

Group Recovery Aftercare Community Enterprise (GRACE) IMPACT EVALUATION

July 2024



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Introduction

Background

Based in East Dunbartonshire, Group Recovery Aftercare Community Enterprise (GRACE) is a membership organisation and charity that supports people who have experienced life traumas. GRACE supports recovery from a range of personal challenges such as bereavement, ill health, mental health issues, isolation, homelessness, and also those who are recovery from addiction.

The organisation has been operating since 2012 and provides a wide range of weekly activities for members from fitness classes to skills development and social activities. At the core of its way of working is peer-led support, where members support each other through life traumas, building self-esteem and resilience. GRACE encourages members to grow in capacity and confidence to become volunteers and support others.

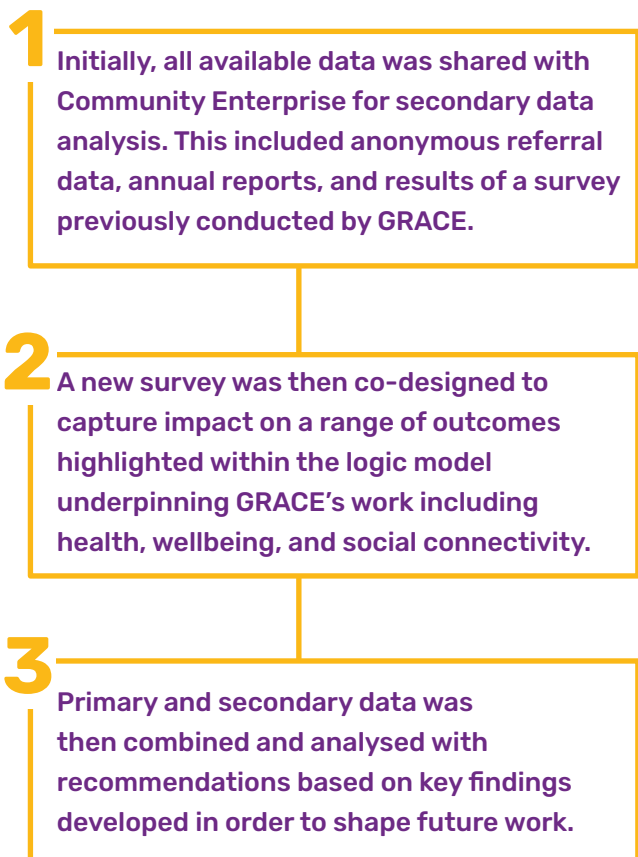
In addition to GRACE members, the organisation plays an important role in the wider community and third sector network within East Dunbartonshire. GRACE works closely with other community organisations in the locality as well as public sector partners such as the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, Community Health Partnership, and East Dunbartonshire Council.

As of March 24, GRACE had a total membership roll of 340 with an active monthly membership of 131. On average they receive 11 new referrals a month to their service from statutory and third sector partners such as the East Dunbartonshire Primary Care Mental Health Team and East Dunbartonshire Alcohol and Drugs Recovery Services. GRACE has an active and growing membership base. Staff and volunteers undertake ongoing monitoring and reporting for funders and public sector partners, but they recognise that this information only captures a small proportion of their work and impact. They have recognised a need to better capture and understand the impact that GRACE is having on the lives of its members and wider community.

GRACE commissioned Community Enterprise to start to better understand and express the impact of their work. A mini evaluation was co-designed between GRACE and Community Enterprise in March 24. This work is a first step towards a recommended full economic impact assessment of GRACE's work.

Methodology

Discussions between GRACE and Community Enterprise shaped the evaluation methodology, co-designing an approach that incorporated existing data from GRACE, alongside new primary data, and contextualised by the time and resources available to GRACE at the time of the evaluation.



Community Enterprise

Community Enterprise has over 35 years' experience as a leading community development consultancy providing tailored support to social enterprises, community groups and charities. We are a social enterprise ourselves. 100% of our profits are re-invested to support the further growth and development of the voluntary sector.

Based in Scotland and working across the UK, we undertake a wide range of work including impact assessments, business development, financial management, governance and leadership improvement, digital, branding and marketing support.

We are recognised nationally as a "boots on the ground organisation" that takes grassroots, listening and collaborative approach to our work, this has helped us to uniquely learn from and understand communities we work with and how we can help them increase their impact. This has influenced the nature of our bespoke branding, design, digital and research divisions.

