



Can Self-Directed Support Work in Community Justice Settings?

EVALUATION REPORT

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Project background



Moving Forward was set up as a partnership project involving Turning Point Scotland, Outside the Box and Glasgow Community Justice Authority (now Community Justice Glasgow) in 2015. The project was funded by the Scottish Government and monitored and evaluated by Inspiring Scotland as part of the national strategy implementation for self-directed support (SDS) in Scotland.

It is our belief that social care should be person centred, rooted in local communities and based around the existing skills, knowledge and capacity of individuals. It is our experience that people involved with criminal justice may have complex chaotic lives and may need support with certain tasks, for example to manage their mental health, to tackle their addictions and to find somewhere to live. Existing services may not be able to offer fully flexible, holistic support. Self-directed support is a mechanism that can help individuals to harness whatever social care is available to meet their needs. The main aim of our project was to look at whether self-directed support could operate within a criminal justice context.

Our theoretical approach adheres to the 'Good Lives' model of offender rehabilitation (Willis & Ward, 2010)¹ whereby people with convictions are empowered to develop personal competencies

¹ Willis, G. M., & Ward, T. (2010). *Risk management versus the Good Lives Model: The construction of better lives and the reduction of harm*. In M. Dréan-Rivette & M. Evans (Eds.) *Transnational Criminology Manual*. Netherlands: Wolf Legal Publishing.

with community support rather than subjected to a traditional risk management approach which aims to detect and contain offending behaviours. Desistance research by McNeill, Batchelor, Burnett and Knox (2005)² supports our experience that people involved with criminal justice are likely to respond well to practitioners who support their capacity to enact positive personal change.

Why did we do it?

Literature review

Initially, we looked for evidence of a self-directed support approach amongst other groups of social care users and in different parts of the United Kingdom and Europe. We discovered that some research has been carried out in this area. For example, the Inside Out project works with individuals from HMP Preston who served less than twelve months in prison. Offender supervisors work with individuals in prison to formulate a life plan for their release and a community volunteer supports individuals in the community aided by discretionary funding. An independent evaluation³ found that individuals reported that their experience of being involved with the project enhanced their resettlement back into the community. However, the evaluation also found that maintaining contact with individuals on release from prison proved to be difficult and dropout rates were relatively high.

Another project in HMP Everthorpe in East Yorkshire worked with individuals with mental health issues and other complex needs not being met by existing services. This project⁴ was a partnership between the prison and Hull City Council, Goodwin Trust (a local social enterprise development organization) and In Control. Following on from action research involving prisoners within HMP Everthorpe, a service model was piloted which involved a project worker supporting individuals in prison and in the community to develop personalised resettlement plans. People who demonstrated commitment to the pilot project were subsequently able to access a beneficiary fund to help them with integrating back into the community, for example to put a deposit down on a private let. While this project aspires to the ethos of self-directed support, there were elements which reflect regulatory aspects of prison life whereby prisoners can only access services and benefits by demonstrating ‘good behaviour’. Equally, it does not explore why and how former prisoners construct new non offending identities and how these integrate with existing roles and obligations as illustrated by Albertson and Fox (2014)⁵ who argue that *‘for the individual to claim that they have human needs that should be addressed, they must also recognize the needs of others’*.

²McNeill, F., Batchelor, S., Burnett, R., & Knox, J. (2005). *21st century social work. Reducing Reoffending: Key practice skills*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

³ <http://www.mmuperu.co.uk/projects/evaluation-of-inside-out-at-hmp-preston>

⁴ <http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/partnerships-development/projects/personalisation-at-hmp-everthorpe/>

⁵ Albertson, K. and Fox, C. (2014) *Justice with Reason: Rethinking the Economics of Crime and Justice*, NAPO

What did we do?

The purpose of the Moving Forward project was to investigate how a self-directed support approach might work for people involved with criminal justice in Glasgow. Specifically, the project aims were:

- to improve knowledge and share information about self-directed support and criminal justice;
- to develop the capacity of criminal justice organisations to use a self-directed support approach;
- to share the learning from other community justice agencies with regard to self-directed support;
- to build the participation of individuals involved in the criminal justice system in services that meet their personal outcomes.

