



## Annual Report 2025

**Independence**  
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Independence is a local charity, and our mission is to support those affected by drugs, alcohol or gambling, and to minimize related harms through education, prevention and psychotherapy.

### **Directors**

André Wilsenach	(Chairman)
Alex Jenner	(Treasurer)
Acsah Nel	(Company Secretary)
Kim Reece-Sheerin	(Director)
Catharine Walter	(Director)

### **Staff Team**

Tracey Rear	Executive Officer
Sarah-Jane McGrath	Criminal Justice Substance Worker
Gill Ogier	Needle Exchange & Harm Reduction Worker
Cate Mason	Therapist
Victoria Arklie	Therapist & Harm Reduction Worker

## Staff Profiles

**Tracey Rear** MA, BSc (Hons), Dip TC, Dip DD, PGDip CBT, MBACP (Accred), MFDAP

### Executive Officer

Tracey has worked with the organisation for 29 years. Having started her employment as an under 21's worker she has worked in each area of service delivery. Underpinning her experience in the field she has a master's degree in public administration, and a bachelor's degree in Addictions Management. Tracey also has qualifications in drug dependency, integrative counselling, and cognitive behavioural therapy. She is a member of the Federation of Drug & Alcohol Professionals, The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and the British Association for Behavioural & Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP).

### Sarah-Jane McGrath

#### Criminal Justice Substance Worker

Sarah-Jane joined the team in 2021 and has over 26 years' experience in Criminal Justice Services, mostly in Public Protection specialising in Child Protection and Domestic Abuse. She is a qualified SMART recovery worker and has obtained a level 3 Diploma in Adult Care, specific to people working in the substance misuse sector.

**Gill Ogier** RGN, Dip An, DIP HG

#### Needle Exchange & Harm Reduction Worker

Gill has extensive knowledge of the organisation having been employed with the organisation for over 21 years. Gill uses her knowledge of the aims of Independence and her experience in the field of healthcare and the criminal justice system, to provide the best advice and guidance to clients seeking general service information or those using the needle exchange service.

**Cate Mason** MA, B.Ed (Hons) Can.Tab, Dip TC, MBACP (Reg)

#### Therapist

Cate is a qualified integrative therapist and has a special interest in mindfulness practice. Before joining the team, Kate worked in education on the island with many years' experience as a school leader. Cate is a registered member of the BACP.

### Victoria Arklie

#### Therapist & Harm Reduction Worker

Victoria joined the team in June 2025. She is a qualified Clinical Psychologist and is registered with both the HCPC and the BPS. Prior to joining the team, Victoria lived and worked in Australia for several years, gaining experience across both inpatient and outpatient settings. She is also a qualified yoga teacher.

## Chairman's Introduction

The past year has been a successful one in several respects, as outlined in the Executive Officer's report below. Most importantly, Independence has continued to make a tangible difference in the lives of many people in the Bailiwick of Guernsey who experience substance or gambling issues alongside mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, or trauma.

Independence is fortunate to have an experienced and highly committed team of professionals. However, our current resources limit our ability to provide this level of support to everyone who may benefit from our services. As a result, we continue to work closely with partner services to deliver a coordinated response across the wider system and to ensure that individuals receive the most appropriate support as efficiently as possible.

Over the past year, the Board and management have continued implementing the strategic objectives previously established. Significant progress has been made in raising awareness of Independence within the community, enhancing the provision of therapy, improving pathways into treatment and strengthening our engagement with the gambling sector. Our new premises in town have, undoubtedly, enhanced our visibility in Guernsey and provided a more accessible and welcoming environment for those seeking help.

Our achievements over the last year are largely attributable to the dedication and professionalism of our Executive Officer, Tracey Rear, and her team. I extend my sincere appreciation to Tracey and all members of staff for their hard work, as well as to all those whose generous donations have enabled us to continue delivering vital services to the community.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the Board who have so generously given Independence their time, expertise, and wisdom. I am also pleased to welcome Acsah Nel to the Board and look forward to her continued contribution in her role as Director and Secretary of the Board in the year ahead.

