




progressive



# Community Justice Scotland Voluntary Throughcare and Mentoring Support Research – Summary Report April 2023



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# Project background



Community Justice Scotland (CJS) has a remit to promote smart justice based on the best evidence for individuals who are currently serving or have served prison or community-based sentences.

CJS will take over the commissioning process of voluntary throughcare and mentoring services for short-term prisoners in 2024 and is conducting a Strategic Needs and Strengths Assessment (SNSA) to provide a foundation for the planning and delivery of these services in the future.

As part of the SNSA, CJS wanted to conduct research into the reintegration needs and experiences of individuals who are currently or have previously served short term prison sentences or been on remand.



Progressive was commissioned to better understand what the current services deliver, gaps in services and to develop recommendations for improvements to service design and delivery.

Research was conducted with individuals serving short-term prison sentences and those on remand and individuals receiving throughcare support in the community.

Research was also conducted via an online survey with professional stakeholders to establish the current services offered, delivery of services and suggested improvements

This document reports on findings from depth interviews with individuals with lived experience of prison, as well as findings from the professional stakeholder survey.

# Project objectives

## Understanding current service delivery and potential improvements

1. How are the current voluntary throughcare and mentoring services funded by Scottish Government delivered?
2. Who might access current voluntary throughcare and mentoring services?
3. How do people access the services?
4. What needs do those that access services experience that the services can/should address?
5. What are the strengths and challenges in current service delivery?
6. What are the opportunities for improvement?
7. What can be recommended to ensure that services are effective in meeting people's needs and achieving positive outcomes?

This document is a summary report of the findings. Key slides have been included alongside an overview of each section. The full report has been issued separately and provides all results and in-depth findings, including any sub-group analysis conducted.

# Method



## Prison in-depth interviews

- **28 in-depth interviews**
- Individuals currently on remand and serving short-term prison sentences
- Conducted in-person or via video call
- Recruited by officers working in each establishment and received £5 in their PPC upon completion of the interview as payment for taking part.
- Fieldwork: 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022 and 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022
- All interviews lasted between 30 and 50 minutes.

## Community in-depth interviews

- **12 in-depth interviews**
- Individuals in the community who were currently receiving voluntary throughcare and mentoring support
- Conducted via video call
- Recruited by organisations offering voluntary throughcare and mentoring and received a £10 supermarket voucher upon completion of the interview as payment for taking part.
- Fieldwork: 11<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023
- All interviews lasted between 30 and 50 minutes.

## Professional Stakeholder Survey

- **205 completed surveys**
- Online survey issued to contacts in Public Social Partnerships (PSPs), third sector organisations and other stakeholders that work in or engage with clients who are serving a short-term prison sentence, on remand or is reintegrating into the community
- Fieldwork: 16<sup>th</sup> of November and the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 2022
- It is important to note that our sample is not representative of all stakeholders across Scotland as not all have opted to, or been able to, take part.

The focus of the research was to gain depth of insight and understanding from these audiences, therefore qualitative research was conducted with those in custody or in the community.



# Sample



	Prison – 28 depth interviews	Community – 12 depth interviews	Stakeholders – 205 (157 completed surveys and 48 partial completes)
	<p>HMP Barlinnie: 3 resp. on remand HMP Edinburgh 8 resp. on remand HMP Grampian: 12 resp. serving STP sentences HMYOI Polmont: 5 resp. serving STP sentences</p> <p><u>In total</u> 11 resp. on remand 17 resp. serving STP sentence</p>	<p>Recruited via third sector organisations and Justice social work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sisco</li> <li>The Wise Group</li> <li>Fife Justice Social Work</li> <li>Sacro</li> <li>Action for Children</li> <li>Apex</li> <li>North Lanarkshire Justice Social Work</li> </ul>	<p> PSP and partner orgs: 70 Other charity/ third sector: 47 Prison establishments: 15 Community Justice Partnerships: 9 Social work: 37 Other Local Authority / Health and Social Care Partnerships/ gov. orgs:22 Other/Prefer Not To Say: 5</p>
	Males: 16 resp.   Females: 12 resp.	Males: 9 resp.   Females: 3 resp.	
	21 and under: 3 resp.   22+: 25 resp.	21 and under: 3 resp.   22+: 9 resp.	



# Qualitative findings (Prison and community interviews)

# Experience of prison



## Support available during sentences varies considerably

- Individuals' experiences within prison can influence their likelihood to accept throughcare support.
- There is often **no consistent way of communicating support available within or between establishments**, meaning the process of accessing support is obscured for many.
- For those on remand, due to their sentence or release date being unknown they tend to feel 'in limbo' and support available differs widely.
- Often individuals deal with mental health issues while in prison, meaning they are often **not in the right headspace** to actively seek out the support they need.
- **Prison staff are not seen as always trustworthy or supportive** and therefore prisoners might not seek out support when they need it.

*"When you first come into prison, it would be good to have somebody telling you what support is available because there is no one there telling you what support is available during your stay and after."*

