

Miscarriages of Justice Organisation

Annual Report 2010/11

Bringing Hope to the Innocent

Miscarriages of Justice Organisation

Half Yearly Report 2010

The year 2010/11 was particularly challenging year, in that we moved office into new premises, increased our workload and began restructuring the governance, of the Miscarriages of Justice Organisation, to ensure our long-term stability. We also continued to provide practical support, advice and access to accommodation, income and health, as well as seeking access to counselling, reintegration and financial advice to our service users.

We now have 26 service users, 18 primary users whom we are working with in the community, 8 we are working with whose cases have been/or waiting to be referred back to the appeal court. We also have 78 family and close friends, whom we categorise as secondary service users. Priority remains with our primary users. This figure includes 2 new clients and another client who has not needed our services for a couple of years. The move to our new office at 54 Carlton Place went smoothly thanks to the help we received from friends and volunteers. The Project incurred costs for decorating the new office, the installation of a new phone line and a call divert system for a 2-year period to alert new enquiries of our new number. The Project also had to pay to have mail re directed to our new address. The Project financed this through donations and fundraising.

In August 2010, we managed to secure a paid placement (50 weeks), starting date Monday 16th September, from the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living for one of our volunteers Paul McLaughlin, who has expertise in welfare rights. The Project paid £4,000 towards Paul's placement, which we paid for from part of a £10,000 project specific donation we received. We would like with the help of our Management Committee to source funding to sustain his employment. As part of Paul's placement he will undergo ECDL training. We also had a Trainee Lawyer, Scott Forbes, working with the Project 3 days per week. Scott was instrumental in investigating two cases, Mr I and Mr P, which resulted in Mr P's case going back to the SCCRC for review. Mr I's case is ongoing. The project was able to secure a 2 year supervised traineeship for Scott with Graham Mann Solicitors; Paul and Scott have been a huge asset to the Organisation and in taking the

Projects aims and objectives forward. We also received a project specific donation at the start of the year to help update our website, this we hope will help educate, and generate more donations towards, MOJO's aims and objectives. Work is ongoing on the website. During the past year the Project has worked with five new volunteers, three are still volunteering with the Project but unfortunately two did not complete their induction and training.

Restructuring of the Governance of the Miscarriages of Justice

Organisation

This year 2010-11 we will begin the process of restructuring the governance of our company. This was to ensure the long running stability of our work, and the security and continuity for our clients.

One of our main aims in the restructuring of our board of directors is to ensure long-term cohesion, which it was lacking with only 2 directors Paddy Hill, Tara Babel and John McManus as Company Secretary. It was felt for the long-term continuity that the increase in the number of directors would benefit the stability of our organisation. Therefore we are hoping to have 7 directors by the end of 2011. They will be

Patrick Hill

Gerard Conlon

Paul Blackburn

Michael O'Brien

John McManus

Willie Rennie (Liberal Democrat MSP)

Iain Stephen (Consultant Clinical Psychologist)

Dr Paul Miller (Clinical Psychologist)

Medical Agencies

In the first half of 2010 we have continued to work with our clients GPs. We have had to intervene once again on behalf of five of our service users (O, J, E, D & W), to obtain for them access to psychological assessment and counselling. Service user (W) is of specific interest, as we hadn't heard from him for a number of years, and had hoped that he had been able to move on with his life. Unfortunately the opposite was true. He tried to bury

his problems believing that time would sort them out. Inevitably he began to realise that something wasn't right and that the anger, mood swings, lack of sleep, the feeling of being cut off from everyone, were getting stronger and more regular. When (W) re-established contact with us he was suicidal and suffering from extreme stress and paranoia. We have succeeded in getting him access for a psychological assessment from a leading consultant psychologist. We also support (W) through daily phone calls and he also visits the office on a weekly basis for added support.

We took part for the second year running in the UK Psychological Trauma Society, where Dr Adrian Grounds, who works with the Home Office, from Cambridge University delivered a keynote speech on Post-traumatic stress, injustice and long-term imprisonment (which MOJO filmed).

