BAVO











Report of the Most Significant Change inquiry into the Bridgend Community Navigator Service

“We need fun and enjoyment in our lives as well. We don’t just want to exist.”

Russell Todd **Dave Horton**

GROW SOCIAL CAPITAL

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr BRIDGEND County Borough Council

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Partneriaeth Rhanbarthol | Regional Partnership

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August 2026

Foreword

A message from our CEO:
Heidi Bennett, MBA, Chartered MCIPD



This report gives us a powerful opportunity to reflect on what the Community Navigator service means in practice, not simply in terms of activity or outputs, but in terms of the difference it makes to people's lives. The 'Most Significant Change' process has shown that the greatest value of the service lies in relationships: Navigators build trust, understand the whole person and connect people to the right combination of community, voluntary and / or statutory support. The stories demonstrate how this relational approach can help people move from isolation and hopelessness towards confidence, purpose, belonging and renewed connection. They also show that the Navigator role is much more than signposting; it is about walking alongside people, sometimes for longer than anticipated, and helping them take steps towards greater independence.

For me, the most significant change highlighted by this research is the recognition that effective prevention depends on the strength of the community around people. Navigators can only do their best work when there are trusted relationships, resilient community organisations and accessible spaces and activities to which people can be connected. The report therefore challenges us to think beyond individual services and organisational boundaries, and to consider how we sustain and replenish the community infrastructure on which social prescribing depends. It also asks us to listen differently: to value people's lived experience and stories alongside quantitative measures, and to close the loop between evidence, commissioning and service improvement.

BAVO, will use these findings not only to celebrate what is working, but to strengthen the partnerships, community capacity and ways of working that will make this impact sustainable.

Forward from the Regional Partnership Board Chair:
Cllr Jane Gebbie, Deputy Leader of Bridgend County Borough Council and Chair of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board.



"I think it's really important that we have those with lived experience and those working in the field to give us the best opportunities to examine and scrutinise the decisions that we are making for Bridgend.

I am an advocate for community services being available where you live, and I am really interested to understand the lived experience of those accessing any of those services.

But what I am really interested to know is what barriers did they face? What worked really well for them? And what is it that we could do better?

Is it the places that we use for delivery? Are these where you live? Is it the service provision that you want but which you are not able to use? Or is it that the communications about these services are not readily accessible?

I really appreciate all those who were willing to be panel members and I'm looking forward to reviewing the MSC panel discussion so we can evaluate all the work that we're doing and make sure it is the best provision for you all."

Who are Grow Social Capital?

Established in 2020, Grow Social Capital is a Community Interest Company that raises understanding of the importance of Social Capital in:

- Bringing about positive social and economic change
- Creating more resilient, capable and confident communities, organisations and workplaces
- Tackling the growth of 'UnSocial Capital': the changing levels of Social Capital that are leading to growing distrust, division and tribalism in society.

Examples of our work can be found in the main report or on our website www.growsocialcapital.org.uk.

Principal findings

> "No-one educates anyone else nor do we educate ourselves. We educate one another in communion in the context of living in this world"
>
> — Paulo Freire

- Navigators and brokers, grounded in trusting relationships, form a 'glue' between services, individuals, community groups, and communities.
- Holistic, flexible, relational support – including fun and joy – enables people to move from isolation, trauma and hopelessness towards renewed identity, purpose and connection.
- As well as having a demonstrable impact on health outcomes, Navigators can help people re-discover meaning, purpose and joy in their lives.
- Stories of change demonstrate a significant 'ripple effect' on and through the lives and networks of an individual supported by a Navigator.
- Navigators are constantly scanning to remain alert to social prescription opportunities. They act as 'living directories' through whom information is disseminated and can be relied upon to reach with a high degree of accuracy those people who can benefit the most from it.
- Community-led spaces are crucial but fragile. Sustaining them is both a moral and financial imperative.
- Community capacity is finite. There is real risk that statutory services draw on community capacity without helping replenish it.
- Navigators remain cognisant of, and sympathetic to, the complexities of people's lives and circumstances, in contrast to services that can sometimes confine themselves to disciplinary or organisational boundaries rather than be holistic.
- There is not a discrete start and finish to working with an individual where 'scaffolding' of support is erected at the start and then dismantled at some notional end. Navigators are constantly reconfiguring the scaffolding around an individual as the relationship evolves and develops.
- A Navigator is constantly varying the extent to which they are directive and non-directive with an individual. This is informed largely by their own judgement and experience, the relationship with said individual, and the wider team's culture of support.