**Female, Remand, Edinburgh**



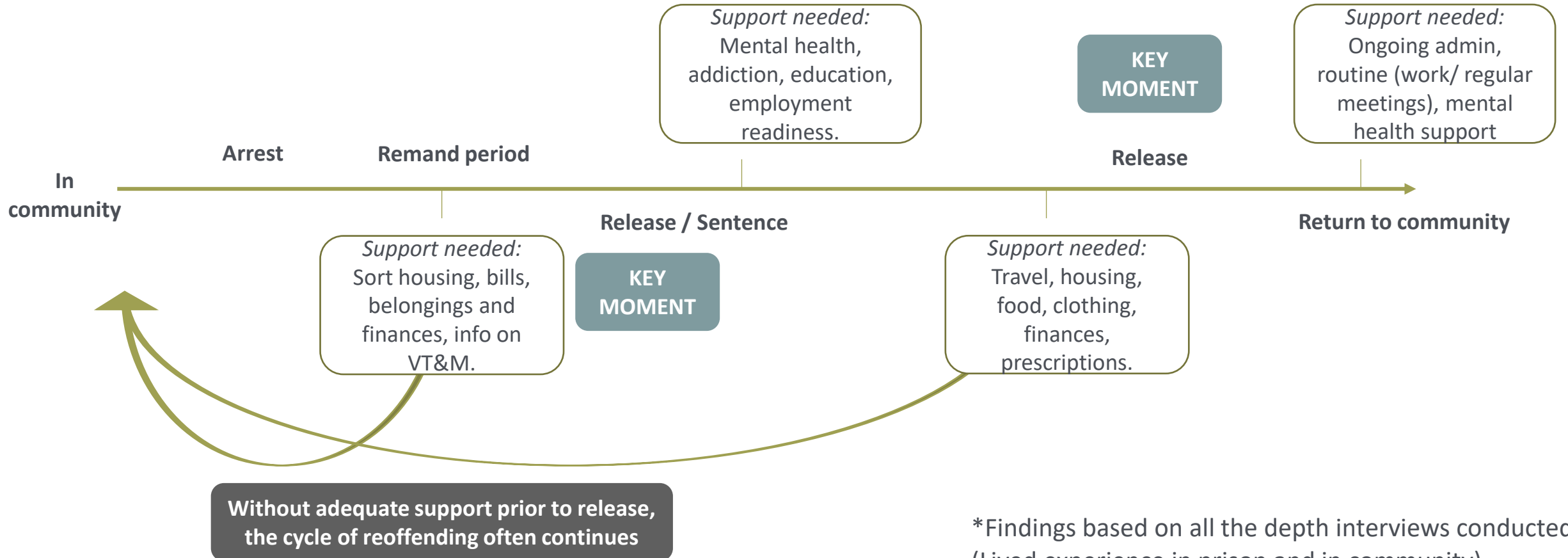
Widely available information and proactive outreach by throughcare organisations can build trust and encourage uptake.



# Support needs



Support is essential throughout and following sentences



\*Findings based on all the depth interviews conducted (Lived experience in prison and in community)

# Key Insights – Support needs



1. Support available during sentences varies considerably.
  - There is often no consistent way of communicating support available within or between establishments, meaning the process of accessing support is obscured for many.
2. Support at the start of and during a sentence can be key.
  - Support with accommodation, finances, bills and health upon entering can prevent issues arising later on.
  - Support with admin tasks, particularly for those in remand over long periods, can help prevent issues worsening
  - Continuity of support previously received in the community, such as mental health or substance misuse support, throughout and following the prison sentence is important for wellbeing.
3. Early outreach from throughcare provides time to prepare (approx. 2-3 months prior to release).
4. Support provided in the initial days after release is vital to ensure positive long-term outcomes and reduce likelihood of returning to prison.
  - Providing for individuals' basic needs can give them stability, confidence and headspace to focus on other day to day needs. Individuals struggle to concentrate on their wider needs if basic needs like travel, accommodation, finances and food are not met.
  - Prescriptions need to be organised immediately after release either via the prison or at a pharmacy near the accommodation.
5. Embedding structure and routine through meetings, appointments etc. adds a sense of security and stability post-release and beyond.
6. Families and other support networks can play a positive role in successful reintegration into the community through providing support upon release, alleviating any concerns at this time, as well as encouraging attendance at meetings and appointments.

# Awareness and knowledge



## Limited knowledge of what throughcare support is available

- In prisons very few understood what voluntary throughcare and mentoring entails, what support it includes and when it is offered, especially as there is inconsistency in service offering and forms of communication with prisoners.
- Among those in prison, there were varying levels of **awareness of different types of support but little clarity on who provides it.**
- Currently the **main source of awareness is other prisoners**, followed by posters and the organisation making direct contact. Some received it previously and assumed they would receive it again, others didn't receive it in the past so were unaware they were eligible for it.
- The most successful form of outreach is the organisation or mentor making direct contact and meeting with the individual as this provides an opportunity to explain what throughcare could do for them.

*"I've been in care before so I've heard of throughcare. It's about getting support in the community with housing and money. I've been offered it through my social worker."*

**Female, STP, Polmont**

*"I heard of it in the remand hall but information is scarce. Even if you ask an officer, you're unsure when you will hear back about things like support."*

**Male, Remand, Edinburgh**



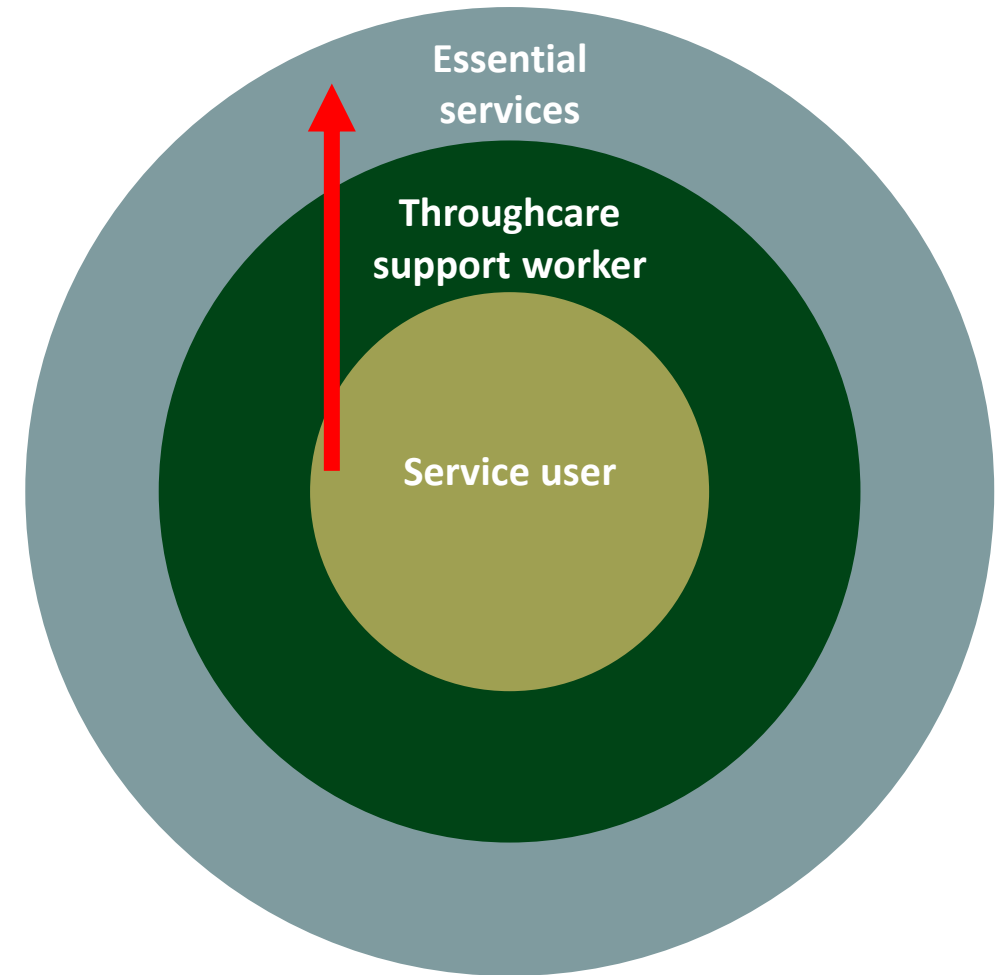
Communications should be consistent for all and focus on: what support is on offer, who provides it and when it is offered / received.

