

# Workshop Report

## The future of voluntary throughcare & mentoring: conversations from roundtable engagement workshops

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Iriss

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## Context statement

This report is intended to provide an overview and key themes formed from a collection of the legitimate views, opinions, suggestions and statements provided by attendees during a series of round table events. These events were organised as part of the wider review of current third sector voluntary throughcare service provision across Scotland and were facilitated by Iriss.

These events provided a platform for key stakeholders, and those who operate within the voluntary throughcare remit, to provide their legitimate views, opinions, suggestions and statements, based on their individual experiences. These were not challenged, analysed, or provided with context during the event or during the compiling of this report. These remain the property of those who made them, but any content has been anonymised for the purpose of compiling this report.

This content is not in any way representative of the views of the Scottish Government, Community Justice Scotland or event facilitators Iriss.

The content of this report is not formed using any form of hierarchical formatting and each element of the report is provided an equal weighting during the reports production.

The key themes reported are only those that arose during the roundtable events and do not include any wider key themes that may be present in the voluntary throughcare remit. The content of this report will be considered as part of the wider CJS led commissioning process, and as such, will be taken into consideration along with each other element of the commissioned review process of third sector voluntary throughcare service provision in Scotland, with no firm conclusions drawn at this stage.

# Executive summary

## Introduction

Community Justice Scotland (CJS) is working with the Scottish Government (SG) to review the commissioning of voluntary throughcare and mentoring services across Scotland. Facilitated by [Iriss](#), five half-day, Scotland-wide, roundtable workshops were run in August-September 2022 with the aim of bringing together those with an interest in developing the best possible throughcare support. 98 people from across statutory and third sector stakeholder organisations participated in the workshops.

This report summarises the conversations of the roundtable workshops but is not in any way representative of the views of the Scottish Government, Community Justice Scotland or Iriss. Each element of the report has been given an equal weighting and key themes reported are only those that arose during the roundtable events, separate from any wider themes that may be present in the voluntary throughcare remit. The content of the report will be considered along with each other element of the CJS-led review process of third sector voluntary throughcare service provision in Scotland.

## Defining the service

*Throughcare is the support people receive in prison, and once they leave, to help them resettle into the community. This support varies depending on individual needs. It can include finding a home, providing opportunities for work and improved health and wellbeing or mentoring. Throughcare helps individuals develop confidence and social ties, so they can build better lives for themselves, their family and their community.*

When asked to consider this new working definition developed by CJS, participants responded favourably, noting it was an improvement on previous definitions. It was also suggested that it should be reviewed by people accessing throughcare for their feedback. How and where a person is asked to engage with throughcare support was deemed by many participants to be as important as the wording of the definition.

## Core values and outcomes

Participants were asked to name core values, attributes and purpose underpinning voluntary throughcare. The strength of commitment that participants bring to their roles in supporting people shone through strongly. Compassion, dignity, hope, inclusivity, partnership and transparency were just some of the frequently mentioned words.

Core outcomes for throughcare were identified as: supporting people to feel connected and have a sense of belonging in their community; building stability, improving resilience, coping skills and hope for the future; reducing re-offending through employment by making available routes to sustainable employment or opportunities. It was highlighted that personal outcomes are what make the real difference and listening to people is critical in identifying individualised support needs.

## Redesigning voluntary throughcare commissioning

To better understand the complexities of creating an accessible, equitable form of throughcare support across Scotland, two questions were posed to participants. Headlines from key thematic areas are below. Additional points and detail are in the main report alongside a connected set of 'ideas for change' created by participants.

Q1. A proportion of those on short sentences or on remand will decline the support offered by voluntary throughcare and mentoring services despite having needs / services perceiving they have needs. Who are these people? How can we engage with this group and ensure they are being communicated with, and maximise the likelihood of uptake?

Q2. The 'voluntary throughcare and mentoring' services seek to support people to reintegrate into the community following release from prison. There are a number of other organisations in this space - for example SPS, JSW, other third sector organisations and universal services (such as housing, DWP). What ideally should the interaction between the commissioned voluntary throughcare services, and these other 'actors' be?

