

THE HORIZONS PROJECT

RESEARCH & GOVERNANCE SERIES

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Building Horizons

The Philosophy, Governance and Practice Behind The Horizons Project

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Research & Governance Series

The Horizons Research & Governance Series explores the principles, evidence, governance and practice that underpin The Horizons Project. Each publication is intended to encourage thoughtful discussion, promote good governance and support safe, ethical and person-centred approaches to engagement and progress, while remaining honest that no organisation can guarantee outcomes.

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Disclaimer

This publication presents the philosophy, governance principles and proposed operating model of The Horizons Project. It is not legal advice, clinical guidance or statutory policy and should not replace professional judgement, statutory responsibilities or applicable legislation. The Horizons Project is positioned as developing, non-clinical support that may sit between everyday community life and specialist services where appropriate. Momentum is an emerging engagement philosophy, and Momentum Support Sessions are the developing public-facing expression of that philosophy. Horizons is working towards a carefully controlled initial community launch from September 2026, subject to organisational readiness. This developing public-facing pathway is subject to a full feasibility study, structured competence and scenario testing, and professional review with two qualified counsellors before launch. Any public-facing access route will include appropriate suitability conversations, including consideration of any ongoing support a person is already receiving. Where specialist legal, safeguarding or clinical advice is required, appropriately qualified professionals should be consulted.

Foreword

There are moments in life when an idea refuses to leave you alone. Not because it is ambitious or exciting, but because the more you look around, the more you begin to realise that something important is missing.

For me, that question has always been about engagement.

Throughout my personal journey, academic studies and work in regulated social care, I have met people who were offered support, referred into services and surrounded by professionals who genuinely wanted to help. Support was often available. Yet engagement was not.

The more I thought about it, the more I realised we spend a great deal of time asking what support people need, but perhaps not enough time asking why they find it so difficult to accept it in the first place.

That question became the starting point for The Horizons Project.

At the heart of this work is a simple belief: people rarely disengage because they do not care. More often, they have become exhausted, overwhelmed, disappointed or have lost trust that another service, another professional or another conversation might meet them with enough understanding to help them move forward.

If that is true, perhaps our first responsibility is not to ask people to trust us, but to build organisations that are worthy of that trust.

This publication is not intended to present all the answers. If anything, it is an invitation to ask better questions. It asks what becomes possible when curiosity replaces assumption, when relationships come before solutions, and when compassion is supported by governance, competence and reflection.

If these pages encourage thoughtful discussion, constructive challenge or inspire even one person to look at these dynamics from a different perspective, then they will have gone further than I could have hoped.

Thank you for taking the time to begin this conversation with us.

Adrian Pietro Vittorio Abate

About This Edition

Since the completion of the first version of Building Horizons, The Horizons Project has continued to develop through research, professional discussion, governance review, reflective practice and practical learning. The organisation's purpose has remained constant, but its understanding of that purpose has matured.

Version 2.0 represents an evolution rather than a replacement. It reflects a growing confidence in the organisation's philosophy, a clearer articulation of its principles and a deeper understanding of how those principles translate into practice.

Many of the developments within these pages have emerged through ongoing constructive challenge from practitioners, counsellors, governance specialists, legal professionals, colleagues and others who have generously contributed their experience and perspectives. Their willingness to question ideas, test assumptions and encourage continual refinement has helped shape a stronger and more thoughtful organisation.

This process of refinement is intentional. Horizons has never sought to present itself as complete or beyond improvement. Instead, it has been developed on the understanding that responsible organisations continue learning, welcome proportionate challenge and remain willing to strengthen their thinking as new evidence, experience and perspectives emerge.

Although this publication has been refined and strengthened through continued research, professional discussion and constructive challenge, it remains intentionally written in the voice of its Founder. Horizons was not created within an academic institution, clinical service or corporate consultancy, but by a support worker committed to building an organisation that places safety, ethics and

professional responsibility at the centre of its development. For that reason, the language throughout remains accessible, practical and free from unnecessary jargon.

The purpose of this publication is not to impress through complexity, but to communicate clearly. It reflects the services, responsibilities and aspirations that The Horizons Project is currently exploring, developing or seeking to provide within appropriate governance, competence, legal and ethical boundaries. Where future opportunities are considered, they are presented as aspirations rather than current practice and remain subject to further testing, review, governance, competence, legal requirements and organisational readiness.

Horizons has always been built on the belief that responsible organisations should remain curious, reflect honestly and continue learning. This publication does not simply describe that commitment; it is itself evidence of that commitment in practice.

Version 1.0 explained what Horizons had become. Version 2.0 explains how Horizons thinks.

The Horizons Library

Building Horizons now sits within a wider Horizons Library. The library has two connected collections: short accessible publications that introduce key ideas, and this deeper companion volume that explores the philosophy, governance and practice behind them.

Publication Series

HP-001–HP-017 provide short, accessible introductions for the public, partners, volunteers, professionals and anyone beginning to understand Horizons.

Building Horizons

Building Horizons is the deeper companion volume. It is written especially for commissioners, trustees, academics, governance colleagues and practitioners who want to understand not only what Horizons does, but how Horizons currently thinks.

The two collections are intended to complement one another. The Publication Series opens the door. Building Horizons invites the reader to stay with the deeper conversation.

Who This Publication Is For

This publication has been written for people who believe that meaningful support begins with meaningful engagement. Whether you are responsible for leading organisations, delivering services, shaping policy, providing clinical care, providing care and support, or working alongside individuals directly, the principles described within these pages are intended to encourage thoughtful discussion about how engagement, governance and safeguarding can work together to improve outcomes.

This publication may be particularly relevant to:

- Directors and trustees
- Commissioners, local authorities, NHS and health professionals
- Social care providers, third sector organisations and Community Interest Companies
- Safeguarding leads, probation and criminal justice services, and housing providers
- Researchers, academics, students, volunteers and community leaders
- Anyone with an interest in ethical, person-centred support

Although this publication introduces The Horizons Project, it is not intended to serve as a business plan or operational handbook. Instead, it explains the philosophy, governance principles and professional standards that underpin the organisation, and the thinking that has shaped its development.

It also introduces Momentum, the engagement philosophy that forms the foundation of our work and gives shape to the chapters that follow.

Throughout this publication, readers will find discussion of governance, safeguarding, professional boundaries, accountability and organisational culture alongside reflections on trust, relationships and the conditions that make meaningful engagement possible.

Whether you ultimately agree with every idea presented here is less important than the conversations those ideas encourage. If these pages prompt a renewed curiosity about how people engage with support, then this publication has begun to achieve its primary aim.

Thank you for taking the time to read it.

To Those Reading This Publication

When I first wrote the “Who This Publication Is For” section, my intention was not simply to identify different professional groups. It was to acknowledge that each reader would naturally approach Horizons from the perspective of their own responsibilities, experiences and concerns. On reflection, I understand more clearly what I hope each audience takes away from these pages.

Social care providers, third sector organisations and Community Interest Companies

My hope is that they recognise something familiar rather than something competing. I know the work they do because I have done it myself. I understand care plans, multi-agency working, competing priorities and the challenge of trying to coordinate support around a person's life. What I also noticed during my own frontline work was that there are often significant periods between appointments where life continues to happen. During those gaps, setbacks can occur, confidence can dip and momentum can quietly disappear before the next professional ever walks through the door.

Horizons is not trying to replace those services. If anything, it exists because I believe the work they already do deserves the best possible opportunity to succeed. If someone has a difficult Tuesday but feels able to acknowledge it before their next appointment, then that next appointment may become far more productive. Sometimes all that is needed is someone to help hold the thread until the existing support picks it up again.

Safeguarding leads, probation and criminal justice services, and housing providers

I completely understand why these professionals will immediately look for boundaries, safeguarding arrangements, escalation routes and role clarity. They should. I would expect nothing less.

Although I do not intend to make my own personal history a feature of The Horizons Project, my lived experience means I understand something of how intimidating statutory systems can feel to the people who find themselves within them. I have spent time around people living chaotic lives, and I know how easily fear, shame or simply feeling overwhelmed can prevent someone from engaging with probation, housing services or the courts.

