



Wise Group Insight and Impact Report:

Wise Community Mentoring

Transforming Lives, Communities
and Society





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Introduction

Supporting social housing tenants to build stability and reduce risk of homelessness.

Wise Community Mentoring (WCM) is an innovative service designed to support social housing tenants through a Relational Mentoring approach. Launched in 2023 thanks to an initial partnership with social housing provider Places for People, WCM supports individuals and families at risk of eviction due to a range of complex reasons. By collaborating closely with social housing providers, WCM ensures a seamless referral process, enabling tenants, both new and existing, to access the support they need at critical times in their tenancy.

The core of the WCM service is the Wise Group's **Relational Mentoring approach**. This method focuses on building strong, trust-based relationships between tenants and professional Mentors. These relationships are voluntary and are anchored in mutual respect and compassion. Our Mentors are trained to see and nurture the potential in each individual, guiding them through personalised support plans. The aim is to empower tenants to navigate the challenges that may threaten their tenancy and to encourage positive behavioural changes. By intervening early and providing tailored support, WCM helps tenants to not only stabilise their current situation but also build resilience for the future.

In 2023-24, we Mentored 109 individuals and their families at risk of eviction. Thanks to our efforts, 97% of households supported have successfully maintained their tenancy. This achievement has not only provided stability for these families but has also potentially saved our partner housing provider in the region of £1m (based on research conducted by Shelter Scotland who found that the direct costs for a Registered Social Landlord to evict a tenant is in the region of £11,944 – as detailed in [this report](#)).

Wise Community Mentoring is managed and delivered by The Wise Group, a leading social enterprise working to lift people out of poverty across Scotland and Northern England. Since 1983 we have been delivering customer-led solutions to tackle inequality and societal challenges. Today we continue to build bridges to opportunity for the most vulnerable in our society, through Relational Mentoring.

What is Relational Mentoring?

Relational Mentoring is the evidenced and sustainable process of helping people identify and overcome multiple challenges through the relationship built with a professional Mentor.

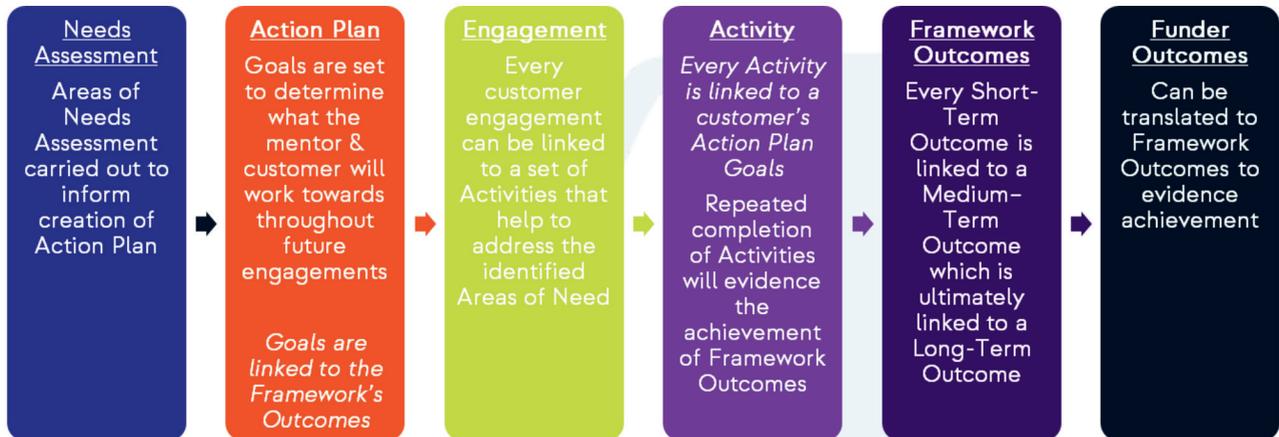
The Wise Group is on a mission to inspire positive change for our customers, colleagues, and stakeholders. Our **Relational Mentoring Approach** is **how** we transform lives, delivering real social value and impact every day. This approach was developed by customers and Mentors and is built on 40 years of experience in supporting over a million people towards a happier, healthier, and sustainable future. It is tailored to each situation and recorded using our **Relational Mentoring**



Framework, which consists of **15 key areas of need** with crisis management, coaching, advocating, listening, and mentoring as key methods of delivery:



Independent of social housing providers or statutory services, our Mentors use a trauma-informed, person-centred framework to identify and address the fundamental needs of each customer:



Progress is monitored and documented to track and evidence positive changes and avoid the need for repeated crisis support.