### Why do people decline the offer of support?

1. A lack of formal data on who does or does not take up support, and why. This makes it difficult to pre-empt barriers and it could be assumed that low trust in individual staff, as well as the system overall, can contribute to a lack of uptake.
2. Support offered may not feel relevant to people's lives, so hearing the voice of people who do not take up voluntary throughcare is key to understanding.
3. People move across localities throughout their time in the justice system. Access to support should be equitable across the prison estate to limit the risk of a person falling through a support gap.
4. An equalities lens could be used to potentially increase engagement of individuals who can't access support due to characteristics or circumstances; including but not limited to - neurodiversity, gender identity, learning disabilities and literacy levels.

### Relationships are key

1. Trust and relationships are key, start the work earlier to improve 'stickability'.
2. A named person - or team of people - to follow alongside someone, perhaps as early as from the point of arrest, to build trust and knowledge of support needs.
3. Mixed perceptions on the role of Social Work in throughcare. Some people in the justice system have negative associations with Social Work, which may act as a barrier to uptake of throughcare provided by Justice Social Work. Others suggested that statutory services like Social Work could be given more capacity to provide throughcare support (e.g. to sex offenders) as this may help to align support provision and 'de-duplicate' support provided by various agencies.

### Role of prisons

1. SPS staff should be equipped with the skills, knowledge and capacity to promote voluntary throughcare services to individuals, and have an understanding of the

variety of support organisations have to offer.

2. Understand the role of prisons as gatekeepers for community-based services. Different parts of the prison estate could be used to facilitate the interactions between support workers and people in prison. It was suggested Links Centres might not always be the best place for this, and consideration could be given to access permissions for workers from external organisations to other areas in a prison.

#### The remand gap?

1. Men on remand are not currently offered throughcare support. This is a missed opportunity to engage, support and prepare people for liberation. Women on remand are currently offered throughcare support through the Shine PSP.
2. Remand is a point where workers often lose contact with people who then re-enter the justice system due to lack of support with navigating healthcare or other needs.

#### Address the busy landscape of support, communication and coordination

1. A priority should be to address the busy landscape of voluntary throughcare. Professionals would benefit from more clarity and information about who is providing support in a locality to then be able to provide a clear and cohesive support offer for people.
2. Improved communication between services in relation to their offer, with a focus on how they complement each other as part of the overall throughcare landscape.
3. A need for better alignment between throughcare commissioned services and universal services (such as Housing and DWP), where universal services recognise the timescales and changes to circumstances of people in or leaving the justice system

#### Considering rural and remote services

1. Future planning should incorporate an equalities assessment, and recognise the unique challenges for rural and very remote areas in resourcing. Allow for flexibility in the service model to ensure equity of outcomes for supported people no matter where they live.
2. Acknowledge that expectations of services differ in a rural context and factor in particular challenges in terms of support and safeguarding in small, tight-knit communities.

#### Rethinking funding, finance and commissioning

1. Changing the commissioning of the voluntary throughcare model could reduce dependency on short term funding and remove competition amongst services for funding streams and client base. Changes in the funding model could improve staff retention and continuity of support for service users while also contributing to
2. Funders could focus on extending funding to what they know already works well in addition to asking for innovation.
3. Increased contract times for commissioned services could be offered to make space and time for relational practice needs.

# Introduction

Community Justice Scotland (CJS) is working with the Scottish Government (SG) to review the commissioning model of voluntary throughcare and mentoring services across Scotland. This review seeks to understand what 'good' looks like in the provision of voluntary throughcare and mentoring services in Scotland and develop a commissioning approach and service design that will create conditions for a consistent, effective, high quality, national response.

Facilitated by [Iriss](#), 5 half-day roundtable workshops were run in August - September 2022. They aimed to bring together those with an interest in delivering the best possible support for people leaving prison. The discussions were designed to develop new ideas and approaches to voluntary throughcare and explore the wider system, in order to contribute to the CJS/SG commissioning review.



