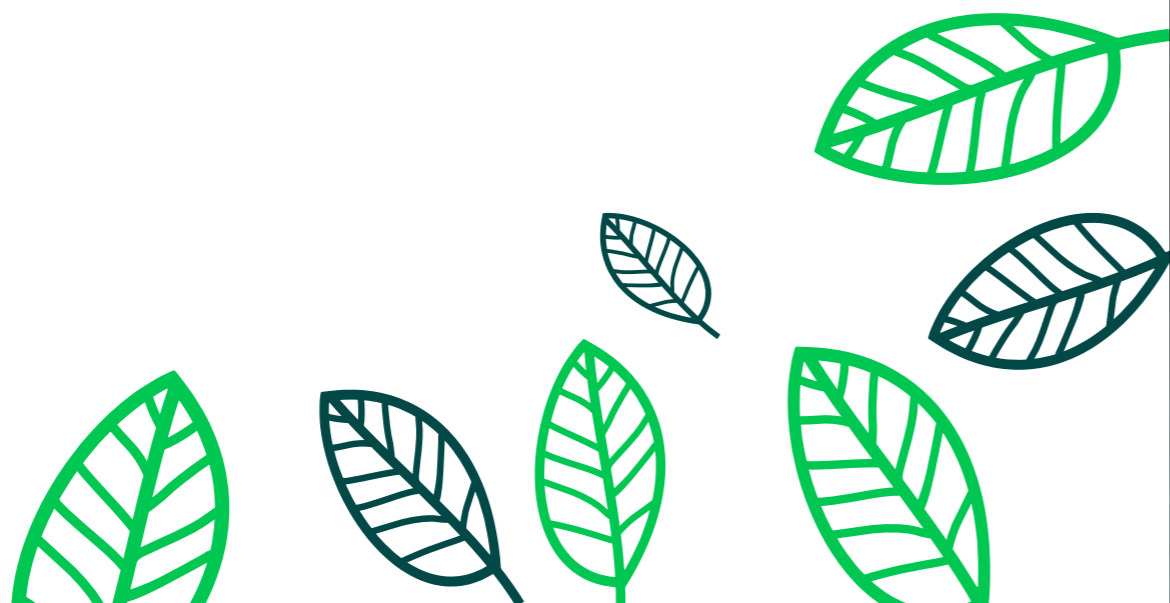
Formed in 2014 by staff and past and present service users, the Elmore Members Association is a group of people committed to doing co-production or working together.

We believe that if we work together, we can make services better and more sustainable, and communities stronger and healthier. The aims of the group are to increase the members' control over their own care and to produce positive change. We have found that the group has enhanced the skills and increased the confidence of participants - it is now chaired by members and has been identified as a consistent and welcoming space.

In its current form, during the pandemic the Association has been meeting monthly and moved online. Members are paid the Oxford Living Wage for attending.

The first hour of the meeting addresses business related to Elmore Community Services (and, more broadly, the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership) including updates and service issues. In 2021-22, this has included giving feedback about our new Strategy, our new website, and new policies and procedures.

The second hour of the meeting is used for education, training and information sharing. In 2021-22, this has included sessions on climate change, wellbeing, and coping with the challenges of the pandemic.



Fundraising

Right now, our work is more important than ever, and we cannot provide support, advice, and information without your fundraising.

We make every penny count. For every pound Elmore spends, 91p goes directly towards improving the lives of people. Just 9p in every £1 we spend is used to keep Elmore alive, meeting our running costs.

Whether you put on a bake sale, bicycle ride, quiz night or head shave, whatever you choose to do, you'll be joining a team making a difference to people's lives.

If you would like to download our fundraising pack, [please visit our website](#).

Whether you're looking for ideas, top tips, or materials such as template posters and flyers, we have got everything you need to easily organise fundraising, keep it fun, and make it a success.

If you've got questions or need advice, we are just a call away on [01865 200 130](tel:01865200130) and can be emailed at info@elmorecommunityservices.org.uk.

If you're posting about your fundraising on Facebook or Twitter, please do tag [@ElmoreCommunity](#)

We can't wait to see what brilliant things you do and will share your posts with our followers!