Who did we work with?

People

We worked with men and women aged 18 years and older who are involved with criminal justice. They have complex lives and experience many challenges including homelessness, addiction, mental ill health and family breakdown. At the same time, they are subject to certain restrictions and requirements as a result of their involvement with community based justice.

We worked with 93 participants from 14 workshops held across Glasgow between March 2017 and August 2018. Participants were referred to us by statutory services and voluntary sector support agencies. Most of the people we worked with were approaching the completion of a community sentence or had recently been released from prison and were being supported with their transition back into the community. We decided to work with people with support in place rather than individuals in immediate crisis to make best use of our limited funding. We fully acknowledge this gap in our provision and had planned to extend our eligibility criteria from October 2018 onwards. However, we failed to secure extension funding and were therefore unable to do so.



Organisations

We established good relationships with Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership through our Steering Group whose members included the Head of Adult Services for Glasgow City Council and the Head of Service for Community Justice Glasgow. We developed connections with existing community justice services in the statutory and voluntary sectors such as 218, SHINE Women's Mentoring Service, Sacro, North East Glasgow Criminal Justice Social Work Teams for Men and Women, Dick Stewart Project, Glasgow Drug Court Team, Clyde Quay Project and Tomorrow's Women. In addition, we have a long established relationship with the Prisoner Support Pathway Team at HMP Low Moss who work with men in the community on release from prison. We also worked with Diversity Matters, a capacity building organisation based in Edinburgh who helped us to deliver our participatory outcomes sessions in the initial stages of our pilot project.

Other organisations that we worked with include Crossreach, North West Glasgow Criminal Justice Social Work Team, Youth Community Support Agency, Positive Prisons, Glasgow Council for Inclusive Living, Simon Community, IRISS, Scottish Prison Service, Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum, Glasgow Community Planning Partnership, Housing Support Enablement Unit and Scottish Government Social Innovation Group.

What did we learn?

a) Learning network events

Our learning network events aimed to share information and good practice with people who work in criminal justice. For example, in our first learning network event, we heard from Turning Point Scotland (Angus) about how self-directed support can work for vulnerable people with complex needs in a semi-rural local authority area. Participants met in small discussion groups and provided the following feedback:

- Starting point for any service is SDS principles then attach funding
- Trust is essential between individuals and services
- Robust evaluation and evidence will set the tone for future action – how do we impact on offending and how will we know we made a difference?
- Needs leadership buy-in
- Cultural shift needed at all levels – commissioners, service providers, individuals
- Need to show what worked and what didn't work – include case studies and personal stories
- Simplify systems – what works for people will work for organisations
- How do we include the most vulnerable individuals?
- Is access to self directed support restricted to people already engaged with social work services?
- What are the best ways to communicate what we learn? Who should we be sharing with?

Another learning event focused on the topic of risk given the prevalence of health and safety concerns in relation to criminal justice and self-directed support. We heard from the Risk Management Authority which has statutory responsibility for assessing and managing the risk posed by serious violent and sexual offenders in Scotland and Turning Point Scotland (Perth) which is a forensic learning disability service. We had participants from several voluntary and statutory sector agencies including Scottish Prison Service, NHS Scotland, Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Government who provided the following feedback:

- Current approach to risk and need is reactive
- How do we help people to deal with risk – linked to supporting readiness to change and individuals learning to meet their own needs in a more balanced way
- Reasonable balanced risk is preferable to no risk taking at all – reflects real life reality
- Need to have honest open communication, respect others' opinions and goals, understand who the risk belongs to – individual or organisation?
- Balance with not setting anyone up to fail – people should be allowed to make mistakes and to learn from them – what worked? What didn't work?
- Careful boundary setting and review process as part of building good relationships – linked to reflective practice and consistent, coherent support of multi-agency professional and personal networks with good communication for consideration of risk before action – like effective parenting
- Contrast with MAPPA arrangements with 24/7 focus on risk management shared with other organisations – different culture of risk involving awareness/planning/enabling for individuals; takes individual views into account ("take something someone wants to do and turn it into something they can do")
- Risk should be proportionate to level and type of support/service offered
- Perception of risk – how does this vary depending on levels of trust and confidence between individuals and providers
- Competing priorities or services and the complexity this presents – time limits; accessibility; organisational pressure/constraints
- Attitudes towards particular groups skews risk assessment – deserving and undeserving
- What are the costs of enabling risk – relapse, reoffending?
- Issue of choice? Myth or reality – need to prepare people better when leaving prison; risks of institutionalisation; SDS only available when people in crisis; simplify process to avoid individual self-sabotage.