# Experience



## Throughcare plays a vital role in post-release outcomes

- Voluntary throughcare and mentoring has a **hugely positive impact** on those who receive it, enabling them to get back on their feet after release from prison and giving them the tools to reintegrate into the community.
- However, **essential services e.g. for housing, benefits, job seeking are often difficult for people to access** and engage with, meaning throughcare workers become the gateway to accessing further support.
- This does not signal an overreliance on throughcare, though. It demonstrates the barriers that exist for many of those who are released from prison when accessing essential services.
- It also means that those who are not offered voluntary throughcare services struggle even more so with reintegration into the community due to the lack of support and assistance with accessing other essential services.
- Without throughcare support, the findings suggest there is a **much higher risk that service users would struggle to establish a stable and secure life** and proceed to engage in riskier behaviours, thus increasing the likelihood that they return to prison.



# Key Insights – Awareness, knowledge & experience



1. There was low awareness of the term voluntary throughcare and mentoring support.
2. A range of language is typically used to describe support (referring to the organisation or the person providing support) and there is a confused understanding of what counts as voluntary throughcare, which can be another obstacle to uptake.
3. There is limited knowledge of what throughcare support is available.
  - Varying levels of awareness of different types of support but little clarity on who provides it.
  - Main source of awareness is other prisoners, followed by posters and the organisation making direct contact.
4. The most successful form of outreach is the organisation or mentor making direct contact.
5. Most in custody accept support when it is offered.
6. Voluntary throughcare and mentoring has a hugely positive impact on those who receive it.
7. However, other essential services e.g. for housing, benefits, job seeking are often difficult for people to access and engage with, meaning voluntary throughcare workers become the gateway to accessing further support.
8. This demonstrates the barriers that exist for many of those who are released from prison when accessing essential services and also shows the additional difficulties those who don't have access to a voluntary throughcare key worker might face.
9. Provision of holistic support where one throughcare/key worker provides support for all needs (or assisting with other services beyond VT&M support) was felt to significantly reduced the likelihood of the individuals returning to prison.

# Key Insights - Strengths and challenges



VT&M can transform lives, but improvements are needed

## Strengths

- For those in receipt of voluntary throughcare, most described very positive experiences
- Relationships with key workers/mentors are highly valued
- Among those receiving support voluntary throughcare and mentoring workers were more likely to be felt to be 'for you', rather than 'for the system'
- Support is felt to be tailored to individual needs
- Key workers are the core node of a network of wider support – can be heavy reliance on them to help with all aspects of their lives not just specific throughcare support e.g. sign posting to other specialist services, taking them to/attending job centre meetings etc
- Regular face-to-face contact post-release helped to instil a routine

## Challenges

- Lack of awareness of what is on offer can impact on take up of support services
- Cooperation between prison establishments, throughcare services, specialist services and other essential services is challenging and varies which leads to inconsistency of provision
- Lack of joined up services provides challenges for throughcare key workers and results in them filling gaps across other services
- The voluntary nature of support means disengagement is a challenge
- Timing of support offered and delivered is crucial. For those on remand sometimes it can be offered too late
- Availability of services was noted as inconsistent for some

# Previous custodial sentence vs. No previous experience of custody



## People with previous experience of custody have greater awareness of support

- Those with previous experience of custody describe the experience of being released with no support as extremely challenging and isolating.
- Those that have been in custody before tend to be more aware of support that is on offer or have existing support in place from previous sentences e.g. social worker.
- However, there were some who had been in custody before that had not heard of voluntary throughcare and mentoring support (this was across previous sentences that were recent and not so recent).
- People who have not previously experienced custody tend to not have heard of voluntary throughcare and mentoring support and stressed that they were given very little information in general. They have less knowledge about the justice system overall.
- A couple of people who have not previously experienced custody stated that they were reluctant to ask prison officers about support on offer, whereas some of those who have been in custody before stated they were comfortable approaching prison officers for information.

*Some people in prison haven't been reached out to by throughcare and would like to be. It feels like you need to look in the right places for the support or you will get lost in the system, it's easy to be missed if you aren't known.*

**Male, STP, Polmont**

# Remand



## Remand leaves many feeling isolated and in limbo

- Females and young people on remand described the same benefits to receiving VT&M, and the same concerns in the run up to release, as those on STP suggesting needs are very closely aligned. However those on remand faced the additional challenge of not always knowing court / release dates, making forward planning more difficult.
- Some mentioned receiving very little information about *anything* including any support that was on offer.
- Not knowing about support that is on offer early enough can result in issues with receiving support in time for release as they don't seek it in enough time or it is offered/arranged very late.
- This can also limit the time for building trust and also for providing relevant support e.g. travel on the day of release or accommodation arrangements.
- It is understood that males on remand are not currently catered for via VT&M support. Findings suggest that with increasing lengths of remand periods this audience do have a need for support services as they currently feel 'left in limbo'.
- The role that throughcare providers play in filling gaps for other service provision is vital for successful reintegration into the community. Males on remand who are not currently eligible for VT&M struggle even more so with reintegration into the community. Not only do they not have access to VT&M support they also don't have the additional support with accessing other essential services that is so highly thought of by those who receive this support via their throughcare key worker.



