



June 2025

New Routes Annual Report 2024/25



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - NEW ROUTES MENTORING

Prevent. Connect. Save.

**Scotland's Public Service Reform sets the bar at preventative · joined-up · efficient.
New Routes smashes that bar - and shows what comes next.**

How we work

- One Family - One Plan | Each participant and their family get a single, live plan steered by a dedicated mentor who pulls housing, health, employability and digital support into one team.
- Relational first | 91 % call their mentor first in crisis - trust that stops trouble before it starts.
- Digital by default | 100 % leave custody with a smartphone, data and a shareable case-plan.
- Cost-smart | 1 000 custody-days avoided in 2024-25 - a cash saving of \approx £1.3 m against the £47 140* annual prison bill.

2024-25 results

PSR lens	Headline Outcome	Why it matters
Preventative	Rapid crisis response + fast housing	Fewer victims, healthier communities
Joined-up	72% stay in pro-social activity > 6ths	Strong local social capital
Efficient	Live dashboards + year One Smart Spending Review	Cash re-routed from failure to futures

Justice Impact

Mentor progress reports now guide sheriff decisions on remand and parole - a credible, lower-cost alternative to short sentences that accelerates safe release.

Next moves - 2026 Manifesto asks

1. National Whole-Family Pathfinder (2026-29) – scale mentoring to cut remand & youth custody
 2. Work-Ready Pathfinder – bolt skills and jobs onto the same relational model
 3. 12-month Smart Spending Review on Relationships – audit today's custody/remand spend and show how much shifts to prevention when mentoring replaces cell time
- Back these offers and turn Public Service Reform's vision into frontline reality - at scale and at speed.

AN INSPIRING YEAR

New Routes, is the justice mentoring service for short-term male prison leavers in Scotland. Led by The Wise Group, in partnership with SACRO, Apex, Families Outside, and SAMH, it has supported prison leavers across Scotland for 12 years. Delivered in close collaboration with the Scottish Prison Service, and fully funded by the Scottish Government, the programme blends prison-based and community-based mentoring to promote desistance from crime, improve lives, and reduce reoffending.

This person-centred approach has made a significant impact on individuals, communities, and wider society. Mentors successfully helped their Customers to resettle in the community through helping them engage with services (74%), increasing their pro-social attitudes (73%), and increasing their motivation to change behaviour (72%).

In 2024/25, New Routes once again surpassed targets in delivering against its predicted outcomes, with mentors working with **1,351** male prison leavers across Scotland, against a target of 1,200. Among this group:

- **72%** sustained engagement post-release (vs 70% target)
- **88%** engaged with mentoring and other services on release (vs 80% target)
- **83%** achieved improved circumstances through mentoring support (vs 70% target)

Mentors provided practical support, inspired hope, and guided Customers toward lives that have the potential to be filled with opportunity and positivity. Their work addressed immediate crises such as mental health, housing, and addiction while building trust-based relationships that enabled early steps toward stability, reintegration, and employability.

This year, the true success of New Routes is best illustrated through the transformative impact we've had on people's lives. Our mentors have not only provided consistent, evidence-based support but have also been instrumental in judicial advocacy—offering written submissions and in-court presence that influenced sentencing outcomes. In **James's case, this advocacy helped secure a suspended sentence**, recognising the significant strides he had in addressing mental health, substance misuse, and emotional regulation. This allowed him to continue his rehabilitation and rebuild key relationships in the community. Similarly, **Mark's story** highlights the power of sustained mentoring, as he rebuilt his life with the **stability of a new tenancy**.

These individual journeys reflect the heart of our work: enabling people to overcome complex challenges, re-establish vital connections, and contribute positively to their communities.

Upon connecting with New Routes, Mark expressed a desire to be rehomed in Glasgow's Knightswood area to stay close to his support network which he believed would play a crucial role in his rehabilitation. His mentor facilitated a housing referral, resulting in suitable accommodation, and a smooth transition into independent living.