Horizons is not there to interfere with those systems. Quite the opposite. I hope it helps individuals engage with them more confidently, understand why those processes matter and feel supported while navigating them. If that means encouraging someone to attend an appointment, helping them organise paperwork or suggesting they access specialist advocacy already available to them, then Momentum has done exactly what it was intended to do.

Researchers, academics, students, volunteers and community leaders

This audience perhaps reflects one of my biggest hopes for Horizons. I am not asking anyone to simply accept these ideas because I have written them. I want them to be questioned, challenged, tested and refined. If research supports them, fantastic. If research contradicts them, then I want to understand why. If practitioners have different experiences, I want to hear them.

In many ways, this publication is an invitation to begin a conversation rather than conclude one. I hope the framework continues to evolve through evidence, professional discussion and the experiences of those working directly alongside the people Horizons hopes to support.

Anyone with an interest in ethical, person-centred support

More than anything else, I hope this group simply feels the humanity behind the pages. Horizons has never been about creating another assessment, another form or another process. It has always been about recognising that meaningful support begins with meaningful human connection.

Sometimes that starts with something as ordinary as sitting down over a coffee, talking naturally, moving at the other person's pace and allowing trust to develop without forcing it. Everything else — governance, safeguarding, policies and professional boundaries — exists to protect that relationship, not replace it.

Overall reflection

Ultimately, I do not want readers to finish this publication thinking Horizons has all the answers. I hope they finish it thinking that Horizons has asked some worthwhile questions. If professionals continue reading because they believe the philosophy deserves further exploration, then the publication has achieved one of its most important aims.

Above all else, I hope people understand that Horizons is not trying to replace the excellent work already taking place across health, social care, housing, probation or the third sector. It is simply trying to help people remain engaged with that support during the hours, days and weeks when those dedicated professionals cannot always be there.

If we can help someone keep moving until their next appointment rather than quietly slipping away before it arrives, then I believe Horizons has found its place.

Understanding Momentum

That place is shaped by Momentum, the engagement philosophy at the heart of The Horizons Project. It is based on a simple idea: progress is often lost not during formal appointments, but in the ordinary hours and days between them. Momentum therefore focuses on helping people keep moving in manageable ways through practical conversation, reflection, planning and proportionate support.

Momentum Support Sessions are the developing public-facing expression of that philosophy. They are intended to provide one-to-one, non-clinical support for people who may be trying to keep going, regain direction or maintain progress between other appointments and responsibilities, while working alongside existing care, support and specialist services where appropriate. Horizons is working towards a carefully controlled initial community launch from September 2026, subject to organisational readiness. To support the safety, practical suitability and ethical integrity of this public-facing pathway, the service is currently undergoing a structured preparatory phase consisting of:

- A feasibility study mapping community infrastructure and local safety nets.
- Structured competence and scenario testing of communication workflows and shared ways of noticing and responding to risk.
- External professional review and scenario testing, with input from two qualified counsellors.

The sessions will not provide therapy, diagnosis, clinical treatment or emergency intervention. Before support begins, each person will be offered a clear explanation of the service and a proportionate suitability conversation. This will consider consent, immediate risk, the person's expectations and any existing support arrangements. Where specialist, statutory or crisis support is more appropriate, Horizons will help the person identify the correct route rather than attempting to replace it.

“People rarely disengage because they don't care. More often, life's complexities gradually distract them from the pathway they were trying to follow, until re-engagement begins to feel increasingly difficult.”

— The Horizons Principle

The chapters that follow trace that journey step by step: beginning with the reality of disengagement, moving through the relationships and structures that make support trustworthy, and ending with the question of how support can let go well.

Building Horizons: The Journey

Part One

Understanding disengagement



Part Two

Building trustworthy organisations



Part Three

Preparing responsibly



Part Four

Letting go well

This map is not intended to simplify the work. It is intended to help the reader see the path before walking it.

Horizons: A Journey of Reflective Practice

Part One: The Frontline Reality

- Chapter One: The Anatomy of Slipping Away
 - *Governing Question:* Why do people disengage?
- Chapter Two: Holding the Thread
 - *Governing Question:* How do we build a bridge across the 167 hours?
- Chapter Three: The Ground Beneath the First Step
 - *Governing Question:* Why do relationships come first?
- Chapter Four: The Safe Mirror
 - *Governing Question:* How do we use lived experience responsibly?

Part Two: The Structural Integrity

- Chapter Five: The Foundations of Trust
 - *Governing Question:* Why does trust require governance?
- Chapter Six: The Architecture of Capability
 - *Governing Question:* Why does compassion require competence?
- Chapter Seven: The Open Horizon
 - *Governing Question:* How should organisations make decisions?

Part Three: The Prepared System

- Chapter Eight: Before Harm Has a Chance
 - *Governing Question:* How do we protect people?
- Chapter Nine: Ready Before We Begin
 - *Governing Question:* How do we prepare responsibly?

Part Four: The Completed Circle

- Chapter Ten: Leaving the Scaffolding Behind
 - *Governing Question:* How do we let go without letting someone fall?

Closing Invitation

- Where Do We Go From Here?
 - *Focus:* The Work Continues

Practice examples note: The practice examples throughout this publication illustrate how the principles may operate within a fully developed Horizons service. Some describe future organisational arrangements that remain subject to funding, recruitment, governance approval and operational readiness.

Chapter One

The Anatomy of Slipping Away

Why do people disengage?

“Disengagement rarely begins as refusal. More often, it begins as life becoming too heavy to explain.”

Related Publications

HP-001 — Vision, Mission and Core Values

HP-002 — Understanding Momentum

HP-003 — Why People Disengage

When a person engages with support, a plan is made. But the world does not stop spinning. In the background, real life keeps happening—a sudden housing crisis, a relationship breaking down, or a quiet, crushing dip in self-worth.

This is where some hidden crises can remain unseen. Because a person may be trying desperately to stick to the “pathway,” a profound sense of shame can settle in when things go wrong. Stigma may tell them that they are failing, so they keep everything in. They mask the chaos, smile through the pressure, and tell no one—until the weight becomes too heavy to carry, and they quietly drop off the radar.

What the evidence suggests: Qualitative studies in the UK indicate that fear of judgement may cause individuals to hide major life disruptions from service providers. They may internalise the crisis, keeping it to themselves until it reaches a breaking point.

1. Hidden crises often remain unseen because shame keeps people silent.
2. Support often expects people to explain complexity in simple ways.

When an individual does manage to walk through the door, the system may meet them with an artificial demand for order. It can present them with rigid assessments, linear thinking and a series of checkboxes.

But a human being living in a state of high stress or survival mode does not think or experience life in a straight line. Their problems are tangled, fluid, and deeply interconnected. When a support system tries to force that raw, chaotic reality into a neat, standardised box, it creates a profound disconnect. The person doesn't feel heard; they feel processed. They realise the system isn't built for their actual life, so they stop trying to fit into it.

What the evidence suggests: Squeezing complex human lives into rigid boxes can sit uneasily with practice that recognises how complicated people's lives can be. When services rely too heavily on straight-line processes and tick-box thinking, they may miss the reality of a person's day-to-day life, creating distance rather than trust.

3. Progress is rarely lost during appointments. It's lost between them.

A support session can be inspiring, grounding, and deeply connective. But that session lasts for perhaps one hour. There are 167 other hours in the week where the support worker isn't there.

This is the mid-week vacuum. On Monday, the goal may feel achievable. By Wednesday, isolation, old habits and daily survival can take over. Without a flexible bridge to hold onto, the momentum generated in the session may begin to fade. A minor setback on a Thursday morning can feel like a total collapse by Friday night because there is no simple, safe space to capture that moment. By the time the next appointment arrives, the gap between where they are and where they think they should be may feel too wide to cross. Some people disengage simply to avoid facing the deficit.

What the evidence suggests: Studies on between-session work suggest that the cognitive and emotional connection to goals can fade without active, low-pressure prompts. The mid-week vacuum may be one place where programme drop-outs begin to develop.

4. Eventually, the system itself becomes exhausting.

This journey of disengagement is amplified by the landscape of support itself, particularly within the Welsh context. Support is rarely a single, straight road; it is a fragmented map of distinct organisational silos.

To get their basic needs met, an individual is forced to cross multiple thresholds, passing from one agency to another. At each door, they are handed a different form. At each desk, they are asked to retell their story, dredging up their vulnerabilities and past failures over and over again just to satisfy administrative boundaries.

