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# CPO Connect: Progress, learning and forward look, July 2021

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## **Introduction**

The Wise Group has published a CPO Connect progress report providing further information on the service and future investment.

In advance of court business resuming to pre-pandemic levels in September 2021 and the expected increase in the number of Community Payback Orders (CPOs) with an unpaid work (UPW) requirement, we have evaluated the CPO Connect programme and refined our processes, ready to scale up quickly and offer up to 30 hours of “other activity” to all clients deemed suitable by Justice Social Work (JSW).

## **Background**

CPO Connect is a secure and flexible online learning programme that counts towards the “other activity” element of a CPO’s Unpaid Work Order. It is a practical and accessible way to reduce Unpaid Work Hours with the added benefit of learning something new. Our trained facilitators deliver a series of two-hour sessions around five pro-social themes (see attached Logic Model).

Data from the Justice Analytical Services Monthly Safer Communities and Justice briefings suggests that if courts return to the pre-pandemic business levels the number of new CPOs per month could be in the region of 1400, adding even more to the current backlog. It is also worth noting that potentially, 1000 of these per month could include an Unpaid Work requirement.



Additionally, the Audit Scotland report published 15 July highlights “Little progress has been made in increasing the proportion of offenders given community sentences, as opposed to custody. In 2016/17, 59 per cent received a community sentence. This fell to 55 per cent in 2018/19 before returning to 59 per cent in 2019/20”. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that Scottish Government will take appropriate remedial action, resulting in an increase in community sentences.

The purpose of this report is to critically review the first 15 weeks of the CPO Connect service and ensure our preparedness for the increase in demand. The Wise Group has committed over £50,000 in funding to the programme which will run until March 2022.

### **The first 15 weeks in numbers**

- 7 Local Authorities have been early adopters of CPO Connect
- 37 case workers have referred into the service
- 205 client referrals received
- 1,082 bookings made
- Over 1,000 hours of Other Activity undertaken
- 149 sessions delivered



## What has worked well so far?

Feedback tells us that the service works well for Justice Social Work and their clients. The referral process, feedback loop and reporting to referrers greatly helps case management and there have been no technical problems experienced to date.

- The referral process is simple and takes about four minutes
- The service is easily accessible to anyone with an internet connection
- No travel involved and geography is not a barrier
- No social distance considerations – uninterrupted service regardless of Covid restrictions
- Numerous evening/weekend sessions, when many other services are closed
- Minimal resource required from Justice Social Work
- Robust security process and feedback loop
- Highly scalable to cope with increasing demand

Once operational, the CPO Connect model supports an unlimited number of referrals from a Local Authority.

As a result, there is no need to prioritise which customers are referred.



We will also continually improve the Service based on feedback and insight through:

- A re-configured timetable. Providing more sessions at evenings and weekends (easier for those in employment to engage);
- Improving understanding and referrals. We will engage with stakeholders to improve referral rates and are producing a video to help more people understand the service;
- Addressing digital exclusion. We're purchasing IT equipment which case workers can utilise to increase the pool of individuals who could be referred;
- An offline version. Online group work might not work for everyone. We are considering how we might provide the service offline through self-directed learning via an offline version of CPO Connect;
- Recruiting staff in preparation. We're recruiting additional staff to provide more customer service in preparation for court business resuming;
- Providing guidance for Post Sentence Interviews. We believe the optimal time to make a referral is directly after the post-sentence interview. Our suggestion would be for JSW colleagues to ask clients if they have an internet connection at home. CPO Connect could then be the default Other Activity option for them – saving offline options for those who cannot access online content. This will direct limited resources to the right places and ensure immediate commencement of the order;
- Increasing variety of topics. This will give flexibility and options for people to learn topics and complete all 30 hours.



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## The forward view

As court business is scheduled to resume more fully in September 2021, it is highly likely that we will see a marked increase in the number of orders coming through, which will add more pressure to an already sizeable backlog.

We believe that the period from Autumn to March 2022 will be when we truly see the added value, impact and potential that this service can offer to augment and support the work of our colleagues in Justice Social Work, and it is for that reason that the Wise Group has committed more money from its own reserves to keep this service operating until March 2022.





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## Feedback from referrers and service users

CPO Connect can help you to help your clients, support the reduction in the backlog of UPW hours, save you time in identifying suitable Other Activity and is the easiest referral you will ever make.

But don't just take our word for it. Here is some of the feedback we have received to date.

### ***Justice Social Work***

"The reporting throughout is very beneficial. I receive a notification when a client fails to attend a session, and this means I can follow up straightaway if necessary. There's also a comprehensive weekly report which details all the info I need to update CareFirst."

***Unpaid Work Case Manager, Highland Council***

"CPO Connect is certainly the easiest referral I make. There's no hunting around for paperwork or emails, it's all done on the online form in a couple of minutes. Then, I get a confirmation email straight away and I can see it's been sent to the client. For a worker's perspective, it's spot on!"

***Justice Officer, Stirling Council***





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“I’ve been referring to CPO Connect since it started. The process is incredibly smooth to make a referral. It’s an online form which takes me just a few minutes. The clients get notified they’ve been referred and someone from the Wise Group team calls them to welcome them onto the programme and explain how it works.

The feedback I get from the clients is that they enjoy the sessions, the content is relevant, and it’s delivered in a relaxed, informative way. I even attended one session just to check it out and was really impressed by how the facilitator managed the group and encouraged people to participate.”

***Community Justice Assistant, Angus Council***

“Feedback has been good so far with no problems highlighted to me. The referral process has been very straightforward from my point of view which has encouraged me to make more referrals.”

***Justice Support Assistant, North Lanarkshire***





### ***CPO Connect clients***

“I learned how diet affects our mental health. What I’ll change? To eat better lol!”

“It’s a no brainer... I can do the sessions from home.”

“I work full time, so the evening and weekend sessions suit me.”

“The facilitator was really good. Finding out about the triggers and how to deal with your anger was good too.”





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## Contact us

For more information, or to discuss CPO Connect in more detail, please get in touch with:

Hamish\_Robertson@thewisegroup.co.uk

Alternatively, if you believe that CPO Connect can support you to support your clients and would like to make a referral, you can do so via the following link:

<https://www.thewisegroup.co.uk/cpoconnect/>