- **Housing Assistance:** Mark was given vouchers to purchase paint and received assistance in decorating his flat, helping to create a comfortable and personalised living space.
- **Essential Supplies:** Mark was supplied with food parcels to support his basic needs during the initial stages of his transition.
- **Financial & Administrative Support:** Mark was linked with Citizens Advice to obtain guidance and support regarding his Adult Disability Payment (ADP).
- **Criminal Justice Support:** Mark was supported by his Mentor in maintaining regular attendance with his Criminal Justice Social Worker, ensuring he met all necessary legal and rehabilitative requirements.
- **Employment & Licensing Assistance:** Mark was guided through the process of applying for his professional driving licence, to open up employment opportunities in the future.

Mark's active engagement and commitment to change, supported by New Routes, enabled him to thrive independently and maintain positive relationships, an inspiring example of resilience and the transformative power of tailored reintegration services.

MEASURING MENTOR'S IMPACT

Over the past year, New Routes Mentors have continued to deliver an exceptional standard of service, supporting individuals both in custody and through their transition into the community. This year alone, 1,352 new Customers have benefitted from the unwavering dedication, expertise, and person-centred approach of our Mentors, each one receiving tailored support that fosters stability, growth, and long-term desistance.

What sets New Routes apart is not only the quality of its mentoring but also its evidence-led approach, which has been groundbreaking in Scottish Criminal Justice. The programme has gathered millions of data points across every stage of the mentoring journey in its 12 years of delivery. This rich dataset provides deep insights into the needs, progress, and outcomes of New Routes Customers, and has driven continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery.

Over the 12 years of New Routes delivery this data has been instrumental in shaping national understanding of what works in justice reintegration. In partnership with the **Fraser of Allander Institute**, the data has been used to conduct longitudinal evaluations, offering robust, independent analysis of programme outcomes. Furthermore, the data has been shared with the Scottish Government, informing strategic planning, policy development, and resource allocation.

No other justice service in Scotland possesses the same depth and breadth of real-time, data on short-term prison leavers. This places New Routes not only as a leader in mentoring but also as a critical knowledge hub for justice reform and community reintegration.

In the more than 10 years of delivery of the New Routes service our Mentors find **that early engagement in prison is important to give the best chance for improved circumstances**, support in the community and sustained engagement with the service on release from custody. This year's delivery has continued to demonstrate this to be the case. Maintaining a pro-active approach of engagement prior to liberation has continued to deliver meaningful change, ensuring that Customers are not only prepared for release but are equipped to thrive beyond the prison gates.

98%
Customers
referred
engaged in
prison

72%
Customers
sustained
engagement in
community

ACTIVITIES LEADING TO OUTCOMES

Mentors work with Customers across a wide variety of different needs in a professional, evidence led manner. This sets our approach apart from single-issue services where support can be limited to one specific need, such as employability – leaving underlying issues such as mental health or substance use unresolved. Our Mentors apply crisis management, coaching, advocating, listening and mentoring as delivery methods based on the needs identified.

Needs are identified jointly between Mentor and Customer through the completion of an assessment when a Customer is first onboarded to New Routes. These assessments are repeated multiple times through the programme to track progress and record progression. These needs are linked to a range of broad themed activities and through repeated Customer engagement, activities are delivered to address each need.

Through this repeated process and completion of activities, Short-term Outcomes are achieved.

Short-term outcomes indicate a change in knowledge, resources, skills and/or abilities, for example “Increased Pro-social Attitudes, Networks and Non-criminal Identity”.

As linked short-term outcomes are achieved, and the activities accumulate, Medium-term Outcomes can be achieved. A **Medium-term Outcome indicates a change in behaviour, lifestyle or decision-making** such as “Substance Abuse Reduced/Stopped”.

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES: ADDRESSING CRISIS

Our Mentors work without judgement and firmly believe that a person’s circumstances can improve with the right support. We pair Customers with a Mentor who has relatable experience, this can be based on age or gender or a shared life experience such as homelessness, substance use, or lived experience of the justice system. This approach strengthens their relationship with their Customers and builds an authentic foundation of trust.