# Improving throughcare



Comprehensive, personalised support can transform outcomes

## What individuals need

Communications around throughcare which clearly explain what they are eligible for.

Time to build confidence and trust in throughcare providers before release.

Support which adapts to their individual and evolving needs in and outside of prison.

Preparation including immediate support following release.

Ongoing support to embed routine and structure in their lives in the longer term.



## What VT&M should offer

Uniform and clear communication of the offering including direct outreach in prisons.

Reach out to service users 2-3 months prior to release and form a bond through regular meetings.

A personalised and adaptable approach and key workers that understand.

Develop a support plan for after release and ensure all basic needs are met in initial days.

Encourage participation in volunteering, education and/ or work to build confidence, independence and routine.

The prison establishments and other essential services also have a role to play in supporting the individual at various stages and communication and coordination between VT&M providers and these services is needed for successful reintegration

# Improving throughcare



## Support plans need to cover individuals' key needs

Those approaching release need support to prepare for life after release. There are a number of factors that need to be considered prior to release. Public sector organisations and throughcare providers can provide and signpost to this support. These include:

- ✓ **Permanent accommodation in a suitable location (or good-quality temporary accommodation)**
- ✓ **Travel arrangements organised**
- ✓ **Medical needs such as prescriptions and mental health support (particularly for those with addictions)**
- ✓ **A bank account and financial preparations made including benefits**
- ✓ **Contact information for support services (ideally a known, trusted support worker)**
- ✓ **A National Insurance number e.g. for non-British nationals**

This will allow for individuals to be able to move on to fulfilling other needs such as appointments, weekly meetings, relationships, considering employment, volunteering etc.

# Key Insights - Improving throughcare

Building awareness, improving communication and providing quality support in good time



1. Awareness is the main barrier to engaging with voluntary throughcare and mentoring services.
2. Consistent messaging in prisons about what voluntary throughcare is, who offers it and how to access it would increase engagement and encourage those who need support to reach out.
3. Continued proactive outreach from voluntary throughcare services would help improve engagement further.
4. Joined-up support with other organisations/services would further enhance throughcare services:
  - Prisons at pre-release planning stage and upon release
  - Specialist services e.g. mental health support, addiction support, at pre-release planning and upon release and beyond
  - Essential services e.g. job centres, local authorities upon release and beyond.
5. Provision of support 2-3 months prior to release to allow time to build relationships and trust between key worker and individual (where timelines permit).
6. Development of a support plan for release that covers individuals' key needs:
  - Travel on release day
  - Accommodation
  - Food, clothing
  - Medical needs
  - Finances/benefits/bank account
7. Ongoing support to embed routine and structure in their lives in the longer term



# Professional stakeholder findings

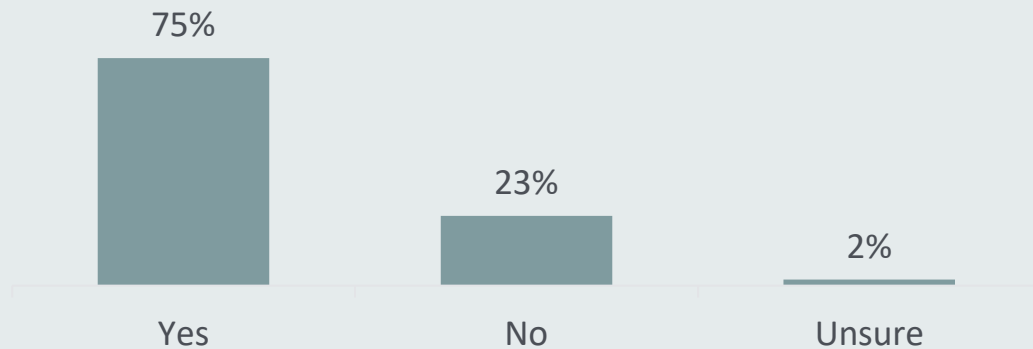
# Stakeholder survey

## Sample



- Three quarters of the sample worked for an organisation which provides throughcare and mentoring and therefore have direct experience of current services.
- The sample includes **both statutory and voluntary** throughcare providers.

### Provide throughcare and mentoring?



### Type of organisation

(those who provide throughcare and mentoring only)



Organisations were most likely to support males, reflecting the higher proportion of males in custody:

**82%**

However, over half provided support to females:

**54%**

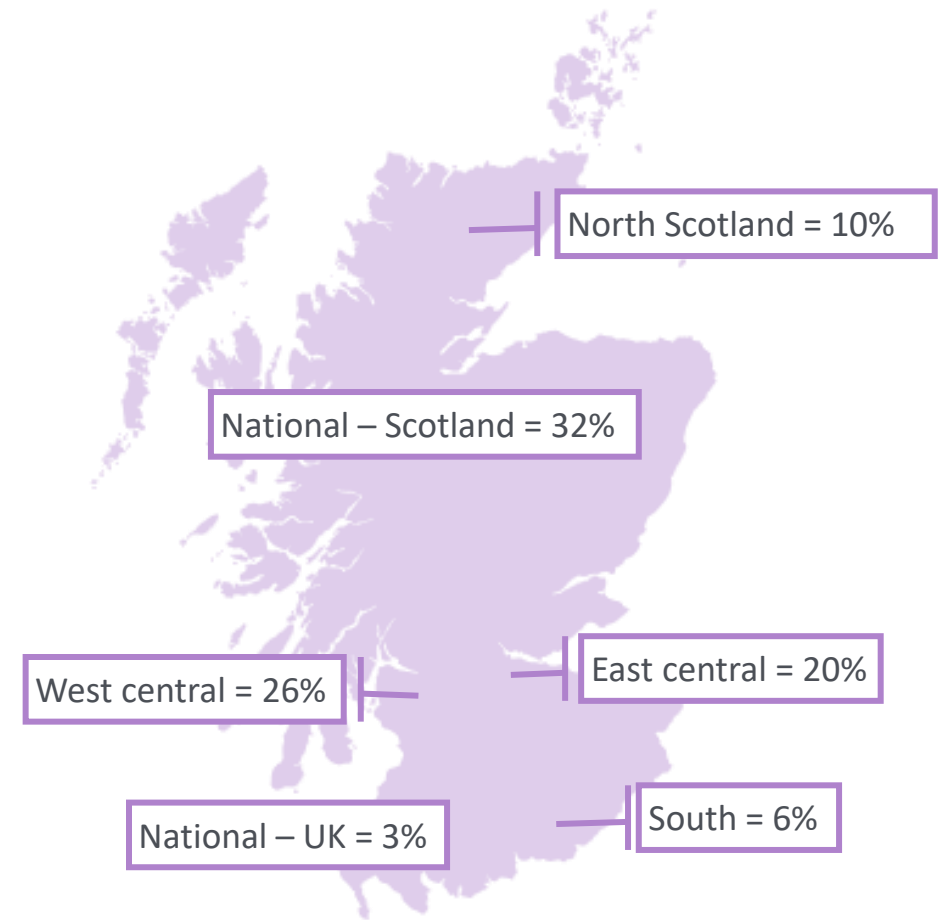
There were a mix of responses from those answering as individuals or on behalf of an organisation, and both types of response were received from within some organisations.