System fatigue can set in. An individual may not drop out because they do not want a better life; they may drop out because they are exhausted by the labour of navigating the system meant to help them.

If disengagement develops gradually rather than suddenly...

perhaps re-engagement should begin in the same way.

Chapter Two

Holding the Thread

How do we build a bridge across the 167 hours?

“The space between appointments is not empty. It is where real life keeps happening.”

Related Publications

HP-003 — Why People Disengage

HP-004 — Holding the Thread

HP-005 — Everyday Momentum

1. Re-engagement doesn't wait for a clean slate; it captures the messy fragments.

If we accept that a client cannot always translate their chaos into a structured summary, the support worker's role can change. We stop asking them to report their week chronologically. Instead, we give them permission to capture it in fragments.

If something feels significant during the week—a moment of intense frustration or a small, unexpected win—the individual can simply snap a photo on their phone or leave themselves a quick, raw 30-second voice note. Horizons refers to this practice as a media diary. A support worker doesn't ask for a written log or a structured report. When they return, they don't open a folder of forms. They look at the phone's camera roll together. A single image of a burnt dinner or a quiet walk instantly unlocks the reality of Tuesday afternoon, pulling the unseen mid-week straight into the room without forcing the client to find the words from scratch.

Horizons in Practice: Non-clinical community support can be strengthened by low-cognitive-load tools. By using existing, native phone features as a passive memory anchor, the support worker works to reduce the friction of “reporting” and replace it with shared, visual reflection, while remaining clearly outside any assessment or treatment role.

2. True momentum requires permission to fluctuate.

When the mid-week crisis hits, the client's biggest enemy is the all-or-nothing trap. The moment they slip, they assume the entire week is compromised, and the shame spiral begins. To prevent the quiet drop-out, the support worker can co-create a plan that breathes.

This is the purpose of a scalable daily routine. Together, the worker and the client can define what a "Green Day" looks like when energy is high, but crucially, they map out the "Amber" and "Red" days before the storm arrives. A Red Day isn't a failure; it is a calculated survival mode—doing the absolute bare minimum to stay safe, like taking medication or stepping outside for just five minutes. When the support worker returns, the conversation naturally shifts from "Why did you stop?" to "I see Tuesday was a Red Day, and you used the plan exactly as it was intended for a difficult day."

Horizons in Practice: In frontline practice, recognising that a person's capacity can change from day to day may help reduce shame-driven disengagement. It shifts the measure of success from perfect compliance towards staying with the plan in a realistic and flexible way.

3. A support worker cannot be there mid-week, but their proxy can.

The insights and confidence built during a face-to-face session are incredibly fragile. The moment the meeting ends and the individual returns to their everyday environment, the gravity of their surroundings can pull them back down.

Because of this, the final minutes of a support session are often the most critical. The worker can help the individual distil the entire session down to a single, hyper-concrete action step—written in the individual's own words. This isn't left in a notebook; the individual takes this action step home to place it physically on their fridge or the back of the front door. A simple card reading "Ring

the housing team Thursday at 10 am" or "Open the curtains by noon" serves as a silent, physical proxy for the support worker's presence, cutting through the mid-week drift precisely when isolation begins to settle in.

Horizons in Practice: Environmental prompting is a practical, non-clinical tool designed to support everyday focus and routine. A physical reminder placed where the person will see it can bridge the gap between visits, maintaining a thread of focus without presenting the support worker as a clinician.

By shifting the focus from rigid documentation to everyday continuity, the space between sessions stops being a void where progress is lost.

It becomes the place where real life is met, managed, and held.

Chapter Three

The Ground Beneath the First Step

Why do relationships come first?

“We do not build the relationship so we can do the work. The relationship is the work.”

Related Publications

HP-006 — Professional Boundaries

HP-008 — Reflective Practice and Continuous Learning

HP-009 — Governance and Responsible Development

1. Trust cannot be demanded; it is established by removing the walls.

When a person meets a new support worker, their instinct is to scan for danger, judgement, or professional coldness. Human nature dictates that we protect ourselves from strangers. If a worker walks in trying to actively "earn" trust through forced cheerfulness or rigid professionalism, it often has the opposite effect.

The basis of fast engagement is not a technique you switch on; it is an internal posture. The support worker speaks naturally, meeting the client where they are, matching their energy and language where appropriate. Instead of trying to force the client to trust them quickly, the worker aims to ensure their demeanour, nature, and speech give the client as little reason as possible to feel guarded. Trust is not built by climbing over the client's walls; it is supported by refusing to bring unnecessary walls of your own into the room.

Horizons in Practice: Frontline engagement relies on genuine presence rather than unnecessary professional distance. When a worker uses a relaxed, authentic tone during the first minutes of a meeting in a public space, it can ease the natural instinct to scan for threat. The individual does not experience the worker as another cold system representative, but as a steady, boundaried person whose role is practical, relational and clear.

2. Safety begins at the surface, not in the deep water.

When someone reaches out for momentum support, the clock is ticking. They need to feel comfortable immediately. However, expecting a person to dive straight into their deepest struggles or past traumas during the first few conversations is unrealistic and often causes them to pull away.

Comfort is built by honouring the surface. A support worker does not push for deep, painful disclosures right out of the gate. Instead, they create a safe harbour for the individual's current, everyday thoughts and immediate feelings. By focusing on what is happening right now in a casual, low-pressure way, deeper conversations may emerge naturally. Once the individual feels safe handling the surface together, they may realise they can share their immediate reality without being forced into an emotional interrogation.

Horizons in Practice: Forcing deep disclosure too early can leave a person feeling exposed afterwards, which may cause them to pull away. By focusing the first conversation on light, everyday topics—like immediate thoughts or the day's routine—the worker aims to establish a comfortable starting point. This low-pressure environment can help build early comfort without forcing the client across emotional boundaries before they are ready.

3. A powerful ally can be an honest third party with no history.

Family and old friends can be vital, but they may also come with history, worry or expectations. They may remember past setbacks, carry their own anxieties about the individual, or feel personally affected by the situation. For some individuals, it can be difficult to be completely open with people who are closely connected to their past.

This is why the support relationship can mirror a very specific dynamic: a warm, honest and boundaried relationship with a completely independent third party. The support worker arrives without the weight of shared history, allowing each conversation to begin with the person in front of them rather than the person they once were. This independence allows the worker to offer honest encouragement and steady support within clear boundaries. They can offer respectful challenge and help the individual remain accountable to the goals they have chosen, with the honesty and encouragement people often value in trusted relationships, but with clear professional boundaries.

Horizons in Practice: Non-clinical momentum support can help fill a social gap that family and friends cannot easily reach. By operating as an independent third party, the support worker can offer honest encouragement and steady support. This distinct relationship gives the client a rare environment: a place to be challenged by someone focused on where they are going, not only where they have been.

Reflective support requires patience with uncertainty. A worker may notice a possible theme or similarity, but should present it tentatively and leave the individual genuine space to reject, correct or reshape it. The purpose is not to interpret someone's life for them, but to help create the conditions in which they can examine its significance for themselves.

We do not build the relationship so we can do the work.

The relationship *is* the work.

Chapter Four

The Safe Mirror

How do we use lived experience responsibly?

“Lived experience is safest when it becomes a bridge, not a stage.”

Related Publications

HP-006 — Professional Boundaries

HP-011 — Beginning the Journey

HP-012 — Ending Well

There is a unique isolation that belongs to hidden harms, particularly gambling addiction. Unlike substance use, it rarely leaves obvious outward signs. A person can maintain a flawless appearance of stability while quietly drowning in debt, chasing losses, and living in a state of constant terror. The hardest part of carrying a hidden addiction is finding a person you can safely tell.

When an individual does drop a hint about a hidden struggle, a rigid system can become frightened. It either rushes too quickly towards a formal assessment route, or it ignores the comment to stay within its comfort zone. But a support worker with lived experience may carry a unique asset: the potential value of purposeful self-disclosure. We do not share our past to put our own stories on display; we reflect a tiny fragment of our history simply to show the person in front of us that their truth can be met safely and respectfully.

Horizons therefore operates from a working standard: Sometimes one safe way to help someone disclose a hidden struggle is to show them that the truth will not frighten, disappoint, or diminish the person listening.