André Wilsenach  
Chairman

## Executive Officer's Report

**2025 was a significant year for Independence, marking our first full year operating from the Mill Street premises.**

The central location in St Peter Port has improved accessibility for clients and provided a modern, purpose-built environment for staff. Thus creating a welcoming and functional space for service delivery.

A key theme throughout the year has been the complexity of dual diagnosis: individuals experiencing substance or gambling issues alongside mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, or trauma. For those with long-standing difficulties, multiple symptoms often converge, creating overwhelming daily experiences that require integrated and responsive support.

We recognise the vital role of the wider mental health system in addressing these challenges. While navigating services can be complex for clients and professionals, we value the expertise and commitment of partner agencies working to provide care across the Bailiwick. Independence continues to prioritise collaboration, aiming to complement and support existing services rather than duplicate them. Our focus has been on building shared understanding of referral pathways and promoting consistent language and terminology which are both essential for improving client experiences and achieving meaningful outcomes.

Our team brings specialist knowledge in substance use and gambling, and we work closely with mental health colleagues to ensure coordinated care. While resources remain limited, we are committed to strengthening partnerships and contributing to a system-wide approach that supports recovery and well-being.

Community referrals for the year (excluding Criminal Justice referrals) totalled 148. Although slightly lower than previous years, engagement and retention has improved: of 103 assessments 76 continued into treatment. Alcohol remains the primary concern, accounting for 69% (75) of assessments. Gambling referrals fluctuate year on year but average around 12 assessments a year. We assessed 10 people for gambling during 2025. There has been a reduction in Affected Others with only five assessments conducted compared to 10 in 2024. Cases involving medicinal cannabis remain too few to report, although concerns persist regarding harm reduction information pertaining to illicit use and edible THC among those under 25.

Each of the Independence Directors contribute their time and expertise free of charge, which is considerable in what continues to be a busy organisation. I extend my thanks to them and to my team for their commitment, support and expertise throughout the year. Finally, we acknowledge our clients, whose experiences help us better understand the complexity of change.

## Community referrals & outcomes

Most referrals are self-initiated, with the online self-referral portal remaining the primary entry point. Clients typically engage in up to nine weekly sessions, though there is no fixed limit; session numbers are reviewed based on individual need. Where attendance issues arise, we explore underlying factors such as motivation or external barriers.

Our therapeutic model is integrative, designed to help clients build motivation for change, manage urges, regulate thoughts and emotions, and achieve a more balanced life. The approach is strongly influenced by Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and is goal focused. Goals are collaboratively agreed rather than imposed, recognizing that not all clients seek complete abstinence. Many aim for improved control and problem management. Ambivalence toward change is common, and while some clients discontinue after a few sessions, these early interventions often plant the seeds for future progress.

Change is primarily measured using the Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE) tool, which assesses psychological distress, subjective well-being, common symptoms, and social functioning. CORE is applied universally, regardless of the presenting issue, and is supplemented by condition-specific measures where appropriate.

### Measuring change

#### CORE outcomes (psychological distress)

Outcome data provides a clear measure of impact and the results remain encouraging. Problematic behaviours rarely occur in isolation; they are often part of a complex narrative that must be understood to support meaningful change.

Monitoring psychological distress is an important component of treatment in appropriate cases.

In 2025, 64 clients completed treatment. Of these, 40 (63%) demonstrated a reduction in psychological distress by the end of their programme, as measured by the Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE) tool.

I didn't believe my change was doable. Choosing my own goal for change made all of the difference and I feel I am in control of how much I drink now.

I feel healthier and happier, I am less stressed, have more energy and am more able to cope with everyday stresses. My relationships with family have improved as a result of the changes I have made.

You have no idea how grateful I am to have met you. You have helped me completely turn my life around at a time I've never been so low, and now, I'm the happiest I've ever been. I'm not sure I could have managed this without your guidance.

Thank you for taking your time and walking with me during that period in my life. I will be eternally grateful as I am in a much better headspace and happier than I was a couple months back before our sessions. I have better control of my thoughts which has greatly impacted all other aspects of my life in general and greatly reduced the drinking.