Since 2009, another of our service users (A) has finally met with two of Scotland's leading psychiatrists, one a leading consultant Psychologist from Ayrshire and Arran, the other was the ex-head consultant psychiatrist/psychotherapist of the River Centre in Edinburgh. We have now managed to get him referred to the Capho Nightingale in London to be treated by Professor Gordon Turnbull. He will be treated for 4 weeks as an in-patient, and another 4 weeks as an outpatient. We are still waiting to hear what long term help will be provided in Scotland after this initial treatment. This we hope will open up the door for all our service users to get the necessary treatment they require for the level of post-traumatic stress disorder they suffer from. We have also been successful in finding a local psychiatrist for Mr G. We have also established a working relationship with Health and Mind who are working with Mr I

Housing Agencies

We have continued to work with service user (D) local housing agency to help sort out financial problems due to built up arrears. This has also been part of the money management work that we have been carrying out with a number of our service users.

We have had to act as mediators for one of our service user (G) between himself and his partner, as he is about to move out of the family home, into a private let. We believe, the disintegration of this relationship is due to the lack of specialised counselling in dealing with his PTSD. We continue working with this couple and endeavour to help them through this. We helped Mr I to secure a tenancy for his new home and staff and volunteers helped with the move.

Benefit Agency

We continue to work with a number of agencies from the Department of Pension and Works (DWP) across Scotland, in particular dealing with clients claims for Disability Living Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (and other sickness benefits) and Social Fund Applications. We continue in getting our service users on to disability living allowance, which as they have all have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder DSM-IV, we find helps with their overall re-socialisation, while seeking counselling for their trauma. However this only happens with our intervention, we believe that there has to be some way in allowing our service users preferential treatment via the DWP in getting our service users automatically on to disability living allowance, particularly when they are suddenly released from the Appeal court without any slow process of re-integration; as long term imprisonment has disabled them from functioning normally in this society, all are being diagnosed within a few short months on release as suffering from PTSD DSM IV.

We have assisted a number of clients in claiming Employment & Support Allowance. Which has seen a number of problems in the implementation and accessing of this benefit for many claimants. We have dealt with five cases this year in particular. E, D, J, O, and I have had varying problems in claiming ESA and were successful in their claims thanks to our support in making and completing claim packs, attending medicals, and advocating on their behalf when particular problems have arisen. I had not been paid benefit for 8 months. We were able to negotiate the reestablishment of payments to him. We were able to help J and O be placed in the support group for ESA only after our intervention in drawing the DWP notice to the effects of the trauma they are dealing with in their daily lives. We are finding that on initial application and contacts there is not an appreciation of the effects of PTSD and find it is necessary to intervene on behalf of clients to give a clear picture of their condition and its effect in relationship to their ability to work.

We have also noticed that the clients have faced difficulties. Overall we continue to have good relationships with all of the different benefit agencies, from Fife, Ayrshire, Lothian and Strathclyde that we have come into contact with.

Money management

We continue to work with a number of clients in helping them come to terms with any financial problems, we continue to help with money management problems by helping to set up bank accounts, easy payment plans. We have also had to mediate between our client's debt recovery agencies to find an amicable solution. We have also established a working relationship with Advice Shop in Edinburgh (Mr I) and Money Matters in Rutherglen (Mr O).

Compensation

We continue to look at ways to work closer with our clients and their legal teams to help speed up compensation claims, with the other agencies involved. We also do this by accompanying our service users to meeting with their lawyers: I know service user (O) found this support very beneficial. However it should be noted that the long drawn out process in compensation claims definitely has a direct effect on our client's mental health. We continue to work closely with a number of our clients' solicitors in helping with their compensation application.

River Centre, Psychological Trauma Society

We continue to be part of this esteemed group, and also help to influence its agenda when coming to raise awareness about the lack of, and need for, psychological counselling for those who have spent years in wrongful incarceration

Scottish Criminal Case Review Commission

One of the outside agencies that we have a close connection with is the SCCRC. The Miscarriages of Justice Organisation is now a member of the Scottish Criminal Case Review Commission User Group, where we met again this year, although the relation is cordial, we do have our differences. The SCCRC has recognised the Project as a human rights organisation working with miscarriage of justice victims and have included our literature in their Appeal packs available to those claiming wrongful conviction. The Project is also listed on their website they have also added the Project on their website

Monitoring and evaluating our work in progress

We have continued to look at ways to show effectively the monitoring and evaluation of our work. We believe that we have found the solution by showing the clients that have taken up most of our time, in pie chart forms (see appendix). Through the statistics we produce you can see all of the clients that we are in contact with in the last 6 months, (also see appendix 1). What we have focussed on with the pie charts is 10 service users we have been working with intensely over the last 6 months in particular. Six of these service users have won their appeals at the high court, whilst the other four are going through the appeals procedure. We have used colour coding for each provision we provide. We believed that this would make it easier to monitor and evaluate the work that we do. However the feedback we received was that it was still hard to comprehend, therefore we have looked at a more qualitative approach in monitoring and evaluating our work and that is by asking three of our clients directly to comment on the help they have received. (See appendix 2)