We have an expert staff team of 26 who provide specialist support, as well as a wider network of associates and specialists. Our expert research team provides high-quality, practical, social research. We use robust methods to ensure the best quality with the intention that all work empowers organisations, communities and drives positive social and environmental change.

Situation

1 Vulnerable adults with addition issues in deprived communities who struggle with sustained recovery.

2 Vulnerable adults with low confidence in deprived communities who struggle with mental health issues.

Inputs

- Funding
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Members
- Partners
- Equipment
- Existing research

Outputs

Activities What we do

1 Direct link to GRACE Projects
- Deliver tailored support programmes and workshops

- Drama Class
- Digital Learning
- Yoga Classes
- Art Classes
- Fitness Classes
- Health Walks
- Creative Writing
- Gardening

2 Other Support Activities
Weekly peer led mentoring and support sessions for people who are lonely, have mental health, addiction issues and life traumas.

3 Volunteering
Volunteering training and opportunities are available within GRACE and wider community.

4 Work continuously with external agencies to enhance project outcomes

Participants Who we reach

1 Members
- Existing
- New

2 Local Communities

3 Self Referrals

4 Multiple Partner Agencies Referrals

Assumptions:

Peer support is at the forefront of the service.

All activities are welcoming and inclusive.

Lived experience supports the development of projects.

Everything we do has the person centred approach.

Logic Model GRACE

- 3** Vulnerable adults in deprived communities who have physical health issues are marginalised.

Outcomes

Short Term

People in recovery:

- Have more opportunities to connect with others
- Have improved self-esteem
- Have enhanced personal development
- Are more aware of local support
- Have a sustained commitment to self-care

Medium Term

People in recovery:

- Have hope and motivation to recover from life challenges
- Have improved Mental Health
- Are less isolated
- Learn new skills
- Have some improvement in their health and wellbeing

Long Term

People in recovery:

- Communities have stronger resilience to deal with change
- Communities have improved health and wellbeing
- Communities are healthier and happier
- Vulnerable adults have a pathway from services to community support

External factors:

Individuals Social and Economical constraints.

Individuals health Conditions.

Funding Needed.

Multi Agency Work.

Based on www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande





Impact Summary

Since joining GRACE...



GRACE invested over 2000+ hours of staff, volunteer, and member time to 18 community events and activities over the year 23-24.



GRACE is growing:
163 new members
Jan 23 – Mar 24.



GRACE Members have increased social connections and feel less isolated (53 comments).

"My life and mental health have improved so much and it's all thanks to GRACE. If it wasn't for GRACE, I would be still relying on the crisis team and Doctor."

"I have changed from lying in my bed with depression to maintaining a full-time job."



Since joining GRACE, 95% of responders felt they had met new people and made friends.



Members estimate 2873 fewer appointments/ support requests for NHS/Social Work and Alcohol/Drug Support as a result of having GRACE support.

Estimated savings of £272,684 per year.



GRACE Members reported an 81% reduction in usage of Addiction support services.

"Means everything to me and so many other people. It has brought me out of my comfort zone and pushed me to be a better, stronger person. I'm using the tools that I have got from other people to help other members."

"Being within Grace has rapidly improved my mental health as there are many to chat with and many people to get to know."

"I know that I will be with GRACE for a very long time, I would ultimately be very lost without it."

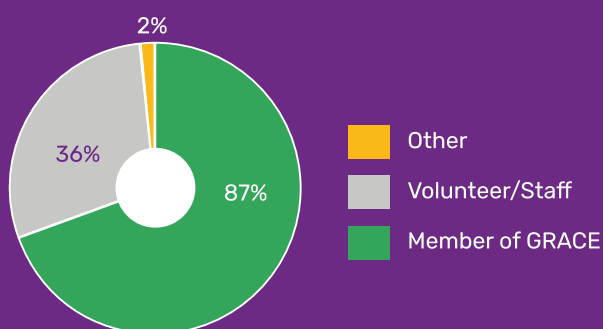
"It has been life changing to me."



