



The Wise Group

Evidence and views to the Criminal Justice Committee relating to -

Evidence session 22 September 2021 on Victims' Rights and Support

- Additional written evidence (**pages 2-4**)
- Response to session question from Rhona McKay MSP "*Do you have an approximate gender breakdown of the people whom you help? What is the male to female ratio?*" (**page 5**)

Call for views 1 October 2021 Committee Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2022/23 Budget

- Priorities and recommendations (**pages 6-11**)

The Wise Group
Supplementary Written Evidence to Criminal Justice Committee
22 September 2021

We would like to take this opportunity to re-iterate our thanks to the committee for inviting us to provide evidence to the round table session on Victims' Rights and Support on Wednesday, 22 September 2021.

Following that session, we are pleased to provide further information to outline our thoughts on how preventative spend, and action can dilute the potential for re-offending and thereby reduce the number of victims of crime.

Our area of expertise is firmly rooted in the rehabilitation and re-integration of prison leavers and our New Routes Mentoring Service is not only trauma informed, but trauma responsive and firmly based around a victim centred approach.

It is our objective, in this modern democracy and as part of a solid approach to community safety and health, to dilute the potential for more victims –

Our 9 New Routes Mentoring outcomes are focused on reducing reoffending, meaning fewer victims. The Programme takes a whole system approach. A mentor works with a customer to identify the underlying reasons for offending and to explore options to deal with and eliminate them. The approach is trauma responsive, and we are alive to the fact that a frequent response to 'trauma' can be offending itself.

We work with people for the long term - up to 12 months both pre and post liberation. This allows time for a relationship to be built on trust and respect which is critical to enable constructive challenges to attitudes and behaviours.

Mentors help deliver a system-wide approach because their role is to provide the superglue that engages customers with the services they need to support their progress and ensure they don't create more victims. Therefore, they know all the constituent parts of the whole system and help join it up.

50% of our mentors have lived experience of the Justice System which gives our service a high degree of credibility and high engagement rates. Mentors who have shared the same experiences, and in many cases the trauma, as their customers, but who have managed to turn their lives around provide highly positive role models who inspire their customers to aspire to change and a better way of life. Mentors explore and encourage goal setting, empowering increased self-efficacy and transformational change all based on the customers own identified needs. Mentoring is proven to provide the much-needed golden thread linking our customers and the universal services in their communities. The one to one, non-judgemental and trusted relationship that a professional mentor has with the customer challenges their attitudes and behaviours towards offending, improves engagement with statutory and non-statutory services, and contributes to reducing reoffending, safer communities, and less victims of crime.

Impact of New Routes Mentoring

- Since 2013, New Routes has supported over 5000 prison leavers
- New Routes is available across all 32 Local Authorities in Scotland
- New Routes is available to all short-term male prisoners across the Scottish Prison Service estate
- New Routes has supported customers across Scotland to engage with over 500 national, local and community support agencies to assist our customers to progress with their self-identified needs
- More than 500 New Routes customers have moved into Employment which is a rate of 10% on a programme which is not specifically employment focused. This illustrates the benefit of mentoring to increase confidence, self-efficacy and the belief that your past does not define your future

Of those New Routes customers who complete the programme, approximately 91.3% have been shown not to have returned to prison within one year of liberation resulting in a dilution of the number of victims of crime. For the operational year 20/21 1117 offenders successfully completed the New Routes Mentoring programme.