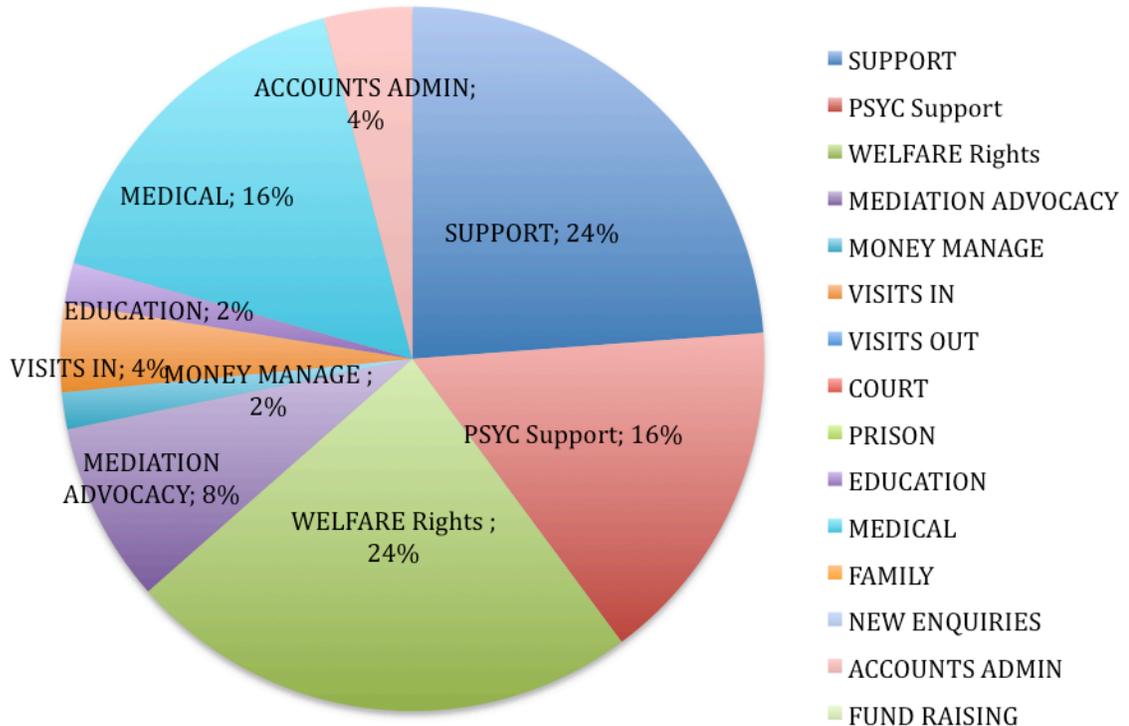
Conclusion

Our biggest difficulty is our lack of resources and the continuing increase on our workload. Because of the lack of medical help in relation to the psychological problems all our clients have been diagnosed with, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder DSM IV. Because of this, our workload continues to increase and our resources are continually stretched. We have increased our activities with our clients; this has been helped due to extra staff both fulltime and volunteers. One of our main concerns due to the lack of medical provision for their P.T.S.D. is that 90% have either a drug or alcohol dependency. We cannot stress enough that more medical help has to be made available in relation to the post traumatic stress disorder that all our clients are suffering from.