With a knowledgeable and compassionate Mentor supporting them, **73% of Customers do make positive steps forward in their journey to pro-social behaviours.**

Customer progression was particularly high in health-related outcomes.

- **88% increased understanding of needs associated with substance misuse,**
- **85% of customers increased their understanding of physical health needs, and**
- **82% increased their understanding of mental health needs**

Overall engaging Customers with **employability education & training** proved to be the most challenging areas for improvement, with only 68% making short-term progress. This reflects consistent feedback from Customers and Mentors that, while many express a desire to work immediately on release, there remains a considerable period of adjustment needed following transition into the community.

The short-term assessments completed by Mentors with Customers tell us that increasing **pro-social attitudes, networks and non-criminal identity was the most common need identified.**

MEDIUM TERM OUTCOMES: FOUNDATIONS FOR A DIFFERENT LIFE

Achievements in Short-term Outcomes are the building blocks for New Routes Customers to make sustainable medium-term change with the support of their Mentor. With sustained engagement with a Mentor lasting change can be achieved, leading to a more prosocial and stable life.

Overall success was seen across all areas, in particular **Reintegration into community and sustained engagement with service, and motivation to change behaviour, where 74% of customers made progress.**

In total **1,027 (52%)** Customers with a reintegration need were successfully reintegrated into their communities, plus:

- **230+** also seeing an improvement in **reduction/cessation of substance misuse**
- **390+** **securing and stabilising accommodation, and**
- **160+** **increasing their employment prospects or moving into jobs.**

As with short term outcomes areas which proved more challenging for Customers including **being ready for and entering employment.** Specialised support in this area would greatly benefit short-term male prison leavers in the future, to provide the strongest possible platform from which to build their pro-social life.

INSPIRING STORIES OF PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

Our successes throughout this year are best captured in the individual stories of the transformational change that mentoring supports.

Every journey is unique and is rarely straightforward. There are ups and downs, Customers and Mentors hurdle the boundaries which are presented together. Detailed below are a few of the inspiring changes our Customers have made this year. All case studies have been anonymised.

SUPPORT GETTING BACK TO WORK

On release from prison the Customer was offered a role in commercial fishing, to take up the role he was required to have his Royal Yacht Association Sea Survival Certificate. The Mentor was able to arrange for New Routes to book and pay for the course for the Customer. The Customer completed the course and took up full time employment and very much enjoys his new role. The Customer really felt that things were starting to come together for him and said to his Mentor **"the only good thing in prison was New Routes and the support given on release"**.

OVERCOMING DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY – MOVING INTO WORK

With a background of poor mental health including clinical depression and social anxiety being further compounded by sleep deprivation, the Customer felt very unprepared to face his life back in the community. The Customer had four pre-release meetings with his Mentor to begin to plan for his release, key to this was beginning to work on his mental health.

While still in prison this was started with the mental health team, and his Mentor organised a referral to SAMH so support could continue upon release. When the Customer was released, his Mentor supported him in his early days to get his tenancy debt dealt with, appointments with the Job Centre and to secure a crisis loan to stabilise his financial situation. The Customer worked on-to-one with SAMH and his Mentor on his mental health and said that for the first time in a long time if felt like someone understood his struggles.

The Customer was discharged from SAMH and exited the New Routes service and is now in full time employment, his tenancy is stable, and he was able to see and treat his daughter for her birthday.

ACCESSING EDUCATION AND BECOMING A CHEF

While working with a young Customer in prison, his Mentor discovered that he had no employment history. He also lacked a formal education and associated qualifications. The work started while he was still in prison and his Mentor supported him to access a Life Skills course which he completed. It was while he was completing the Life Skills course that the Customer found he enjoyed and had

a talent for cooking, and expressed to his Mentor it was something he would like to pursue as a career.