- Navigators are a key element in reducing fragmentation and its associated costs through 'untangling' knotty issues and spotting the risk of falling through 'cracks' in the system.
- There remains a pressing need to 'close the loop' between the Navigators and commissioners around the effectiveness of the service. There is also an opportunity here for this to be co-productively informed by the material experiences of the individuals who access the service.
- There is a consensus that Most Significant Change is a useful qualitative methodology for measuring impact and should be incorporated into evaluation and quality improvement frameworks.

Key themes

The MSC inquiry has identified ten main themes. Panellists have identified four of these as ***key*** themes. These are numbered 1-4 below. To help the Navigators and partners to further explore these key themes, several forward-facing questions have emerged from the inquiry.

A number of quotes from panellists and stories of change are included to illustrate the themes and to give a flavour of the discussions.

1. Sustaining community-led activities and infrastructure: 're-weaving' social fabric and the importance of social infrastructure

Panels recognised the health risk posed by loneliness and social isolation. Recent research[1] suggests they increase all-cause mortality by 14% (loneliness) and 32% (social isolation), and lead to a decline in physical, mental and cognitive health conditions including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, depression, anxiety, and dementia.

> "Isolation reduces life expectancy. This sense of purpose now has brought her out of her shell…you got public health benefits for getting these people from isolation out into the community…this sort of service does [that] in spades."

Navigators provide an important role in linking people with community groups and the activities they run, very often in spaces they manage. They provide ongoing, non-time-limited support. It is routine and offers structure and a sense of "family." These "third places", as Ray Oldenburg[2] calls them, can be seen as 'prevention infrastructure.'

> "We talk about preventing things from happening [but] prevention starts in the community. This is where the first line of prevention starts."

[1] Ward, S., Dale, C., Hughes, K. (2026) *Loneliness, social isolation and social connection in Wales: A public health perspective*, Public Health Wales: Cardiff.

[2] Oldenburg, R. (1989) *The Great Good Place.* Marlowe & Company: New York.

They are however fragile, reliant on voluntary effort, grant-funding, and goodwill. There is a strong call to invest - via grants, full cost recovery for hire and use, in kind support - in the community organisations and third spaces that underpin social prescription activities. Otherwise, there is the risk that the statutory sector extracts resource and capacity from communities

> "Years and years ago, you'd have had the socialization, all the clubs…we've lost all that social [infra]structure, and this is one way of trying to bring that back in."

> "We've got the Navigators but without this [community provision], the Navigator can't fully function properly. This is kind of the bedrock…the foundation for everything else that happens."

> "That's the irony of the Welsh Government's social prescribing policy…there's no funding to sustain the things in communities that actually [receive the referrals]."

> "All our community organisations are really very good at hosting statutory functions [yet] I'm still to see where they're paying them for the use of this. It costs them money. If we want them to input into the regional partnership…we need to support their strategic functioning because otherwise they cannot do that."

Squirrels' Nest in Bridgend is an excellent example of such a community organisation. People can drop in as often as they like with no expectation that they take a lead on activities or conform to certain behaviours; people can be themselves. In large part this is because its founders have been through similar situations and experiences in their own lives.

> "We've found that when people come to Squirrels Nest, they sort of go through the same emotions as everybody else has been. Maybe not the same order. You can read which part of the emotion they're going through."