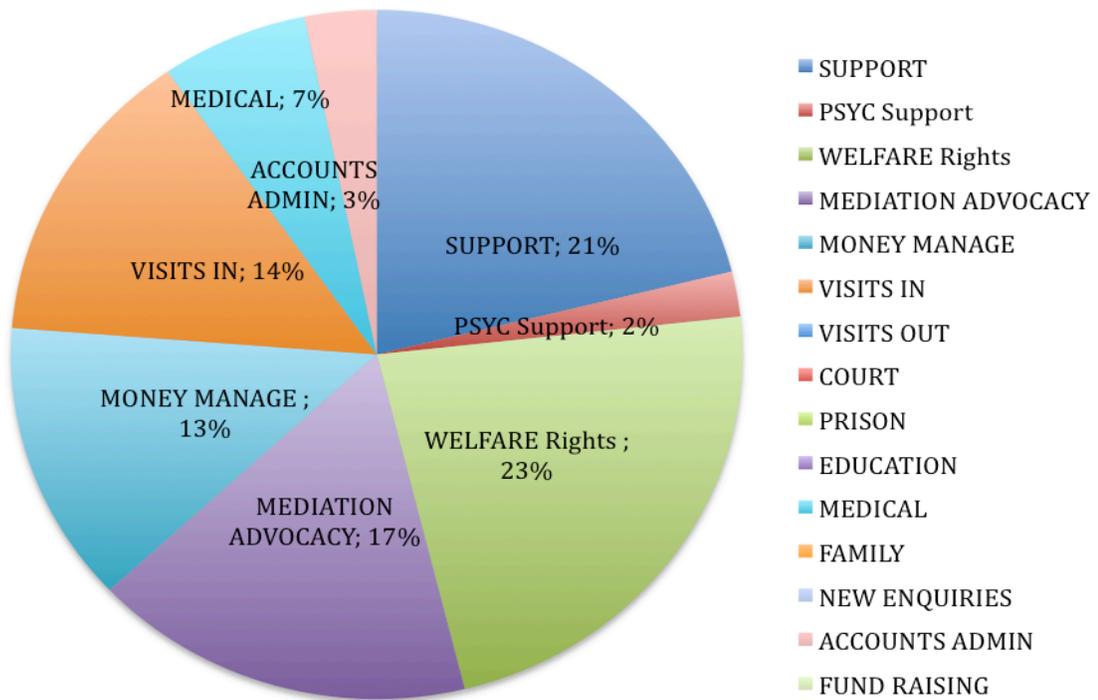
Appendix 1

Clients in the Community April 2010-Sept 2010

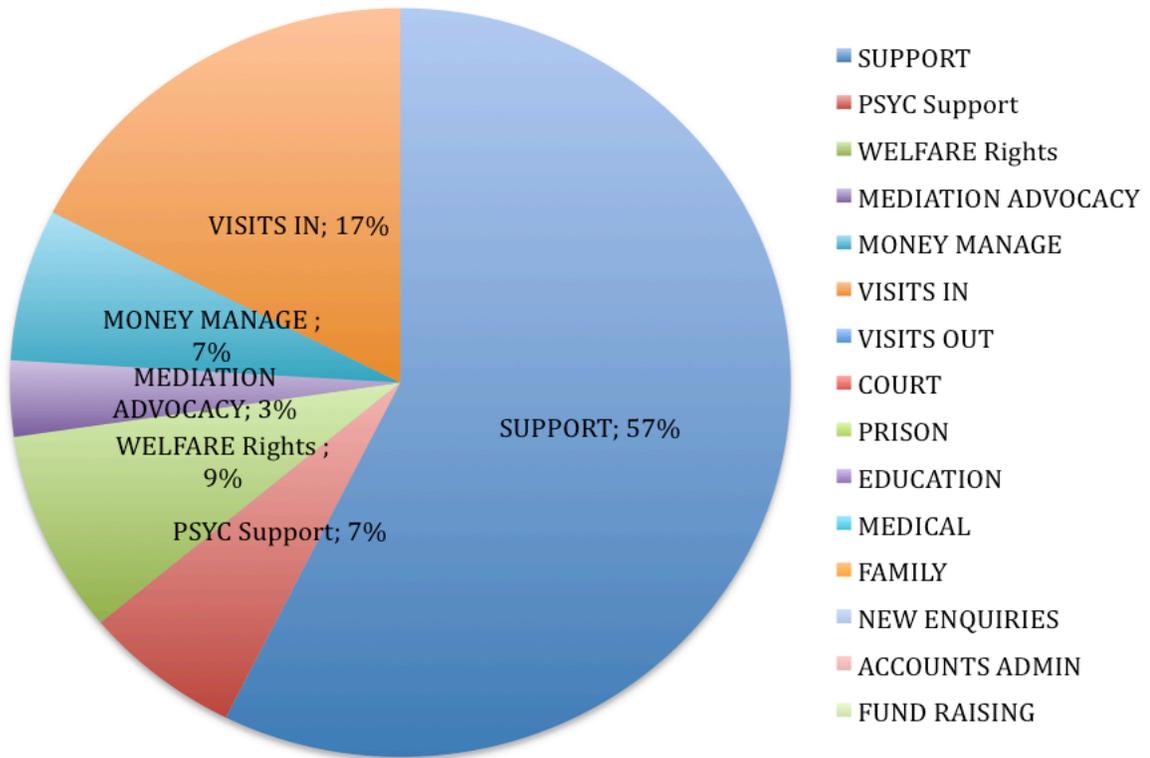
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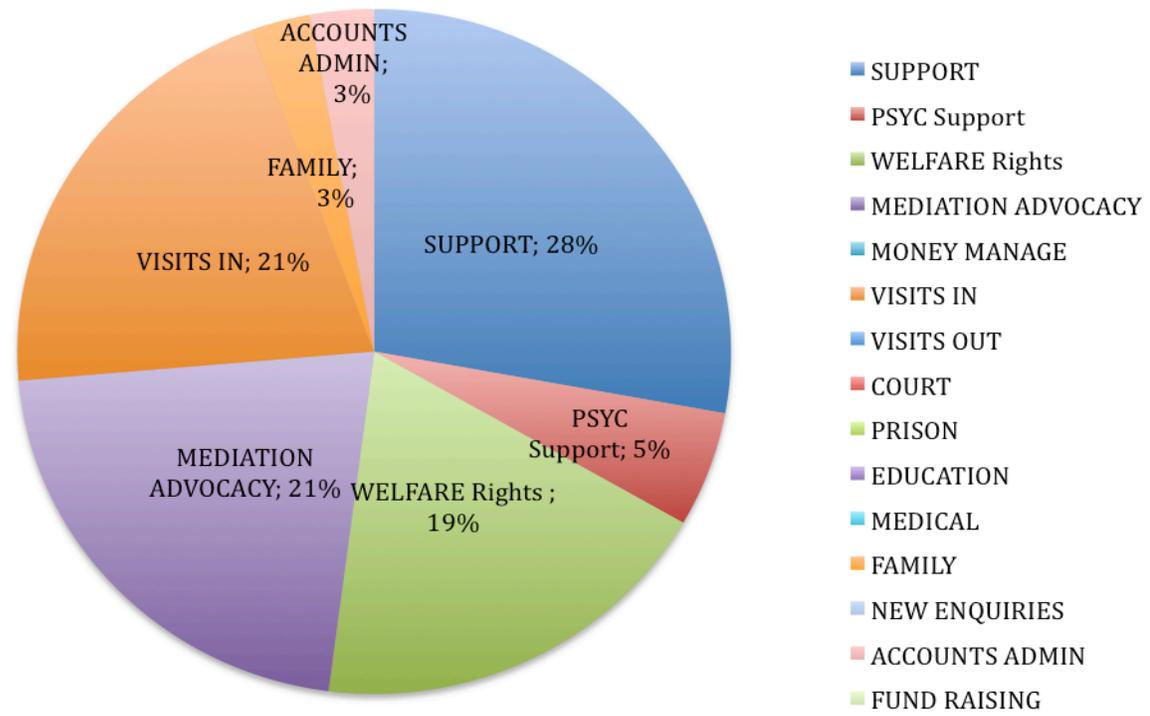