b) Pilot study

We quickly realised that one of the core aims of our project (to improve knowledge and share information about self-directed support and criminal justice) was difficult to accomplish given the lack of available resources aimed specifically at people involved with criminal justice. Consequently, we decided to set up and capture the results of a pilot study that reflected the principles of self-

directed support by offering individuals involved with criminal justice a small one off payment (i.e. micro budget) to facilitate greater choice and control in relation to their social care needs.

What was different?

Pilot study participants were asked what might make their lives better rather than why or where they had ‘gone wrong’. The micro budgets were not a grant or loan and there were no restrictions on what people could spend the money on within reason (e.g. no illegality, no selling on and no direct spending on a third party). There was no formal monitoring aspect of the project (e.g. Outcomes Star) although we kept in touch with individuals by text, email and via focus groups and one to one interviews.

What were the challenges?

At times, it was difficult to explain the ethos of the pilot study – not free money – to participants and social workers. There was no initial system in place for distributing micro budgets and in the early stages we distributed cash payments, later moving over to bank transfers where possible. On occasion, there were licence restrictions in place for some participants and an identified need for single gender groups which sometimes restricted our choice of venue and the timing of participant sessions.

What type of things did participants ask for?

Generally, participants used their micro budgets to cover the cost of items and experiences that were related to housing, employment/study/training and health. For example, some participants used their micro budget to buy essential items like floor coverings and window blinds to make a home out of their first permanent tenancy. Others chose to spend their micro budget on training courses or materials to help with gaining employment. For example, one participant bought upholstery tools and thread and intends to set up his own furniture upcycling business having working with Fine Cell Work, a UK charity that trains prisoners in paid, skilled needlework with a view to selling their work in its online store and through supporter events around the country. Several participants spent their micro budget on experiences or activities to improve their mental health, to avoid negative coping mechanisms and to build or maintain positive relationships with their families, particularly children.

Who participated?

Despite – or perhaps as a result of – the challenges they face, our participants appeared strongly motivated to make positive choices in line with Scottish Government endorsed principles of self-directed support whereby people are supported to gain greater control of their lives and empowered to make important decisions about their lives. We believe that timing is crucial to the desire and ability of participants to take part in our pilot project. For example, most of the individuals we worked with had been supported for at least a year by statutory or voluntary sector services. Some people were coming to the end of a Community Payback Order or a Drug Treatment and Testing Order. Consequently, our participants were actively looking for opportunities to continue with their recovery and to avoid offending. As mentioned earlier, we

decided not to focus on individuals in crisis during the pilot stage because of limited financial resources and a relatively short pilot stage.

In terms of the demographic profile of our participants, we worked with adult men and women currently living in Glasgow. All groups were single gender with the exception of one group (North East Glasgow Criminal Justice Social Work Team) which had a single female member. We choose not to gather any further monitoring data given that the pilot study was intended to be a fairly informal and flexible exercise. Instead we focused on the qualitative experiences of our participants and looked for any patterns or commonalities regarding how people choose to use their micro budgets.

What was the format?

With regard to the logistics of meeting with people for both group and one to one sessions, we found that coordination was sometimes difficult and usually took longer than anticipated. This is the reality of working with people in the community where other immediate life issues can take precedence. It was our experience that it was best to meet with individuals in places that they were already familiar with and to ‘tack’ our sessions onto existing appointments with social workers. While this increased our attendance rate, it could be argued that it was difficult for people to distinguish between our project and statutory services and perhaps this muddied our message. Regarding the format of sessions, we learned that participant focus was likely to wane after a couple of hours so we tailored the timing accordingly and built in comfort breaks.



How did we distribute the micro budgets?