Our 9-point 'behaviour change' approach, based on our bespoke Baseline Monitoring Tool and completed in three stages, identifies rationale for change and offers empowerment for desistance. It helps our customers to diagnose the reasons for their offending, the areas they need to address and importantly, where and how to access the support available to help them effect change. With a unit cost of £1094 it is economically and socially more effective than prison, which in turn can create more inclination to re-offend. By completing the Baseline Assessment prior to release, immediately after release and finally, six months post-release we can effectively measure "behaviour change or distance travelled" for each participant on the programme. The 9-point approach addresses –

- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Addictions
- Education and Training
- Employment
- Relationships
- Finance
- Housing
- Attitudes and Behaviours

Data from our customer journeys in 2020 – 21 shows that this approach to our customer journey contributes effectively to behaviour change and distance travelled as they move towards the desistance pathway. Specifically –

- 75% addressed and improved their Financial Circumstances
- 75% secured or improved their accommodation
- 65 % improved their physical health and wellbeing
- 63% improved or created positive Family / Personal relationships
- 63% reported an improvement in attitudes and behaviour
- 63% reduced or stopped Substance Misuse
- 62% saw an improvement in their Mental Health

- 60% increased their employability skills with 10% gaining employment

Recommendations to the Committee

- The importance of the contribution of third sector organisations in supporting victims of crime and reducing re-offending to further dilute the numbers of victims cannot be underestimated.

In order to effectively plan and maintain sustainability of available support organisations, we urge the committee to raise and promote the issue of multiyear funding which would ensure consistency of delivery, and support the retention of highly trained and effective staff members.

- With over fifteen years' experience working with and supporting prison leavers on their journey of change and desistance, we understand clearly that transformational change cannot be achieved without mentoring. It is proven to be the most effective way to support the reduction of re-offending and therefore contribute to the corresponding reduction in the number of victims of crime.

We invite more Victim Support Organisations to work in closer partnership with services like ours. As a first, tangible step, we would like to work with these organisations to share educational input relating to victims' issues.

- Ensure that lessons learned, and innovations delivered through sectoral response to the Covid pandemic are not lost and indeed are fully recognised and captured as future best practice.

Specifically, the enhanced attitude to partnership working and integration of services, the use of technology as an enabler through digital connection for service provision, sharing and increasing the impact of innovations like our new CPO Connect programme which might well be adaptable to help Victim Support Organisations.

- The question of Friday liberations from prison which was raised at the Committee session continues to be an issue. However, the mechanism to deal with this was provided in the Control of Prisoners Release (Scotland) Act 2015. This legislation allows for a prisoner whose release date is a Friday to be released up to two days early at the discretion of the Prison Governor if it can be shown that this would be advantageous in supporting the prisoner to access services and support to help them in their re-integration. The application needs to be made by an individual or organisation who are providing support to the prisoner.

We urge the Committee to consider advocating wider promotion and endorsement of this scheme to ensure more use is made of it.

Please click here to hear from our mentor Roseann who shares how we reduce re-offending and dilute the potential for more victims.

bit.ly/reducingvictims

Please click here to hear directly from our customer Craig.

<https://twitter.com/wisegroup/status/1438531116139524096?s=20>

Wise Group Follow Up Response to Question from Rona Mackay 22 Sept 2021

During the evidence session on 22nd September 2021, Rona Mackay MSP posed the following question to Sean Duffy CEO, The Wise Group:

"Do you have an approximate gender breakdown of the people whom you help? What is the male to female ratio?"

Background

Male offenders serving sentences of less than four years are supported through the New Routes Mentoring Service which is a national Public Social Partnership (PSP) led by The Wise Group. It operates across thirty-two Local Authorities and all Scottish Prisons with a short-term prisoner population.

Female offenders serving sentences of less than four years, on remand or subject to a Community Payback Order are supported through the Shine PSP led by Sacro, in which we are a delivery partner for Glasgow (there are other partners across Scotland who also support females via the Shine PSP).

Number of people currently being mentored by the Wise Group as of 30th September 2021

Males	914	(New Routes Mentoring Service)
Females	31	(Shine Women's Mentoring Service)

Numbers supported during Operational Year 2020 - 21

Males	1589	(Wise Group New Routes Mentoring Service)
Females	366	(Shine Women's Mentoring Service)

Criminal Justice Committee Pre-Budget Scrutiny Wise Group Response 1st October 2021

Introduction

The Wise Group welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Justice Committee's call for views relating to spending in the Justice portfolio. The paper below provides insight from our customers and our programmes and we would be happy to provide a verbal briefing if that would be helpful.