**63%** Of respondents were in a client facing role some or all of the time

# Sample profile - region



Geographical area	#		#		#
National – Scotland	65	East Renfrewshire	1	Orkney Islands	2
National - UK	7	Edinburgh City	5	Perth & Kinross	14
Aberdeen City	3	Na h-Eileanan an Iar	1	Renfrewshire	4
Aberdeenshire	6	Falkirk	3	Scottish Borders	1
Angus	1	Fife	2	Shetland Islands	1
Argyll & Bute	5	Glasgow City	21	South Ayrshire	3
Clackmannanshire	2	Highland	6	South Lanarkshire	4
Dumfries & Galloway	11	Inverclyde	4	Stirling	2
Dundee City	4	Midlothian	3	West Dunbartonshire	2
East Ayrshire	4	North Ayrshire	2	Prefer not to say	1
East Lothian	7	North Lanarkshire	4	Not provided	4
<b>Base</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>Base</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>Base</b>	<b>205</b>



While the sample of those who currently provide throughcare and mentoring services is not representative of all sources, it offers a picture of provision across a significant proportion of organisations administering these services in Scotland.

# Stakeholder survey summary

## Current service provision



*Q. Thinking about voluntary throughcare and mentoring support in general, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the current provision meets the needs of all clients?*

Unsure/Don't know    Disagree strongly    Disagree slightly    Neither/nor    Agree slightly    Agree strongly



*Stakeholders said the top three challenges currently facing VT&M services were:*

- Funding/resources (38%)
- Client housing/homelessness issues (21%)
- Co-ordination/comms between organisations (20%)

*When asked about gaps in current VT&M service provision the top three were:*

- Coordination/comms between services (22%)
- Provision for those on remand/awaiting trial/sentencing (19%)
- Not enough housing/homelessness support (17%)

*When asked what areas VT&M excels at, the most common themes in comments were:*

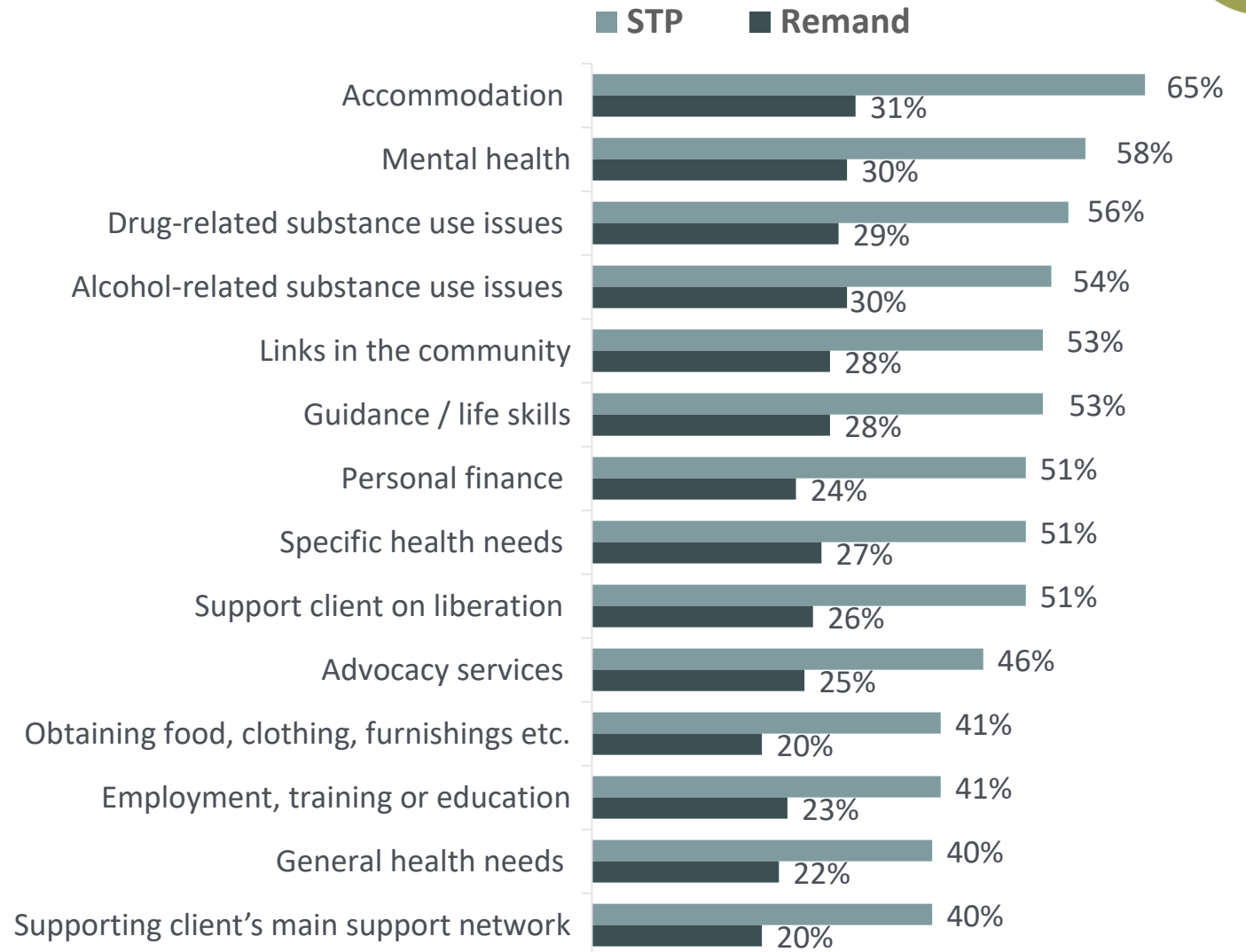
- Person centred/relationship based support (42%)
- Mentorship/peer support (21%)
- Housing homelessness support (20%)