The nature of participants' sessions meant that we could not specifically inform individuals about the micro budgets (i.e. that each participant would get £200) until the end of the day. To some extent, this made it difficult for us and partner agencies to recruit participants for the pilot study since we had to be relatively vague about the overall purpose (i.e. giving people involved with

criminal justice a micro budget to test principles of choice and control) to encourage individuals to tell us first of all what they needed to change or improve their lives. Our partner agencies effectively ‘cherry picked’ participants with whom they already had a good working relationship. This proved helpful since social workers could ask individuals to attend – despite the lack of detailed information – by informing them that the sessions would help with planning for the future. We have to acknowledge that the perceived threat of being ‘breached’ for not attending the participant sessions may also have been a factor for some individuals although from our perspective, we were careful to explain to people that participation was entirely voluntary.

c) Focus groups

We held 3 focus groups with 12 former participants of our outcomes sessions with Tomorrow’s Women, Clyde Quay and North East Glasgow Criminal Justice Social Work Men and Women’s Teams to find out how they felt about being involved in the pilot project and whether they had found it helpful. Participants told us that they appreciated having choice and “*being treated as a human being rather than a prisoner*”. In addition, they reported that they felt trusted to handle money and encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions. At the same, some participants reported that the “*flipside of more responsibility is the pressure not to mess up and to use the money wisely*”. Others spoke of “*testing yourself in unknown waters*” particularly since we openly acknowledged that we were effectively unable – and unwilling – to ‘police’ expenditure to a punitive degree.



In our initial outcomes sessions, we asked participants if they were willing to meet with us again to provide feedback about being involved in the pilot stage. Most participants were amenable to this suggestion. In the end, we were unable to contact some former participants because they had completed their community order and had moved on from statutory supervision. In addition, two people returned to custody.

When we asked participants whether we should change or add anything to our outcomes sessions, most people stated that they had enjoyed the process of having some time and personal space to reflect on their lives and choices and were happy with the process as it stood. One person suggested that we offer top up funds particularly when people needed a little more money to complete a training/education course. He suggested that those extra funds could be paid directly to the educational institution or training provider to avoid unnecessary temptation for those who struggled to manage money in the past.

What changed?

In terms of evaluation, our approach was simple. We asked participants to tell us in their own words what difference having a micro budget had made to their lives. To this end, we met with former participants in focus groups and also on a one to one basis and we kept in touch with people by text, email and telephone. The results were almost overwhelmingly positive with the exception of three people: two people returned to custody and one person reported that although the money had enabled him to get a passport and fulfil his ambition of travelling to Germany, overall the money had not changed his life in any way given his severe depression and the unlikelihood of him ever working again.

Personal stories



Sylvia is a woman in her fifties with two grown up daughters and several grandchildren. She has convictions for breach of the peace committed while under the influence of alcohol. Her younger daughter's partner is violent and Sylvia has to avoid him for fear of being arrested again for remonstrating with him. Her daughter is about to enter the residential unit at Glasgow Drug Crisis Centre to deal with her heroin addiction. As a result, Sylvia's thirteen-year-old grandson will be coming to live with her shortly. Sylvia is hoping to move into a two bedroom house with her

grandson who has experienced bullying at school because of his mother's addiction. However, he is doing well at school. She is also working with other agencies including Lifelink which offers counselling, group work and stress reduction techniques to adults and Families Addiction Support Service which supports families affected by drugs and alcohol. In particular, she has found that the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy sessions offered by 218 have helped her process her anger in less harmful ways. Sylvia will use her micro budget to buy new bedroom furniture for her grandson's room. It will be a new start for her and her grandson. She says that she doesn't want to make the same mistakes that she made with her daughters and is determined to provide a stable, secure home life for her grandson.

Laura is a young woman in her twenties with anxiety issues and depression who has used alcohol to cope with the psychological effects of trauma. She is being supported by 218 and finds that exercise helps her to feel better mentally and physically. Initially she had thought about using her micro budget for a gym membership but has now decided to get her teeth whitened and has agreed a payment plan with her dentist. At present, she is too embarrassed to smile properly and is uncomfortable talking to people in new social situations. In the past she would spend days in bed or drinking. Recently, her mother has noticed that she is taking better care of herself and has been trying new activities and groups. Laura has also said that feeling better about her teeth and

appearance will motivate her to give up smoking, be healthier and to take up volunteering opportunities.