1. Purposeful disclosure is built to serve, not to vent.

Sharing personal history within a professional relationship is a high-precision tool. If a support worker launches into dramatic stories of past losses, betting amounts, or the details of their old life, they inadvertently make the session about themselves. The client is forced into the role of the listener, and the momentum of their progress stalls.

To use lived experience safely, the disclosure must be brief, entirely relevant to what the client has already said, and immediately handed back. It is an opening of a door, not an interrogation. You disclose just enough to lower the stigma, and then you step out of the way so the client can choose whether or not to walk through.

What the evidence suggests: Public health guidance highlights that stigma, shame, and fear of disclosure can prevent individuals from seeking help for gambling-related harms. The evidence suggests that direct, low-pressure, and non-judgemental validation from a trusted practitioner may help lower the barrier to disclosure.

Horizons in Practice: Purposeful self-disclosure should use personal history as a brief bridge rather than a destination. A client casually mentions putting a heavy bet on the weekend and laughs it off nervously; the support worker replies naturally, “I used to gamble quite heavily myself and got into a really difficult place with it, so you’ll get no judgement from me.” By keeping the statement brief and returning the focus to the client, the worker aims to reduce the fear of shame without turning the conversation into a personal monologue.

2. A non-clinical ally guides the process without dictating the path.

Overcoming a serious hidden harm does not make a support worker a clinician or a therapist. It is incredibly tempting to view your own personal recovery route as the universal blueprint for everyone else. But human journeys are diverse, and what worked for the practitioner may not be what the individual needs or chooses.

The boundary of a non-clinical support worker is practical, relational, and clear. We do not diagnose, offer therapy, or replace specialist treatment. Instead, we use lived experience responsibly to help the individual reflect on experiences or patterns they themselves have begun to notice, organise tangled administrative pressures, discuss practical safeguards, and navigate the journey toward specialist services while remaining steadily by their side.

What the evidence suggests: National health frameworks recognise that clinical support should be provided by appropriately qualified professionals, while non-clinical support networks can play an important role in maintaining engagement with help. The evidence indicates that practical assistance—such as sorting correspondence, establishing everyday spending controls and facilitating self-exclusion tools—may support longer-term stability when appropriately aligned with clinical care, specialist input or other relevant support.

Horizons in Practice: Frontline practice requires supporting an individual's practical infrastructure while respecting professional boundaries. A support worker assists a client who has acknowledged a gambling worry to configure formal website-blocking software and self-exclusion tools on their phone, while also helping them prepare for an appointment with a local specialist addiction service. By focusing on immediate, low-friction environmental safeguards, the worker aims to provide practical protection without overstepping into diagnosis, therapy or clinical treatment.

3. Protective support requires the courage to ask direct questions when risk may be present.

Because hidden harms carry an immense burden of shame, individuals may not volunteer the full extent of their distress without an explicit invitation. Waiting for a person in crisis to perfectly articulate their need can be unsafe. Protective support should include the confidence to ask straight, ordinary questions when patterns indicate potential risk.

This is particularly important because severe financial crises or harmful patterns can be associated with sudden, intense feelings of hopelessness. If an individual drops a hint that suggests unmanageable debt, fear of consequences or deep despair, the support worker should not dance around the subject. We ask directly, clearly and calmly. If a high-level risk is disclosed, we do not manage it in isolation; we follow established safeguarding pathways and work with appropriate crisis, statutory or specialist services to connect the individual with the right support.

What the evidence suggests: Safeguarding and public health evidence identifies an association between gambling-related harms and increased risk of suicidal thoughts or attempts, particularly following significant financial loss. Clinical consensus guidelines emphasise that asking direct, compassionate questions about self-harm does not increase risk, but such questions should sit within clear safeguarding procedures and escalation pathways for appropriately qualified crisis support.

Horizons in Practice: Shared protective awareness means turning observations of distress into direct, protective questions and appropriate escalation. A client discloses during a mid-week review that they have lost their entire month's rent money on an online betting app and states, "I can't face what's coming next, there's no way out of this"; the support worker asks directly if they are having thoughts of ending their life, validates the immense pressure, and immediately contacts the on-call manager and local crisis team. By meeting the emergency with calm, structured transparency, the worker aims to connect the individual to the right protective network rather than holding the risk within non-clinical support alone.

I am not telling you that I understand exactly what you are experiencing.

I am telling you that I understand why this is hard to admit.

If Part One explores why people drift away, Part Two asks what kind of organisation is trustworthy enough to hold the relationship once it begins.

Chapter Five

The Foundations of Trust

Why does trust require governance?

"We do not ask people to trust us. We ask whether we deserve it."

Related Publications

HP-006 — Professional Boundaries

HP-008 — Reflective Practice and Continuous Learning

HP-010 — Safeguarding and Protective Practice

If people are asked why they trust another person, they rarely mention policies, constitutions, or governance frameworks. They talk about honesty. Consistency. Reliability. They talk about people doing what they said they would do. Trust, in its simplest form, is remarkably ordinary.

Most of us would prefer to live in a world where trust did not need to be earned because it could simply be expected. A world where people spoke honestly, acted with integrity, and accepted responsibility when they made mistakes. Unfortunately, many of the people Horizons hopes to support have experienced the opposite. Broken promises, inconsistent services, changing professionals, and systems that have left them feeling unheard can gradually erode the expectation that trust is a reasonable thing to offer.

Horizons therefore begins from a simple position: We do not ask people to trust us. We ask whether we have built an organisation that deserves it. That question changes everything.

1. Governance is the practical expression of integrity.

Governance is often misunderstood as paperwork, regulation, or administration. In reality, good governance is simply the collection of decisions, boundaries, and responsibilities that ensure an organisation behaves consistently with the values it claims to hold.

It helps ensure that the integrity shown by an individual worker on the doorstep is not left to personality alone, but is supported by the wider culture. When a support worker says, "I'll call you tomorrow," governance provides the structure to help that promise be remembered, prioritised, and delivered.

Horizons in Practice: When an organisation treats its values as operational rules rather than vague aspirations, everyday reliability becomes more tangible. A support worker promises to follow up on a housing letter by Wednesday morning; the organisation has systems in place to help ensure that commitment is remembered, prioritised, and delivered. Good governance means a client does not have to rely solely on a worker's individual memory, because the organisation has built a system that aims to hold the promise with them.

2. Structure turns good intentions into dependable care.

Compassion without governance relies on good intentions. Compassion supported by governance becomes dependable. It is easy to care about someone when things are going smoothly, but when life becomes more complicated, good intentions alone are not always enough.

When Horizons says that confidentiality matters, governance explains exactly how that confidentiality is protected. When the organisation says it will only provide services it is competent to deliver, governance is the mechanism that turns those words into everyday practice, keeping both the worker and the individual safe.

Horizons in Practice: Clear boundaries may help prevent well-meaning support from becoming erratic or unsafe under pressure. A coordinator clearly outlines the limits of a worker's practical role during their initial induction, preventing them from stepping into

clinical tasks they are not qualified or equipped to handle. By defining exactly what the service can and cannot safely deliver, the organisation helps the support remain stable, predictable, and resilient.

3. Strong foundations are built to be silent.

Good governance should rarely be noticed by the person receiving support. Like the foundations beneath a building, its purpose is not to draw attention to itself but to make everything above it stable.

The person receiving support should be as free as possible to focus on the difficult work of rebuilding their own lives, confident that the organisation supporting them has taken responsibility for building trustworthy foundations. They should not have to wonder whether decisions are made fairly, whether money is managed responsibly, or whether safeguarding responsibilities are taken seriously.

Horizons in Practice: An organisation intentionally absorbs administrative and legal anxieties where it reasonably can, so the individual can focus more fully on their own personal progress. Policies, systems, and professional oversight operate quietly in the background, allowing the relationship between support worker and individual to remain at the centre of every conversation. When the structural scaffolding is silent and secure, the person receiving support can feel more confident that the ground beneath them is being carefully held.

Trust is not built by asking people to believe in us.

It is supported by consistently giving them fewer reasons not to.

Chapter Six

The Architecture of Capability

Why does compassion require competence?

"Compassion opens the door. Competence helps keep it open safely."