Getting ready to start the session, at Kinning Park Complex, Glasgow

## Workshop attendance

Workshops were attended by 98 participants. Existing PSPs were represented, and to a lesser extent there was representation from non-commissioned third sector partners. Local authority and SPS participation was seen across all workshops. We noted a substantial number of 'no shows' in addition to known apologies. When apologies were given these were mostly in connection to emerging frontline pressures in services on the day, and as a

result it is assumed that this was a factor behind the unexpected no shows. Workshop attendance is as follows:

Date	Location/event	Participants
11th May	Commissioning redesign launch event (online)	105
23rd August	Highlands & Islands roundtable (online)	13
31st August	Dundee roundtable	15
6th September	Glasgow roundtable	19
7th September	Edinburgh roundtable	22
13th September	Mixed localities roundtable (online)	29



#### Ideas for change

During the workshops participants had the chance to creatively 'design' services which would contribute to improving the current system. Some of these designs for change are new ideas, and others focus on rolling out local best practice nationally. These are highlighted throughout the report.

## Core values

As an icebreaker, participants were asked to identify the core values, attributes and purpose that underpin voluntary throughcare. The strength of feeling and commitment that participants bring to their roles in supporting people shone through strongly in these discussions.

### Core values driving voluntary throughcare and mentoring support

- Aspirational
- Approachable
- Benevolence
- Build bridges to opportunity for the most vulnerable in our society
- Compassion
- Consistency
- Collaboration
- Collective intervention from services
- Dignity
- Empathetic
- Equality
- Fearless
- Genuineness
- Honesty
- Hope



*"It is quite succinct - not too long. It could benefit from a shorter 'tagline' summary such as 'providing you with the right support you need to get the life you want.'"*

*"It should make sense to people who might take up the support, and feel 'people facing', not focused only on professional services or policymakers"*

*"It needs to invite people in and show them the benefits of voluntary throughcare"*

*"It should be inclusive - not using stigmatising language like 'offender', suggesting that the support is here to help the person to help themselves to make changes in their lives."*

The definition refers to *'their family'*. It was acknowledged that family is very important in 'passing the baton' as someone goes into custody, throughout their time in prison and then back into their communities. Participants discussed that not everyone has family, or a family that is supportive or in contact, so a definition should also reflect a wider network of friends or trusted people.

The definition refers to *'their community'*. Participants suggested that the definition could better acknowledge that people may want to return to different communities, and that the phrase 're-integration' disguises that people may not feel integrated in the first place.

*"Living in a community is different from a sense of belonging in one, so we need to be clear about what voluntary throughcare is aspiring to help people achieve."*

Across sessions there was debate about the relationship between throughcare and mentoring, and there was discussion around whether this support should be labelled as such. Participants reflected that mentoring is about developing social capital and should be asset-based, yet sometimes wraparound support is described as mentoring. It is important to clarify the difference to help manage the expectations of supported people.

How and where a person is asked to engage with throughcare support was deemed by many participants to be as important as the wording of the definition.

## The outcomes of voluntary throughcare

In the first two workshops, participants were asked to explore the outcomes of voluntary throughcare. This activity was then reviewed and changed in further workshops. However, the following outcome themes were identified:

1. Supporting people to feel connected and have a sense of belonging in their community. This includes making sure people are connected digitally (phones, internet) and to build relationships with family, community and services.

*"It is important for families to be able to help shape a release plan where appropriate."*

*"Families often know in advance that people will be at risk at time of liberation."*

*"Families also have their own outcomes, and support meeting the outcomes of individuals. This is maybe even more important in a rural setting."*

*"It is important to know what people need support with, and how family can help."*

*"Relationships are key within the service too. It is important that individuals can build a relationship with a mentor before and after release."*

2. Building stability, improving resilience, coping skills and hope for the future. This included managing expectations around what services are available as well as making possible real access to support.

*"There are often waiting lists for services (for example, one to one counselling). Intermediary support services aren't always what people need."*

*"People must be supported to physically access services to achieve their goals. Steps are often missing. For example, if transport support is required (to enable someone to get to an appointment)."*

3. Reducing re-offending through employment. Alongside improving life-skills, making available routes to sustainable employment or opportunities.

*"In order to stop the cycle of offending, we need to understand why people reoffend and return to custody – what are the main drivers?"*

Participants stressed that user voice is critical in identifying the individualised supports required (such as mental health, housing, addictions, universal credit, employment, education, family links). Although personal outcomes can be difficult to measure meaningfully, and are different for every individual, achieving these make the difference to a person's life.