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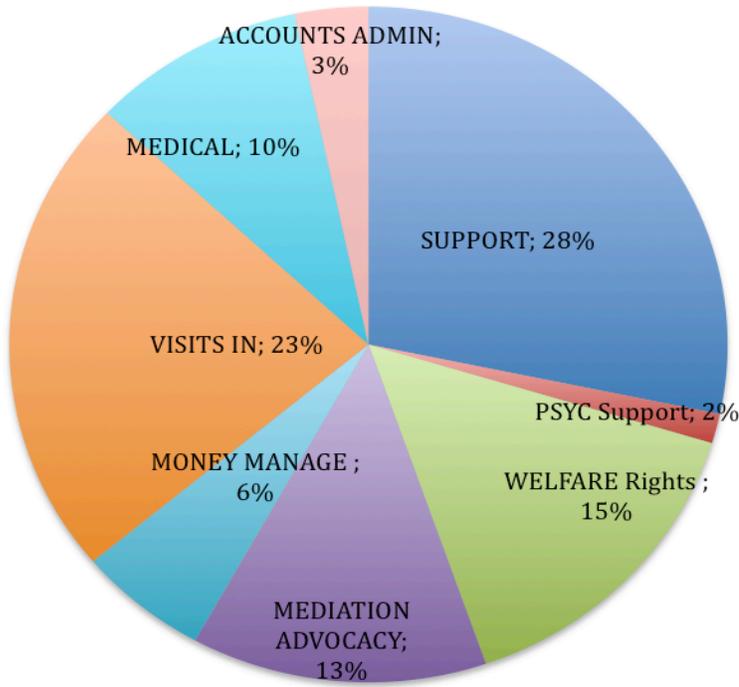
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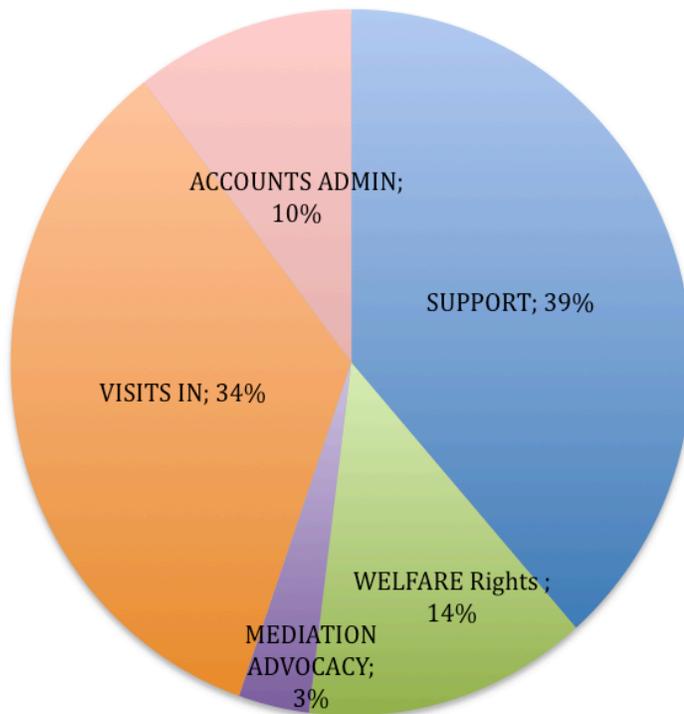