- Current VT&M is not considered to be meeting the needs of all clients suggesting there is significant room for improvement.
- In addition there were mixed views on the timeliness and appropriateness of referral routes, with around a third of stakeholders saying that routes were appropriate and timely but the same proportion saying they were not, and the remaining third unsure.
- There were differences in how positively current service provision was viewed across stakeholders, with those more directly involved in service provision more positive than others (though scores remain low).

# Pre-release, support with accommodation is most likely to be available

- Pre-release support was lower for those on remand than those serving a short-term prison sentence, in line with eligibility.
- For STP clients most types of support were provided by over half of providers, particularly accommodation, identified as a key support need across interviews with those with lived experience of the justice system.
- For those receiving support whilst on remand provision was highest for the same four areas as STP clients: accommodation, mental health and substance use issues (alcohol and drugs).
- For STP clients, PSP/partner organisation respondents were particularly likely to say they provided support with accommodation, mental health, and support on the day of liberation.

## What support is provided pre release



Base - those who provide T&M (all who provided a response): 124

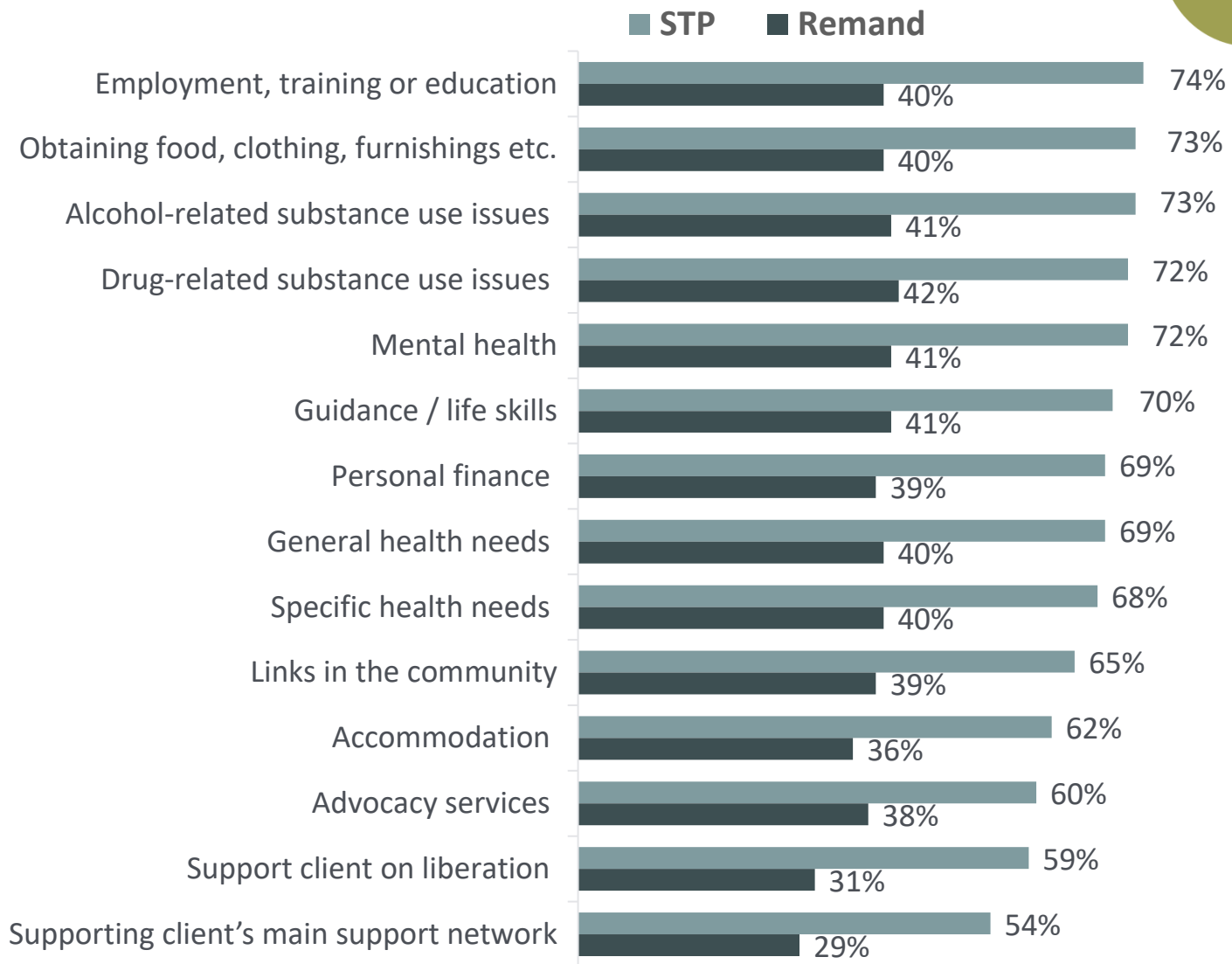
Q27. What support is provided by your service at each stage of a client's time in the justice system?



# Post-release, employment, training or education support is more widely offered

- While accommodation support was still on offer from many providers, post release support provision was more likely to include elements to provide clients with goals/activities (employment, training or education) or support them to maintain a healthy lifestyle, such as substance abuse and mental health support.
- At both pre and post release, providers were least likely to provide services aimed at clients' support networks.
- For remand clients, other charity/third sector organisations were significantly more likely to be providing each of the listed support options than others.