Related Publications

HP-005 — Everyday Momentum

HP-010 — Safeguarding and Protective Practice

HP-013 — Building Community Connections

Good intentions can open a door, but they cannot hold it open under pressure. In the world of support work, it is easy to assume that a warm heart is the only real prerequisite for the job. But warmth without capability can inadvertently create its own kind of instability.

If a worker cares deeply but lacks the focus to track a client's progress, forgets the critical details of their week, or fails to prepare for the unexpected, the client is left holding the weight alone. Compassion is the spark that brings us into this work, but competence is the invisible engine that makes that compassion reliable.

Horizons therefore operates from a working standard: We do not just offer a sympathetic ear; we work to offer a mind that keeps hold of your story.

1. Competence means holding the thread of another person's life.

When a person is living through chaos, their own narrative feels fragmented and broken. They struggle to remember what happened on Tuesday, let alone track their progress over a month. Competence in support work is the conscious decision to be the keeper of that thread.

It means showing up to every session with a clear memory of the last conversation wherever possible. It means ensuring that if you cannot be there, someone else is appropriately briefed so the client is less likely to experience a drop in care. When a worker shows up prepared, the client does not have to waste their limited energy catching the worker up. They may feel that their story is being held safely by someone else, which can help them stop looking backwards and start looking forwards.

What the evidence suggests: Research into relationship-based social care suggests that a worker's ability to remember and build upon a person's story over time can contribute to emotional safety and continuity of care. When clients do not have to constantly retell their stories or correct a forgetful worker, the evidence indicates that trust may be supported because they experience being genuinely known.

Horizons in Practice: Frontline practice relies on active attention to an individual's changing reality. A support worker reviews their previous interaction notes for ten minutes before entering the public meeting space, recalling that the individual was waiting on a specific utility bill phone call on Wednesday. Upon sitting down together over a coffee, the worker immediately asks how that phone call went, showing the individual that their life matters enough to be remembered outside the hour they spend together.

2. True capability has the humility to seek wider wisdom.

An experienced support worker does not pretend to have all the answers. The world is far too complex, and the challenges clients face—from housing legalities to navigating local authority systems—are constantly shifting.

Competence is the proactive drive to say, "I want to understand this properly for you." With the client's explicit consent, a competent worker actively reaches out to wider networks, managers, and specialist sources to gather the information needed to

unblock a situation. This is not a sign of weakness; it is one important expression of care. It means you value the client's progress too much to guess the answers.

What the evidence suggests: Research into human services points to the value of knowing where to find the right information and when to ask others for specialist advice. The evidence suggests that workers who actively seek out wider wisdom are better equipped to provide accurate information, supporting more sustainable outcomes for their clients compared to those who rely solely on existing knowledge.

Horizons in Practice: Professional competence includes recognising the limits of one's immediate information and using external expertise. An individual is struggling to understand a complex piece of correspondence regarding their local housing benefit entitlement; rather than guessing the implications, the support worker requests consent to contact a community advice liaison that afternoon. By bringing verified facts back to the next session, the worker helps replace anxiety with a concrete, reliable plan of action.

3. Professional practice begins before the front door opens.

There is a profound difference between a worker who views support as a series of shifts to complete, and a worker who approaches it as a professional practice requiring daily discipline. In frontline practice, operating at a lower capacity does not just reduce effectiveness—it can introduce risk into a vulnerable person's life.

When competence matches compassion as a daily discipline, it can change the atmosphere of the support. The worker is not just going through the motions or offering passive companionship. They are fully engaged, analysing the barriers, celebrating the micro-wins, and helping maintain the momentum that the client is fighting to find. This level of dedication communicates that the client is not a chore to be managed, but a person worthy of an exceptional standard of care.

What the evidence suggests: In organisational psychology, this professional alignment is often linked to “Compassion Satisfaction” — the fulfilment derived from doing care work with a high degree of professional efficacy. Studies suggest that when workers deliberately invest in maintaining their own readiness and competence, it correlates with higher professional stamina, which is consistent with creating a safer and more stable environment for the people they support.

Horizons in Practice: Maintaining a high standard requires intentional self-regulation and personal accountability. A support worker deliberately structures their day to include brief reflection gaps, helping them arrive at each scheduled session as prepared as possible. This disciplined consistency is intended to support the same thoughtful focus and dedication for the last individual of a Friday afternoon as for the first individual of a Monday morning.

Compassion is the emotion that makes us care.

Competence is the discipline that helps make our care safer.

Chapter Seven

The Open Horizon

How should organisations make decisions?

“An open horizon does not tell us what to decide. It helps us see further before deciding.”

Related Publications

HP-010 — Safeguarding and Protective Practice

HP-014 — Working Together

HP-015 — Measuring What Matters

Many organisations make decisions through a rigid, top-down rulebook, operating under the assumption that the world is static and predictable. They look at data on a screen and issue directives from an organisational distance. But human life is fluid, filled with shifting realities, new crises, and complex community dynamics.

Decision-making within a trustworthy organisation cannot rely on institutional certainty. Instead, it must rely on visibility. An open horizon does not tell you which direction to walk; it simply lets you see further before deciding. Wise organisational choices are not made to protect administrative convenience, but to clear a path for the front line to operate safely and effectively.

Horizons therefore operates from a working standard: We do not make decisions to enforce conformity; we make them to widen the horizon of what is possible.

1. Decision-making begins with curiosity, not conclusions.

When an organisation operates purely from the top down, it becomes blind to the immediate realities of the people it supports. Effective decision-making must clear an escalator for insights to travel upward. It requires an institutional mechanism that captures small, frontline observations and translates them into systematic change.

This means the organisation treats frontline data as the primary catalyst for structural pivots. We do not assume the boardroom already holds the answer. Instead, when a pattern of need or friction is identified on the doorstep, the organisation initiates a structured process of collaborative review, evidence gathering, and deliberate adaptation.

What the evidence suggests: Studies on bottom-up decision-making frameworks in human services suggest that organisations that systematically elevate frontline insights may demonstrate higher operational agility. The evidence indicates that when institutional policies are directly informed by frontline observations, the resulting decisions may be more resilient under real-world pressure.

Horizons in Practice: Frontline insights can help shape wider organisational changes. A support worker notes that five different individuals are experiencing extreme anxiety due to a transition to digital-only local authority portals; this observation is formally logged, moving swiftly to a team discussion, manager review and targeted evidence gathering. The organisation responds by designing and piloting a hybrid advocacy toolkit, which is then evaluated before any wider adoption across the service.

2. True transparency balances multiple perspectives to maintain an equilibrium.

An organisation cannot make sound operational choices if it only listens to its own voice. To maintain a safe, steady equilibrium within a community, governance must become an active assembly of diverse viewpoints.

This requires a serious commitment to transparency. When significant choices are on the table, the decision-making loop should intentionally widen to include a full circle of perspectives where appropriate: the lived experience of the individuals receiving support, the practical wisdom of volunteers, the oversight of trustees, and the professional expertise of external partners. By balancing these distinct voices, the organisation reduces the risk of institutional blind spots.

What the evidence suggests: Research into multi-stakeholder governance models within social care suggests that incorporating diverse participant perspectives correlates with greater service stability. The evidence points to the value of balanced viewpoint inputs in preventing the development of insular, detached procedures that alienate the community.

Horizons in Practice: Transparency means seeking governance structures that bring together the people affected by decisions. When reviewing and updating the service delivery criteria, the decision-making group does not sit in isolation; instead, it may convene a dedicated advisory panel comprising people using the service, frontline volunteers, trustees and local authority partners to co-produce the updated framework. By bringing in these different viewpoints before a vote is cast, the final policy is more likely to be sound and widely understood.

3. Accountability requires the humility to review, reflect, and adapt.

A decision is not a static monument to be defended at all costs; it is an active hypothesis that must be continually tested against reality. True accountability means asking the most critical question: *Once a decision has been made, how do we evaluate whether it was the right one?*

Organisational practice should include regular cycles of review, feedback and reflection. If an implemented change causes unexpected friction or fails to support the front line effectively, accountability requires the organisation to have the humility to admit the problem and adjust course. We do not alter human lives to fit our decisions; we alter our decisions to better safeguard human lives.