On release, the Mentor suggested that the Customer apply to the Greene King "Releasing Potential" programme, however the Customer was apprehensive about moving straight into full-time employment so early after release. With his Mentor's support, the Customer accessed a college course in professional cookery. Being on the course afforded the Customer a routine and he said he felt better about his life now he was doing something he enjoyed.

Education had opened a door and acted as a stepping stone to the next phase of the Customer's life – financially stable and in skilled employment as a chef.

OVERCOMING ADDICTION, AND CREATING SELF-BELIEF

Following a conviction for a violent offence which occurred following a long history of alcohol addiction, a Customer realised that things needed to change and that he was prepared to face his addictions. Paired with a Mentor who had their own experience of addiction, the Customer was frank and open about his addiction issues and accepted the support from his Mentor to take positive steps while still in custody to address the alcohol addiction.

The Customer became involved with the recovery café in HMP Barlinnie and was soon moved to HMP Castle Huntly where he engaged with the Alcoholics Anonymous 12 Step Programme. As the Customer was apprehensive about release and the risk of relapse once in the community, he was met by his Mentor on the day he was liberated. He was supported to attend appointments, complete a Universal Credit application and attend a Job Centre. The Customer maintained regular contact with his Mentor and continued attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in the community.

On exiting the New Routes service, he had been sober for 12 months and was keen to develop his skills and become a Mentor himself.

ACCOMMODATION – MAINTAINING A SAFE SPACE

A Customer with co-morbid mental health and substance misuse difficulties was referred into New Routes while still in custody. The Customer was open with his Mentor about his fears about release from custody due to being homeless and his vulnerabilities linked to his safety and self-harm. The Mentor advocated for the Customer to the prison Consultant Clinical Psychologist to ensure all the correct information was gathered to put together quality risk assessments and to make referrals to SAMH for close mental health support on release.

On release the Customer was able to access a temporary furnished flat due to his Mentor liaising with West Dumbartonshire homeless team. With strong advocacy from his Mentor at multi-disciplinary team meetings to demonstrate the positive steps the Customer had made, he was able to take up a permanent tenancy. With a permanent home and ongoing support, the Customer grew in confidence, was accessing all the right support and financially secure, he had a secure and firm foundation to continue to build upon.

ADVOCACY AND ENGAGING THE JUDICIARY

Our New Routes Mentors go the distance so our customers reach a positive and sustainable future. This includes advocating for Customers within the court system.

By advocating in court using letters of support and detailing the work Customers' have done through the New Routes programme, Mentors influence decisions of court officials. The Mentor's professionalism and comprehensive understanding of individual circumstances provides unique insight for courts. The influence ensures that the Customer's wellbeing, their successful reintegration into their communities and reducing recidivism is prioritised.

Detailed below are examples of where the presence and advocacy of a New Routes Mentor has led to a non-custodial outcome.

A New Routes Customer who had for years been trapped in a cycle of crime, court appearance and custodial sentences has spent the previous 12 months working with his Wise Group Mentor on the New Routes Programme. While in the programme he had begun to address the core issues which had held him back for so long including poor mental health and alcohol abuse which had contributed to his criminal behaviour. As he saw and celebrated the victories, he had in improving his mental health and managing his cravings for alcohol he was able to find new purpose through volunteering, supporting others who had struggled as he had, a role he found deeply fulfilling and gave him a sense of responsibility.

The Customer found themselves in front of the Sheriff once more for a historic offence, his Mentor made a supporting statement outlining the work that the Customer had done over the 12 months and how much he had moved forward and contributed to his community via his volunteering. On sentencing the Sheriff said ***"Because of the efforts you have made, I am granting you a suspended sentence. You will be free to continue the good work you have started."***

The advocacy from his Mentor meant that for the first time in years he was not being sent to prison but being given the chance to continue to move forward in his pro-social life.