> "It's like we've been through it before, we've got the idea…we can tell the moment someone comes in here."

The nexus of Navigators, community groups, larger voluntary organisations, and statutory services within which individuals find themselves helps them to 're-weave' the relationships they have with partners, families and local networks. In short, the impact of Navigators' work is often felt far beyond the individual they have been supporting.

> "My father lives alone and is a stubborn man. I was working 12-hour shifts in hospital. In addition, I was studying for a University degree and living with my mother who is not very well. I was desperate for some further support."

Forward-facing questions

Recognizing that prevention starts in the community, how might funding be moved from traditional top-down services to community spaces?

Can we be confident that our social prescribing processes replenish community provision and do not exhaust it?

2. The central role of trust and trusted relationships

Across both panels, trust was repeatedly identified as the foundation - the "bedrock" - for any meaningful change. Navigators are trusted *people* rather than seen as a trusted *service*.

> "We all had a general consensus: without trust you don't really go very far with anybody; without it, we don't really get to any of the other places."

Trust extends beyond the Navigator and into the community settings where groups operate. Service users are trusting of a great many of these groups in part because the navigators have developed relationships with groups over time.

> "It's about not just trust with perhaps the navigator, but where they go, how they develop that. So it's not just building trust with the individual…it's building trust with all the other organisations that are in the community, so you know where you're going is the right place for that person."

An example of the trust that exists is in Nicola's story where, after a break in engagement with the Navigators, they were 'front of mind' when she felt she might be returning to a crisis point:

> "Even though you didn't have to signpost her anywhere, what you've already done is signpost her back to you if it does change. She's in a holding pattern at the minute. If it doesn't work, she can come back to you and you can explore it again."

Forward-facing questions

How is trust maintained over time? What risks might we face that trust is eroded?

How do we recognise who holds those trusting relationships within communities and organisations?

3. People need more than one thing: holistic, multi-faceted support

A recurring theme in both panels was that people rarely have a single, discrete need. Their needs are multi-layered and co-occurring (e.g., grief, isolation, addiction, physical health, neurodiversity).

Since the Navigator role is intended to straddle boundaries - sectoral, organisational, administrative - they are naturally inclined towards taking an holistic approach and a person's whole life situation

Multiple "touch points" are required between Navigators and an individual because of the rich complexity of people's lives.

> "We may not be living where we grew up. We've got different interests. There can be a number of touch points with individuals because of that complexity."

> "I allocated [Josh] to myself because of our joint passion for the outdoors. That's what I do when I allocate to different navigators: we navigate to our strengths."

> "You can't isolate mental health from physical health. Trauma has meant that it's probably re-initiated an eating disorder…we will treat those things as something completely separate…the crisis would probably not have been the mental health crisis. Probably would have been the physical crisis…collapse, malnutrition."

> "You can't always treat just one thing, everything has to be treated together, and it's relational in how we do that."

A vivid metaphor was used to explain the need to blend approaches for the benefit of an individual:

> "We need to be a soup and not a fruit salad. This shows that at the end of the day everybody goes in as their own little individual [organisation] but a person is holistic and we need to *blend* that so we don't need to be all different individual people in that bowl."

Forward-facing questions

How might we better join up different offers and services - moving beyond organisational boundaries - to create a wider community network that complements each other?

4. The role of brokerage: Navigators as a 'living directories'

Brokerage is a key role within which Navigators are constantly negotiating and re-negotiating with a range of organisations including community groups what they do. Navigators are seen as acting as 'living directories' that are far more likely to be up-to-date than printed/written directories.

> "We call ourselves living directories now…Tom's very good at finding new stuff."

> "It highlights the importance of knowledge of local services…because you look in directories and online, a lot of it's out of date…[It's about] being up to date with current circumstances."

Moreover, the Navigators' role serves as a hub around the individual with spokes that reach out to community organisations and activities. As they scan what is out there and network across and between sectors and organisations, they act as effective conduits through which information about community activities reaches people who may, by virtue of their circumstances (social isolation, mental health, substance abuse, trauma) may not otherwise receive it. It is relational and, as has been pointed out, is based on trust.