Customer Demographics

The service is currently available across Edinburgh, East Lothian, West Lothian, and Midlothian and is delivered in partnership with Places for People. Housing Officers identify and refer tenants who are at risk of eviction, often due to a variety of complex circumstances.



More than half (60%) of all referrals are female customers, many of whom have complex needs and are lone parents with young children. Many of our female customers are previous victims of domestic abuse now living independently. To provide the right support for these vulnerable customers, we work closely with Social Work Teams, women's support charities such as Women's Aid and with specialist services across the community. Our Mentors also offer emotional support to help build self-esteem and confidence.

The age range of customers varies from 17 to 87 suggesting a diverse customer base. This is due to our person centred, needs based approach which allows customers of all ages to feel valued and understood. However, the needs of each customer can vary significantly depending on age.

Many younger customers, including care leavers (6.4%) managing their first homes, need life skills coaching in budgeting, forming positive relationships, decision-making, and employability. A typical challenge is household management, as highlighted by an 18-year-old during their first meeting with Richard, a Wise Community Mentor. Overwhelmed by the responsibilities of their new, unfurnished tenancy and financial struggles, including being denied support and falling into rent arrears, the young person was very close to being evicted with no other housing options. However, within just 30 minutes, Richard helped set up a direct debit for their rent and assisted in a successful reapplication to the Scottish Welfare Fund. He further supported the young person in obtaining energy grants, food vouchers, and connected them with our Employment Pathways Team, which helped improve their job prospects. Over time, Richard helped the young person secure employment.

Older customers aged 60+ (5.5%) often grapple with issues like bereavement, isolation, and loneliness. For older customers, our Mentors adopt a befriending role, assisting them with identifying social groups and dealing with issues related to the home (such as hoarding).

Most customers (85.3%) are white Scottish/English/Irish. This could be due to various reasons such as geographical location, cultural preferences, or historical factors. However, it also highlights the potential opportunity to attract and engage customers from different ethnic backgrounds and create a more inclusive customer base.

Making Connections

Our mentors play a crucial role in helping customers realise their individual Action Plans by identifying and connecting them to a diverse range of community-based services and support. They walk alongside the customer, removing barriers and connecting customers to multiple community-based services. This includes:

Financial Assistance and Inclusion

Our Mentors assist customers to navigate the complexities of financial, benefits, and debt-related services. They provide hands-on support in applying for Community Care Grants, Crisis Loans, Disability Living Allowance, Scottish Welfare Fund, and managing tasks such as opening bank accounts and handling council tax payments or arrears. Collaborative efforts with Places for

People's Financial Inclusion Team and external organisations such as the Edinburgh Food Project enhance the financial stability of our customers.

Employability Support

We provide monthly sessions with our Employment Pathways Team to offer comprehensive employment support to our customers. These sessions run from Hay Avenue Community Hub, providing a convenient location for individuals in need of assistance. Our Employment Pathways Team provide an array of individualised services, including interview preparation, assistance with clothing for interviews, CV creation and review, help with job applications, and strategies for effective job searching. The sessions are aimed at empowering individuals with the necessary skills and resources to secure suitable employment.



Energy Support

Energy needs are addressed through referrals to the Wise Group's services such as HEAT and Home Energy Scotland. Mentors directly assist customers in applying for Hardship Funds, Warm Home Discounts, and obtaining fuel vouchers, ensuring that the basic need for warmth and energy is met efficiently and with dignity.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Recognising the critical importance of mental health, mentors facilitate access to specialised services such as the Wise Group's CONNECT service, SAMH, I Thrive, Places for People Wellbeing Services and Victim Support Scotland. They also help customers register with local GPs and dentists, ensuring they receive consistent and reliable healthcare.

Our Mentors have provided support for 39 customers to find and access appropriate support for their neurodiversity needs. This includes navigating through the process of getting tested and diagnosed with Autism, Dyslexia, and ADHD. We understand that these conditions can often be accompanied by various mental health challenges, therefore, we have facilitated their access to expert services, including counsellors, and medical professionals specialising in these areas.

Physical Health and Outdoor Activities

Mentors promote physical health by connecting individuals with local initiatives such as Health in Mind-Wellbeing Walks, Dr Bell's Mindfulness Dips, Out & About Ambling Adventures Walking Group, Port Seton & Longniddry Community Centre, and Street Soccer. These activities not only support physical wellness but also foster social connections and community integration.

Addiction Support

For individuals facing challenges related to addiction, Mentors provide crucial linkages to NHS services, Social Work Services, and specialised groups like Midlothian and East Lothian Drug Services, Number 11 Dalkeith and Narcotics Anonymous. This targeted support helps in addressing specific needs through appropriate channels, ensuring that every individual receives the care and attention they require.