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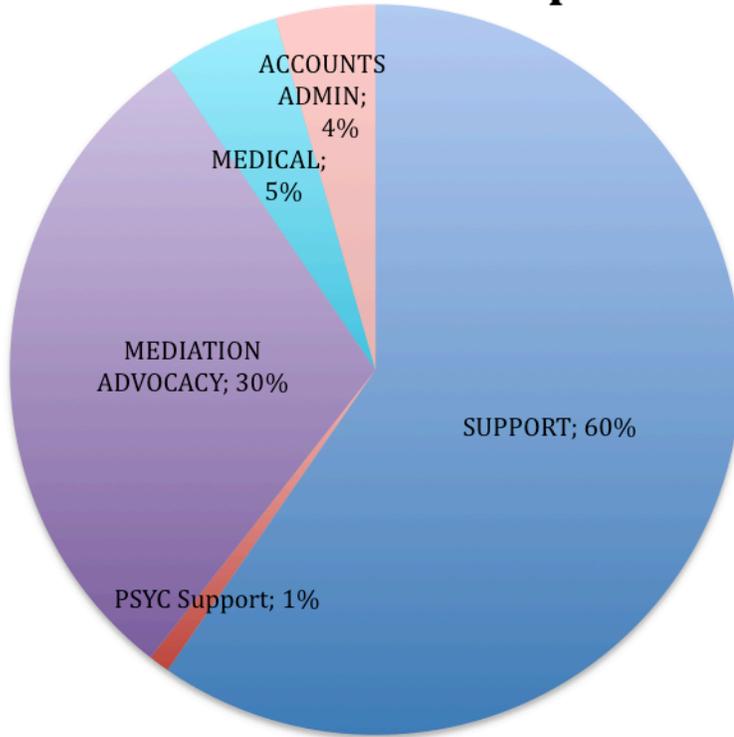
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- PSYC Support
- WELFARE Rights
- MEDIATION ADVOCACY
- MONEY MANAGE
- VISITS IN
- VISITS OUT
- COURT
- PRISON
- EDUCATION
- MEDICAL
- FAMILY
- NEW ENQUIRIES
- ACCOUNTS ADMIN
- FUND RAISING