Participants also noted that there are system and GDPR challenges with data sharing between statutory and third sector services as people move through the justice system. These can make it difficult for services to follow people through the justice system and support people to achieve personal outcomes. It was flagged that people have to repeat their stories often and this could be a barrier to engagement as well as potentially re-traumatising. Consideration is needed as to how data could be safely shared across services.



### Idea for change: Individualised throughcare care plan.

Building on the pilot of a new “My compass assessment” which is currently underway at HMP Inverness. This is an individualised care plan for someone who is in custody to address different areas of need. The approach would offer an earlier intervention from point of custody throughout their care and beyond. It could facilitate a more wraparound service that uses shared information and a care planning approach. It avoids a person retelling their story and re-traumatisation. It adapts with a person’s changing needs.

## Key questions: commissioning redesign

Participants were asked to respond to two key questions with the aim of identifying strengths, gaps and opportunities for improvement in how voluntary throughcare support is made accessible to people in the justice system.



Question 1. A proportion of those on short sentences or on remand will decline the support offered by voluntary throughcare and mentoring services despite having needs / services perceiving they have needs. Who are these people? How can we capture this group and ensure they are being communicated with and maximise the likelihood of uptake?

Question 2. The 'voluntary throughcare and mentoring' services seek to support people to reintegrate into the community following release from prison. There are a number of other organisations in this space - for example SPS, JSW, other third sector organisations and universal services (such as housing, DWP) What ideally should the interaction between the commissioned voluntary throughcare services, and these other 'actors' be?

## Why do people decline the offer of support?

Participants felt that there is a lack of formal data and understanding of who is in this group, and why the offer is not attractive to them. This makes it difficult for services to pre-empt barriers, and work with people to maximise uptake. *“There are no set 'groups'; there are only people with individual issues and hopes.”*

Participants thought however that people on short term sentences, awaiting court dates or with repeat offences and complex needs may fall through the net. *"Hearing the voice of this group is important to understanding who is currently missing and why."*

It was highlighted that support may not seem relevant to people's lives. Examples were given of people who had been in the justice system for years and may have been let down or had given up hope. Engaging well with this population would need considerable levels of collaboration among service providers. *"For example, people who are in and out of prison on short term sentences may be in more chaotic circumstances and most in need of deeper level support. Most are vulnerable and don't recognise their needs, or they are looking at only their most immediate needs."*

It was also thought that people may make decisions about taking up throughcare based on the stability of being in prison, or may not see the point if they are close to release. Participants spoke of the need to start engagement work earlier to improve 'stickability' between a person and throughcare support. *"Incentives such as community care grants could encourage people to engage."*

A further point was made that some people may feel they have sufficient support already in place without the addition of throughcare, or may want to put their experience of being in the justice system behind them- where throughcare is viewed as a continuation of that experience. Alternatively, there may be another motive for not engaging *"...some don't intend to leave crime connections behind. The people involved in organised crime often have someone looking after them on the outside."*

Participants discussed that support and access must be equitable across Scotland so that there are fewer gaps. *"People move across localities between sentencing, prison and release. The variability of support offer and support experience across the prison estate has an impact on uptake."*

A participant from an existing PSP posed this question: *"If those who currently decline this kind of support were encouraged to take up the offer, how would that impact on staff capacity? What can realistically be offered to an increased client base based on current staff capacity?"*

One group suggested that an equalities lens could be used to improve the uptake of services: *"It is of importance to build the ability to overcome barriers to reach individuals who can't always access support as it currently stands. This would then lead to changes that aim to increase engagement of individuals who can't always access support due to particular characteristics or circumstances; including but not limited to neurodiversity, gender identity, learning disabilities and literacy levels."*



Sharing group discussion feedback, at Kinning Park Complex, Glasgow

## Relationships are key in throughcare delivery

Workshop participants highlighted that in the absence of solid data, it could be assumed that a lack of trust in individual staff, as well as the system overall, contributes to a lack of uptake. Therefore relationships, trust and consistency are key. Staff need to be visible and present to people.