What the evidence suggests: Research into continuous improvement in care delivery suggests that regular feedback and review may reduce systemic errors. It indicates that organisations that treat policy implementation as an evolving process, open to correction, are better placed to maintain standards of safety and care continuity.

Horizons in Practice: Accountability benefits from a continuous cycle of review, feedback collection, and service refinement. Three months after introducing a new mid-week communication protocol, the organisation triggers a review cycle, gathering anonymous feedback from support staff and direct feedback from people using the service. The review reveals a minor tracking bottleneck, prompting the team to collectively refine the reporting mechanism within a fortnight, helping the system remain agile, safe, and responsive to actual need.

The Filter Against Bloat: Because a distinct philosophy naturally invites expansion, Horizons enforces a strict gatekeeping rule for its own growth. We explicitly resist the temptation to expand the framework into adjacent specialist, financial, employment or care sectors simply because it is interesting or convenient to do so. Every future workflow, partnership or idea must earn its place by actively strengthening our core focus on relational momentum. If a new addition dilutes the central philosophy rather than reinforcing it, the framework rejects it. We do not build an empire of services; we protect a single, disciplined pathway.

An organisation doesn't make decisions to settle a debate.

It makes them to open a new pathway.

Once trust and capability have opened a pathway, the next responsibility is preparation: building a system that is designed to notice risk early, protect personal information, and remain steady before pressure arrives.

Chapter Eight

Before Harm Has a Chance

How do we protect people?

“Protection is not only what we do when harm appears. It is what we practise before it does.”

Related Publications

HP-006 — Professional Boundaries

HP-010 — Safeguarding and Protective Practice

HP-016 — Innovation with Purpose

Most organisations describe safeguarding as a mechanism of reaction. They build comprehensive toolkits, reporting pathways, and compliance structures designed to activate the moment something goes wrong. But for an individual navigating a fragile life, waiting for harm to occur before a system responds is a profound failure of care.

Safeguarding is simply the formal expression of a much larger, quieter discipline: protective thinking. Safer organisations are not only those that respond well to harm; they are also those that work to notice and reduce risks before they escalate. When an environment is intentionally protective, safety is not just a policy document hidden in an office drawer. It becomes a living, breathing habit shared by everyone in the circle.

Horizons therefore operates from a working standard: We do not wait for a crisis to prove our vigilance; we practise the daily discipline that aims to keep harm at bay.

1. Protection begins with noticing the quiet shifts.

Harm rarely arrives with a sudden explosion; it often develops gradually through tiny, almost imperceptible changes in a person's environment, routine, or demeanour. If a support service only reacts to high-level alarms, it can miss the window where earlier support may be possible. Protective practice requires professional curiosity—the willingness to look past the surface while resisting premature conclusions.

This means a support worker maintains a heightened, respectful awareness of the details. A change in how someone presents at a meeting, subtle signs of a chaotic routine shared via their media diary, or a quiet withdrawal from conversation are not viewed as trivial details. They are treated as possible prompts for proportionate curiosity rather than immediate conclusions. By asking gentle, non-threatening questions when these patterns shift, the worker creates an opportunity for the individual to share a hidden pressure before it hardens into a crisis.

What the evidence suggests: Studies surrounding preventive safeguarding in community-based care suggest that early situational awareness may reduce the incidence or severity of welfare crises. The evidence indicates that when practitioners are trained to identify and act upon small warning signs—minor changes in physical environment or social habits—systems may be able to intervene with minimal logistical burden, reducing the chance of issues compounding.

Horizons in Practice: Protective practice depends on noticing when an individual's ordinary pattern has begun to shift. During a scheduled meeting at a local cafe, an individual brings along a bundle of unopened mail that they have been avoiding; rather than ignoring it, the support worker casually suggests looking through the post together over a hot drink. This early curiosity reveals a sudden, confusing change in a utility tariff, allowing the team to work with the individual to address the financial stressor before it escalates further.

2. Healthy boundaries form an important framework of safety.

There is a common misconception that protecting someone requires building massive walls of professional distance. In reality, rigid barriers can alienate vulnerable individuals, driving them back into isolation. Protective support relies on healthy, transparent boundaries—structures that may provide safety without sacrificing human warmth.

Boundaries help support stability, predictability, and resilience under pressure. When a practitioner maintains clear limits around their time, their role, and their capability, they reduce the risk of the relationship becoming erratic or dependency-driven. This can provide the client with a dependable starting point: they know what to expect, they know the boundaries of the service, and they understand that the framework is designed to help keep them secure.

What the evidence suggests: Research into clear boundaries within non-clinical support services suggests that clear interpersonal limits can be associated with ongoing emotional safety for people receiving support. The evidence points to the fact that erratic or poorly defined professional roles may increase client anxiety, whereas consistent boundaries can create a more secure support space that reduces the risk of exploitation or distress in the relationship.

Horizons in Practice: Boundaries are not barriers meant to distance the worker; they are part of the framework that helps make support safer. A client going through a difficult week asks their support worker for their personal mobile number to text over the weekend; the worker gently declines, explaining that using the official communication channels helps ensure that if an emergency arises, a full, monitored team is there to respond. By reinforcing the structural pathway rather than offering an ad-hoc exception, the worker reduces the risk of erratic support while maintaining institutional accountability.

3. Shared protective awareness removes the burden from a single pair of shoulders.

If protection is treated as the sole responsibility of an isolated practitioner or a lone safeguarding officer, the system may become fragile. A single pair of eyes cannot see every vulnerability, and a single mind cannot hold every risk. Safety is better understood as something held by many people, requiring the active participation of the individual, the worker, the team, and the wider community.

This means fostering an open culture of collective reflection and shared responsibility. We do not dismiss well-founded professional concerns simply because they have not yet become formal evidence; we discuss them openly, cross-reference them with the observations of other partners, and make collaborative decisions. When safety is held collectively, the organisation reduces the chance that one individual carries the exhausting weight of protection alone.

What the evidence suggests: Organisational safety culture literature indicates that shared responsibility may produce stronger safeguarding outcomes than isolated command structures. Research suggests that human service teams that actively practise collective case-reflection can show stronger shared confidence and lower error rates, as multiple perspectives may help reduce individual blind spots.

Horizons in Practice: Accountability requires safety to be treated as a shared responsibility. During a weekly reflection meeting, a support worker shares a slight, intuitive worry about a client's increasing reluctance to leave the house, unsure if it warrants a formal alert; a colleague reveals a similar pattern with a neighbour in the same complex, prompting the manager to explore support from a local community integration partner. By sharing the observation across a reflective team, the organisation can turn an isolated professional concern into a more coordinated, protective response.

Safeguarding is the mechanism we trigger when safety fails.

Protection is the habit we practise to help it stand.

Chapter Nine

Ready Before We Begin

How do we prepare responsibly?

“Preparation is not bureaucracy when it helps a promise hold under pressure.”

Related Publications

HP-010 — Safeguarding and Protective Practice

HP-013 — Building Community Connections

HP-016 — Innovation with Purpose

It is easy for an organisation to profess deep values when the sea is calm. Most services operate under the comfortable assumption that they can simply deal with crises, complaints, or operational failures if and when they arise. But in the volatile landscape of community support, relying only on reactive readiness can leave people and workers exposed.

The backstage machinery of an organisation—the risk assessments, the insurance policies, the data protocols, and the accountability frameworks—is often dismissed as dry, bureaucratic box-ticking. In reality, this unseen machinery is one of the things that makes the human-centred work possible. We do not build a robust operational framework only to satisfy a regulator or survive an audit; we build it so that when a worker steps out into the mid-week chaos, the ground beneath their feet is less likely to shake.

Horizons therefore operates from a working standard: We do not prepare to satisfy a checklist; we prepare so our promises are more likely to hold under pressure.

For that reason, the proposed public-facing Momentum Support Sessions pathway is not being treated as ready simply because the idea is compelling. Horizons is working towards a carefully controlled initial community launch from September 2026, subject to organisational readiness and only after a feasibility study, structured competence testing, and professional scenario-based discussion with two qualified counsellors. This preparatory phase is intended to test communication workflows, shared ways of noticing and responding to risk, referral thresholds, consent processes, suitability arrangements, and local safety nets before any public-facing access route opens.