A Year in Images

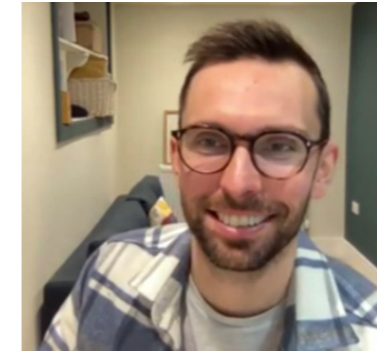
April

Elmore continues to respond to the pandemic, having delivered food parcels to roughly 30% of our clients and supported people and families to stay at home in line with Government guidance by providing jigsaws, books, and other entertainment.



May

Elmore caseworkers receive storytelling training.



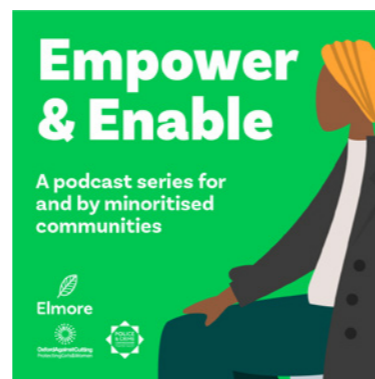
June

Elmore's caseworkers meet with Anneliese Dodds MP.



July

Elmore marks two years as a Living Wage employer.



August

Elmore launches its new website, including staff and service user feedback.



September

Elmore joins the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance. Elmore launches its podcast series 'Empower & Enable' with Oxford Against Cutting.



October

Elmore published its positive independent evaluation of the New Beginning service for adult survivors of childhood sexual exploitation.



November

Rise & Shine service launched by Elmore and Connection Support.

December

A podcast conversation about Elmore's New Beginnings service is launched, including discussions with the evaluators of the service.

Oxfordshire Discovery College leaves Elmore to become a fully-fledged independent charity after two years of sponsorship.

Elmore raises concerns about the national cut in Universal Credit payments for clients.



January

Elmore launches its new Strategy for 2022-2025, 'Holding the Hope'.

Elmore's domestic abuse managers and CEO meet with Josh MacAlister, the Chair of the Independent Review of Social Care.

Elmore and Oxfordshire County Council present to Frontline's national ExChange 2022 conference about the work of our Frontline placements in our domestic abuse service.

February

Elmore publishes ground-breaking research into the nature and extent of modern slavery and hosts podcast conversation with a researcher and the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

March

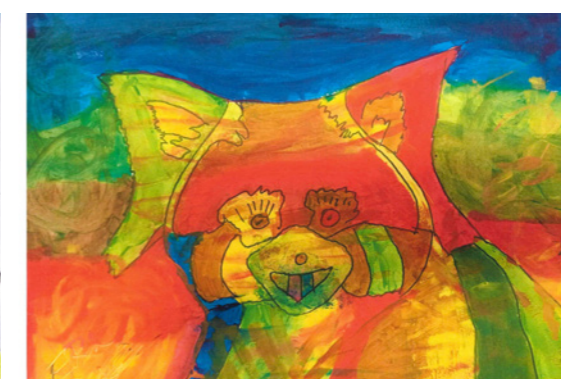
Elmore co-hosts a Modern Slavery Summit involving the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and shares its research with the Oxfordshire Anti-Slavery Network.

Elmore publishes research which shows that, over the last five years, our mental health and complex needs floating support services have saved the public purse £1.9m.

Elmore publishes the first Flipping the Narrative podcast episodes to mark International Women's Day.

Elmore is commissioned to provide personality disorder services through the Community Mental Health Framework.

Elmore raises concerns about the national cut in Universal Credit payments for clients.



Chase's Story

Someone to talk to

"I had a real bad patch with my mental health, not January just gone, January the year before. Life felt negative to me constantly and I needed to get help. But then when you tried to get the help they said, 'oh no we can't help you' or 'there's a long waiting list'. Then I just felt like, well what's the point of carrying on with things? 'I can't be bothered to ask for help anymore because no one's gonna help me'. I was struggling to keep going.

It got quite severe and Safe Haven, who were supporting me at the time, they said there was gonna be programmes starting up with Elmore. They knew I was really, really struggling and they felt that it would benefit me to get some support and help while I was waiting for other services. It was nice that they chose me to go on the programme.