Digital, Training, and Education

Education and skill development are facilitated through connections to programmes offered by the Wise Group and CLD services in each local authority area. Mentors help individuals engage in skills training, employment pathways, and volunteer opportunities, which are crucial for personal development.

Community Integration

Mentors play a crucial role in fostering community integration by connecting individuals to local hubs and clubs such as Bonnyrigg Community Club, Newbattle Community Centre, and the Hay Avenue Community Hub where they can participate in communal activities and forge meaningful connections. They also organise regular community events, including Christmas parties and social trips.



Outcomes & Impact

Since the launch of Wise Community Mentoring in April 2023, we have monitored key indicators to track the impact of the service.

For each customer, we record how many engagements they have with their Mentor and how many actions/activities have been completed to help progress towards outcomes.

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| | Total |
| Customer Engagements | 4233 |
| Activities Completed | 10,037 |

Sustained Tenancy

The overall aim of Wise Community Mentoring is to support customers who are at risk of eviction to address the issues that have led to housing instability.



To date, we have successfully supported 97% of customers referred to the service to sustain their tenancy:

| Tenancy Status | Number of Customers |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Sustained | 106 |
| Managed Transfer | 1 |
| Chose to Leave | 2 |
| Evicted | 0 |

Areas of Need

109 customers have so far exited the service. Exit from the service is planned via an agreement between the Mentor and the customer. Based on individual Action Plans, we track improvements against each Area of Need. The table below indicates the percentage of customers who have recorded positive progress against each area of need. It is important to note that not all customers have identified issues in every area of need. Therefore, the progression and improvement percentages are calculated based on customers who have identified against the specific area of need.

| Area of Need | % of Customers (planned exit) who have evidenced progression |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Access to Other Services | 46.7% |
| Aspiration & Motivation | 48.6% |
| Addiction | 11.9% |
| Basic Skills | 25.6% |
| Building & Maintaining Relationships | 26.6% |
| Developing Life Skills | 30.2% |
| Digital Skills | 33.9% |
| Energy Assistance | 51.3% |
| Financial Support | 50.4% |
| Mental Wellbeing | 44.0% |
| Physical Health | 26.6% |
| Social Skills for Work | 15.5% |
| Housing Stability | 44.9% |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Wellbeing, Self Esteem & Confidence | 36.6% |
| Work Skills & Experience | 15.5% |

The data indicates that Wise Community Mentoring significantly enhances the lives of our customers, particularly in Energy Assistance (51.3%), Financial Support (50.4%), Aspiration & Motivation (48.6%), Housing Stability (44.9%), Mental Wellbeing (44.0%), and Access to Other Services (46.7%). These figures demonstrate that customers exiting the service have made measurable progress in these key areas, underscoring the effectiveness of Relational Mentoring in helping them improve their circumstances and maintain their social housing tenancies.

While the impacts in areas such as Addiction (11.9%), Social Skills for Work (15.5%), and Work Skills & Experience (15.5%) are lower, these still indicate that a notable percentage of customers are making progress in these areas. However, these need areas are often deeply intertwined with individual circumstances and may take longer to show significant improvement, underscoring the importance of continued engagement with a Mentor. Going forward, we are committed to providing a longer-term customer journey for our customers with more complex needs.

Going the Distance

To better cater to the needs of our customers, we have introduced additional elements to our Wise Community Mentoring service. While the core focus remains on providing personalised Relational Mentoring, we have developed the service based on customer needs and feedback:

Volunteer Days

We coordinate regular Volunteering Days for customers to work with Mentors, other Wise Group colleagues and Places for People Housing Officers to improve the local area. These days are designed to foster a greater sense of community and connectedness. We have included a variety of activities that not only serve the community but also provide a unique opportunity for our customers to engage in meaningful and rewarding experiences.

A recent Volunteer Day involved working collaboratively to clear and tidy a customer's garden. This provided invaluable support to a very vulnerable customer while also offering a chance to socialise and meet other people in the community.

We have also arranged painting sessions to support customers to improve their living conditions and create a sense of 'home'. In January 2024, customers, Mentors, and other colleagues from across the Wise Group came together to paint the living room of Lorna, a customer with long-term health conditions. The team cleared the room, sourced the materials, and re-decorated the space to a high standard,



creating a clean and bright living space for the customer. It was especially restorative for Lorna who enjoyed engaging with new people. Lorna said:

“This has been amazing. I cannot believe it as has all been done in one day, Brian and Chris especially were just brilliant. Thank you all so much, I am so happy and over the moon.”