Survey Respondents

Survey sample

In total, 107 responses were received to the Community Enterprise survey between April – May 2024. Respondents included a range of members, volunteers, staff, and new attendees of GRACE (as yet not registered as members). The majority of responses were gathered directly from GRACE members. Overall, 71% of active GRACE members took part in this survey.¹



- 87% responses from members of GRACE
- 36% from Volunteers / Staff
- 2% of responses from 'Other' (e.g. new attendees of GRACE)

Lenth of involvement

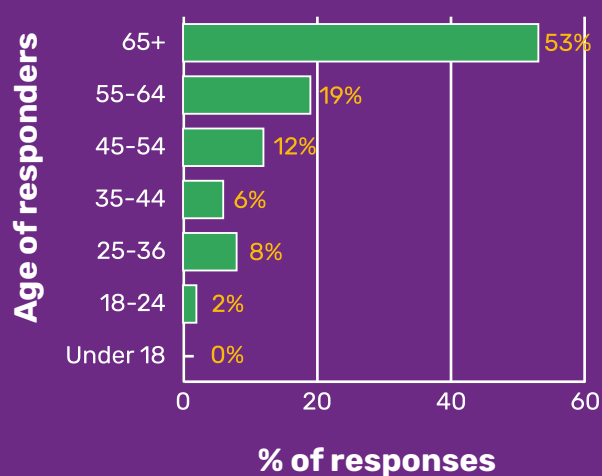
Survey responses showed a mixed range of participant voices.

- Around a third of respondents had been involved with GRACE for more than 5 years.
- A further 26% had been involved with GRACE for 3-5 years, and a 27% had been involved for 1-2 years.
- 17% of respondents noted more recent engagement with GRACE (<1 year).

¹ 'Active' monthly members of GRACE recorded as part of regular, internal monthly reporting – number of active GRACE members in March 2024 was 131.



Age profile

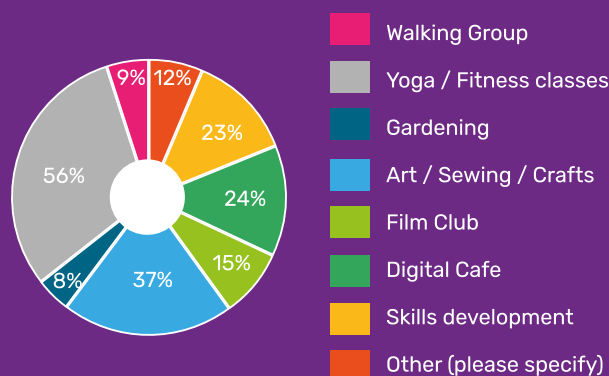


- Over half of respondents were in the 65+ age range with a further 19% between 55-64 years.
- This broadly reflects the membership profile of GRACE more generally – however future evaluations may wish to specifically sample from under-represented age ranges to ensure their views and experiences are captured.

GRACE activities

The survey captured views from participants who participate in a range of GRACE activities.

- 65% of respondents took part in some form of **fitness class or walking group**.
- 37% were involved in craft activities including **sewing and art classes**.
- 24% were active participants of the **Digital Café**, seeking to develop digital skills and confidence.
- 23% of respondents undertook specific **skills development** through GRACE.
- 12% highlighted participation in '**Other**' activities which, when reviewed mostly highlighted specific classes/activities such as 'Table Tennis' (10) and 'BSL/Sign language' (4).



Health & Wellbeing

A range of **health and wellbeing impacts** were identified as a result of involvement with GRACE.

79%

felt that they had **improved their physical health** since getting involved with GRACE.

72%

had become **more physically active** since joining GRACE.

83%

had **improved or maintained their fitness** since being involved with GRACE.

Improvements in mental health were also apparent – and more striking – for those involved in GRACE activities.

91%

felt **happier** since getting involved with GRACE.

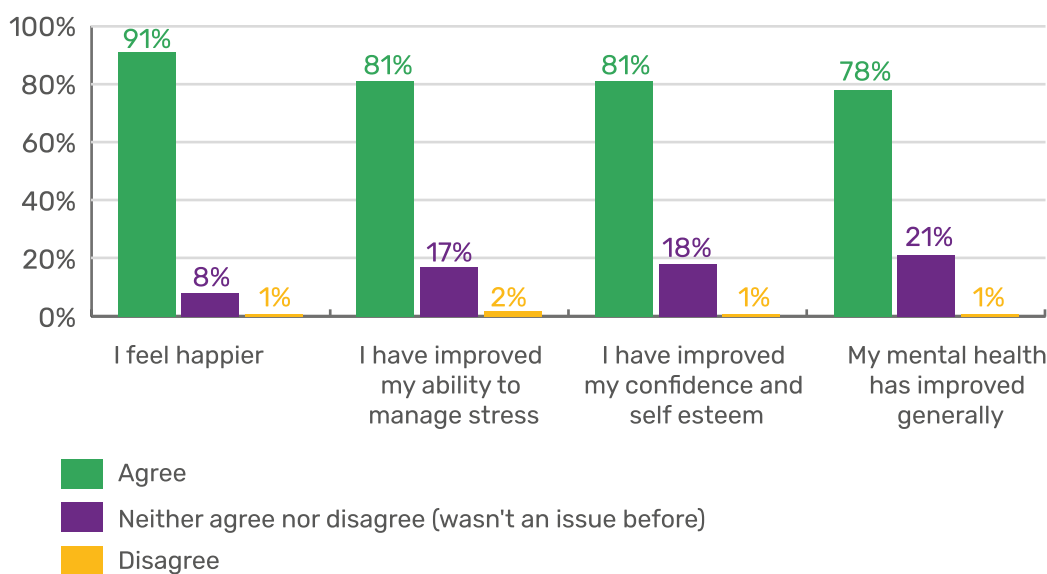
81%

said that GRACE helped to **improve their ability to manage stress**.

81%

reported **improvements in confidence and self-esteem** since getting involved with GRACE.

Since getting involved with GRACE...



78%

believed that their mental
health had generally improved
since joining GRACE.



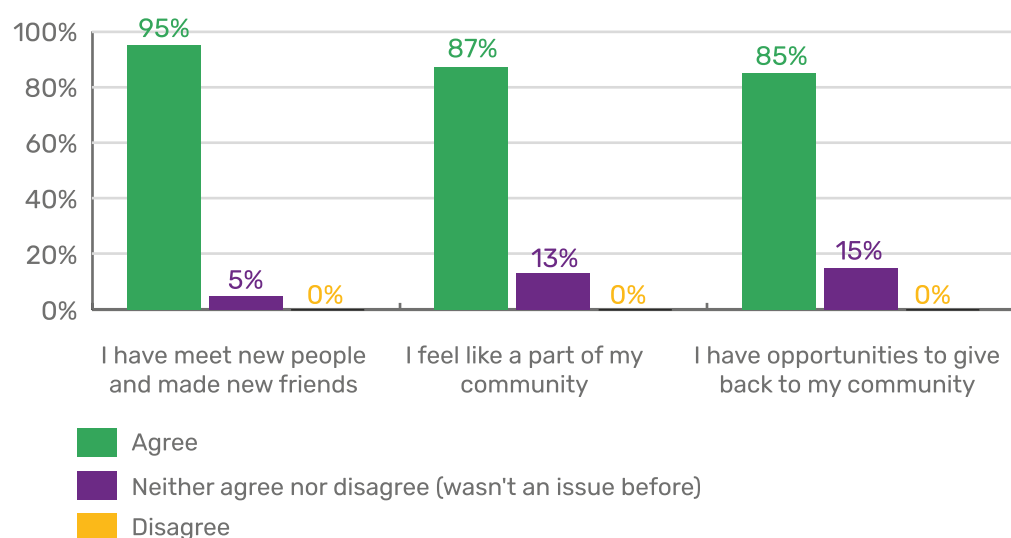


Community and Social Connections

A range of key outcomes from the logic model underpinning the GRACE model explore the impact of their work on social connections and the wider community. Community Enterprise asked a range of key questions relating to these factors and respondents indicated positive impacts on social connectivity and reduced isolation.

Since getting involved with GRACE...

- 95% of respondents had met new people and made new friends since joining GRACE.
- Since joining GRACE, 87% now felt like part of their community.
- 85% believe that they can give back to their community since becoming involved with GRACE.



This evaluation also sought to capture the role of GRACE within the wider community. Anecdotally, staff and volunteers at GRACE highlighted the numerous events, community activities, and wider networking role that GRACE played – both within East Dunbartonshire and the recovery sector across Scotland. To date, no attempt had been made to evidence this role and demonstrate the important value that GRACE brings locally as a community anchor organisation. Staff worked with Community Enterprise to consider how best to capture and record this information – both for previous events and going forward into the future.

