



Trauma-informed approaches in police custody: a qualitative case study

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What is trauma?

- *Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or a set of circumstances that is **experienced** by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual wellbeing (SAMSHA, 2014)*
- Overwhelms capacity to cope and leads to maladaptive coping strategies



How does trauma link to crime?



- Trauma in childhood can have pervasive neurodevelopmental impacts and is associated with compromised emotion regulation, hyper-responsiveness to threat and impulsive decision making (Sheridan & McLaughlin, 2020)
- Linked to use of maladaptive strategies for regulating emotion, such as substance use disorder (Najavits et al., 2017)
- Increases risk of contact with police and crime involvement for general and violent crimes (Levenson and Grady, 2016; Reavis et al., 2013)

A perfect storm: Why trauma is important to police custody?

People who are detained in police custody, in the context of mental health crisis, substances use and homelessness are likely to have a trauma history

Police custody is a 'resilience-reducing' environment due to social isolation, restraint, removal of liberty and officer equipment (Deghani, 2020)

Without an understanding of trauma, custody officers can fail to identify vulnerability or unknowingly become entangled in interpersonal situations that are re-traumatising, leading to conflict

What are trauma-informed approaches?

- ❖ **Characterised by a service and its providers become aware of, and responsive to the impact of trauma (Hanson and Lang, 2016; Harris and Falot, 2001)**
 - **Realising** how common the experience of trauma and adversity is
 - **Recognising** the different ways that trauma can affect people
 - **Responding** by taking account of the ways that people can be affected by trauma to support recovery
 - **Resisting** re-traumatisation and offer a greater sense of choice and control, empowerment, collaboration and safety with everyone that you have contact with
 - Recognising the central importance of **Relationships** (NHS Education Scotland)

Study aims and methods

- Staff training has had positive impacts on service provider attitudes towards trauma-informed practice (Miller-Cribbs et al., 2020; Steen et al., 2022)
- But little research on police which is culturally distinct (Brough et al., 2016; Cordner and Cordner, 2011)
- ❖ A multi-perspective case study:
 - Focus groups with custody staff (n = 9)
 - Focus group with an aligned Women's service (n = 3)
 - Interviews with senior staff (n = 4)
- ❖ Analysed using thematic analysis



A photograph of three police officers in dark uniforms walking away from the camera down a cobblestone city street. Each officer has a white rectangular patch on their back with the word "POLICE" in black capital letters. The street is lined with multi-story buildings, and other pedestrians are visible in the background. The overall scene is in a slightly desaturated, muted color palette.

9 Insights from the results

Insight 1: Recognising vulnerability

A nuanced understanding of different ways that trauma could present, supported staff in building a rapport.

A lot of the time the people that are vulnerable - it can be people that are very quiet and not telling you anything - they can be the ones that actually have had the worst trauma and say 'no' to everything and you've got to try to see beyond the 'no's a lot of the time. " [P9]

'Someone could be hitting you, or are being really aggressive or threatening you, but two minutes later, if you have engaged with them, you can talk them down and then you go, 'Right, so what's happened here'? People then say to me, "Would you know I was assaulted?" or "I was raped" or something like that.' [P1]

Insight 2: Empowering 'speaking up'

- Trauma-informed training empowered officers to advocate for people in their care or raise issues with colleagues

..they [custody staff] are empowered to advise us, make decisions, speak their mind, and tell us if they think there's something potentially wrong with that person and I think that, has the trauma-informed training helped that? Probably, to an extent it has, yeah.[P5, Sergeant]

[The training] would make them more willing to take that step to saying to[a colleague], "Are you ok? Like, I've noticed a change in you... [P10]

Insight 3: Depersonalising conflict

Being open to the possibility of trauma encouraged empathy and reflection, avoiding negative cycles of interaction.

“Was he thinking to himself, ‘I’m going to assault this police officer’, or was he waking up fighting for his life? That’s what he was doing and I’m better at recognising that” [P3]

“I think it teaches you to be not quite so frustrated with people... sometimes you have a tendency to bite back at them, ‘cause maybe you’ve had a bad day as well... we’re not going to get anywhere with that.”[P9]

Insight 4: Custody as a 'critical juncture'

Participants recognised that police custody was a unique opportunity to offer support for issues related to crime in both victims and perpetrators.