Court Attendance

Several of our customers are engaged in the Justice System and are required to appear at the local Sheriff Court. We understand that attending court can trigger a range of emotions such as fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. Our Mentors have provided a reassuring voice, offering a compassionate ear to alleviate any distress our customers may experience during this challenging time. We have also referred them to expert support services such as Victim Support and Women’s Aid.



In addition to emotional support, we also assist our customers with practical matters related to their court case. This may include helping them gather necessary documents, connect with legal professionals, or to navigate the administrative process. We have also provided supporting statements, detailing the personal progress they have made in their life via Relational Mentoring such as getting a job, accessing addiction services, or working on their mental health.

Our commitment to emotional support extends beyond the courtroom. We understand that the impact of attending court can linger long after the case has been resolved. Therefore, we continue to be available for our customers, providing ongoing emotional support and resources to help them navigate any post-court challenges or transitions they may face.

Anti-Social Behaviour

We have taken steps to address the issue of anti-social behaviour in the community, including cases of racial abuse. We collaborate closely with Housing Officers to tackle these situations. This includes supporting customers to submit detailed complaints and providing emotional support when required.

In response to incidents of anti-social behaviour from our customers, we have implemented a series of initiatives aimed at educating them about the importance of community respect and social responsibility. We have also encouraged them to take part in volunteering activities, such as garden clean ups to foster a sense of belonging and to underline the value of contributing positively to society. Our goal is to help them understand that their actions can make a significant difference and to cultivate a more community-centric mindset.

Physical & Mental Health Activities

We have partnered with local Bike Charity MAED. This charity aims to promote physical activity and overall wellbeing by providing bicycles to individuals who are unable to afford them. By partnering with MAED, we have enabled our customers to engage in regular exercise, address social isolation and reap the rewards of an active lifestyle.

As part of our commitment to our customers' health, we have also organised health-promoting group and individual walks. These walks are designed to encourage our customers to stay active and engage with their local community. They provide an opportunity for individuals to come together and enjoy the benefits of physical exercise in a supportive and motivating environment.



During these walks, our Mentors encourage customers to open up and share their thoughts and experiences. Being in nature and away from the usual distractions of daily life creates a relaxed and peaceful atmosphere, making it easier for individuals to speak indirectly about their challenges. Our Mentors are trained to listen actively and provide a supportive and non-judgmental space for customers to express themselves.

Building relationships with Social Housing Providers

Mentors bridge the gap between customers and the extensive support their housing provider offers. Often, our customers are either unaware of the available assistance or hesitant to seek help due to past negative experiences, distrust, or fear of stigma and judgment. By connecting customers with these services, we empower them to access necessary support. This approach has proven effective for Places for People, our current housing partner, who has observed increased demand for their Home Energy and Financial Inclusion services.

We have also developed a strong working relationship with Places for People's Housing Officers. Housing Officers identify those who may benefit from Relational Mentoring and facilitate referrals. This active partnership has led to enhanced customer outcomes, evident in improved living conditions, better financial management, and increased social interaction among residents. Wise Community Mentoring can step in to provide additional support to vulnerable individuals who may require more intensive care and attention than a Housing Officer can provide. This includes individuals who may be dealing with mental health issues, addiction, or other challenges. This is evidenced by the following testimonial provided by a Places for People Housing Officer:

"I've engaged with Wise Community Mentoring for approximately 4-5 months now. From the start I found the team very helpful and positive to deal with when making initial enquiries. My main contact has been with Linsay who I've found to be very helpful and good to work with."

I would say that Wise Community Mentoring has enhanced my role as a Housing Officer. Whereas previously I would refer customers to Social Work and often get no response or hunt around for some other Support Agency to help customers, sometimes without success, I know I can now refer to Wise and always get a prompt response. I have mainly liaised with Linsay and have found her really great to work with. I know I can rely on her to give customers the best possible advice and support and to keep me updated on how things are going with them. I believe she really cares about the people she works with and brings out the best in them. It brightens up my day to hear about all the positive things that she's doing with customers.

I believe the service has made a massive difference to the individuals I have referred. I know the customers I've referred have been given all the financial advice and support they need in terms of food vouchers, referrals to the Welfare Fund, Financial Inclusion etc. which is helping them to sustain their tenancies. I know customers have been given information on lots of local resources and support groups available to them and some have enrolled in classes or engaged with other agencies that they would have never done previously. I believe they have someone friendly, caring, and honest they can talk to and have responded really positively to this. We probably don't even know what a hugely beneficial impact it may have had on some customers."