> "What has been prioritised here is the role of the brokerage…almost being like a bit of a hub with lots of these spokes going out from around that relationship upon which there is a lot of trust based."

> "We've commented on how many times they've supported someone and act as a kind of bridge to community services, but this [story] is also that bridge to statutory services."

Forward-facing questions

How can the team maintain its brokerage role effectively?

Are the Navigators playing to their diverse strengths and interests to the fullest extent?

How can the team continue to effectively 'scan' for new opportunities?

5. The Navigator role: more than signposting

This inquiry has challenged the notion that navigators are simply 'signposters'. Rather, they are:

- Investing in long-term, relational work
- Advocates

- Providing practical help (e.g., forms, benefits, transport, council tax, etc.)
- Persistent and flexible in time and approach
- Patient
- Required to exercise their judgement about when to step in or step back (what is known as being directive and non-directive.

The Navigator's work often prevents escalation to acute or crisis services, though this prevention is hard to measure.

> "I think sometimes people think of navigators as being kind of signposters [but] I think it's a lot more than that…it's the investment in a relationship with somebody."

> "Advocacy. I think that's really important…I think in all of these stories [there's a theme of advocacy]. Helping the people to be able to take control of their life and just to look on it as a holistic thing."

Because of the need for discretion and to maintain an individual's dignity, Navigators work with quiet diligence in between sectors and organisations; their role is not 'showy'. Does this lack of visibility to the Navigator role undermine appreciation of it?

> "This is far more than signposting…from a visibility point of view to wider services. It is really how do you visibly portray your role and the impact and meaning of your role?"

An underlying principle to this entire inquiry was the feeling that the data and monitoring supplied by Navigators to commissioners misses or obfuscates some of the more impactful aspects of their role:

> "They provide the data to us and we look at the numbers…but it's how we can get better at understanding and evidencing the bigger impact; the changes that [Navigators] have helped happen."

6. Self-discovery, identity, purpose, and belonging

Navigators provide a role in helping people re-discover:

- A renewed sense of self
- Purpose – often in caring for others, volunteering, or creative practice
- A sense of belonging in community spaces
- New language – "hope", "peace", "joy" – that had not been part of their experience (in some cases, for a long time)

This 'identity rebuild' was seen as central to sustainable change.

"How to learn to be Muriel. I haven't got to be a mum, a grandmother, an ex-wife. All of a sudden it's 'Who's me?' I'm on a learning process which I've never been allowed before."

"I never ever thought I would fit anywhere in my life, but I fit here."

"He reflects and goes, '[My life]'s not so bad', and I think that's amazing... 'I want to get back on the farm, I want to get back working.'...'I recognise I've got limitations, but it's possible.'"

"It is like another family, isn't it?"

7. Striking a balance between being directive and non-directive

There is a general sequence to how a Navigator engages a new service user:

- Starting where the person is, e.g., a home visit. Described as meeting people "on their own turf"
- Accompanying people to first sessions ("hand-holding"), including travelling with them to an activity
- Stepping back gradually to build independence and confidence
- Keeping in touch with people even when the Navigator has stepped back and is providing, if any, limited support

Navigators often accompany people on their first visit(s) to a group or activity. This 'hand-holding' is regarded highly by many people accessing the Navigator service and panellists noted its recurrence:

"In all three of those stories, there is that hand-holding that is happening for a short period or a longer period, but it's echoed through each story, isn't it?"

"Sometimes when you want to build resilience in someone, you have to hold their hand… She said she wouldn't have gone to these things if Georgina hadn't gone with her the first few times."

"After I met Julia, she took me along to a social group in Bridgend. And it was strange in the beginning with everybody looking at you but it was so nice having Julia with me, especially the first time."

However, an underlying principle of the Navigator role is to not create dependence. A balance must be struck between doing things *with* people rather than *for* them. Panellists recognised the delicateness of finding such a balance.

