



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

The role of caseworkers

Insights from the Changing
Futures programme

This infographic describes the role of caseworkers within the Changing Futures programme. It summarises the challenges workers face, the trade-offs and choices they make when supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage, and their contribution to systems change. Caseworker support is central to Changing Futures. Evaluation evidence demonstrates the crucial role caseworkers play in supporting participants towards healthier, safer, more stable and fulfilled lives.

The Changing Futures programme is a £92 million initiative between Government and The National Lottery Community Fund. It seeks to test innovative approaches to improving outcomes for people experiencing multiple disadvantage, including homelessness, substance misuse, mental ill health, domestic abuse and contact with the criminal justice system.

Caseworkers provide person-centred, trauma-informed support

The Changing Futures caseworker role is highly autonomous and flexible and characterised by smaller caseloads (7 to 12 people) compared to other services. This enables them to build trust and confidence in the service and lead the provision of flexible, person-centred support. Key responsibilities include:

Locating and engaging participants

Caseworkers spend significant time identifying and engaging participants who may be disconnected from services. Building and maintaining trusting relationships is key.



Coordinating support

They ensure that support is well coordinated across services, often acting as a single point of contact.



Key Responsibilities

Providing direct support

This includes practical and emotional support, often tailored to individual needs and circumstances.



Liaising and advocating

Caseworkers advocate on behalf of participants with other services, ensuring their needs are met despite systemic barriers.



Caseworkers face challenges, including:

- **Inflexible service practices:** Services often have rigid practices that do not align with participant needs, such as local connection rules for housing.
- **Access to services:** There are significant barriers to accessing mental health services and other support due to high thresholds and long wait times.
- **Management of responsibility and risk:** Caseworkers perceived that some services deflect responsibilities onto them and are unwilling to work with people they deem to be high risk.
- **Staff retention and turnover:** High turnover rates among caseworkers, driven by low pay and burnout, disrupt the continuity of support.
- **Data sharing issues:** Limited data sharing agreements hinder efficient coordination and support.



I What helps caseworkers:



Small caseloads



High autonomy



Clinical supervision



Reflective practice



Professional experience of related fields



Lived experience of multiple disadvantage



Flexible risk management



Supportive environment



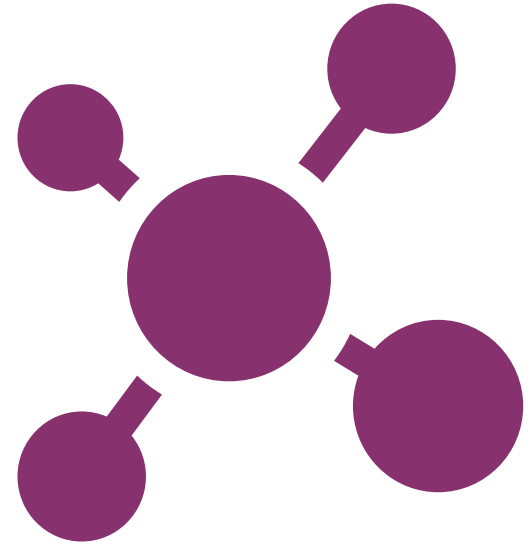
Our caseload is small compared, for example, to leaving care workers who have higher caseloads and can't offer such intensive support. We can do assertive outreach.

- Caseworker

Caseworkers and systems change

Caseworkers play a significant role in influencing systems-level change by fostering new relationships and working practices. Examples include:

- **New service pathways:** Establishing clearer pathways for accessing services, such as housing support.
- **Problem-solving groups:** Engaging in multi-agency groups to address systemic barriers and improve service coordination.
- **Advocating for policy changes:** Highlighting the need for more flexible and inclusive service criteria to better meet participant needs.



Sustaining and growing the caseworker model

To sustain and expand the caseworker model beyond the Changing Futures programme, evidence from the evaluation suggests:

