

## 3 Client Voice Interviews

### Evaluation approach...

**The purpose of this evaluation research was to understand clients' perspectives on how their lives are different *because of Golden Key*, and how clients have experienced GK's support.** We also explored how principles and practice of GK's person-centred and trauma-informed approach (see Chapter 4) were reflected in the client's experience. The research was designed in collaboration with GK's lived experience group. These findings should be interpreted in the context of the well documented challenges of services engaging and supporting change with this population. These findings build on [Phase 2 evaluation research](#) with clients and Service Coordinators.

**Four UWE researchers conducted 11 semi-structured interviews between 20-45 minutes with GK clients during January and February 2022.** There are important limitations to this research, so caution should be taken in transferring findings to the wider population of GK clients and beyond. We have a small sample size (n=11 of 154) which is not fully representative of all GK clients. There is no comparison group to see what would happen without GK, which means the research has limited ability to establish GK as being the cause of change. However, this research enables insight into clients' views of GK, the change they experienced, and common themes in how the support contributed to change whilst accounting each client's context.

### Learning...

**Most clients (8 of 11) experienced positive life changes which they felt GK had substantially contributed towards.** Three clients highlighted how GK had helped them completely turn their lives around and a further five gave examples of how GK had been beneficial to them and/or their lives. Two clients felt that change in their life was very slow or difficult to determine and one felt that they had not benefited or seen positive change. Clients reported the important role of their GK support in positive change across nearly all life areas except offending and physical health.

**Clients particularly valued GK's emotional support, practical support (which often removed barriers to positive life change), along with support to access and engage with services.** The personal budget was a key resource to facilitate clients' progress in areas where it would have been otherwise difficult. Client's nearly all felt GK's support was different in a good way, particularly in how their Service Coordinator cared about them and their progress.

**Challenges exist for relationship endings during points of transition between workers, and when ending support,** which is concerning given the client population's vulnerability. Service Coordinators have drawn on considerable skill and experience in building trust whilst navigating challenges around dependency in their client relationships. However, questions remain about managing endings and wider expectations that all clients *can* positively transition away to other currently available support.

**Overall, the experience of clients reflected the highly person-centred approach which Service Coordinators described in terms of both principles and practice.** Nearly all clients we interviewed indicated that they had developed a positive trusting relationship with their Service Coordinator(s) during their GK support which they valued positively. The vast majority also described support which was highly flexible and responsive during most of their experience, though some issues arose during the pandemic. Nearly all clients indicated that the support was client led.

### 3.1 How were our interviewees' lives different through GK's support?

**Three clients we spoke to had experienced transformational life change** which they themselves attributed substantially to Golden Key's support and we were able to understand and connect how the different areas of support activity from GK had contributed to help the client to improve their life. These clients told moving stories of their lives being completely turned around and described the sustained and comprehensive role the Service Coordinator support had played in their change.

*"Before Golden Key I was totally chaotic, didn't go to appointments, couldn't be stable on my methadone, I was just in town, never turned up for appointments, never worked with any professionals....I got clean now, I didn't think I would ever get clean but now I been clean and I've been clean since I come to the refuge...I don't think we would have got there if it weren't for [Service Coordinator name] helping me as much as they did.... And I don't think, if I didn't have [Service Coordinator name], none of this would be here, none of this would have happened.... don't get me wrong, it took me quite a number of years to get better but now the outcome now ... that is just amazing, and I couldn't have done it without [Service Coordinator name]." **GK client***

**Five clients felt that GK had been highly beneficial to them and/or their lives** and were able to provide multiple different example areas of their lives which had seen significant positive change since receiving GK's support. In the majority of the examples, we were able to understand and connect *how* the different areas of support from GK had helped the client to improve their life.

*"So [Service Coordinator name] had a massive impact on me personally, they helped me with a lot of things ... and had I not had that stable sort of support and foundation and just quite practical help, I wouldn't necessarily have got onto my degree, I wouldn't have necessarily got my job." **GK client***

**Two clients felt that change in their life was very slow or difficult to determine.** Both clients very much appreciated GK's support and said they felt it was helpful. One client did not feel that their life had changed. Both of these clients had been supported by GK for over five years.

*"Golden Key was like, kind of helpful, and kind of not, yeah... And how my life is now is, well, it's not the greatest at the moment, because I feel like I need still more support. I'm not saying I want support for the rest of my life until I'm dead, but I feel like some of the support I've got now is okay, but not enough." **GK client***

**One client did not feel that they had benefited or seen positive change at all.** This client had received very minimal support from GK, though we could not understand why this was the case.

*"[Service Coordinator name], they were very nice, easy to talk to, you know, easy to get along with you know, but, yeah the organisation itself, nothing just seemed to get done... my personal experience was I didn't get nothing from them." **GK client***

It is not possible to say with certainty from our research whether this change represents a 'good' outcome in terms of the overall programme of support as we don't have a robust comparison (counterfactual) to understand what would have happened without GK's support. However, we can report that the majority of clients we spoke with themselves believed that GK played an integral role in their change and/or gave us specific examples which demonstrated GK's role in their change. One client reflected on their own role and motivation in their transformative change.

*"Obviously you gotta wanna do it as well ... you've got to wanna do the work, and not a lot of people out there, you know not everyone out there can do the work" GK client*

## 3.2 What did we learn about change in different life areas?

### 3.2.1 Housing

Five clients we interviewed had been homeless or in unstable accommodation at the start of their support and were now in stable accommodation. Three of these clients talked about GK's support in helping their housing situation. These clients appreciated the signposting and advocacy their Service Coordinator provided whilst working with Bristol Housing services. One client thought it was helpful having the Service Coordinator working together with their social worker to find stable housing, so the process was not overwhelming. Two clients' housing situations could not be substantially progressed due to immigration restrictions.

### 3.2.2 Mental health, taking responsibility and self-care

Nearly all of the clients we interviewed were assessed with mental health needs at the start of their support and talked about their relationship with their Service Coordinator having brought something positive to their life. Clients who did feel that their lives had changed for the better since working with GK, told us of quite significant improvements to their mental health.

*"I'm starting to feel more like not self-harming, I was suicidal because there's my case going through the system. It started with [Service Coordinator name], it didn't start with no one else.... just like keeping myself strong like going to a gym, and going running, you know, stopping smoking." GK client*

*"I'm sort of dealing with my demons now, instead of trying to just mask them, trying to silence ...like I'm sort of facing them head on and ready to change... I'm just ready to work on myself, instead of covering up with drugs and alcohol. And I don't wake up in the morning feeling like crap." GK client*

Two asylum seeker clients were depressed before they were supported by GK, they both felt GK's support had helped them feel better. One who had previously been having suicidal thoughts felt the Service Coordinator's positive approach had helped them be able to see a positive future for themselves and see the good in the world. Two clients said that important indicator for them of the positive changes GK had helped bring about was that they were no longer self-harming. One of these clients said this was due to how their Service Coordinator's support reduced their anxiety and increased their confidence in being able to cope with whatever life might throw at them.

Through the clients' descriptions it was possible to see examples of how the Service Coordinator relationship supported improvements in mental health. In some cases, this was just by being there for personal and emotional support, but there were also many examples of very practical support where

Service Coordinators identified (with the client), actions which would directly or indirectly tackle areas that were negatively affecting mental health.

Four clients highlighted a positive difference in their ability to take responsibility and be independent, which was linked with the personal and practical support Service Coordinators provided.

*“Now I'm sat here over a year and a half clean, in my own house, not been on the streets, paying all my bills, which I never thought I would do.” GK Client*

*“I've given up like, the lifestyle... I'm a lot more well now basically. Even down to like dress and appearance, I'm in a completely different place from where I was at, and I'm pretty much still going with it... I'm doing a lot of voluntary nowadays, and a lot of that was from giving up my drinking and stuff. I've changed like my views on things you know... a lot of what it is, a bit of a mix of everything and it's like a ripple effect that's sort of like benefited me in other areas.” GK Client*

### 3.2.3 Addictions

This was an area less frequently raised by clients, perhaps due to perceived stigma, so the Service Coordinator's role was largely unclear other than referrals to specialist support agencies. Of the three clients whose lives had transformed, two moved from heavy long term substance abuse to being completely clean, and another younger client had also stopped using drugs as part of their recovery. One client said that GK helped them access specialist drug support services where their level of use would normally not have been eligible for support, and this helped them understand why they were using and find alternative ways to meet those needs. One long term client discussed their Service Coordinator helping with their difficult decision about whether and when it would be right to access detox and helping with the practicalities of accessing their 'script'.

### 3.2.4 Offending

Of the four main 'needs' areas, this was the least discussed topic, again perhaps due to perceived stigma. Only one client described changes in relation to criminal justice, and this involved the Service Coordinator playing an advocacy role, helping the client be clearer about their rights and feeling confident to handle interactions with the police in ways which helped avoid the situation being escalated to court.

### 3.2.5 Managing money

Two clients talked about how Service Coordinators supported them to claim benefits which they had not previously accessed. The Service Coordinator supported their clients through the process, helping to understand eligibility, dealing with application paperwork, providing advocacy and emotional support during the process.

*“So you know PIP [state benefit] for example that I'm getting, I remember that I'd been trying to claim for it and I didn't get it. So what was really helpful, I don't know if any other services would do this, but what was really helpful is that [Service Coordinator name], had to write a letter to explain... and then when I went for the assessment I felt really nervous, and the guy he was touching on issues which were not relevant, he kept saying 'how many times a day do you think of dying and when does it happen?'. And [Service Coordinator name] said 'that's just irrelevant, you shouldn't be saying that, that was really good of them helping me.” GK client*

### 3.2.6 Meaningful use of time

Two of the younger clients we interviewed had made positive progress with returning to education. One was able to use their personal budget to buy a laptop which enabled them to access online counselling and education. Another was supported by their Service Coordinator with volunteering job applications, which led to a paid role, which enabled the client to access a degree in their chosen career. No other clients we spoke with mentioned changes related to education. One of the clients whose life was transformed talked about now doing some voluntary work, but no other clients mentioned employment. One client told us that their Service Coordinator supported them to do some creative home crafting activities which they enjoyed.

### 3.2.7 Relationships

Three clients talked about how the changes in their life had supported improved relationships with family members, including one client's relationship with their daughter, and another client's partner. One client highlighted how their Service Coordinator had put a lot of effort into facilitating improved family relationships but it wasn't possible to resolve the issues. In this case though, the support work still contributed to the client being able to move positively forwards, as the quote below explains.

*"[Service Coordinator name] was so willing and determined to try and make things better with my family, because things weren't working. It just kind of showed me that regardless of how much effort I want to put into my family, you know, this is the pushback I'm gonna get. And [Service Coordinator name] got that pushback too, and they're coming from an unbiased place. So I was like, if I can't get that, if they can't get that, then it's just unobtainable, and that's another reason why I was like, I need to be independent." GK client*

### 3.2.8 What we didn't hear from clients

Obviously, the scope of what clients didn't say is huge, but there were some more noticeable absences. As mentioned above, most clients did not discuss much detail of their change journey around substance misuse and offending although our data reflects the majority had needs in those areas when they joined GK. In contrast to clients talking about changes in their mental health, we heard very little about changes in physical health.

## 3.3 What did we learn about how GK's support improved clients' lives?

We aimed to understand not only whether our interviewed clients experienced change through GK's support but how the support facilitated that change. This focus aims to draw out the role of GK's support when clients experienced change, to better understand the relationship between GK's support and subsequent change.

From the client interviews, it was clear that support activity can look very different across different clients, as we would expect from a person-centred approach. We identified some activities that were common to how Service Coordinators provided support which clients drew our attention to when talking about their support:

### 3.3.1 GK provided emotional and personal support to most clients

Emotional and personal support provided by Service Coordinators was very much valued by clients and in some cases had clearly contributed substantially to their improved mental health. The research team felt

the support was functioning as a therapeutic relationship for some clients, whilst it also seemed in many cases to have a life coaching element. Perhaps reflective of the personalised support, many clients were keen to express their gratitude and thanks for the support their Service Coordinator had provided.

It was clear that on the whole Service Coordinators did build positive trusting relationships with their clients. Clients commonly referred to their Service Coordinator as 'like a friend', or some compared them to a close family member (e.g. brother, uncle). Many of the clients we spoke with told us they appreciated having someone 'on their side', knowing they would be there when they needed them, and nearly all clients felt they knew the Service Coordinator cared about them and wanted them to do well.

*"It was just a big help, a big support in a time of need. And without them being able to show me where to go, or to put me in contact with people that could help, yeah, I don't know where I would be right now... I remember there was a time when I left my house, and I got to the end of the street and ended up hiding behind the bin, and I was just frozen, in fear. And I called them, and she actually gave me advice on how to get back home. Like I think back on it now, I was always quite overwhelmed, and putting that on somebody else can be quite overwhelming. But they never gave off the impression that I was too much, and I think that is really important as well." GK client*

*"Emotionally as I said, for anything I need him, he was there for me... we talk man to man me and him." GK client*

### 3.3.2 GK provided holistic support across a client's whole life, towards harm reduction and recovery

Support activities ranged across the expected areas (housing, offending, addictions, mental health) but also covered areas which traditional support services would not generally cover. The lack of restrictions on which areas could be supported by GK, partly enabled their support to undertake more unusual 'practical enabling actions' which facilitated the client's progress. When highlighting what was different to other services, some clients highlighted how GK covered everything, like an umbrella.

*"They helped me with my dog actually, when I was sleeping rough on the streets and all that, they helped me getting my dog into local foster place...and then just like going up to see him." GK client*

When clients talked about their support, it was clear that the Service Coordinator had worked with the client (i.e. client led) to identify areas where activity would directly improve their life. This then often led to very practical support actions.

*"It seems like all the things that I'm saying there, how they were helpful with, were quite practical things. Yes, they are practical things, yet they've had this sort of lasting impact on my life, because I'm now soon to be a qualified nurse. And I wasn't in any position to be doing that, even when I was doing my voluntary roles seven plus years ago. So that was a major deal." GK client*

Frequently, Service Coordinator's support activity involved 'practical enabling actions', actions that often seemed quite straightforward but addressed an important barrier in an area where the client was stuck, which helped the client move forwards in multiple different life areas. For example:

*GK supports driving lessons through personal budget > pass driving test > become mobile and independent > get out more/not stuck at home > young kids more easily entertained > parenting is easier > social relationships developed > access social support through relationships > feel less alone > gaining independence helps move on emotionally from frustration at lack of family's support > improved mental health > feel empowered and able to cope with single parenting.*

### 3.3.3 Personal budgets were key to facilitating clients' progress

Some of the Service Coordinator's actions which supported a client's progress, were only possible due to the availability and flexibility of the personal budget. This resource was critical to facilitate the systemic approach to finding 'practical enabling actions'. Some examples we heard from clients of where GK's support helped the client progress, would have been difficult or impossible without the personal budget.

*"I was like, I want to get back into education, I want to be able to do things for myself again, but I don't know how I'm going to get to classes. And even if I do get to classes, you know, I don't know how I'm going to find the time to do things at home. I didn't have a computer, so I was like, you know, there's no way I'm gonna be able to spend evenings in the library and things like that. And [Service Coordinator name] was like, well, we can support you with that and get you a laptop and then you can do classes from home. There's no way I would have been able to afford a laptop, so they actually like put the funds through to get me my own laptop, not having to borrow, it's my laptop. So I was able to do my [NHS online mental wellbeing support service] CBT cognitive behavioural therapy. So it meant that I was able to get you know mental health support at home. But without it, you know, I would have to rely on my phone. So the laptop meant that I was really able to just focus and I got a lot out of it and since then, I've not really had to be on my medication. I was on like really strong anti-depressants and stuff like that, and I've not been on that for a while now." GK Client*

### 3.3.4 GK helped clients get the support they needed from services

A substantial amount of the Service Coordinator support activity involved helping the client to engage with services to get the support they wanted and/or needed. Service Coordinators gained a good understanding of the clients' needs through their relationship and were able to draw on that in conversations with services. The support activity involved activity with the client alone, with services alone and also working together. From the client's perspective, advocacy was described as "fighting my corner", "standing up for me", "helping me get my point across". Service Coordinators varied the support activity during the client's support journey and/or process of engagement with different services as described in the table below (also see related insights related to trauma informed support in Chapter 4, section 3.3 and 3.4).

Stage of service access	Service Coordinator activity with the client	Service Coordinator activity with services
<b>Before engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding clients' needs, particularly understanding barriers to engagement in the past and preferred ways of working with services</li> <li>• Signposting – drawing on Service Coordinator knowledge of services to help clients understand available services, their offering, and eligibility</li> <li>• Exploring options, finding more information if needed</li> <li>• Reaching decisions together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering information about a service</li> </ul>
<b>Initial engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare client to work with service</li> <li>• Positive risk management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy for clients' service access and get suitable support to meet needs</li> <li>• Coordinate and prepare service to work with client</li> <li>• Positive risk management</li> </ul>
<b>Throughout service engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support client to work with service(s)</li> <li>• Positive risk management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate and support service to work with client</li> <li>• Advocacy to get the best support for the client</li> <li>• Supporting multiple services to work together providing joined up support</li> <li>• Positive risk management</li> </ul>

### 3.4 What clients highlighted was different about GK to other services

People who experience Severe Multiple Disadvantage (SMD) have often had long term 'revolving door' experiences of services where they are unable for various reasons, to get the support they need. We wanted to understand whether and how GK's clients perceived the support as being different to other services. Our interviewees nearly all felt GK's support was different in a good way, though there were a range of responses around how that positive difference was perceived, as follows:

- Clients felt their Service Coordinator actually cared about them and their progress, where it was seen more as 'just a job' or tick box support for workers in other services.
- GK being 'for the client', in that they cover everything and help get the client's points across.
- GK helped when no-one else did.
- GK had more resources in terms of how much time Service Coordinators could spend with clients and the personal budget.
- GK was seen as more flexible and responsive than other agencies, for example, having a contact who would answer the phone and return calls was highlighted as a difference.
- The persistence to engage the client.



## 3.5 Challenges

### 3.5.1 Endings: transitions between workers and disengagement

Four clients we spoke with, either mentioned a positive experience of transitioning away from GK's support or did not mention the ending. Three of these clients were those who had experienced transformational life change and were overwhelmingly positive about GK's role in their lives.

*"I can't actually remember the moment when [Service Coordinator name] stopped working with me." GK client*

Three clients we spoke with (who were no longer supported) described the end of their support from GK as a time where they felt they had a negative experience of the support. Several clients had a perception that the disengagement was unplanned, due to staff sickness, and/or the pandemic.

*"You know, when we did end, it's really funny, because when we did that end, we were supposed to have a last meet up on Zoom. And it never happened, and I never heard from them and I was like, I guess that's over then." GK client*

*"I had to call up to find out that they were no longer necessarily giving me a service, but I could call if I needed support. But then even that, that was left very vague. Okay, so if I call and need support, so I just call and speak to someone on duty? Do you even have duty? Okay, so who do I speak to, just some random person on the other end of the phone that I have no connection with?" GK client*

*"It's like they're a friend to me, and they walk out on me, this friend. I never know who's gonna help me out, even now some of the things I do, I struggle to read but when [Service Coordinator name] was there, they did for me every letter... so I just struggle on somehow slowly somehow." GK client*

One client's support ended at a point where the Service Coordinator left GK, and they had been quite upset by this. The client in this case felt that they had been de-prioritised due to lack of resources and some agreed actions were not completed leading to them feeling let down by their Service Coordinator. Two clients described the approach to withdrawing support which left an impression that it did not take the usual thoughtful and collaborative approach, which they found distressing. One of these clients was worried about what would happen if they needed support in future and was unclear as to what their situation would be if they did. However, the two clients who were most disturbed by GK's approach to withdrawing support both also said at the point where support changed, they had already improved their situation substantially. One of these clients said they found the withdrawal of support was a "launchpad" for them to take ownership and further gain independence which perhaps indicates they were ready to cope on their own.

Whatever the cause of the disruption was, the result was three clients who had experiences which were not positive or desirable, which indicates an opportunity to improve clients experience of ending the support relationship. Consideration should be given in future to managing tricky circumstances (e.g. unanticipated temporary or permanent staff departures, pandemic restrictions) in a proactive and planned way to protect these vulnerable clients.

The end of GK and transition of SMD support in Bristol to Changing Futures has meant that some of GK's still active clients have had their support migrated elsewhere or withdrawn. We conducted our interviews towards the last stage of GK's work to manage planned endings with their clients, therefore the clients who were still being supported were likely to have ongoing substantial needs. Three of the clients we interviewed who were still being supported were very worried about what would happen when GK ended, and to some extent this dominated their thoughts during the interviews.

*"...and just being worried that they'll be gone, and they worked with me for a while, and all of a sudden they'll be gone again like, you know." GK client*

*"The government don't give money to [Service Coordinator name] because when they said that last time; oh the funding is cut off, I went depressed, I start feeling depressed. I say why the government is gonna cut it off. Because I know they are a nice person, if something happened to me now, they're not going to be there." GK client*

### 3.5.2 Trusting relationships, person-centred support and dependency

For some clients, GK has clearly been able to engage the client, build a trusting relationship and leverage that relationship to overcome challenges and engage the client with other services which support their needs. As the evaluation team understand it, the ideal is that the support from services then helps the client to move forwards over time, with declining GK support until GK support is no longer needed. However, some clients have remained with GK over a long period 5 years+ and have required continuing support despite other services becoming engaged. There are some important questions about the extent to which for these clients, GK has provided a long-term ongoing support service. To describe GK as other than a service, risks misinterpreting the long-term complex support needs of some, along with the continuing challenges for services to support people with severe and multiple disadvantage. This could lead to unrealistic expectations about overall client caseloads over time and further pressures on staff.

The model approach we have captured through the evaluation, is underpinned by the trusting relationship and taking a holistic person-centred approach. Although clients were careful to not call their Service Coordinator their friend, many described them as *"...like a friend"*. Clients talked of the attachment they had for their Service Coordinator, and GK's approach is in many ways reliant on clients developing that trust and a certain degree of dependency in the relationship. The nature of the approach calls for extreme care and consideration with this vulnerable group in managing relationship endings in the points of transition between workers and ending support.

GK have challenged professional boundaries in how they have approached support activity. The approach can cause some professionals to feel uncomfortable as it carries complex challenges for both the client and the professional in managing risks and boundaries, Service Coordinators have drawn on considerable skill and experience in navigating these challenges in the context of each client's context and needs.

### 3.5.3 Managing clients' expectations for using the personal budget

Whilst clients appreciated GK's ability to support their needs with access to funds, personal budget use was raised by several clients as an area where they felt unclear about the rules about how this could be used and there were some misconceptions which also previously emerged from previous evaluation research in phase 2. One client said they didn't understand why or agree that the personal budget could be used to buy a pair of shoes but not for other basic needs like food or a tent if they were street homeless or struggling to eat. Several clients' perceptions were that other GK clients' use of the funds was abuse of the personal budget, while their own sometimes unusual uses were valid.

GK have principles which underpin decisions about the use of personal budget which are assessed on a case by case basis to account for the client's context. There is an opportunity here to be open and clear with clients about the principles for personal budget use. This could avoid clients perceptions that its use is inconsistent when comparing different uses over time and between clients.

## 3.6 Clients' experience of GK's person-centred support

In Chapter 4 we explore what person centred and trauma informed support looks like in practice and what enables GK to deliver support in those ways. The client interview data was analysed to understand how clients experienced person-centred and trauma informed support, though questions were not asked specifically to explore this area during the interview.

Little emerged on the trauma informed side which the research team felt was due to this approach being largely invisible from the client perspective within their interactions with their Service Coordinator (e.g. is a Service Coordinator empathetic with a client because they are drawing on their understanding of theories of relationships and behaviour patterns, or because of the worker's own personal traits, or other life experiences?). Many of the examples given by Service Coordinators of being 'trauma informed' in practice (in Chapter 4), concerned activity which would have been directly with service professionals.

Findings around how clients experienced person-centred support are described below.

### 3.6.1 Clients' experience of their Service Coordinator relationship(s)

Nearly all clients we interviewed indicated that they had developed a positive trusting relationship with their Service Coordinator(s) during their GK support.

*"She was empathetic, understanding, non judgemental, they cared, compassionate... It didn't feel like it was just a job to her...it felt like she actually cared." GK client*

*"Whenever I had a breakdown, they'd be the first person I call" "And you need to know that somebody cares. Yeah. And that's, that was the biggest thing about working with [SC] is that you knew they cared." GK client*

*"...they met me, you know, on the level where I was at basically, they met me at my level... you know they basically just like treated me like equal and that was probably one of the biggest things... it was just like the basically like the understanding and all that" GK client*

*"They stayed and continued until they got my attention and you get a worker and you don't have to worry about, like, getting different workers or this and that, you stay with the one for seven years ... and they can help you for a lot for seven years, I reckon it's brilliant Golden Key...[Service coordinator name] made it joyful like, so I used to \*like\* meeting up" GK client*

One client who had been supported for over 7 years by a number of different Service Coordinators, had a negative experience with one particular worker but good relationships with the others.

*I've just got whoever has come up with really... To be honest, I found some difficult, and I found some amazing, and then their heart's in the right job... there's a couple of them, I think just left you high and dry and was in it to win it... then sometimes, all you want to do is not go to appointments ... You don't really want to be around that person, because you know there's something coming which is not very good for you. I've got to give [Service Coordinator name] their due. They've been absolutely brilliant ... I just think they'd like to see me do alright standing on my own two again... 100%. I do trust them.” **GK client***

One client who had not received much support did not seem to have developed a trusting relationship with a Service Coordinator.

### 3.6.2 Clients' experience of flexible and responsive support

The vast majority of clients we interviewed described support which seemed highly flexible and responsive support during most of their experience. Clients also appreciated the responsiveness of their Service Coordinator, who would return calls promptly and respond in times of crisis. Clients and researchers both noted how unusually holistic the support was in extending across the client's lives.

*“They were always on call whenever I needed them. They were always at the end of the phone. Like, no matter when you called them, if they were in an appointment, they get straight back to you after the appointment....and then they'd give you like, 10-15 minutes of their time, even if they were really busy.” **GK client***

*“For every appointment I've got, he is with me. For every problem I'll call him, he is there to help me out.... Any time I need him, he is there for me.” **GK client***

*“So yeah, they'll come out, they will see me on a weekly basis... they're doing anything that they can I think of, to help me at their end....” **GK client***

Four clients talked about issues they had experienced when transitioning between Service Coordinators and/or during the pandemic which indicated some occasions during that time where the support was not as responsive to their needs as it was previously.

*“But when the lockdown hit, you know, there was a lot of like miscommunication ...they would be, you know, busy with other things. And, you know, it's like our support kind of dropped off.... towards the end of the pandemic, they were a lot better.” **GK client***

### 3.6.3 Clients' experience of support being 'client led'

Nearly all clients gave an indication through their interviews that the support was client led. We did not explicitly ask all clients about whether they felt they were directing the support, but this was mentioned directly by around half of clients we interviewed and indicated indirectly by all but one remaining clients.

*“You know, I didn't feel like she was trying to come into my life and just be like, okay, this isn't right, we need to fix that. She focused on the things that I needed and the things that I wanted and she made that her priority in our work instead of what she, kind of like, you know, the rulebook of how things need to be done.”* **GK client**

*“They just worked with me and everything that I've asked them to do, well not anything, but yeah the majority of whatever I asked them to work with, they've basically been alongside me.”* **GK client**