Since then, Elmore has been really helpful. Like, there were certain doctor's appointments that I hadn't gone to for years because I was frightened of going. But, I eventually plucked up the courage to do it with the help of the Elmore staff. They took me to the doctors and came in with me and made sure that I was fine. And it helped because they got everything prepared beforehand, like they spoke to the doctors about what I was fearing and how I felt and what I needed. Every time I booked appointments, I kept getting anxiety about going to them. I've cancelled 'em and cancelled 'em and cancelled 'em. Having someone there to walk in with me, it made me, I dunno if it was more determined, but I felt like I didn't have to just run away. I had someone facing it with me."

A support worker helped me with changing my name. We sorted it out on the laptop and did it online. That was another step that I didn't think I'd get done. I feel that the name change has helped. I feel really happy because I feel like I can be myself now.

I also have help with budgeting. I've been living with my parents, and I haven't spent as much money as I normally would but I felt like I had nothing to show for it. I just felt like my money was being wasted. So, in the end I got some help with budgeting, like being able to put a bit away each month and cancelling things that I didn't need. So that helped.



"It's been good because I felt like if I was struggling, we'd have a little chat and run through what was going on in my head."

I don't necessarily always talk to my parents about everything that goes on because they are supportive in certain situations, but not all. I suppose my support worker understands a bit more about things. She was able to guide me in the right direction, and she'd say, 'maybe we could ring this place up and get some help from here?'. So that helped, knowing that I had someone that could find places to get support and help when I needed it.

It's been good because I felt like if I was struggling, we'd have a little chat and run through what was going on in my head. They'd also always say, 'if I'm not there someone else will chat to you, so don't feel you can't talk.' That was a positive. Sometimes I worry, do people want to listen to what's going on? I can shut myself away. So, it was good to be reminded that you can come and talk to somebody.

Overall, the team are very supportive, very helpful. I've found 'em really good. The other day somebody was talking about Elmore - they haven't used it and I was just sitting there telling them how great Elmore was. And then they turned around

to me and said, 'it's good to hear that from someone that's actually used it - and in a positive way'. I explained that it's good because you can put a plan in place, you can work out what help you need and what you need to sort out. And then you get to see the person regularly, or they're only a phone call away if you're not sure of something.

I've managed to get into the Recovery College. They've got a few arts and crafts things that I'm gonna join in with and then there's just a few other mental health type things that I looked at. Some are online in the evening. Some are face to face. But I'm fine doing that. I feel like I'm a lot better now. I used to struggle going with people I didn't know but in the last few months I'm a little bit more open to actually talking to people. I think having that support worker there gave me the oomph to do what I need to do. I suppose Elmore's helped me move on to different things. Things that I didn't think I would be able to do I'm managing. I want to go back into work eventually, once I'm ready. I'm trying to get support with Complex Needs, and then I can see after that what I'm able to do. I'm turning myself around.

Chase was supported by Elmore's complex needs floating support service.

William's Story

Save A Life

“Old age hasn't been as graceful as it should have been. Back in January 2020 I wasn't feeling too good. Nothing you could really put your finger on. I just had no energy. I couldn't be bothered to do anything. There was nothing I could go to the doctor with and say, this is wrong. And that got worse and worse. It was getting to the stage where I couldn't even be bothered to make myself a slice of toast. I was probably weak from lack of food. Living on your own with nobody to come after you, it can happen quite easily. Then Maron, my caseworker, persuaded me to see the doctor.

By that time, I was in no fit state to get to the doctor. But Maron very kindly offered his services as a taxi and took me to the surgery. On getting there, the doctor refused to treat me. He said that I had to go to the hospital and get checked over properly. And again, Maron was superb, he took me to the hospital and got me to the people who needed to see me. Perhaps needless to say, I didn't come out of the hospital. They wouldn't let me go home.

Whilst in the hospital, Maron would come and visit, bringing things like apple juice. You don't get many luxuries when you're in a hospital. I think I was there for 10 days, connected to an intravenous drip of antibiotics.

When you're just lying in bed with tubes in your arm, it's not a very pleasant existence. It was good to have Maron calling to visit from time to time. His intervention probably saved my life. So thank you to Maron and the Elmore team.