*“Support must begin before liberation - by introducing hope into people’s lives. A sense of hope may help people be more open to engaging with support. Resources and caseloads must be managed - enough workers with enough time to engage and communicate.”*

A number of conversations were had around how a named person - or team of people - is needed to support and follow alongside someone from the point of arrest. Participants felt that a significant number of people offering throughcare and mentoring support have lived experience of the justice system. This was deemed to be valuable in engaging people, and seen as a strength. *“More personal experience stories could encourage people to engage.”*

Many participants felt that a trauma-informed approach is required, and one that accounts for the complexities of men and masculinities. Support offers should be open and be more than a one-off opportunity to engage. *“There is a role for persistence.”*

There were mixed perceptions on the role of Social Work in providing throughcare. It was suggested that some people in the justice system have negative associations with Social

Work, which may act as a barrier to uptake of throughcare if it is provided by Justice Social Work. On the other hand, statutory services like Social Work could be given more capacity to provide throughcare support (e.g. to sex offenders) as this may help to align support provision and 'de-duplicate' support provided by various agencies.



**Idea for change: Throughcare 'buddy' or case manager - a named person to support reconnection in the community.**

A person based in the community working with prison-based colleagues developing the integration plan, building on local delivery models. This would be based on a multi-disciplinary approach prior to release. Engagement will be encouraged through relationship building. This manager would have a list of services relevant to the local community, lived experience/case studies, involving and educating family members.

When this idea was presented, there was whole-group discussion around how this model (which is already used in some areas) could work in a rural setting.

*"How do we build trusting relationships over a large area? A phone call is not as effective as face to face, for example. But it wouldn't be possible to have a mentor on each island. How do we ensure an equity of service in remote and island communities? There are challenges around consistency of service delivery due to staff recruitment, rural geography, smaller range of third sector organisations who can be. This is not an easy logistical problem to solve. Consistency is important, but challenging., especially if we are losing someone for 2 to 3 days for a prison visit elsewhere in Scotland. Where is the 'value' for money if someone has this role but there are low numbers of people coming out of custody in this region. New models of working shouldn't replace local delivery that is already working well - ideas should build on what's already working"*

## The role of prisons in delivering throughcare

A general perception was that prisons have a role as gatekeepers to throughcare services and in signposting to community-based supports. *"SPS staff should be equipped with the skills, knowledge and capacity to promote voluntary throughcare to individuals, and have an understanding of what different organisations have to offer."*

There was also discussion about where the best places are in a prison for relationships to be built between workers and people... *"not necessarily in the Links Centres."* and that more clarity, or a change in policy and practice, is needed in relation to how peer mentors (e.g.

people with a conviction record) and other non-statutory workers, such as the third sector, gain permission to access to different parts of a prison to work alongside people more closely. *“Be imaginative in finding the gateways to addressing the needs of people.”*



**Idea for change: Peer mentoring and support within prison.**

Someone with lived experience could provide a peer mentoring role. This would be a paid role to support someone while they were in prison. Training and qualifications would be offered. This would support core needs to be met before release. With the basics completed people will have headspace to think about what they want next.



**Idea for change: Creating ‘hub’ community spaces for those leaving the prison service to meet with family and peers, on a regular basis.**

This idea has two parts:

1. Support and strengthen existing Links Centres through increased capacity for workers to build up and maintain an information base of the supports available to people in their locality. This includes commissioned throughcare support services as well as how community- based and statutory support agencies operate in their area.
2. Create community ‘hub’ spaces in localities where community-based services could be visible to support and promote their services. SPS and mentors already working with people while in prison would signpost people to the hub on liberation.

This service would provide a space for people to:

- Re-connect with families and community.
- Access practical support, including signposting to events and activities in the area; support with housing applications; assistance in opening a bank account.
- Family, friends and mentors could support and encourage, or attend with the person to help them get to know people at the community hub.
- Allow mentors to connect with each other for peer learning and support. This kind of opportunity is currently missing from mentor support.

Communication and information could be made available to people earlier and that resources, advertising and communication could be improved to help people engage. HMPYOI Polmont and HMP Perth have an in-house radio station and this is currently being planned for HMP Low Moss. The voice of lived experience was also proposed as a strong and effective way of growing engagement with throughcare support.