> "There's this thing of being proactive on behalf and with someone. [Of] having the knack of taking them with you, but encouraging them to act for themselves. That's a difficult balance to strike."

> "And you can see the steps and the story as to how BAVO has supported him in building that…They've set up a strategy almost for him to be able to be independent within that space. And then so much more comes out of that."

Panellists advised caution in equating longer contact with a service user with dependency. Stepping away from an individual so that they begin to stand once more on their own feet can be a slow and/or stop-start process, whereby a Navigator begins the process of stepping back but external factors or set-backs in an individual's life require the Navigator to resume being more directive.

> "At the start [they were] originally having counselling and then the funding stopped. I just think that's such a shame [but] that's how we design our services, isn't it? Time limited."

> "I think your point about rigid treatment or rigid working times is good…you need flexibility…Some people will get wrapped up in a couple of weeks, but then others won't."

> "That approach of a short-term intervention is justified by this idea that anything more and you're making people dependent. We need to say that's not what we're talking about. [Amy's story] is a really good example of an approach that doesn't make someone dependent. It gives them the time to become *in*dependent."

8. Cost of fragmentation

Several stories are evidence of where people have either fallen through 'cracks in the system' or been shunted between services. One story in particular infuriated panellists because a treatable eye condition had gone untreated and had led to a host of issues mounting up. Navigators help 'untangle' these issues.

> "You see this happening all the time with the ping-pong ball…they get knocked around. Three or four months down the line [Amy] might have been lost to follow-up."

> "She's a bit of a number on that list. If she took her life while on that list, who's accountable? The health board arguably."

If the cost of fragmented services is difficult to measure then similarly so is evidencing the savings from effective prevention (what *didn't* happen).

> "It's preventing that kind of escalation. One of the frustrations [is] there's probably no way of calculating what that saves…we're very much about preventative approaches, but you can't kind of measure what hasn't happened."

9. Fun and joy as serious outcomes

Words such as 'fun', 'humour' and 'joy' are all too often missing from professional discourse yet are central to wellbeing.

> "I'm so full of joy at the moment because I've got somewhere to go."

> "The smile on her face when you see her now is phenomenal."

> "We need fun and enjoyment in our lives as well. We don't want to just exist."

Community groups tend to have their own vernacular that involves 'banter', joking and self-deprecation.

> "When a new person comes here we don't ask what's wrong. Absolutely not. We don't know the story, do we? But it doesn't matter, does it?"

> "One of the things that comes out quite a lot in the stories is the role of banter. And also the role of that kind of humour in dealing with some really quite dark things sometimes."

> "We go up there, we have a good laugh."

10. Recognition and 'closing the loop'

It is frustrating that Navigators' reports to commissioners are often not responded to. Among other things, it excludes service users from the later stage of co-production: the 'folding' of learning back into service improvement, knowledge exchange, and influencing policy.

> "There's a role there for us as commissioners to be better at understanding the story behind the data."

> "We have these case studies in but we just put them on a shelf. Those are the things I spent hours sending to you. It's very frustrating, isn't it?"

The Most Significant Change stories

Part of the MSC process is the identification of the MSC story that resonates the most with the panel. Sometimes one story is a clear 'winner', other times a panel can be split between two or more stories. In this instance there were **two** stories that resonated most:

- *Finding the Fire for a New Life* - Josh's story
- *Don't suffer in silence* - Mo's story

Finding the Fire for a New Life - Josh's story

I have a brain injury from a traumatic incident last year. I was in hospital for six months. Before I met Gail, I was sat in the house, afraid to go out. I was depressed and I couldn't do anything. I didn't have the fire in me to go out. It's good for me. It has helped me, going out with different people and trying to get back into the community.

Lots of good things have happened since I met Gail. Nothing bad at all.