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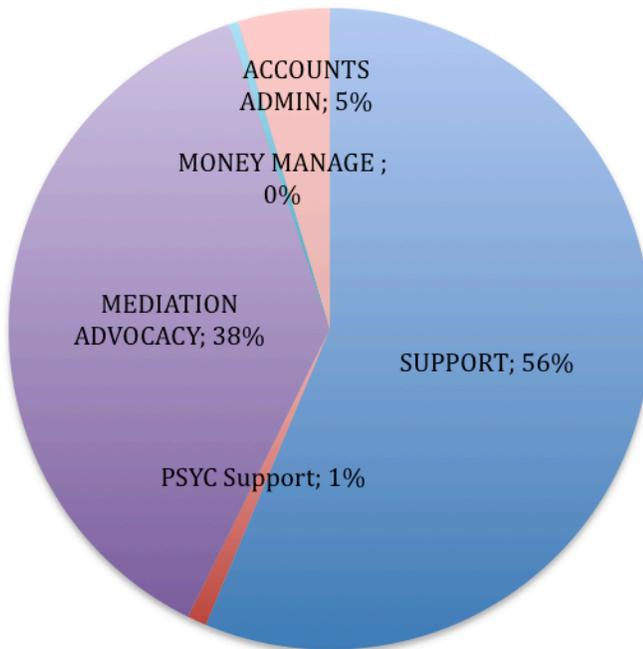
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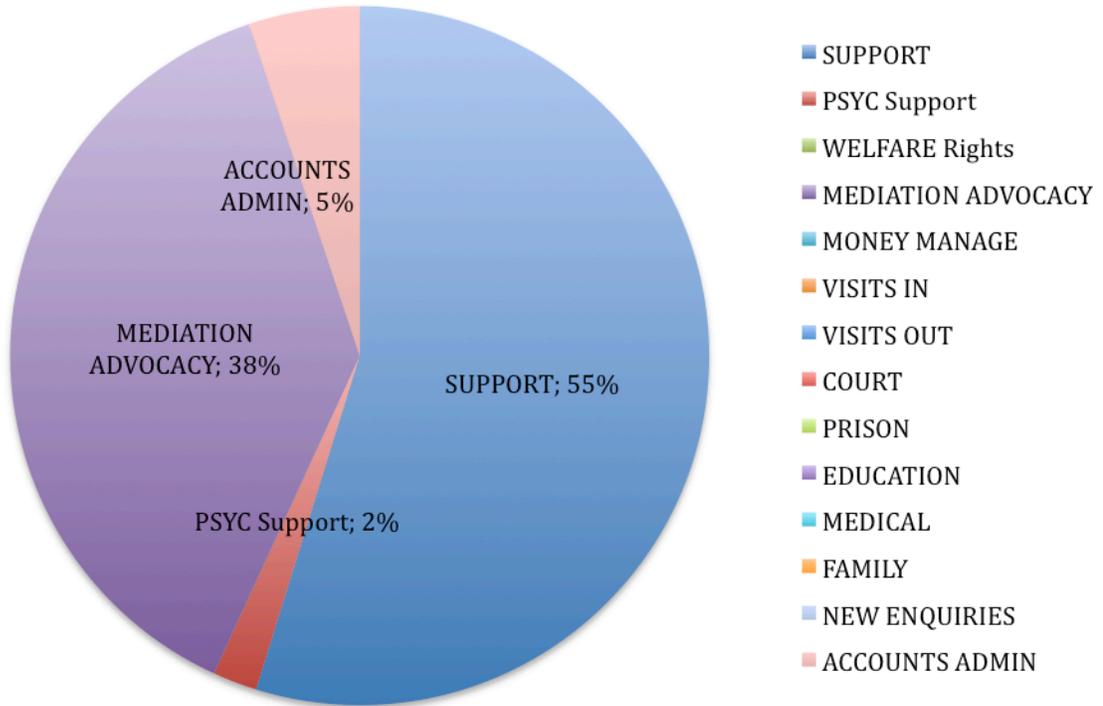
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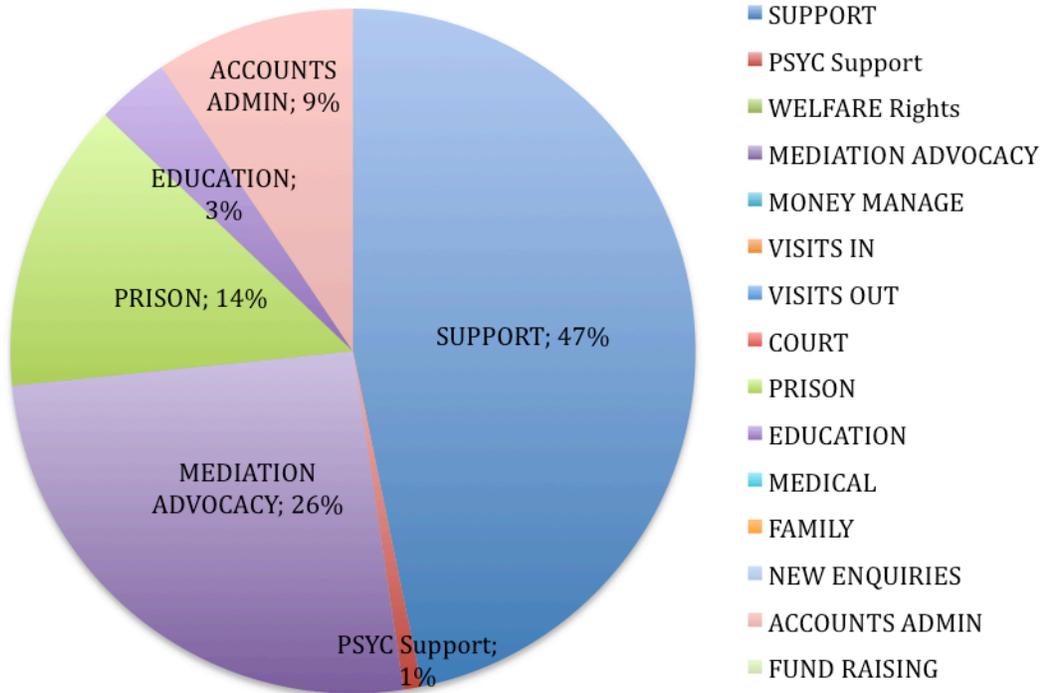