Case Studies

Owen

Background: Owen, a 17-year-old care leaver, recently moved into his first Places for People tenancy. His Housing Officer referred him to Wise Community Mentoring in August 2023. Owen expressed his interest in mentoring support to increase his wellbeing, manage finances, develop life skills, and pursue education and employment opportunities.

Mentor-Mentee Relationship Development: Owen was paired with his mentor Richard, and they started their journey together by engaging in wellbeing walks. These walks provided Owen with a safe space to express his feelings and be heard. Over time, his trust in Richard grew, and they began working on an action plan to support Owen in achieving his goals.

Volunteering & Securing Employment: Richard, aware of Owen's interest in painting and decorating, involved him in volunteering opportunities within the service. Owen shared his skills with others and contributed to the community. Recognising Owen's potential, Richard also provided support to create a CV, interview preparation, and interview attire. This assistance paid off when Owen successfully secured full-time employment as a painter & decorator.



Outcomes:

- Health & Wellbeing: Through regular walks and talks in nature, Owen found solace in the local views and experienced a reduction in anxiety. Additionally, Richard assisted Owen in registering with a new GP, ensuring his healthcare needs were addressed.
- Supporting Statement: A supporting statement highlighting the positive behaviour changes in Owen was provided to his solicitor. This statement was taken into consideration in a Court Hearing involving Owen.
- Advocacy: Richard actively engaged with Owen's Social Worker and Housing Officer, fostering collaboration to address Owen's needs holistically.
- HEAT & Energy: Owen was referred to Home Energy Scotland and HEAT to ensure he received support in managing his energy needs.

Owen's journey with Wise Community Mentoring demonstrates the positive impact mentoring can have on young individuals transitioning from care to independent living. Through the support of his Mentor, Owen was able to secure employment, enhance his wellbeing, develop essential life skills, and receive guidance in various areas of his life.

Kieran

Background: Kieran was referred to our service in June 2023, by his Housing Officer. Kieran needed assistance with various issues and was extremely distressed due to a lack of mental health support and an ongoing autism diagnosis. His first meeting with his Mentor, Linsay, took place in a local café where they discussed his goals, and the support required to help him achieve them. Kieran was eager to be part of Wise Community Mentoring and was committed to his personal journey.

Support Areas and Action Plan: Kieran completed a needs assessment and identified several areas where he desired assistance. Linsay worked closely with Kieran to create an Action Plan which included access to Home Energy Scotland, Places for People Financial Inclusion Team (FIT), digital skills, mental health services, counselling, therapy groups, and activity groups to promote wellbeing. They established a strong bond, built on trust and rapport, through regular face-to-face meetings. Additionally, referrals were made to Health in Mind, Scottish Autism, SAMH (Football Team), Andy Man, First Hand Lothian Support Group, The Yard, Get-Set-4-Autism Post Diagnostic Support Service, Salvesen Mindroom and Vocal Carer Support.



Outcomes:

- Through a FIT referral, Kieran received a Discretionary Housing Payment to help address his rent arrears.



- Kieran was referred to Home Energy Scotland for advice on energy support and is now claiming the Warm Home Discount.
- He was referred to Health in Mind and is now engaged in group therapy and one-to-one counselling.
- Support was provided during his autism diagnosis, and he is now being directly assisted by specialist service Number Six.
- Kieran is now engaged with Shared Parenting Scotland to help with the shared care of his son.

Kieran expressed his gratitude for the support provided, stating, “*Thanks for helping someone like me, it’s helped a lot*”. This case study highlights the significant impact that personalised support and development tools can have on an individual's mental health and overall wellbeing.

Social Return on Investment

The 15 key areas of need identified and updated as part of a customer’s journey are linked to activities and short, medium, and long-term outcomes. This data can then be used to calculate the social impact of mentoring. The Wise Group is committed to delivering £1.5 billion of Social Impact over the next 5 years.

To understand how much social value is created through the delivery of our WCM service, we are currently working with HACT (The Housing Associations Charitable Trust) to assess the impact achieved to date. The social value calculation will be conducted using well established tools within the HACT **UK Social Value Bank**. HACT’s approach to measuring social impact is underpinned by Wellbeing Valuation which is endorsed within HM Treasury’s Green Book. The UKSVB is a **comprehensive set of metrics designed to measure the social impact of programs and services** that provides a **standardised approach to valuing the benefits of social interventions**, allowing the quantification of positive outcomes in monetary terms.

We intend to publish the SROI value and a detailed breakdown of the figure by the end of October 2024.

Visit us here:
thewisegroup.co.uk/reports

For more information contact:
Sean_Donnelly@thewisegroup.co.uk