The Wise Group is one of Scotland's leading social enterprises, focussed on lifting people out of poverty. We provide person centred support to help people gain the skills to find and stay in work; we support people in or to prevent fuel poverty and mentor those at risk of offending or re-offending.

As we referred to in our recent Wise Group manifesto [From Rhetoric to Reality](#), if the pandemic and economic woes of the past have taught us anything, it is that society and business reflect each other. With an economic scale of around £2 billion, social enterprise and its role in the recovery needs to be understood. Through growing our social capital, we do what we do with purpose at the heart whilst delivering economic benefit. The monumental scale of the economic and civic challenges we face leaves us in no doubt that our focus must be on a new approach.

Supporting the Justice System in Scotland

Re-offending is one of the strongest drivers of our prison population, and whilst we know that short term prison sentences are largely ineffective, our prison population remains stubbornly high. With over a decade of experience we bring new innovations to the system and have operated in the field of prison throughcare since 2006.

The Wise Group is the managing partner of New Routes Mentoring - the largest, national, Justice Mentoring programme in Scotland, funded by the Scottish Government. Operated as a Public Social Partnership (PSP), New Routes Mentoring is a robust, cohesive and high functioning partnership of public and third sector organisations which is highly committed to reducing re-offending and victims, supporting people to re-integrate with their communities and tread the path to desistance. In short, the New Routes partnership is much bigger than the sum of its parts.

Over the course of the year ended March 2021, the New Routes service was accessed by almost 1600 short term male prison leavers from across the entire Scottish Prison Service (SPS) estate. The willingness to engage with our mentors (50% of whom have experience of the justice system) is clear evidence towards diluting the number of potential new victims.

The insight and rich body of data we capture through our work in this field allows us to follow and predict trends and therefore adjust and re-configure our service and delivery model to create improved outcomes. 91.3% of our customers who experienced our New Routes Mentoring did not receive a future prison sentence within one year of leaving custody.

Below we outline responses to the specific questions posed by the Committee.

1. Whether the Scottish Government is providing enough budget for the criminal justice sector to recover from COVID-19?

We welcome the investment placed in both court business and Justice Social Work as we strive to recover from the pandemic and the resulting backlog of case management. Although the Government has provided £13m (including £2.5m to purchase third sector support) to provide extra capacity in dealing with the backlog in Community Payback Orders, the timescales attached made it very difficult for Local Authorities to effectively identify, procure and operationalise the most effective and appropriate services.

Going forward, it will be crucial that this investment is sustained to allow Local Authorities, as well as third sector providers, to plan effectively and provide the services needed for community safety and health. Effective planning ensures that service providers can recruit and retain staff and can continue to develop and test new ideas towards continuous improvements for individuals and their communities.

There remains uncertainty about the future of spending on Justice to recover from COVID 19. Without a longer-term view of sustained investment, the Government's Justice, Health and Communities agendas will not be deliverable. We urge the Committee to use this opportunity to progress the agenda of multi-year, secure funding across these areas.

2. What the cost will be of making permanent some of the temporary changes brought in because of the pandemic (if these are to become permanent)?

The solutions that worked in 2019 aren't necessarily suitable for a post-pandemic world – so new ideas are needed which take time to create and embed. However, during the pandemic, we have proved that we can do 'difficult'. It is incumbent on all of us not to lose sight of the progress we have made through building on existing processes and making them more efficient during the pandemic.

For example, the Wise Group increased the use of the "email a prisoner" service to engage with existing and potential customers to begin and continue their journey towards desistance. Traditionally undertaken through a mentoring approach, it is important to note that the relational aspect of mentoring is the bedrock of its success therefore we must be careful during the recovery period that we do not dilute all face-to-face engagement which is also crucial to the life changing and societal outcomes delivered by the mentoring programme.