I've had two caseworkers at Elmore. And they've both been very good. Building up a rapport with one person, it's important. If you're changing from one worker to another, then it becomes meaningless. I'm very sorry that my support stopped. I think Elmore should do something to change their remit. I could still benefit from their support.



Right now, I'm facing eviction. And that has probably come about because of the lack of support. If I'd had more support at the right time, then probably I wouldn't be facing eviction. It's not worked out well over the last couple of years. But just having somebody who cares, somebody who knows you, in a time of crisis, can literally save your life.

Chase was supported by Elmore's mental health floating support service.

“Whilst in the hospital, Maron would come and visit, bringing things like apple juice. You don't get many luxuries when you're in a hospital. I think I was there for 10 days.”

Kieran's Story

When To Push and When Not To



“I remember, we talked about medication for a long time, we probably talked about it for a year before we went to the doctor and got anything.”

“So where do I start from? Maybe year eight of school. I started having a lot of panic attacks, and got to the point where going out of the house was very difficult, very anxiety-provoking. At some point, I started seeing the support people they had in place at school. But they soon realised that wasn't enough. So I got referred to CAMHS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services], in maybe 2012 or so. I went through a lot of workers there, probably four or five different workers until I was eighteen. They kind of changed quite a lot with the CAMHS. I'd have one worker for a few months or so, and then it would change to another person. There was one person who I was making quite a bit of progress with, he was helping me go outside a bit and do some cooking, buying food and stuff. But then he stopped that line of work. So he dropped out and I lost that support.”

“Doing anything was difficult. Going outside at all was difficult. I wouldn't go outside, no interaction with anybody, no hobbies, just sitting inside, my eating wasn't good. Obviously, a lot of general health things wasn't really that good. And I didn't really have a set doctor or anything, so we had to sort all that out. Every time we would go to the GP, it was a different person. So to try medications and stuff, it was a bit difficult. You know, to build up trust with a new person there, because they usually just throw things in your face without thinking about it.”

“That stops once you get to eighteen, the service at CAMHS. So then I got referred to the Elmore team. Then we were put on a waiting list, which was pretty long. I didn't see start seeing Maron until I was maybe nineteen, or twenty. We would mostly just sit

inside at first, to lead up to going outside more, and creating goals and steps. To sort of really feel the impact of those meetings and work, it took quite a while. It was a lot of slow progress. I'm now twenty-four, almost twenty-five. So four or five years of slow progress. A lot of small steps and small goals. It wasn't jumping into things quickly.”

“Basically, it takes me about three to six months to make a decision. Previously, I could not go out even into the backyard without panicking. When I was eighteen, my mum applied for Personal Independence Payments (PIP), but they rejected it. She said I shouldn't bother because of her experience with them, but once I was connected to Elmore, we ended up applying - after a lot of deadlock over the interview, trying to make me come to Reading, and Elmore explaining that wouldn't work, they sent someone to my home. At that time I could only say 'Yes', 'No', or 'I don't know.' The assessor was shocked at my state, and he said he was thankful Elmore could reach isolated people.”

“I remember, we talked about medication for a long time, we probably talked about it for a year before we went to the doctor and got anything. For a long time I wouldn't see a GP, since my old one died when I was thirteen or fourteen. I wouldn't take anything in pill form after I got ill one day as a kid after taking tablet medication. But eventually we worked out that there was medication I could take in liquid form. It was a long time before I started taking it, but that liquid diazepam then helped me start going out to an evening course.”

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“We just did a lot of small things, like going sometimes outside for the meeting, or going in the car, and driving down somewhere to sit and talk. Lately when Maron's come, we go walk because of Covid, we'll walk down to the park and just talk on a bench for a bit. At the start, I wouldn't do that. If we had gone back five years, and he had come and said, 'Can we go for a walk outside?', I would have said no. So that's something that now we do. I feel comfortable doing that.

“It's been very helpful. Because Maron didn't push me. Or maybe he kind of knew when to push and when not to push. He understood that side of me, whereas some people in the past that I've worked with would maybe push you when they shouldn't.