"But had she went to another police station, then she'd never have got the referral. " [P15, support worker]

"...be that that you've been a victim of something, or be that you're actually are the perpetrator, it's the same principles isn't it, that you're going to apply to it... because if you can find the trauma that's maybe led to this person offending, if they can identify that in themselves, that might be enough to stop them offending. " [P9, officer]

Insight 5: What about us?

A significant barrier to trauma-informed working was a perception that police trauma is under-recognised by the service.

"I think when you see other emergency services especially, we're the worst. They [senior staff] don't care." [P8, custody staff]

"..supervisors, so sergeants, inspectors, senior management teams, should be given an enhanced level of training so that they can support the people that do the job for them, to ensure that their wellbeing is being met, which would then obviously have a positive impact in terms of how people engage with others. You know, it's going back to the cycle of your attitude affects my behaviour, which affects my attitude, which affects your behavior. (Study 2, P11)

Insight 7: Embedding with service

Trauma-informed approaches need to be embedded within the service

“but if you want it to work long term, it has to be really, really consistent, everybody has to be doing the same thing. And we would have loved to have actually managed to get in, you know, to the cells to see the women to and also spend time with the staff, do you know what I mean, you know, it's a hard sell when you meet somebody once and then you're saying, well, this is a great idea, trauma informed and people go well that's great and then of course they got on with the job, so they forget about it. ” [P16]

Insight 8: Service-level support

Officers need senior service-level support in implementing trauma-informed practice

“We have to become bold and actually document “we will support staff doing the right thing for people”, you know, as well as the organisation, but that’s a step that has to basically come from the top down, to say “you will be supported if you do anything”.

[P2, senior staff]

Insight 9 It will take time

“we can’t measure prevention, so it doesn’t sound as glamorous when you put it onto promotion forms or different things... but if we act now, it might not be in my time in the police that we see it, but in 20 years, in 30 years we’ll see the benefits of it and the part that that plays in society.”

[P1, senior staff]

Next steps

- 1) Building evidence-based trauma-informed training into police training
- 2) Providing opportunities for group discussion with other agencies present
- 3) Strengthening inter-agency working with support services to promote 'critical juncture' view
- 4) Making service-level endorsement visible through presence of senior staff
- 5) Embedding officer support within staff structures



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**Dr Caroline Lloyd
Research Assistant**



Thank you for listening
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Related publications/reports

- *Goodall, K. Brodie, Z., Lloyd, C. & Gillespie-Smith, K. (2023). Impact of trauma-informed training on police custody: a qualitative investigation. Scottish Institute of Policing Research. https://www.sipr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Research-Report_Goodall_et-al-2023_trauma-informed-custody.docx.pdf
- Gillespie-Smith, K., Brodie, Z., Collins, K., Deacon., K. & Goodall, K. (2020). Moving towards Trauma-Informed policing: An exploration of police officer's attitudes and perceptions towards Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Scottish Institute of Policing Research. [Microsoft Word - ACEs SIPR Full Research Report.docx](#)
- Goodall, K. Brodie, Z.P., Deacon, K. Collins, K. & Gillespie-Smith, K. (2023). How the police conceptualise and view the relevance of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) for policing: A qualitative Investigation. *Policing: an international journal*.46 (5/6) 878-892.
- Brodie, Z. P., Gillespie-Smith, K., Goodall, K., Deacon, K., & Collins, K. (2023). The impact of trauma-awareness session on police officers' trauma-informed attitudes in Scotland. *Psychology, Crime & Law*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2023.2210736>



Sex workers need specialist responses
in the criminal justice system

“It feels like because we’re working, we don’t

Policing Sex Work: Sex Work Liaison Officers

Dr Kate Brown, Prof Sharon Grace, Dr Scarlett Redman

University of York

SWLOs and best practice

Police dual role as 'prosecutors and (alleged) protectors' of sex workers (Stardust et al, 2021:147)