3. Whether organisations in the criminal justice sector have enough budget and staff to be able to cope with a return to pre-pandemic levels of working (e.g., expected growth in the number of court trials)?

In this context we urge the Committee to focus on the significant backlog in the system.

The 'funnel' through which the backlog travels is wide at the top, that's the court business, and narrow at the bottom, that's someone completing an order or leaving prison. Currently, funding is being disproportionately spent on the top of the funnel to make it bigger, for example extra summary courts, but if the funnel continues to pour into the system at an increased rate, then there will be a marked increase in numbers of people being released from prison around similar timescales, or of people being sentenced to CPOs.

It is unlikely that current resource within Justice Social Work and Third Sector support services would be able to cope with those (expected) volumes. However, we would point out that with the right level of targeted preventative spending, this is a golden opportunity to capitalise on the Presumption Against Short Sentences (which we support) and move people onto more CPOs, which with the right amount of investment, can not only be expedited, but are more economical and proven to be more effective than short periods of imprisonment.

We believe that there is merit in aligning and referring those people on Community Sentences to the New Routes Mentoring Service as a proven way to reduce re-offending and victims, increasing desistance and halting the graduation to higher levels of crime that would ultimately lead to custodial sentences, thus reducing the flow of people adding to the prison population.

There will always be victims of crime because no crime is victimless. It is our objective, in this modern democracy and as part of a solid approach to community safety and health, to dilute the potential for more victims. We can do that because our mentors work with individuals to identify the reasons for offending to ensure that they can leave prison behind. There is a notion that once you get into crime you 'graduate' and those committing lower-level crimes (on sentences of less than four years) can often be on a roundabout and so the right intervention towards prevention is key to diluting the potential for more victims.

For the operational year 20/21, 1117 successfully completed the New Routes Mentoring programme and only 8.7% received a further sentence (against a national average of around 30%).

The New Routes Mentoring programme costs around £1094 per person. That means that as a Programme it is both economically and socially more effective than prison, which in turn can create more inclination to re-offend. By completing a Baseline Assessment prior to release, immediately after release and six months post-release we can effectively measure "behaviour changed, or distance travelled" for each participant on the programme and this is easily transferable to those on Community Sentences.

Our 9 point 'behaviour change' programme helps our customers to diagnose the reasons for offending and offers a reason to change.

The 9-point assessment approach covers –

- ❖ Physical Health
- ❖ Mental Health
- ❖ Addictions
- ❖ Education and Training

- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Relationships
- ❖ Finance
- ❖ Housing
- ❖ Attitudes and Behaviours

Data from these assessments in 2020 – 21 shows that this approach resulted in the following improvements and demonstrates how our customer journey contributes effectively to tackling the reasons for offending in the first place -

- 75% addressed and improved their Financial Circumstances
- 75% secured or improved their accommodation
- 65 % improved their physical health and wellbeing
- 63% reduced or stopped Substance Misuse
- 63% improved or created positive Family / Personal relationships
- 63% reported an improvement in attitudes and behaviour
- 62% saw an improvement in their Mental Health
- 60% increased their employability skills with 10% gaining employment

This model is proven and evidenced in its efficacy and value for money. It operates on a basis of continuous improvement that monitors for changing customer needs and amends the service accordingly. Indeed, it has been recognised and adopted by the Ministry of Justice to support the transformation of the probation service in England and Wales through our innovative partnership with St Giles.

With the infrastructure already in place, it can easily be adapted into other areas and programmes within the Justice Sector to ensure consistency and value for money. The model also presents the added consideration of “economies of scale” whereby as the number of participants increase, the unit cost (currently £1094) comes down.

4. Whether there have been any savings and efficiencies because of the different way of working during the pandemic, what these savings have been used for elsewhere, and could they be kept once the pandemic is over?