Claire is a woman in her fifties who is being supported by Tomorrow's Women, a community justice centre for women involved with offending behaviour. She decided to use her micro budget to purchase a sewing machine and materials. She says that this gives her something to do in the evenings which doesn't involve drinking. She also has plans to set herself up as a self-employed seamstress making wedding and bridesmaid dresses which will give her an income and boost her self esteem.

George is being supported by Clyde Quay and will used his micro budget to buy upholstery tools – an evolution mitre saw, a work bench, a rotary cutter and fabric scissors. Any remaining money will be spent on thread and fabric. He plans to learn how to upcycle old furniture and upholstery and set up his own business. He has been training since 2013 when he took up embroidery and then making soft furnishings in prison. He is currently at college and hoping to get mentoring from Fine Cell Work, a UK charity that supports individuals to learn needlecraft skills in prison.

Tom is being supported by Clyde Quay and has anxiety issues for which he received psychological treatment in prison – he hates crowds and small spaces in particular. He would like to use his micro budget to access a kayaking course at Pinkston Watersports Centre in North Glasgow and to buy fishing gear and a golf trolley for Linn Park public golf course. His social worker says that this would all have been beyond Tom a year ago when he was mostly confined to home with anxiety and spent his days alone, playing Xbox. He is trying out new things at a steady pace because he doesn't want to set himself back by taking on too much at once but already feels better.

Carolanne has been working with Tomorrow's Women project for nearly two years and is about to be reunited with her children who have been living with her mum. She's currently on the waiting list for a three bedroom house having progressed from sofa surfing with a relative to a temporary furnished one bedroom flat. She has been clean and sober for nearly two years and now attends the gym regularly. She asked for her micro budget to be kept aside until she was ready to move into her new home and will use some money for floor coverings or blinds. In the meantime, she has put a deposit down on a family holiday for next summer.

Suzanne spent her childhood in care and is now working with Tomorrow's Women project. She is working towards a career in social care and has taken the first few steps towards college. She is working with social work to gain access to her five year old son who was removed from her at birth. She used her micro budget to buy an upgraded phone to enable her to stay in touch with family and a refurbished laptop to complete her course work and to access information about future jobs. She states that being able to contact family and friends for support is really important when she's feeling lonely and struggling to do things differently. She added that the laptop has been a lifeline in terms of opening up her horizons, helping her learn new things and keeping her distracted whenever she has been tempted to use drugs or drink particularly when she experiences setbacks in life.



What did not change?

Many participants have diverse social care needs like housing support which are not directly related to offending behaviour. Participant feedback from our pilot study suggests that these needs are not being addressed via self-directed support because of an assumption that people involved with criminal justice do not want and cannot cope with greater choice and control over their lives. In addition, it is difficult for people involved with criminal justice to access independent information and advice relating to self-directed support which accurately reflects their experience or illustrates the type of situation with which they require support. In effect, this limits their access to statutory health and social care provision and encourages discriminatory practice.

To our knowledge, none of the people we worked with have been able to access self-directed support despite the Scottish Government's introduction of personalisation as the bedrock of social care nearly ten years ago. Statutory guidance states that people with convictions or those subject to community justice orders cannot be offered support that relates to their offending. However, many participants require help in areas of their lives that have been negatively affected by their offending behaviour such as housing, employment and relationships.

What happens next?

After an additional six months funding from the Scottish Government, the work of Moving Forward Partnership concluded in September 2018. We applied to the Big Lottery Fund and Inspiring Scotland for further funding to continue and expand into training and community brokerage activities for people involved in criminal justice who wish to access self-directed support but ultimately, neither bid was successful.

At present, self-directed support remains the mechanism by which people in Scotland access social care. At this point, it is unclear how people involved with criminal justice can do so given existing statutory restrictions and the complexity of developing a non offending identity for many of the people who took part in our pilot study. We await the outcome of new criminal justice initiatives (i.e. presumption against custodial sentences of less than twelve months; electronic monitoring; women's community custodial units) in Scotland and hope that the learning from our project will inform future work in this area.