1. Responsible risk management is an act of deliberate resilience.

Many organisations treat risk as an enemy to be avoided, creating hyper-restrictive policies that can inadvertently trap vulnerable individuals in isolation. Responsible practice does not mean eliminating risk; it means understanding it, sizing it up, and building the structural resilience required to hold it as safely as possible.

This requires the organisation to look at volatility with clarity before the work ever starts. We map out the safety parameters and identify the appropriate insurance arrangements required for frontline practice, while equipping our staff with clear guidelines. By doing the heavy lifting of risk calculations beforehand, the worker is less burdened by institutional anxiety and more able to focus on the person in front of them.

Horizons in Practice: Responsible risk management means transforming institutional fear into practical preparedness. The organisation reviews a new community accompaniment pilot, identifying potential environmental triggers that could cause a client severe distress; rather than cancelling the project to avoid liability, the team maps out verified safe zones and clear escape routes along the path. By securing targeted operational insurance and equipping the worker with an explicit safety blueprint, the organisation works to support the client's independence while reducing avoidable exposure to harm.

2. Protecting personal data is one important way of showing respect.

When an individual shares the messy, fragmented pieces of their life, they are not just handing over information; they are handing over pieces of themselves. In the Horizons worldview, safeguarding information is a fundamental act of respect. Our daily practice is defined by a simple cultural boundary: we listen, but we don't hoard.

This means our data systems should operate seamlessly and securely in the background, treating every stored note, phone number, and voice recording with serious care. We aim to build secure, low-friction information systems that allow the team to stay informed without ever turning the client's lived experience into a public commodity. When the organisation takes quiet responsibility for data security, the client is given an important reassurance: their vulnerability is being treated with strong safeguards.

Horizons in Practice: Personal disclosures must be protected from exposure. A support worker uses a secure, encrypted mobile application to input brief reflection notes immediately after a public engagement session, reducing the chance of physical paperwork being left exposed. By keeping information tightly managed behind multi-factor authentication, the organisation works to maintain continuity of care while treating the individual's private reality as confidential.

3. A transparent complaints pathway can support deeper trust.

An organisation that claims it never makes mistakes is lying. Human systems are inherently imperfect, and at some point, a promise may be dropped, a boundary may blur, or communication may fail. One important measure of an organisation's trustworthiness is not the illusion of perfection, but how it behaves when things go wrong.

Accountability demands a clear, low-friction pathway for feedback and complaints that is accessible to everyone. We do not hide our mistakes behind administrative walls or defensive legalese. Instead, we welcome feedback as a vital mirror, seeking the structural humility to listen, investigate transparently, and implement course corrections where needed. When an individual sees that their grievance is met with respect and timely action, a moment of failure may become part of rebuilding trust.

Horizons in Practice: Accountability requires meeting service failure with transparency and timely correction. An individual feels that a sudden shift in their weekly support schedule was handled insensitively and submits a formal complaint through the organisation's agreed feedback route; the area manager contacts the individual within twenty-four hours to listen openly, validate the frustration, and co-produce a revised scheduling arrangement. By treating the complaint as an opportunity for collaborative alignment rather than a defensive dispute, the organisation aims to repair the relationship and strengthen the service model.

We do not ask people to believe in our perfection.

We ask them to trust our readiness.

After exploring how a service prepares, protects, and governs itself, the final question is what happens when the person no longer needs the scaffolding to remain standing.

Chapter Ten

Leaving the Scaffolding Behind

How do we let go without letting someone fall?

“The aim is not that people always need the scaffolding. It is that they can eventually stand without it.”

Related Publications

HP-004 — Holding the Thread

HP-005 — Everyday Momentum

HP-017 — Looking to the Future

Traditional services frequently view endings through a purely administrative lens. They talk about closure dates, exit strategies, and discharging cases—treating a human life as an allocated slot that has simply run its course or exhausted its funding. But when a support system snaps shut based on a calendar date, it risks creating the exact same vacuum that triggered the initial disengagement.

Responsible endings require the art of letting go. Leaving can be a cold, top-down decision forced by external changes; letting go is a collaborative, relational choice made between two people. The aim of a non-clinical support service is not that an individual always needs our presence, but that they may eventually reach a state of confident independence. The scaffolding is not the building; its purpose is to remain silent and stable until the structure can stand more securely on its own foundations.

Horizons therefore operates from a working standard: Success is not measured only by how many people stay with us; it is also measured by how confidently they are supported to walk away.

1. Relational transition is a shared letting go, not a clinical discharge.

When an individual has spent months building a secure, history-free alliance with a support worker, an abrupt ending can feel like a profound rejection. Dependency is not reduced by suddenly cutting the line. It may be reduced by gradually shifting the ownership of progress back into the hands of the person who earned it.

This means the final phase of support should involve an explicit, deliberate tapering of presence where appropriate. We do not disappear overnight. Instead, we work with the individual to widen the gaps between visits, moving from weekly momentum touchpoints to fortnightly check-ins, and finally to an occasional community coffee if this is safe, suitable and wanted. This intentional pacing gives the individual space to test their own wings while keeping a proportionate safety net alongside them, transforming an ending into a supported transition.

Horizons in Practice: Relational transition involves gradually shifting the focus from the worker's guidance to the individual's independent action. A support worker and an individual agree to transition from weekly face-to-face sessions to a brief fortnightly phone call over a six-week period. During these final interactions, the worker intentionally steps into the background, prompting the individual to lead the conversation and review their own scalable routines. This gradual withdrawal supports the individual's autonomy, helping the proof of capability stay in the room long after the worker leaves.

2. Setbacks are a continuation of the journey, not a return to the start.

The fear of going backwards can be one of the biggest barriers an individual faces when preparing to stand alone. They worry that if life knocks them sideways three months down the line, a single bad week means they have failed completely and are right back where they started. This all-or-nothing mindset can trigger a pre-emptive disengagement born out of sheer anxiety.

To let go safely, the organisation must firmly decouple the end of regular support from the end of the relationship. We explicitly reframe the future: asking for help down the road is not a sign of failure, but a continuation of the journey. If a crisis hits, they do not

have to navigate a labyrinth of rigid new assessments or retell their story from scratch. They are simply picking up the thread with an organisation that already knows their worth.

What the evidence suggests: Research on maintaining change and preventing setbacks indicates that framing future challenges as normal lifestyle fluctuations rather than complete failures may support long-term resilience. The data suggests that when individuals know a service remains accessible for low-friction re-engagement, their confidence may grow, potentially making regression less likely to occur.

Horizons in Practice: Supporting long-term progress involves building a clear, non-shaming safety valve into the final plan where appropriate. On the penultimate visit, the support worker and client co-produce a "just-in-case" blueprint, listing the specific small warning signs of a difficult week and detailing a direct, low-barrier number to call if things become unmanageable. The worker explicitly states, "If you need to ring us in six months, you aren't starting again; you are just continuing what we built." This open-door starting point works to reduce the shame of struggle and help the individual handle future volatility with greater confidence.

3. The intended destination is for momentum to belong increasingly to them.

A support worker does not fix a broken life; they can provide steady, external momentum while a person navigates difficult terrain. Independence is strengthened when the individual looks at the routines, the phone reminders, the physical anchors, and the visual journals, and realises that the progress did not belong to the worker. It belonged to them.

The final conversation acts as a mirror held up to their own achievement. We do not take credit for the stability achieved, nor do we present ourselves as the authors of their success. We step out of the frame as much as possible, leaving the individual standing more firmly on the ground they cleared for themselves. They walk forward not because a system is pushing them, but because they are discovering their own forward motion.

What the evidence suggests: Research on independence and motivation within human services highlights that long-term independence is supported when individuals begin to see independence and capability as their own. Research suggests that when practitioners intentionally attribute success to the client's own choices and efforts, the individual's self-belief may become more sustainable, reducing the risk that progress falls away after support ends.

Horizons in Practice: Confident independence means working towards a final interaction that celebrates generalised ownership. During the final session, the support worker reviews the media diary photos and physical anchors accumulated over the past months, asking the individual to describe how *they* managed to keep those promises. The worker finishes by saying, "I didn't cook those meals, ring those offices, or clear that clutter—you did." When the final session draws to a close and they part ways, the individual moves forward knowing that the momentum increasingly belongs to them.