## What support is provided post release



Base - those who provide T&M (all who provided a response): 124

Q27. What support is provided by your service at each stage of a client's time in the justice system?

# Stakeholder survey summary

## Service delivery recommendations



- Three months prior to release was considered the best time to start VT&M, in line with findings from qualitative research
- There is little support among stakeholders for placing limitations on when support can start or how long it can last. This is out of line with current practice as reported by those who work for throughcare and mentoring organisations. Comments suggest a more person-centered approach to decision making would be preferred.

When asked the best time for VT&M to start most selected a time prior to liberation, with the **3 months prior to liberation** the top answer:

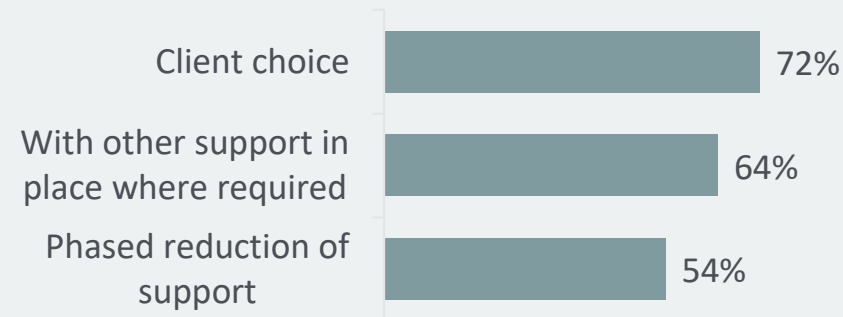
**52%**

**74%**

of stakeholders said there should not be a cut off point beyond which clients can no longer commence VT&M support

**There was little call for reduction in support or limits on eligibility**, with the majority stating that all types of support should be considered and that most types of prisoners or offence types should be suitable for support

### How support should end (top 3)



The majority of stakeholders did not support a maximum length of time that VT&M could be provided being in place: **62%**

# Stakeholder survey summary

## Service delivery recommendations continued....



Face-to-face contact with service representatives in prison was considered the best way to communicate about VT&M, with good relationships between service users and workers considered critical in maintaining engagement.

Stakeholders said the **best way of informing people** about support was:

- Service reps meeting potential clients in prisons (**68%**)
- Prisons informing those approaching liberation/on remand (**44%**)
- Services being advertised throughout the prison (**41%**)
- Justice social work staff attend prisons to meet those approaching liberation/on remand (**32%**)

When asked how support could be improved a range of themes were noted across typed in responses. The top three themes were:

- 24%** Housing/homelessness needs
- 21%** More/better pre-release support
- 19%** Improved funding/resources/staffing



A **good relationship** was considered the most important element in maintaining client engagement:

**76%**

- this was a feature highlighted as a key strength of current provision.

Good communication (41%) and in-person contact (38%) were the next top answers.



*The experience and professionalism in this sector is amazing with so many always going a step beyond. The personal input, the building up of relationships and trust within those and the dedication to seeking the best outcomes in the face of difficulties is commendable.*

**PSP/partner organisation comment**

# Stakeholder survey summary

## Subgroup detail



Comments made in open text boxes throughout the survey have been explored, with a focus on factors which affect VT&M eligibility, factors which interviews and/or topline thematic exploration suggest may impact experiences; or which were highlighted by CJS as of particular interest. A qualitative approach was taken for this analysis, whereby comments were explored for any additional insight on selected topics and do not represent statistically robust data. Topics are shown below and on the following slide.

### GEOGRAPHY

- Many references were made to regional variation without specific detail. This suggests many see this as a widely recognised feature of T&M.
- Varying levels of availability and of quality of services were both commented on (in relation to VT&M, prison and other essential services), as was variation in systems and processes which could impact on service users' experiences.
- There was feedback that rural and island locations were more poorly served than urban areas (in particular the central belt) – with less agencies and services in rural and island areas, as well as access to them being more difficult.
- Large geographical areas which may be covered by a small number of workers due to low population numbers was also commented on as problematic, and it was noted that if a significant amount of time was taken up travelling, this meant less time with those needing support.
- Proximity was also noted as an issue for people in prisons that weren't local to them or to services supporting them, also impacting ease of access.

# Stakeholder survey summary

## Subgroup detail



Comments made in open text boxes were explored for any additional insight on selected topics. Further topics are shown below. A qualitative approach was taken for this analysis and therefore this does not represent statistically robust data.

### **GENDER**

- Gender was underlined as a specific need, and the importance of providing gender specific services was stressed.
- Trans and non-binary service users were highlighted as needing a more tailored support package, with a need for gender sensitive support noted.

### **FAMILY**

- A number of comments mentioned the potential of family support to positively influence outcomes.
- Parents were also identified as a group with needs requiring a more tailored support package by several respondents.

### **REMAND**

- Support for people on remand was noted as a key gap in provision. Feedback was that males on remand faced similar challenges to those serving STPs but were disadvantaged as they did not have the offer of VT&M.
- Remand was described as particularly challenging due to uncertain timescales and short notice liberations.

### **COMPLEX NEEDS**

- Comments mentioned a range of issues that may affect the type and level of support needed. As well as addiction and poor mental health, trauma & Adverse Childhood Experiences, care experienced individuals, Neuro-diverse individuals, and people with learning disabilities were highlighted as potentially needing additional support.



# Summary and conclusions

# Summary and conclusions



Voluntary throughcare and mentoring organisations provide a highly valuable service to their clients, responding to complex individual needs and delivering holistic support to prepare for release from prison and reintegrate into the community. The majority of feedback on support received has been positive; however stakeholders believe that current provision is not meeting the needs of all clients.

## **Awareness**

- Limited awareness of the support available and limited eligibility within the prison population make VT&M significantly harder to access and many fall through the cracks, which can lead to an ongoing cycle of reoffending.
- The lack of consistent communication about throughcare services means many rely on word of mouth to hear about it and / or need to ask prison officers about support. This can result in variations in how VT&M is communicated and promoted to individuals.
- Thus, several barriers prevent prisoners from seeking support and proactive outreach from throughcare organisations is needed to increase chances of engagement.

