

## **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](https://bit.ly/reducingvictims)

Please click here to hear directly from our customer Craig.

[https://twitter.com/wisegroup\\_se/status/1438531116139524096?s=20](https://twitter.com/wisegroup_se/status/1438531116139524096?s=20)

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

During the evidence session on 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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)