The first chapter begins with someone quietly slipping away from support.

The last chapter ends with someone confidently stepping away from it.

A Note on the Evidence Base

The research summaries in this publication draw upon established themes across relationship-based practice, trauma-informed engagement, safeguarding, behavioural change, community support, organisational psychology and service governance. They are presented as accessible summaries rather than systematic reviews or clinical guidance.

A fuller referenced evidence base is currently being compiled for a future edition. Readers seeking the sources informing a particular section are invited to contact The Horizons Project.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The Work Continues

If you have reached this point, thank you.

Whether you have agreed with every idea, questioned half of them, or found yourself somewhere in between, you have already joined the wider dialogue that Horizons hopes to encourage. This publication was never written to provide all the answers. It was written to ask better questions.

The Horizons Project will continue to grow through research, reflective practice, lived experience, professional discussion, constructive challenge and careful testing. Like the people it hopes to support, the organisation does not aspire to perfection. It aspires to remain curious, accountable, and willing to learn.

If these pages have encouraged you to look at engagement, relationships, governance or compassionate support from a different perspective, then this publication has begun to achieve one of its principal aims. The future of Horizons will not be determined by this document alone. It may be shaped by the shared learning that follows it.

Horizons does not ask to have the final word.

It simply hopes to contribute to better support.

Thank you for being part of that continued work.

Future Development

Building Horizons has never been intended as a finished blueprint. Like The Horizons Project itself, it is expected to continue evolving through research, reflective practice, professional discussion, lived experience and constructive challenge.

This publication establishes the philosophical, governance and practice foundations of Horizons as they stand today. As the organisation matures, several areas have already been identified for further development in later publications.

Rather than viewing these as omissions, Horizons regards them as part of responsible organisational development. Reflection, refinement and continual learning are not signs that an organisation lacks confidence. They are signs that it remains willing to strengthen its thinking as evidence, experience and understanding continue to grow.

Strengthening the Evidence Base

The research summaries throughout this publication have been intentionally written in an accessible style to support a broad readership. Subsequent editions will expand upon this work through a more comprehensive referenced evidence base, enabling commissioners, researchers, academics and statutory partners to explore the underlying literature in greater depth.

Organisational Sustainability

As Horizons develops, later publications are expected to provide greater detail regarding organisational sustainability, including funding arrangements, resource planning, financial governance and long-term development. These additions will help explain not only the philosophy of the organisation but also the practical structures that support its continued delivery.

Service Definition

While this publication explains the principles and boundaries of Momentum Support Sessions, future work may further clarify operational eligibility, suitability criteria, referral pathways and service access arrangements as these continue to develop through governance review, professional consultation and practical learning.

Measuring Meaningful Outcomes

Building on the philosophy introduced throughout this publication and expanded within the accompanying publication series, future work is expected to describe the evaluation frameworks used to understand impact. This may include both qualitative and quantitative approaches to measuring confidence, engagement, continuity of support and sustained Momentum.

Governance and Regulatory Development

As Horizons continues towards full operational readiness, subsequent editions may include additional detail regarding governance arrangements, information governance, data protection, regulatory compliance, recruitment standards, professional development, supervision, safeguarding assurance and organisational accountability.

Learning Through Practice

Perhaps most importantly, Horizons will continue to evolve through experience. Every conversation, every partnership, every challenge and every thoughtful piece of feedback contributes to a deeper understanding of what helps people remain engaged with support. Horizons has never sought to become an organisation that has all the answers. Instead, it hopes to remain one that continues asking better questions.

Looking Ahead

If future editions differ from the one you have just read, that should not be viewed as inconsistency. It should be understood as evidence that Horizons remains committed to reflection, responsible development and continual learning.

The purpose of *Building Horizons* is not to present a finished destination, but to document an organisation that continues to ask better questions, learn from experience and strengthen its practice over time.

If these pages encourage future discussion, constructive challenge and ongoing collaboration, then they will have achieved exactly what they were intended to do.

Further Reading

The following suggestions are offered as recommended next reading rather than a complete catalogue. They are intended to help readers follow the themes that most interested them.

Interested in governance?

HP-010 — Safeguarding and Protective Practice

HP-016 — Innovation with Purpose

Interested in community support?

HP-013 — Building Community Connections

HP-014 — Working Together

Interested in relationship-led practice?

HP-008 — Reflective Practice and Continuous Learning

HP-009 — Governance and Responsible Development

The Horizons Project Publications

Publication Series

HP-001 — Vision, Mission and Core Values

HP-002 — Understanding Momentum

HP-003 — Why People Disengage

HP-004 — Holding the Thread

HP-005 — Everyday Momentum

HP-006 — Professional Boundaries

HP-007 — Building Trust

HP-008 — Reflective Practice and Continuous Learning

HP-009 — Governance and Responsible Development

HP-010 — Safeguarding and Protective Practice

HP-011 — Beginning the Journey

HP-012 — Ending Well

HP-013 — Building Community Connections

HP-014 — Working Together

HP-015 — Measuring What Matters

HP-016 — Innovation with Purpose

Research & Governance Series

Publication No. 1

Reserved

Publication No. 2

Building Horizons: The Philosophy, Governance and Practice Behind The Horizons Project

Publication No. 3

Future Development

The Journey Continues

Horizons is not presented as a finished model. It is presented as an evolving philosophy—one that grows through evidence, reflection, governance, lived experience and constructive challenge.

If the ideas in this publication continue to be tested, strengthened and shared, then the journey has only just begun.

With Gratitude

No project like The Horizons Project is ever built by one person. It is shaped through trust, challenge, encouragement and the quiet generosity of people who give their time, experience and belief to something still becoming.

Although my name appears on the cover, the thinking behind these pages has been shaped by hundreds of people, countless discussions and experiences that have challenged, encouraged and inspired me over many years.

First and foremost, my deepest gratitude belongs to the individuals whose lives have intersected with my own—the people who, often during some of the most difficult periods of their lives, allowed me the privilege of learning from their experiences, walking alongside them and seeing the courage it can take to keep going. Many will never realise the impact they have had on shaping my own understanding of engagement, progress and hope.

Horizons exists because of those shared experiences. It exists because every individual reminded me that behind every assessment, every referral and every case file is a person with a unique story that deserves to be heard. You have taught me more than I could ever fully express.

I would like to thank my friend, Sam.

Throughout the development of The Horizons Project, Sam has been a constant source of encouragement, honest discussion and unwavering belief. Many of the ideas within this publication began as thoughts spoken aloud, questions explored together and conversations that gradually transformed hopes into plans, plans into words and words into something real. Every project needs someone willing to ask, “What if?”

Thank you for asking that question with me.

My sincere thanks also go to the many professionals who have influenced my thinking throughout my journey: colleagues within social care who modelled patience and practical judgement; professionals across psychology, counselling and mental health who helped deepen my understanding of emotional safety; and healthcare practitioners, researchers, teachers, managers and supervisors whose knowledge, challenge and example have shaped the standards I continue to work towards.

Every discussion has contributed something. Some offered knowledge; some offered challenge. Others simply demonstrated what compassionate professionalism looks like in practice. Each has helped shape the values upon which The Horizons Project has been built.

I owe particular gratitude to The Brosnan Centre Youth Services in Melbourne, Victoria. At a time in my own life when direction was uncertain, they offered something far more valuable than answers. They offered belief. Looking back now, I can see that many of the principles described throughout this publication were quietly taking root long before I ever had the language to describe them. For that, I will always remain grateful.

I would also like to acknowledge every organisation that has invested in my professional development. From my earliest experiences within social care to my most recent employment, every opportunity to learn, every training course, every difficult discussion and every interaction with the people I have supported has helped shape both my practice and my understanding.

Formal learning teaches knowledge. Experience helps develop judgement. The combination of both has profoundly influenced The Horizons Project.

Finally, thank you to every person who has chosen to read this publication. Whether you are a director, practitioner, volunteer, commissioner, researcher, student or simply someone who believes support can always be improved, thank you for giving your time, attention and openness to the ideas explored here.

The Horizons Project was never intended to belong to one individual. It belongs to every person willing to contribute their experience, curiosity and compassion towards building something better.

I hope this publication marks not the end of the work, but the beginning of many more opportunities to learn, reflect and build something better.