I love going fishing now, with Reel Minds. Helps me get out and I enjoy it. It's good, talking to people. Talking to people and going back out to the community so I'm not stuck in the house. It makes my life happier and I'm excited to go fishing. I book that myself with the Reel Minds app. Gail showed me how to book on the app and I can sort it out now on the phone.

I go to volunteer at Bryngarw Park every Tuesday and Gail put me in touch with a lovely lady, Nikki at Alpaca Dreams. I'll be going down there next Saturday. Last time I went I helped guests walk the Alpacas, walking at the back, making sure nothing's going behind them to scare the alpacas. I chatted to the guests, which helps me too.

Gail has made a big change to me since I met her. She put me on different ways of helping. I like helping people out. I used to work on a farm, so I told Gail I like working outside and that is what she showed me.

The only thing is, I can't do too much. I forget. I'm starting to get back to mixing with people again. Trying to get back, feel safer again…..we go into those places to make you feel safe. I do trust them. Gail took me and so I trust them and feel safe. I definitely wouldn't have wanted to go if I weren't going with her. To be honest, it all worked out for me……feeling safe to go back out now.

I get excited when I know there is something coming up. Yeah, it's like knowing what's coming up and what I like doing. I need to know what I'm doing and have things to look forward to. But if I can't remember, my mother always reminds me. And it's nice to be outside for a couple of hours. Not stuck in, so a bit of a break from my mother and for her too, give her a bit of peace. It has helped me big time. To get back into doing something, so I know people.

She picked me up to start off and then on the bus. We went on the bus together, to know the way to get down there. Fair play, Gail messaged me on the phone to remember what bus to catch. So now I look on my phone every time for the message so I remember. It's there on my phone to remind me where I'm going first. I still haven't got my bus pass, it's still being sorted out, but I will save money when I have it.

I can't cope with too much, with lots of things to think about. I know I can't remember it. When I'm fishing or at Bryngarw Park, just thinking about that thing I'm doing, I don't have to think about anything else.

The brain group (Headway) was good. Saw that we're all different, aren't we? I felt sorry for some people, like with Parkinson's. Made me see I can work towards targets, I have got big targets too. I'm trying to remember better. I want to go back to work on a farm. I know it would be more hands-on, but work is more things to think about and I know I can't do it at the moment.

The hospital said I had to stop drinking or I wouldn't get better, and I haven't had a drink. It's something a little sad to say, but it's a good thing to come out of the accident. It's changed who I was, but in a way I'm glad I've changed.

I would tell anyone that Gail does very, very well. My mother has told everybody about BAVO and they should get help from them. The Community Mental Health Team introduced Gail to me, best thing they did. I recommend them to everybody, and especially my mother does!

I would like to call my story: Finding the fire for a new life.

Don't suffer in silence - Mo's story

Life has been painful. I've been thrown into a world where I don't fit. I've been very mentally, physically, badly bruised and battered all my life. From the age of 5, I can tell you lots of incidents. I've had help because I've been under a psychiatrist for years and years. I didn't feel able to go out and feel safe. A lot of my troubles happen in the night, so I don't sleep, and then I'm scared to come out because I have nightmares constantly. I can't plan because every day I get up, whatever hits me on the chin that day, that's the only thing I can cope with for now. I've always been alcoholic all my life. I've been dry for, I'd say, a good while now. So I've got an issue fighting against myself all the time. And then every time I've come out somewhere different, whoever with, it's always been a negative memory. I haven't got positive memories. But now I've got a positive memory…

I'm in this society now - Squirrel's Nest. And they keep saying 'You've just got to turn up, just keep coming back'. And I did, and I wouldn't look back again. And if anyone says 'Where have you got your help from?' The first thing I'd say, 'BAVO'!

I just can't explain how much it means to me. In 2023 I met Russel (Community Navigator, BAVO) in Ark. Squirrel's Nest is the first place Russel brought me. The good thing is that I can come somewhere safe. That thing of safety is really, really important. And how to learn to be Muriel. I've actually tried to find me. Because I haven't got to be a mum, I haven't got to be a grandmother, I haven't got to be an ex-wife. I haven't got to be my mother's carer or my father's carer. And all of a sudden it's 'Who's me?'