*"All services should endeavour to engage verbally. Word-of-mouth conversations can build trust and rapport when people can hear a voice of lived experience as well as 'practice wisdom' from workers."*



#### Idea for change: Mobile app

A one-stop shop for all services, available to all, that promotes choice and privacy. The app would allow more people to create a personal space to keep all the information they need, and access the appropriate services at the right time for them. It would be a place where people could access advice, information, links to services, and one-to-one support. They could tell their story and they could consent to have their information shared across services if they wanted to do that. It would be person-centred and would involve all partners. It would be a tool to support better throughcare coordination.

A few participants highlighted that the SPS TSO role had been helpful in the past. This role supported services by having someone who knew what was available in a locality, signposting and connecting people. SPS could support the throughcare experience by knowing more about what each local service is offering and where that fits with the throughcare landscape.

*"A signposting challenge exists for SPS staff. It is difficult for them to know which services a person should be referred to when there are different organisations offering similar types of support services in a locality".*

## The remand gap?

There was concern from participants that people on remand are not offered throughcare support. This was seen as a missed opportunity to engage, support and prepare people for liberation.

*"The justice system is currently seeing the impact of the pandemic on remand cases and the duration of remand. Where is the scope to engage with people on remand when this is an important time where mentoring and support could make a difference to their lives?"*

*"Remand is a point where we often lose contact with people and we often see them come back in ('a revolving door') to the justice system as they have no support during that time to help them navigate GPs, healthcare, mental health or substance abuse support."*

However, women on remand are offered throughcare services through the Shine PSP, so this point being raised may indicate a knowledge gap in the case of the participants who discussed it, or perhaps more likely, it could have been a generalised statement made by people who work exclusively with men (who are not offered throughcare support whilst on remand).



### Idea for change: A Scottish throughcare and reintegration guarantee

An agreement that key players, such as politicians, ministers, chief executives and professionals sign up to. This would outline roles, rights and responsibilities to support people leaving prison and would systematically involve cross-sectoral collaboration and minimum standards. It could reduce reoffending, inequalities and social exclusion, improve belonging and increase connectedness, hope and human dignity.

*“Other countries have coherent, concrete and coordinated agreements in place, with a duty to co-operate to deliver throughcare. If others can do it, why not Scotland? Finland, Norway, and Australia have obligations on Ministries and Government Departments such as Health, Work and Pensions, Housing.”*

## A complicated landscape of services

Through the discussions it was largely agreed that a priority for commissioning redesign should be to address the busy landscape of voluntary throughcare, sharing the view that professionals would benefit from more clarity and information about who is providing support in a locality to be able to provide a clear and cohesive support offer for people.

*“As a professional it can be confusing - knowing who to refer people to and what is on offer. If this is confusing for professionals, then it must be overwhelming for people who are receiving throughcare support. Everyone (professional services) needs to know their role and what other services offer.”*

The most effective way to manage referrals was questioned, with the approach taken at HMP Barlinnie given as an example of good practice of bringing services together.

*“Who is the best organisation? Networks have changed as a result of Covid. GDPR rules restrict how information is shared across organisations. The Hub at Barlinnie works well as an example of organisations working together.”*

Participants suggested introducing obligations for universal services to make throughcare processes smoother. For example, timings for DWP claims could align with liberation timings. It was proposed that housing tenancies could be kept open while someone was in prison to reduce the risk of homelessness on release. However the point was also made that this could create the undesired consequence of rent debt.

*“Universal services could better understand and flex around the complexity of the needs of*

*people in the justice system. Structural issues of access and waiting lists also affect throughcare. There should be obligations on the statutory sector and an upholding of fundamental human rights. It should not be difficult to plan for a house to live in and access to welfare benefits, but it can be. Short sentences and loss of tenancies make for much more work for throughcare."*

## Coordination and communication between services

Improving the clarity and communication of offer between services was an identified priority, with the focus of discussion on the dovetailing of commissioned and non-commissioned services in order to develop an integrated referral process.