HMP Low Moss approached the New Routes service for support for a Transgender woman. They were not eligible for the Shine Women's Mentoring service, and a process was put in place for them to receive the New Routes support due to their complex circumstances. The Customer's Mentor advocated for the Customer's wellbeing and assured the prison staff of support at court and upon release. The New Routes Mentor was present at court proceedings and were available to develop a liberation plan with the Customer. Upon release the Mentor took the Customer for a coffee to decompress and process some of what they had experienced. The Customer was required to return to Newcastle as part of their release conditions, their mentor provided them with a mobile phone, a month's supply of medication and clear information about their ongoing court proceedings later in the year. The New Routes Mentor accompanied the Customer onto the train and remained in touch throughout their journey until they reached their accommodation in Newcastle. In a case as complex as this one advocacy and support enabled a transgender woman to feel safe, supported and able to access the support they required.

AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FRASER OF ALLANDER

Between 2021 and 2025 The Wise Group partnered with the Fraser of Allander Institute to draw significant, independent insight about the Customers who accessed the New Routes Programme and the outcomes that were achieved.

The wealth of data gathered through the 12 years of delivery has been shared with the Fraser of Allander Institute and they have produced a series of reports. The first report, "[Rehabilitating Scotland: Exploring the Impact of Mentoring-based Throughcare](#)", was produced in 2022 using data from 2013 to 2021. It demonstrated the positive impact of New Routes on reducing reoffending in Scotland.

The 2022 [report was updated in 2024](#), with data from April 2021 to March 2023, marking 10 years of delivery of New Routes .

During the 2024-25 delivery year, the Fraser of Allander Institute looked closely at two key elements which directly affect Customers' accessing the New Routes Programme: the relationship with families and the specific rural challenges affecting prison leavers.

The Family Element of New Routes

Family relationships are a critical foundation for successful community reintegration, with over one-third of New Routes participants having dependents, and 73% of those requiring help with family and relationships. Targeted activities and engagements showed measurable impact, with nearly a quarter improving their family relationships.

However, the pathway to rebuilding these relationships varies considerably, with rural participants facing distinct challenges around stigma and social acceptance that require tailored approaches to achieve the same positive outcomes.



Between 2021 and 2024, **34%** of individuals had dependents. Of these individuals **78%** had access to their dependents.



73% of individuals with dependents had **Family and Relationships** identified as a need.



1 in 5 individuals with dependents had improved their family and relationships need at any stage.



When comparing an individual's need score at their first vs last assessment, **24% of individuals** had improved on their family and relationship needs upon leaving the programme.



31% of users with dependents, worked towards **S5E: Family/Relationship** to better understand their family and relationship needs.



Of those working towards **S5E: Family/Relationship**, **56%** achieved this outcome during their time on the programme.



Looking over the medium-term, **1 in 3 individuals** with dependents worked towards **M6: Positive family/personal relationships**. Of those working towards this outcome, **35%** achieved it.

Family and good quality, positive relationships are a key factor in reducing reoffending, people who receive family visits while in custody are **39% less likely to reoffend**² and on release family can provide practical and emotional support, and be the motivation for an individual to continue in their desistance journey³.

The weight of stigma in rural reintegration

Looking at the geographical make up of New Routes comparisons can be made on how the programme benefits individuals living in rural areas to those from urban areas.

Between 2021 and May 2024, approximately **12%** of New Routes user journeys were undertaken by Customers from rural areas. While numerically smaller, this group faces distinct and often more complex barriers to reintegration—one of the most significant being **stigma**.

In rural communities, where anonymity is limited and social circles are tightly knit, the **stigma of a criminal record can be more visible, persistent, and socially isolating**. This heightened visibility may discourage individuals from seeking support or engaging with services.

This is reflected in the outcomes data:

² <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/about/why-support-people-in-prison/>

³ <https://www.familiesoutside.org.uk/content/uploads/2017/11/families-outside-in-brief-9.pdf>

- The most worked towards short-term outcome for rural participants was **S3: Increased pro-social attitudes, networks, and non-criminal identity** a clear indication that **identity transformation and social acceptance** are needs in these areas.
- Similarly, the **most pursued medium-term outcome** was **M3: Reintegration/acceptance into social networks and community**, demonstrating the **importance of belonging and social reintegration** in overcoming stigma.