It's also helped things between me and my mum. My mum's the only person I have, but we have trust issues. When I have attacks, she has to leave work and be at home. Working to address this between us, for Maron, it was like walking on a thread. Now we'd both say that our relationship has improved a lot. I have honest conversations with my mum.

“Since we started working together, I did a year at college, in carpentry. It was only beginner-level, but it was a big step. But then that was just before all the coronavirus stuff. I made all that progress, and then went into the massive lockdown. So now it feels like a lot of regression, if that makes sense, because I kind of got stopped in my tracks. When lockdown started, it was kind of like going back how I used to be as a person, being forced to stay inside all the time. But this time, it was not by choice. You kind of had to do it. So that was very triggering.

“I've worked on getting back to where I was prior to lockdown. It's a lot of small steps again. This time around it is a bit different mentally, though. Before, it was more anxiety that was stopping me. This time, it's kind of more feeling down and depressed. Because I made all that progress. And it wasn't me that took it away, it was outside things. I don't have as much anxiety as when I first started. There are places where I'm comfortable now, I've built up to going outside around here. That's not very anxiety-provoking, but if it was a new situation, say if I did have to go to college again, or a job, that would probably be a big trigger.

“But before the lockdowns, we did work towards a lot. I was going to college, I was taking meds. Then it got to the point where I stopped taking them, and then the coronavirus stuff, then the lockdowns.

I would say I had an eating disorder before, when I weighed the lowest was maybe six stone seven or eight. That was around the time I started with Elmore. And we had worked on that. So my eating habits were good. Then during the lockdown, I lost quite a bit of weight again. I think going to the gym introduced good eating habits, it would make me want to eat and eat good foods. So having that taken away, led to the diet spinning out. I couldn't really get into a consistent pattern at home. We couldn't really make much progress. During the lockdowns we would have probably a phone meeting once a week for fifteen, twenty minutes. But it's not really the same over the phone.

“The lockdowns were just a bit of a headache really – you have progressed and then it gets kind of taken away. Then it gets kind of tiring to keep doing the same thing again. But I'm getting too comfortable. I need to kind of push towards other stuff. I've been working on making sure I eat enough, I'm back at the gym now a few times a week. That is probably one of the biggest mental health things for me. That definitely helps with a lot of stuff. Losing that in the lockdowns was a big trigger.

“Now I have a driving license, and I'm thinking of applying for a job as a driver. I'm going to the gym on a regular basis, even though I've taken many steps backwards, because of Covid and lockdowns. But I can use the techniques that we've worked on. We're trying to figure out what next, we're back setting goals, hoping there are no other lockdowns. What I've learned from anxiety is, even if you don't want to face it, that is the best way.”

Kieran was supported by Elmore's complex needs floating support service.

Alan's Story

Breaking the Circle

“With my kids, I’d always spoken to them like adults. And they’d never quite understood where I was coming from. Instead of saying, no I can’t give you sweets because it’s nearly bedtime, or, you can’t do that because we don’t have the money, it was just an outright no. That would always leave them feeling confused. When me and my partner would have a disagreement in front of the children, nine times out of ten it got out of hand and we’d end up shouting and arguing. That’s not healthy. Nobody ever wants their children to witness that. But at the height of the moment, you don’t realise you’re doing it.

“The beginning of this year I gave up work to become a full-time carer for my partner. Our relationship was okay, we had our moments, but then lockdown started up again at Christmas. I was depressed. Being together all the time exaggerated everything. Things became heated, and one day it came to a head. That’s when I got arrested and social services became involved.

“My relationship had broken down. I realised that the kids had been through some mental abuse. Social Services told me about the Creating Changes course with Elmore. They thought it would be good for me to go. And at first, I was thinking: why? what have I done? Obviously, I recognise that I’d been angry and slightly verbally violent towards them with my ex, but I’m thinking it’s just normal behaviour. And they said no, you’re going to learn a lot from it. I go on this course and the first couple of sessions I was very anxious, very nervous. Thinking, oh no, what have I gotten into, I’m nothing like these guys. And then the other guys, I heard them speak and I sort of sat back and listened. I heard them talk about their own experiences and I thought, actually I can

kind of relate to this. And then by listening to what the course leader was saying, I learnt that these behaviour patterns I had weren’t healthy at all, particularly for the children. The relationship breaking down as well, the way me and my partner used to argue and the way that we used to handle things, that wasn’t healthy.