The Wise Group developed the [CPO Connect](#) service as an online solution to the huge backlog in unpaid hours by taking care of the “other activity” element of a CPO. CPO Connect offers a weekly timetable of two-hour modules covering a wide range of topics. Participants can do between 2 and 30 hours, all counting towards an Unpaid Work Order.

Sessions are designed to be rehabilitative, are delivered by trained facilitators and provide an opportunity for good quality learning on topics that are educational, with time built in for self-reflection and growth including:

- Mental health
- Physical health
- Pro-social networks
- Employment
- Financial inclusion

CPO Connect is currently used by 8 Justice Social Work teams in Scotland (25% of Local Authorities). This is arguably the most cost-effective form of other activity available. It is the only programme which offers to take an unlimited number of referrals and is safe in terms of social distancing. We have future proofed this model by designing scale into it. When a local authority joins the programme, they can access the service for an unlimited number of clients. This removes the normal limitations of programmes. By creating a fully scalable programme, delivered digitally and available nationally, we've created the efficiency of scale to work differently.

We believe that it is imperative that this should be retained and supported post pandemic as a major opportunity to reduce the inevitable further increase in the unpaid work hours backlog. It is suitable for the clients who have an internet connection. That represents around 25-30% of all people on a CPO. The most cost-effective model for an authority is to make CPO Connect the default other activity programme for people who have an internet connection, saving money and freeing up the time of Justice Social Workers to focus on more high-risk cases.

In addition, our response to the second question above refers to the efficiency of the New Routes employing the use of "email a prisoner". This produced an added efficiency in allowing us to take on higher caseloads, in particular round the period of the "Early Release Scheme" in May 2020. The caveat of course is that as we recover and services begin to open up again with crucial face to face support, those levels of caseloads may not be sustainable without appropriate levels of funding.

5. Where are the opportunities for future reform and savings?

With legislation in place for the Presumption Against Short Sentences, more use needs to be made of this to support a reduction in the prison population. Community based sentences have been shown to be more effective than short periods of incarceration, as well as being economically more viable. However, there can always be improvements and we believe that a three-level system of CPO might be even more effective in reducing re-offending and diluting the number of victims of crime:

- Level 1: for less serious offending and early intervention where offenders are sanctioned by the court to a period of intense holistic third sector support such as the New Routes Mentoring Service as referred to in our answer to question 3. The support of a mentor can then help them deal with the issues that have brought them to the attention of the courts, and where they can gain life skills in respect of education, training, and employability. We know that nothing stops offending as effectively as a payslip.
- Level 2: Would be the equivalent of the current level 1 order, but we would suggest that the "other activity" element of the order be increased from 30% to 50%.
- Level 3: remains the highest level as the equivalent to the current level 2 with no change made to the proportion of "other activity" due to the seriousness of the offending and the need for Risk Management from professional Justice Social Workers.

The above also presents an invitation to consider closely the question of diverting funding from the use of custodial sentencing in a paradigm shift towards the increased use of effective community sentencing.

In addition, it is important to note that at time of writing there are 96 females on Remand and 1995 males. It is our view that more needs to be done to consider the impact of the use of remand on society, families and work.

6. Whether the Scottish Government is providing enough budget to enable organisations to support victims of crime?

We believe that this is not so much a question of whether enough funding is being provided to organisations to support the victims of crime, but rather where are the gaps that providing funding could *reduce* the number of victims of crime. We would suggest therefore, that by considering those areas where organisations contribute to reducing re-offending would be a pragmatic and effective example of preventative spending. There is no doubting the valued and important work that Victim Support Organisations do within the Justice Sector and indeed it would be unpalatable to think of them not being available to victims in their time of need. Reducing the number of victims, however, would allow them to concentrate their resources on exactly where and when they are needed, and to ensure that victims' voices are heard and that they are supported on their entire journey towards closure.

For more information, please contact Victoria_Carson@thewisegroup.co.uk

Or click here –

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

<https://www.thewisegroup.co.uk/community-justice/new-routes/>

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