So I'm on a learning process, which I've never been allowed (before). I actually came to the open day with my family. That was an outing where I'm being a mum and being a grandmother and showing them where I come, because it's exciting when you start telling people you're going to something positive. It's a memory.

I've actually got my feet on the ground for a Wednesday and a Friday at the moment coming in [here]. I was saying to Gail, I'm only out of my house for 6 hours, 2 hours here on a Wednesday, 2 hours on a Friday, and I'll give myself 2 hours to go shopping. Otherwise, I stay in the house. Here, I feel safe.

If I come in on a Wednesday, what happens is that I've spoiled them all and I do burger quarter-pounders and hot dogs and onions. So I feed all the men. I can't cook for myself at home, I can't cook for one. I'm used to cooking (for) a family of 10, you know. To feed these guys on a Wednesday. They 'yak yak yak' and you give them all food and they go quiet, deadly quiet. I've done my food hygiene and my first aid course since I've been here because I've got nothing else to give. I feel like I can smile coming out now. I do have that pressure in my head (still), but this is a release for it. I just fit. I never ever thought I would fit anywhere in life. But I fit here. And I do get that kick every time a Wednesday comes or Friday comes.

[Mo describes another member of Squirrel's Nest who is disabled].

So every time I leave here, I give him a ring and I say, 'Are you home?' 'Yes, I'm home'. I said, 'Well, sit by your door, I'm coming over with some food'. And he waits by the door for me to get over. Oh, my heart goes out to (him). That's when I know I'm a lucky person and I can help. And (I've) gone to someone else's home. That's unheard of.

Getting out of the house has been the biggest change for me. There was nothing out there years ago. It's only now everything's come to light. I'm in the land of living, not in all the bad memories and deaths and where I've come from. I'm ready to take the next steps. This is my sanity. I can't explain from the heart of my belly, I'm so full of joy at the moment cos I got somewhere to go. And if I can help anyone by going through…There's always someone worse off. I just want to guide people that it's not that bad when you get out there.

BAVO and Squirrel's Nest have made a safe space that I can come to. It's also the first time I've ever been on a day out with a group of people. We go to Weston-super-Mare once a year with Squirrels Nest. I've done it twice now. But I take exactly what I need in my rucksack in case I

have panic attacks. I mean, I got to be prepared for the worst. But I get a positive out [of it] at the end.

Russel's role [someone to encourage and guide] is important. A guide into the community. He used to pick me up in the car, drive me here, stay with me until I actually felt secure, and then he used to encourage me to get back in my car and drive. Well, I can drive now, only from A to B, but that's fine. I couldn't do that before I met Russ. The first time we got to the roundabout and had to turn around. But we kept trying and we got there in the end.

If you ever hear of BAVO, follow through because they've stuck by me all the way through. You haven't been put in somewhere and forgotten. If it wasn't for BAVO, I wouldn't be here. I never knew what hope was until now, but I'm learning this different vocabulary than being an alcoholic and down the wrong aisle. [Words like] 'Peace'.

What is Most Significant Change?

Devised by Rick Davies in the early 2000s to meet some of the challenges associated with monitoring and evaluating a complex participatory rural development programme in Bangladesh, MSC is a qualitative method based on storytelling.

MSC is a person-centered method in which people, first, re-telling their stories of change as a result of a project/service. Second, they explain why they thought their story is significant, recognising that people learn best when they talk and think collectively through democratic dialogue. Often, those telling their stories have experience of not being heard or being ignored.

Stories of change are taken to a panel comprising people from different organisations, with different roles, and different perspectives on the subject matter at hand. The panel discussions surface information about impact - intended and unintended - and values held by different stakeholders. MSC is also excellent for identifying where change has happened and revealing an area that might require further attention or research.