“Realising what I had done just hit me. Suddenly I was reflecting on loads of arguments we’ve had, particularly situations when we were shouting in front of the children. The kids are seeing us throwing threats around and things like that. Suddenly I was like, oh crap, that’s not right. There’s a lot of personal things I realised that were not helping the relationship either. When we broke up, I was arrested and there was an allegation of sexual abuse. To me, abuse is physically forcing someone to do something. But then when I sat there and thought about it, and I’ve never forced her to do anything, but when they go in depth about emotional abuse and things like that, it opened my eyes and made me think, oh, hang on...sometimes when I’ve wanted to be intimate and she’s not been in the mood, I’ve then made her feel guilty. Which I now realise is a form of emotional abuse, making her feel bad for not giving me what I wanted.

“When I first started the course me and my partner weren’t talking. We’d been together nearly 20 years on and off. I was 16 and she was 15 when we actually got together. And I didn’t think we were ever going to get back together. But we started to communicate again for the children’s sake, probably a third of the way through the course. We sat down and had a heart to heart about what went wrong in our relationship. I’d told her what I’d learnt, to start with, and the changes I’m trying to make.

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Alan's Story (cont'd)

We started getting on. And after a few weeks, we decided we was going to try and sort things out. And then she realised, after some of the things that I told her, that she had issues that she needed to deal with as well. And I'm more aware now. If I have an argument or disagreement with my partner or whoever, you can say, okay, hang on a minute, I'm not happy about this. Give us five minutes or whatever, and then come back and re-approach it or reassess the situation, instead of going all guns a blazing.

"I used to always be out working, doing long hours, long shifts. Like I said, I was depressed as well, when the relationship first broke down. I didn't really have time for the kids. But now I've dropped my hours down to part time so I have more involvement with them outside of school. And it's better, it's working well. They're happier, I'm happier. It's really good. I started dieting, and I was going to the gym, trying to keep my mind focused. And that then reflects positively on the newfound relationship I've got with my partner and the children. Because when I do see them, I'm not miserable, I'm not depressed anymore. It's things like that, its remembering that if you're not happy then others around you are going to reflect on that, and then they're not gonna be happy either. Now I've worked on myself I can be a better partner and a better father.

"My dad was a firm believer in if I misbehave, it was physical punishment. I tried not to do that with my children but occasionally I smacked them. That's one of the reasons why I was taking the course. I was doing exactly what my dad used to do, I just didn't realise that I was doing it. I actually had to speak to my dad about it and say, look, Dad, it's not your fault, but I've been acting just like you were when I

was a kid and it's not healthy. And he said, I've seen it in you when you've come to visit. The way you spoke to the kids. He said, I've looked at you before and thought - you're just like me. But then, he was brought up exactly the same. It's this vicious circle that I want to break. I don't want my kids to do that to their kids when they're older, if they have kids. My oldest boy, for example, if he's in a relationship, I don't want him to treat his girlfriend the way I used to treat his mum. As long as I can have a healthy relationship with my partner, as long as I can be a good role model for my kids and they grow up and break that circle - then I couldn't ask for anything more.

"Now, my daughter, she's ten. And at one point, she was very reluctant to speak to me about her personal problems. I mean, she's grown up very fast. And she wouldn't speak to me about anything, she had no confidence in talking to me. But now I've learned how to come down to her level and speak to her properly. She's become more confident and she's opened up, which is really nice. I've never experienced that before. And that's making me want to do it more, you know, I want to learn more, I want to be able to be that father to her and to understand what she's going through.

"Two weeks before I was due to finish the course, another couple of guys joined. One guy was like, I shouldn't be here, I ain't got time for this crap. And I said to him, I know where you're coming from. I said, just go in with an open mind, because if you can learn from it and change just one thing, it's worth it."

Alan was supported by Elmore's domestic abuse service.

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Thank You!

We would like to thank everyone who has supported Elmore and our life-changing services over the last year.

Without your support and generosity, Elmore would not be able to make a difference to people using our services and living on the margins of society. Our thanks go to commissioners of Elmore's services and the organisations and individuals who have provided support or funded our clients' essential items and much needed welfare in crisis situations.



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