GRACE has been a key partner in a wide range of community and sectoral events across the region, often as the lead or co-lead organisation. Staff, volunteers, and members contributed 2225 hours and internal resources to 18 events and activities over the year 23-24. In some instances, staff reflected that GRACE was often the only representative organisation from East Dunbartonshire in recovery network events demonstrating the key role this organisation plays in representing this region on a wider platform.

Event	Staff No.	Volunteer No.	Member No.	Total Hour spend per year
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Kirkintilloch Gala Parade	4	15	49	22
Kirkintilloch Canal Festival	7	32	115	36
Remembering Together Event	7	25	80	22
Film Premiere	7	35	100	30
Party In The Car Park (Community Event)	7	30	100	32
Recovery walk	5	16	35	22
Kilt Walk	4	11	10	20
Lenzie Festival	4	16	20	20
End Polio Day	6	20	75	21
Family Support	3	14	24	21
Easter Support	4	12	70	35
Halloween Party (X2)	7	30	70	24
Christmas Party (X2)	7	25	120	60
Serenity Garden	3	15	90	150
Sharing Time	4	10	12	150
Help Yourself Hub	3	14	110	1560

Resources

Partners

Banners, whistles, bubble's, tables, goods to sell, advertising, preparation	Your Kirky
Tea/coffee, stalls, advertising	EDC
Tea/coffee, projector, gardening, leaflets, banners, plaque	Green space
Tea/coffee, projector, leaflets, banners	Lottery
Bouncy castle, stall, badminton, tombola, mobile disco, jewellery & badge making	Redbae Restaurant, Scottish Fire & Rescue
Coach, music, banners, refreshments	Scottish Recovery Consortium, With You, Flourish
Car share, T-shirts, lunch	Kiltwalk, Tom Hunter, Just Giving
Banners, whistles, bubble's, tables, goods to sell, advertising, preparation	Lenzie Community Council
Purple bulbs, garden, potting equipment, emails	The Rotary Kirkintilloch Club & EDVA
Shopping vouchers, kitchen Packs, Art supplies, Family, trips	Flourish, With You, EDC
Easter eggs, gift bags, art supplies	45th Glasgow, EDC, Scouts Group, Family Support
Ballon's, decorations, sweets, Costumes, lunch, hiring of hall	EDC
Tree, presents, costumes, decorations, lunch	With You
Garden, plants, soil, potting equipment	EDC, Kirkintilloch Rotary
Tea/coffee, lunch, leaflets, Invitations, TV, laptop	ED statutory & Third Sector Organisations
Drivers, food, fridge, display, area, storage, hygiene equipment, close rails	Foodiverse, KFC, ASDA, CO-OP, Tesco, EDVA, Milton of Campsie Parish Church. Rotary Kirkintilloch

Impact on Services

Members responded to an internal GRACE survey which asked them to reflect on their usage of key support services before and after joining GRACE.² 106 members responded to this survey and the results illustrate a considerable reduction in reliance on a range of statutory and voluntary support organisations after being part of GRACE's peer-led support model.