Therapy had been very helpful. I have never spoken about my vulnerabilities before, and doing so has helped me gain a deeper understanding of myself, increased my self belief to make significant helpful changes to my lifestyle

Sessions have helped me to identify and understand the process involved that maintained gambling behaviour. It means I am better prepared to deal with situations without gambling. I realise that happiness, fulfilment and self-worth for me isn't about money,

### **Alcohol-related risk: AUDIT Outcomes**

Alcohol-related risk is assessed using the Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT), which evaluates consumption patterns, frequency, and associated consequences. Scores are reported only for clients who completed screening at both the start and end of treatment.

In 2025, 40 clients had AUDIT outcomes recorded. At intake, 23 (58%) were classified as high-risk drinkers. By the end of treatment, 11 (48%) of these had reduced to low risk. Seven (30%) remained in the risky or harmful category but showed improvement, while five (22%) demonstrated no significant change.

### **Gambling Services**

Long-term funding for gambling therapy remains uncertain. However, financial support from the gambling industry and private donations enabled us to maintain services throughout 2025. We are pleased to confirm that our application at the end of 2025 to the Social Investment Fund was successful, securing funding for a further three years at current service levels. Any increase in demand will require additional resources.

Referrals for gambling-related problems remained steady, with 12 referrals during the year. Of these, 10 attended assessments, and over half remain in treatment. Clients who completed treatment demonstrated significant reductions in gambling risk, moving from high-risk to low or no risk on screening measures.

### **Needle Exchange Service**

The needle exchange operates as a harm reduction initiative, providing individuals at heightened risk with access to essential services in a safe, non-judgmental environment.

The service offers clean injecting equipment and an opportunity to discuss related concerns. Clients receive advice on safer injecting practices, general support, and signposting to relevant services.

Usage levels are at their lowest in a decade, with fewer than 40 individuals accessing the service. Data indicate an aging population rather than new injectors, a trend that has persisted. Reports of performance-enhancing drug use fluctuate annually; in 2025, numbers declined compared to previous years.

## Criminal Justice Substance Service (CJSS)

The CJSS is a partnership between Independence and the Probation Service, designed to provide courts, prison, and the parole board with facilities that enable treatment for drug and alcohol users as a condition of supervision. This collaboration is fundamental to the success of the service.

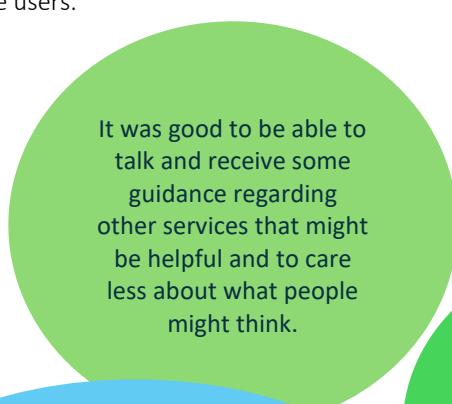
In 2025, there were 46 referrals to CJSS, with 15 resulting in court or parole orders. During the year, 18 clients successfully completed their orders, while four breaches occurred due to drug or alcohol use.

As part of our annual review, service users are invited to participate in interviews to share their experiences and provide feedback on the effectiveness of the service.

Below are some of the comments from service users.



Sessions have helped me to think more broadly about my drinking and how I might manage emotions and triggers to drinking.



It was good to be able to talk and receive some guidance regarding other services that might be helpful and to care less about what people might think.



Sessions helped me to think about the effects on my family life.



**Sessions helped me to understand my triggers and manage them.**



I felt I could really offload what had been bothering me and what made me drink.

## Thank you

We are grateful for the support and generosity of others towards our work. Without this our services would not operate.

Amalgamated Facilities Management

Betway Ltd.

Canaccord Genuity Wealth (International) Charitable Trust

Les Cotils Guernsey

Watchman Security

Square Clouds

To those individuals who have given generously but wish to remain anonymous, thank you.