

# Mutual Aid Facilitation Sessions

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**you**  
do the  
**MAFs**

'You do the MAFS' is a programme designed to provide a pathway into mutual aid, delivered by those living a life in recovery themselves.

This study sought to evaluate 'MAFS' ability to increase active participation in mutual aid and support recovery.

Working out what's best for you.

**DearAlbert**

*'I've made friends from MAFS and some of them go to the same SMART group on Saturday. It's nice to meet new people and share things'*

*'This was the first time I had asked for help. I wouldn't have gone to mutual aid due to my anxieties. MAFS helped a lot. I was anti before, I didn't believe in mutual aid'*

Mutual aid is where groups of people come together to share their experiences in an attempt to gain support for their own recovery as well as supporting others (Humphreys, 2004). Clients who attend mutual aid are more likely to sustain their recovery (ACMD, 2013; PHE, 2013; NICE, 2011,12 13; NTA, 2010).

Despite the known benefits, attending mutual aid and knowledge of mutual aid remains a stumbling block for

service users who may benefit from engagement. Research suggests that 'taster' sessions, intensive referrals and active peer support can increase mutual aid attendance (Manning *et al*, 2012), yet there remains a paucity of such pathways.

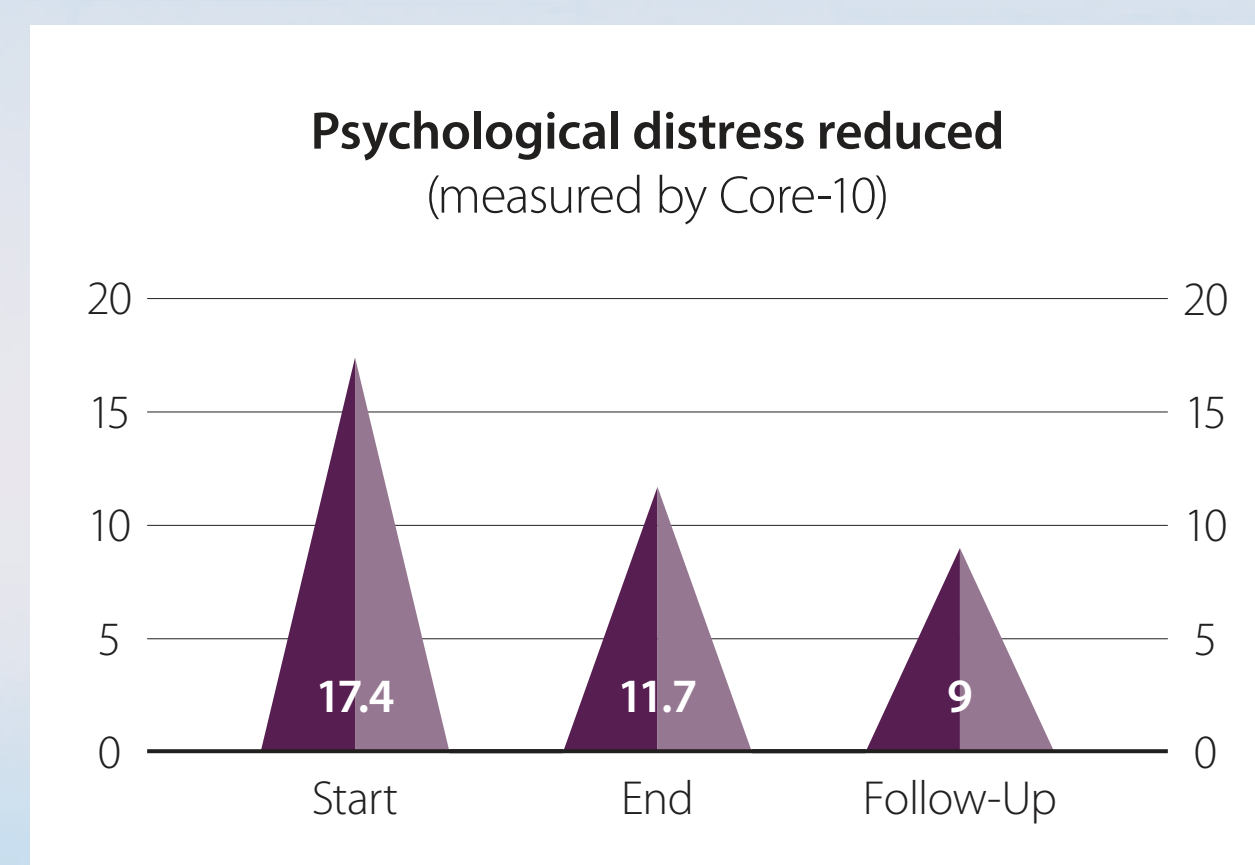
'You do the MAFS' consists of formal group sessions run by a peer-led social enterprise, Dear Albert. Fundamental topics are covered such as history of mutual aid, cultural perspectives of

substance misuse and 12-step and SMART recovery. Group check-ins are used where each individual will discuss their week. The vibe of each session is similar to that of a mutual aid meeting thus providing participants with an experiential element. **Participants are expected to try at least one mutual aid group** outside of MAFS sessions and a number of support structures are offered to ensure this.

## Methods

Standardised measures used to observe changes in physical/mental well-being and psychological distress. Substance use and mutual aid attendance was logged. End of programme focus group, and semi structured interviews conducted. Analysed using thematic analysis.

■ Mutual aid attendance increased, substance use reduced and wellbeing improved across the MAFS cohort.



■ Service users were still attending mutual aid groups a month after the MAFS course had finished.

## Findings

Participants' psychological distress reduced as they went through the MAFS programme as measured by the CORE-10 assessment. Their distress was still reducing a month after MAFS had finished. All findings were statistically significant ( $p=0.000/p=0.01$ ).

■ Service users liked the autonomy of being given information on all types of mutual aid and being able to chose what worked best for them.

✓ **Psychological distress reduced by 32%**

✓ **72% reduced their substance use**

✓ **84% now attending mutual aid**