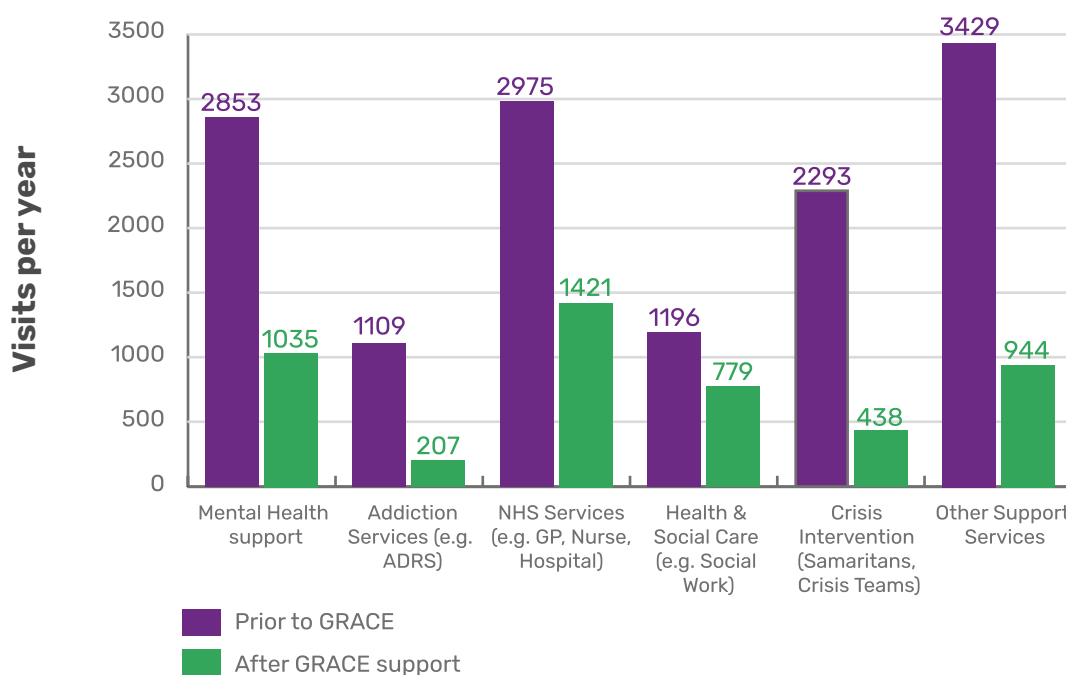
In total, GRACE estimates that

9031

fewer appointments or support visits were needed as a result of GRACE support.

Secondary data analysis on data collected by GRACE illustrates a reduction in annual service use across all sources of support from NHS services to charitable organisations. This change is demonstrated in the graph and data table below.

Changing usage of support services by GRACE Members



² These figures are based on asking GRACE members to estimate how many times per week/month/year they used a range of service prior to and after joining GRACE. Self-reporting as a method of data collection is common in medical research but does risk issues of recall error and bias.

	Prior to GRACE	After GRACE support	% reduction
Mental Health support (e.g. Mental Health Teams, EDAMH, SAMH)	2853	1035	64%
Addiction Services (e.g. ADRS)	1109	207	81%
NHS Services (e.g. GP, Nurse, Hospital)	2975	1421	52%
Health & Social Care (e.g. Social Work)	1196	779	35%
Crisis Intervention (Samaritans, Crisis Teams)	2293	438	81%
Other Support Services	3429	944	72%

In summary, this data illustrates:



52% reduction in usage of NHS Services.



81% reduction in usage of Addiction services such as East Dunbartonshire Alcohol and Drugs Recovery Service, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous.



64% reduced usage of mental health support services. This could include support from East Dunbartonshire Primary Care Mental Health Team and third sector organisations such as EDAMH and SAMH.



35% reduction in usage of statutory social work services.



81% reduction in usage of Crisis Intervention support through Crisis Teams and third sector support such as the Samaritans.



72% reduction in usage of other support services (not GRACE).

Utilising unit cost estimates for Health and Social Care services, an estimation can be made as to the potential cost savings related to the reduction in use of certain key statutory services.³

SERVICE	UNIT COST(\$)	AVERAGE UNIT COST
GP appointment	£56 per 10 minute in-person consultation	-
A&E or outpatient appointment	£91 – 445	£268
Alcohol and drugs support (community contact or outpatient)	£79 – 125	£94
Social work visit	£35 – 53	£44

The data indicates a **52% reduction in usage of NHS services** which equates to

1554

fewer NHS visits annually for GRACE members.



However, these figures combine a range of different NHS services under the one data set e.g. GP visit and hospital appointments. The cost of a GP appointment differs widely from the cost of an A&E visit or outpatient hospital appointment which adds complexity to estimating savings related to reduced use of these services.

³ Jones, K., et al (2023) *Unit Costs of Health and Social Care 2023 Manual*. Personal Social Services Research Unit, University of Kent and the Centre for Health Economics, University of York. <https://www.pssru.ac.uk/unitcostsreport/>

To examine potential savings related to reduced NHS usage a range of scenarios were explored. These relate to estimating the reduction in usage across primary and secondary care services e.g. all reduced visits were related to local GP services vs. a 50:50 split between GP and hospital settings.