Despite these challenges, rural Customers showed resilience, with **nearly 100% achieving S2: Increased motivation to engage with interventions**, and **M1: Sustained engagement with service and motivation to change behaviour** being the most achieved medium-term outcome.

These patterns suggest that while stigma in rural areas may be more acute, **targeted mentoring and early engagement can empower individuals to overcome it**, rebuild their identities, and re-enter their communities with confidence.

The difference in needs between those released from prison into rural vs urban settings demonstrates that a national approach with local delivery is crucial to supporting people in making positive change.

APPENDICIES

Appendix 1: Key Performance Indicators

Kery Performance Indicator	Profile	Actual	Evidence
KPI 1 Service users (who are not engaged with another service) engaging with the mentoring service in prison	1,200	1,352	Number service users engaging with the mentoring service in prison
KPI 2 Service users sustaining engagement with the mentoring service post-release from prison	70%	72%	Attendance at agreed post-release appointments with mentor and PRP updated (gate liberation appointments are excluded)
KPI 3 Service users engaging with mentoring service in the community and engaging with other services to meet needs	80%	88%	Specialist provision or other signposted referral - customer attends agreed appointments to progress identified need(s)
KPI 4 Service users engaging with mentoring and other services to address the identified need(s) have increased capacity and improved circumstances	70%	83%	Customer remains engaged with the service and has made acceptable progress to address one or more of their identified needs. The supporting evidence demonstrating progress against each need is specific to the need being addressed (as detailed on the mentors' outcome guidance sheets).

Appendix 2: Short-Term Outcomes

Outcome	Identified	Met	%	Outcome Explanation
S1	1137	821	72	Engaged with Service and Motivated to Change Behaviour
S2	1593	1234	77	Increased Motivation to Engage with Interventions
S3	2055	1499	73	Increased Pro-social Attitudes, Networks and Non-criminal Identity
S4A	504	448	89	Increased understanding of Health needs: Physical
S4B	873	750	86	Increased understanding of Health needs: Mental
S4C	792	696	88	Increased understanding of Health needs: Substance Abuse
S5A	480	407	85	Engaged with Service(s) to support Identified Criminogenic Need(s): Physical Health
S5B	855	698	82	Engaged with Service(s) to support Identified Criminogenic Need(s): Mental Health
S5C	754	617	82	Engaged with Service(s) to support Identified Criminogenic Need(s): Substance Abuse
S5D	991	818	83	Engaged with Service(s) to support Identified Criminogenic Need(s): Housing
S5E	403	304	75	Engaged with Service(s) to support Identified Criminogenic Need(s): Family/Relationship
S5F	1178	1001	85	Engaged with service and motivated to change Behaviour: Finance
S5G	309	212	69	Engaged with Service and motivated to Change Behaviour: Employability
S5H	297	203	68	Engaged with Service and motivated to Change Behaviour: Education and Training
S6	95	72	76	Contributed positively in Employment, Learning, Training or Volunteering Activities

Appendix 3: Medium-Term Outcomes

Outcome	Identified	Met	%	Outcome Explanation
M1	1563	1155	74	Sustained Engagement with Service and Motivation to Change Behaviour
M2	1280	820	64	Sustained Engagement with Interventions
M3	1977	1027	52	Reintegration into Community
M4A	431	200	46	Improved Physical Wellbeing
M4B	758	239	32	Improved Mental Wellbeing
M4C	681	230	34	Substance Abuse Reduced/Stopped
M5	878	397	45	Accommodation Secured/Stabilised
M6	413	172	42	Positive Family/Personal Relationships
M7	1073	505	47	Improved Financial Situation
M8	501	160	32	Increased Employment Skills

NEW ROUTES

New Routes Throughcare Mentoring PSP

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