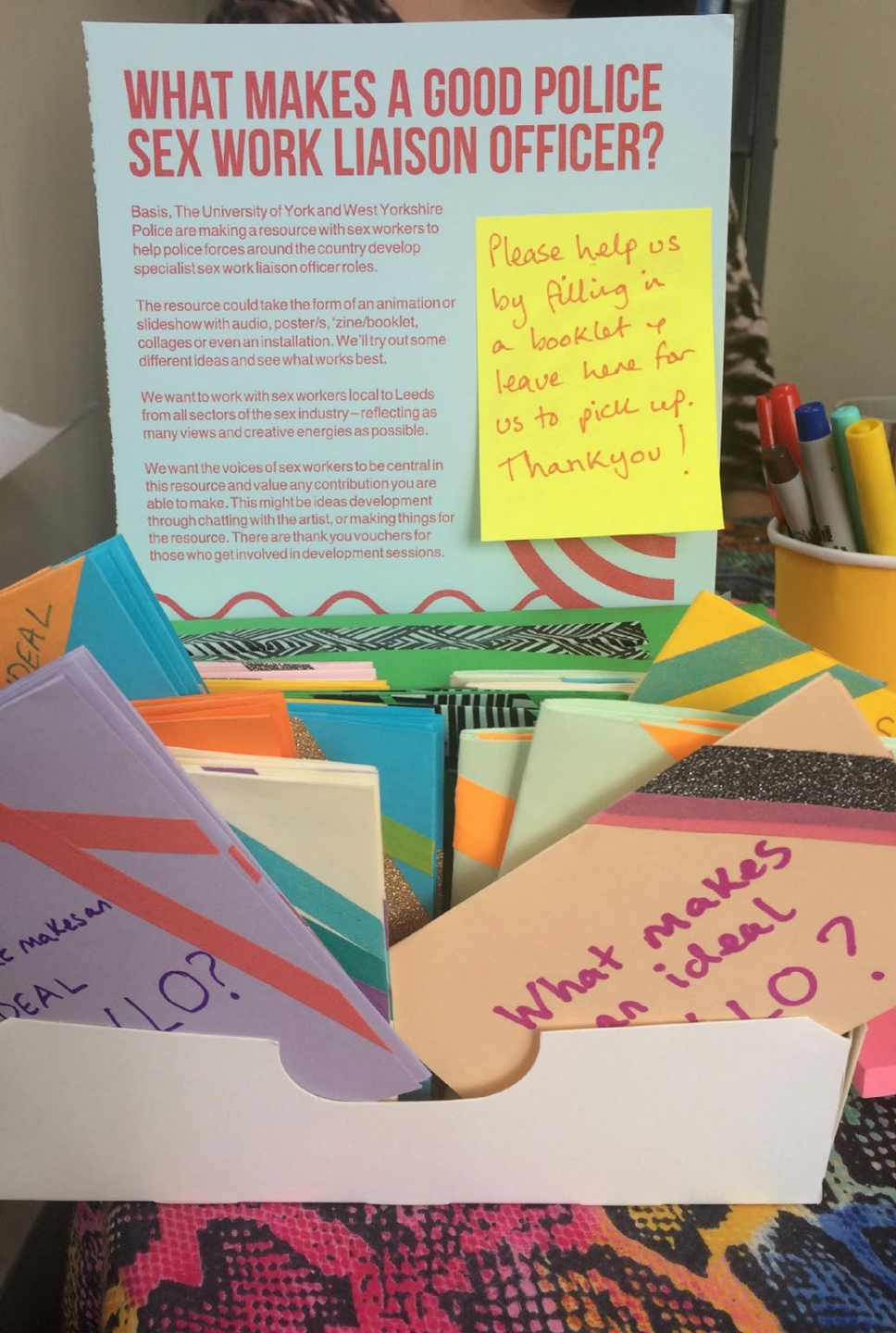
Sex Work Liaison Officers (SWLO) bridge this tension

Recognised as best practice (NPCC, 2023) - focus on vulnerability rather than enforcement

Policing Vulnerability: Evaluating the Sex Work Liaison Officer Role in West Yorkshire Police (N8PRP funded)

Co-produced role-descriptor & resources available for use





Research methods

Partnership: West Yorkshire Police (WYP) & Basis Yorkshire, support from National Ugly Mugs (NUM)

Case tracking for CJS outcomes - police data and National Ugly Mugs (n=78; 2014-2019)

Co-produced with sex workers (co-creation tools, analysis workshops) and police

Stakeholder interviews (12), focus groups (3): police, partners, community representatives (total n=20)

Interviews with SWs (n=10): 4 indoor and 6 outdoor, ages 21- 40+; 6 white British, 2 mixed heritage, 2 migrant sex workers

30+ sex workers involved in various capacities

Shadowing and observation of SWLO; diary-keeping

According to sex workers, what makes a good Sex Work Liaison Officer?