SCENARIO	ESTIMATED REDUCTION IN NHS SERVICE USAGE	POTENTIAL SAVINGS
100% primary care	1554 fewer GP appointments	£87,024
75% primary care: 25% A&E & Outpatient care	1166 fewer GP appointments 389 fewer A&E/Outpatient appointments	£169,548
50% primary care : 50% A&E and outpatient care	777 fewer GP appointments 777 fewer A&E/Outpatient appointments	£251,748

In addition to these cost savings, we can also estimate savings associated with reduced reliance on alcohol and drugs services and social work utilising the unit costs previously highlighted. These potentially equate to:

- **Social work:** 417 reduced visits since becoming involved with GRACE. Potential savings of £18,348 per year.
- **Alcohol and drugs services:** 902 fewer support visits/appointments since joining GRACE. Potential savings estimated at £84,788.

Impact on NHS, Social Work, and Alcohol & Drugs Services



2873 fewer appointments / support requests

Estimated savings of £272,684 per year

It is important to note that this figure does not include the potential impact on the other services highlighted by GRACE members e.g. East Dunbartonshire Primary Care Mental Health Team, Crisis Support Teams, and wider third sector support (not GRACE). Estimating a cost savings for these would require additional data to elucidate these specific support services and associated costs. Therefore, the figure presented above can be seen as a conservative estimate of the potential cost savings from reduced reliance on GPs, A&E/Outpatient care and alcohol and drugs services by GRACE members.⁴

⁴ This is an estimate of the potential savings based on available data and should not be used as an assessment of full economic impact from GRACE's programmes and activities.



Key Outcomes

The following table reviews the progress made towards the short, medium, and long-term outcomes highlighted in the logic model for GRACE. The data used within this table was gathered through Community Enterprise’s survey as well as internal monitoring and reporting by GRACE staff and volunteers.

	Expected Outcomes	Evidenced Outcomes
Short-term outcomes	Opportunities for connection	I have met new people and made new friends (95%)
	Improved self-esteem	I have improved my confidence and self-esteem (81%)
	Enhanced personal development	"I have a greater understanding of adults living with mental health trauma." GRACE Member "[A] sense of achievement from opportunities, [I've] learned lots of new skills e.g. can do basic conversation with BSL and improved social skills." (GRACE Member) "I think the on-going 6-week training will help me to develop my skills as a volunteer." (GRACE Volunteer)
	Aware of local support	"A great, local, contact point to meet and greet. Great for local people on their own, or carers to mix." (GRACE Member) "Being fairly new to the area...I have benefitted from the involvement with GRACE." (GRACE Member)
	Commitment to self-care	"Joining GRACE has been beneficial in the way I deal with my struggles with social anxiety." (GRACE Volunteer). "[GRACE] helped with my wellbeing and mental health and made me more aware of how to treat and care for my own body." (GRACE Member).

Expected Outcomes

Evidenced Outcomes

Hope and motivation to recover from challenges	"It gives me purpose to get up in the morning." (GRACE Member) "[My] motivation has improved." GRACE Member "[GRACE] has...pushed me to be a better, stronger person. I'm using the tools that I have got from other people to help other members." (GRACE Member) "GRACE has given my life purpose...I now have confidence in myself and enjoy stepping out of my comfort zone." (GRACE Member)
Improved mental health	I have improved my ability to manage stress (81%) My mental health has improved generally (78%)
Less isolated	Increased social connections and less isolated (53 comments) "If I didn't have GRACE, I would be isolated and at home all the time." (GRACE Member) "I now have a lot more friends and we go for lunch or meet up at someone's house...I have a social life now." (GRACE Member) "Not only has being a member and now volunteering helped give me a purpose in life, but I have made a lot of friends who I refer to as my GRACE family". (GRACE Volunteer)
New skills	Almost a quarter of survey respondents specifically participated in Skills Development through GRACE and a further 24% highlighted their involvement in the Digital Café as a route to learning. "I've had many opportunities to build confidence, try new things & its gives me a sense of purpose & enjoyment. I've learned a lots of new skills too." (GRACE Member) "GRACE offered me the opportunity to take classes as a student which ensured my graduation as a yoga teacher aged 70." (GRACE Member)
Improvements in health and wellbeing	I feel happier (91%) I have improved or maintained my fitness (83%) I have become more physically active (72%) I have improved physical health generally (79%)

Expected Outcomes

Evidenced Outcomes

Stronger, more resilient communities to deal with change	I feel like a part of my community (87%) I have opportunities to give back to my community (85%) "It has helped me to help other people." (GRACE Member)
Wider health and wellbeing improvements in community	"I can see the difference in the community that GRACE has brought about." "I feel I can manage my mental health better outside of GRACE because of the work I do when I'm in GRACE." (GRACE Member)
Happier and healthier communities	GRACE contributed 2225 hours of staff, volunteer, and member's time to 18 community events in 2023-24 – often as the lead/co-lead organisation. "I feel GRACE helps to empower the local community and gives its members a voice when it matters." (GRACE Member)
Vulnerable adults have a pathway from services to community support.	163 new GRACE members between Jan 23 – Mar 24. Mix of referrals from statutory service, third sector partners, and community knowledge. 48 members left GRACE – all into positive destinations e.g. employment or education.