*"Instead of creating competition between services we need to focus on offering a clear support package to people, with a common purpose of what is best for the supported person."*

Over the course of the roundtables the following suggestions to put this into action were made:

- Improve understanding of the impact on support for people who are not from, or intend to live in, the locality where they are in prison.
- Improve ownership of support coordination in each local authority and prison. This would look like a team of coordinators who know what support people are or should be receiving, following it through and checking that it is meeting their needs.
- "Case Management for tomorrow": A coordinator role to organise a team around the person that could be there potentially as early as from the point of arrest to ensure understanding of the person's context and support needs.
- Considering and addressing who the service user wants to work with, and how this might change at different stages in time.
- Multi-service reintegration meetings where *"everyone is round the table"*. The approach taken in South Ayrshire was given as an example where responsibility is shared across multiple agencies to support the person and meet their needs.
- Linking in with community-based groups and understanding what these groups need to best engage with people when they are liberated.

## Considering rural and remote services

*"Flexibility must be built into the service model to ensure equity of outcomes for supported people."*

During the online session for Highlands and Islands, and in the general online session, participants brought up the unique challenges that face rural throughcare. Participants hoped that future planning will recognise the unique challenges that rural and very remote areas face in resourcing and providing support.

Their suggestions included:

1. Incorporating an equalities impact assessment for rural and very remote areas.
2. Exploring how outcomes work in a rural setting and allowing this to influence budgeting.
3. Acknowledging that expectations of services differ in a rural context. *“There must be consideration of how to create a ‘one stop shop’ of services in rural areas where realistically people will not want to travel for hours to reach a service provider.”*
4. Factoring in the resources required in smaller tight-knit communities, who have particular challenges to overcome in terms of support and safeguarding.

## Rethinking funding, finance and commissioning

The key message from discussions on funding was that changing the way the current model of voluntary throughcare is commissioned could enable the future development of permanent, continuous services that are neither dependent on short-term funding nor in competition for the same funding streams or client base. This was flagged as particularly important for third sector organisations.

*“The current structure of funding is a key barrier which drives competition. If we want to work in partnership we need to get out of competitive relationships and be willing to give up certain things to make it work.”*

*“Competition between different services due to funding means that there can be protective attitudes over service users. Statutory services get paid regardless of numbers when others don’t.”*

Participants identified the instability of contracted workers and ‘short-termism’ as a problem that could be tackled by a change in funding structure. It was thought that staff turnover affects the perceptions of individuals and families in relation to the quality, fairness and consistency of the support available.

*“The focus of support should be needs-led, driven by our clients, not driven by the funding. Funders could be more aware of this potential impact of funding streams on services.”*

Suggestions from participants about shifts that could be made in the way throughcare is funded:

1. Funders could focus on extending funding to what they know already works well in addition to asking for innovation.
2. Increased contract times for commissioned services could be offered to make space and time for relational practice needs.
3. Throughcare is not only a ‘justice problem’ - it supports a range of wider outcomes e.g. health, community wellbeing, and others. Drawing finance from other larger funding streams (e.g. health) to contribute to the throughcare budget could make a difference to the capacity for throughcare provision.

4. Research to demonstrate the contribution and saving that voluntary throughcare makes to other areas would support innovation.
5. National outcomes of care standards and external evaluation could be used for accountability.

*“Creating a permanent continuous service that is not dependent on short-term funding would be welcomed. This would involve the Scottish Government and would require a systems level change that would result in higher staff retention, benefits for service users, decluttering the landscape, and would allow for a better quality of services to be offered.”*

## Concluding comments

The participants in the roundtable workshops brought a range of experiences and perspectives based on their professional roles and/or personal lived experience. As a result discussion ranged widely over the specific questions asked and the more exploratory part of the workshops where people were invited to generate ideas for change. Combined, these elements provide insight into not only how people working in the field of throughcare understand and see the complexities of providing this type of support, but also a sense of the bigger picture - locating throughcare in a vision of society that enables citizens to live well with the right support at the right time. The themes emerging from discussion point to this with a call for improved connectivity between services and suggestions on how support could be as equitable and sustainable as possible. Moreover, at the heart of it, participants highlighted that throughcare should be built on enabling trusting relationships between people in the justice system and the workers who are alongside them.

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