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Appendix 2

Testaments from service users

Client O wrote

“The practical advice and assistance MOJO has provided with regard to benefits has been invaluable. I am not at all certain I would have had the patience and concentration to deal with the forms questions and frankly the humiliation...Without MOJO’s assistance I would surely have found myself tied in knots as I struggled to address the consequences of the miscarriage of justice I suffered. I gladly offer my sincere thanks for all you and your colleagues have done for me. The work you do is invaluable.”

Client W wrote

“I cannot thank MOJO enough for the long term support they have shown me. For a number of years after my release I tried to move on, and couldn’t understand why I kept breaking down, it was thanks to MOJO that I realised that I was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This helped me in so many ways, I also have to thank MOJO for their support in dealing with the benefit system, they go the extra mile, that is by accompanying me to appeal tribunals, has helped to alleviate a lot of pressure”

Client E1 wrote

“ I cannot praise MOJO and all their staff enough, for the support they have shown me and my son. If it wasn’t for MOJO I don’t know where my son would be today, they helped him in numerous occasions with his benefit and accommodation. As well as, arranging sessions with a psychologist to help him with his trauma. I owe them so much as I could not have coped on my own with my failing ill health”

Client J wrote

“It feels like a very long process trying to piece my life back together but I know that it would have been ten times harder without the help of the people with the experience and insight of all those who have helped me and continue to help me at MOJO”

Client G wrote

“MOJO have been a great help to me, both with my benefits, and getting me accommodation when I was first released. I have continued to seek their advice in relation to benefits, and the lack of medical support. Unfortunately the support and assistance, which is available to the guilty person upon release, is not on offer to those who are innocent. After having my conviction quashed and released as an innocent man, having spent 10 years wrongly convicted and imprisoned for a crime I did not commit, I was released onto the streets with no money, no accommodation, and no clue as to what I was supposed to do with myself. MOJO was able to assist me by liaising with the homeless department of the local council to get me into temporary accommodation, and also helped me with applying for financial assistance, and referred me to a reputable Health Care professional. Had the services of MOJO not been there for me, I don't know what I would have done. Life on the outside can be lonely and frightening but it is comforting to know that at MOJO there is someone at the other end of the telephone line if I need help with anything at all.”

Client E wrote

“Even though it is now 6 years since my release, I continue to need MOJO's assistance, with benefits, medicals, financial advice support, family mediation as well as psychological support. At the moment MOJO are supporting me, and have helped me to recognise that I have alcohol dependency problem and are helping me deal with this, through alcohol counselling and support from there office. Without this help I don't know if I would still be here ”