What makes GRACE different?

Being part of GRACE had a range of beneficial impacts on members and volunteers from being more socially connected to increasing their physical fitness.

Most commonly, involvement with GRACE was cited as:

- 1** Improving social connectedness - both to other individuals at GRACE and the community more generally.
53 comments
- 2** Provides a “lifeline” and “a reason to leave the house”
31 comments
- 3** Improving quality of life
20 comments
- 4** These benefits were seen to be fundamentally linked to the environment that staff and volunteers have created at GRACE. *
- 5** The notion of a “safe environment” where members feel comfortable to share personal and difficult stories is repeatedly highlighted as a critical component of the success of GRACE.
- 6** The peer-led model was felt to facilitate this supportive environment creating more “empathy and understanding” for people who are struggling, especially with mental health challenges.



**** "It is a very safe environment for people who may be very easily triggered by what others deem as harmless simple topic, when at GRACE and this happens, I feel safe."***

"GRACE doesn't judge but builds confidence."

"It has meant having a safe space where I can comfortably talk about my mental health and come up with solutions."





Learning and Recommendations

This evaluation has evidenced a wide range of impacts from the activities operated by GRACE across East Dunbartonshire. GRACE is well-loved by its members and volunteers with a high degree of participation in this evaluation process (71% of active members took part in the CE survey). Feedback was positive across the programmes and activities with improvements in health and wellbeing as well as social connectedness for members. Peer support is recognised as a key element of this way of working and provided the basis for improved social connectivity and reduced isolation. Overall, GRACE provides a highly valued environment where challenging and personal subjects can be discussed in a safe, supportive space.

A series of recommendations are proposed in order to further support the ongoing work of GRACE into the future.

1

To date, monitoring and evaluation of GRACE's work has been sporadic. Staff and volunteer capacity has focused on the delivery of support to its members and community. Some regular monitoring is already in place e.g. monthly referrals, number of active members, movement of members.

2

There is a need, however, to improve monitoring and reporting within GRACE in order to continue to demonstrate the outcomes from their work. This will be essential to address the ongoing challenges for funding across the third sector.

3

In addition to the basic quantitative information GRACE already gathers, additional data would add greatly to the demonstrable impact from their work. E.g.:

- Baseline gathering of health and wellbeing perspectives of new members in order to map change over time with GRACE involvement.
- Annual member surveys to capture impact from specific programmes and events. The ability to review the most impactful programmes will help GRACE shape future directions and reduce costs if appropriate.
- Refining referral monitoring processes in order to differentiate between referral routes e.g. statutory service referrals, third sector referrals, self-referral etc. This would enable better tracking of these routes and would be particularly valuable when considering the role GRACE plays in supporting statutory health and social care services.
- GRACE plays an important role in communities across East Dunbartonshire but evidence supporting the importance of their broader work is limited. Staff have begun to compile evidence of time and resources linked to their role as a community anchor organisation. Furthering this evidence base through better data capture at events and networking sessions would help meet several of the long-term outcomes from GRACE programmes and activities.

4

GRACE plays an important role in supporting the wider health and social care services across East Dunbartonshire. Staff at GRACE have worked hard to try and capture the impact of their work in terms of reducing pressure on primary and secondary care services as well as a range of statutory and third sector crisis support. This evaluation has examined the data available in terms of the reduced usage of statutory services by GRACE members over time. It also attempts to some potential savings related to this shift in behaviour. A full economic impact assessment, however, is out with the scope of this evaluation. A key recommendation therefore is to secure support and funding to engage in a broader economic evaluation of GRACE's work. This could potentially also seek to incorporate the social benefits for members through use of frameworks such as Social Return on Investment (SROI).





Group Recovery Aftercare
Community Enterprise (GRACE)
IMPACT EVALUATION

July 2024