## **Timely engagement**

- Mentors/key workers act as a pillar to help service users navigate life upon release. Developing trust and bonds prior to release is essential to ensure continued engagement with support and to improve outcomes in the long term. Repeated exposure to offers of support during the individual's time in prison will help ensure they are aware of what is on offer at a time they feel ready to engage.
- Release date is crucially important for the individual and has an impact on how the days following release will be. Access to a key worker on this day is important, particularly for those who do not have support networks in place in the community.
- The initial days following release from prison are often decisive for longer-term outcomes and the presence of throughcare support during this process helps to provide a safety net and motivation to deal with issues both in and outside of prison.
- Offering a breadth of throughcare support is important to meet the complex needs of service users. Ideally, this should last as long as the individual needs it, but otherwise support should continue for at least 3-6 months following release and there should be indications towards further support pathways upon completion of VT&M if needed.

# Summary and conclusions



## Support provision

- Fulfilling basic needs such as accommodation, travel arrangements, food, clothing etc. are important to ensure the individual can then have the stability and confidence to think about more day-to-day needs e.g. finances, benefits, relationships, appointments, meetings, employment etc.
- Ongoing support that helps the individual have a routine provides structure and a sense of purpose, and helps combat feelings of isolation.

## Timing/ length of support provision

- Both qualitative findings and the stakeholder findings suggest that 2-3 months prior to liberation is adequate time to build a relationship and start the support process. This can be particularly challenging for those on remand (females and young people) due to the uncertainty of their release date and length of time they have in prison and therefore they can find out about support too late or be offered it when there is very limited time to plan for their release.
- Stakeholders findings suggest that the end of support should be based on individual needs instead of a set time period, particularly for vulnerable individuals. Typically for just under a third it tends to end by client choice anyway.

## Remand individuals

- It is understood that males on remand are not currently catered for via VT&M support. Findings suggest that with increasing lengths of remand periods this audience do have a need for VT&M support services as they currently feel 'left in limbo'. They also face the challenge of sourcing and engaging with other essential services with no or little support.
- Females and young people on remand described the same benefits to receiving VT&M, and the same concerns in the run up to release, as those on STP suggesting needs are very closely aligned. However those on remand faced the additional challenge of not always knowing court / release dates, making forward planning more difficult.

## Relationship with other services

- Relationships between prisons and support providers is key in ensuring services are communicated to as providers would wish them to be.
- Research suggests many have complex needs which may require multi-agency cooperation, however stakeholder findings suggest coordination between services is an area for improvement, with both duplication of services and people 'falling through the cracks' a risk.



# Summary and conclusions



## **Lack of funding/resource**

- Lack of funding and resources were considered key challenges faced by services. Increasing awareness of the service to ensure all those eligible have access to the service will only exacerbate this further and something to consider for future models of provision.

## **Accessibility/Location**

- Feedback indicated that there is a lack of access to services in some locations, with a general variation in what is available commented on. Stakeholder findings suggested that more remote locations were more poorly served than urban areas.
- Proximity to services was noted as impacting access, particularly for people who are being held at prison establishments that are not local to them and/or the services that are supporting them; for example for individuals in prison at Grampian who had key workers based in Inverness. In turn this was found to impact understanding of services and next steps.
- Support services being local to the individual does help with accessing the services; however it was noted that some key workers have travelled long distances to ensure individuals were provided with support.

## **Other differences by sub group**

- Research did not identify clear differences between the experiences of males and females however this is likely to have been impacted by the small sample size and other factors affecting experiences such as whether participants were serving STPs or on remand. There was some indication however that male participants were more likely to express finding it harder to reach out / be open with how they are feeling, impacting their likelihood to seek support.
- Analysis of stakeholder survey results by organisation type showed other third sector/charity organisations were likely to be main providers of support for those on remand. PSP & partner organisations and others who provide a throughcare and mentoring service were more positive about provision, though many still do not feel the needs of all clients are being met. The main gaps identified by stakeholders were related to communication/coordination between services, eligibility gaps for those on remand or awaiting trial or sentencing, or availability of essential services such as housing and mental health support, both noted by respondents from PSP/partner organisations in particular.

# Recommendations

While funding and resource constraints may make some recommendations challenging to put in place, feedback suggests a number of key elements that would help to extend the reach of VT&M and achieve positive outcomes for those eligible for support; and which should be borne in mind when reviewing future models of provision:

- Closer relationships with prisons would help VT&M services to shape the timings and format of communications, in turn improving awareness and understanding of what help is available.
- Inform prisoners about voluntary throughcare and mentoring support upon entry to prison and throughout sentence and clarify what is on offer, who offers the support, how it could benefit them, when they can access it.
- Males on remand have the same needs as those on a short-term sentence and therefore should be offered VT&M support.
- From a client's perspective the name of the support provided is not important, it is the actual support provided that is; however how the support is referred to may be more important to stakeholders and help clarify what VT&M covers.
- Establish initial face-to-face meetings between mentors and service users at least 2-3 months before release and organise regular meetings before release to allow time to sort housing and finances and to develop a relationship prior to release.
- Co-ordinate and communicate with other essential services to ensure the provision of accommodation, travel, finances, medical needs etc.
- Communicate with essential services to support with accommodation provision that is secure, long term and meets the needs of the individual. A system should be put in place (where possible) to avoid certain 'at risk' locations for individual or stays in hostels for those with addictions.
- Provide intensive support on the day of and immediately following release (especially for those who are most vulnerable). Organise travel arrangements, sort belongings and initial care packages and ensure any issues are quickly resolved.
- Ensure mentors are highly flexible around service users' needs with regular contact through meetings and phone calls but balancing this with the necessary boundaries to ensure mentor safety and appropriate working hours.
- Support service users to develop structure and routine in their lives whether it be through work, education or training, volunteering, meetings or something else.
- Offer VT&M to as many prisoners as possible and encourage uptake through direct outreach to individuals. For those who are not eligible, ensure they know what other support may be available to them.