Good listener

Approachable

appreciate the different types of sex workers

know useful information for sex workers

help give you confidence to report

Messages and imagery developed with sex workers



Benefits of the SWLO role

Cultivated trust and respect - highly valued by SWs and professionals

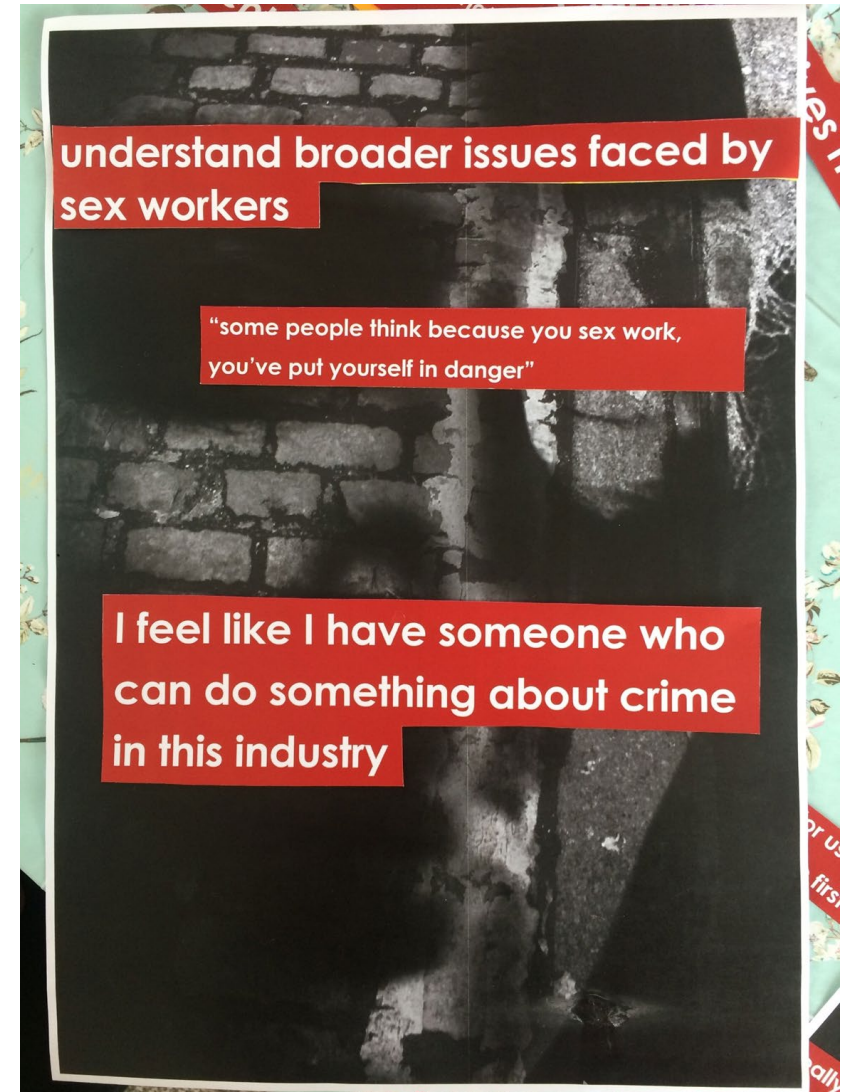
Sends clear message: 'being a sex worker does not mean you deserve to be a victim of sexual violence' (Arts workshop)

Notable increases in reporting (0% 2012 then 50% 2015/6 to 30% 2018)

Police presence that was not threatening and significant 'intelligence value'

Rights and control within the reporting process - small number of convictions achieved

Positive impact on labour conditions



When I got my nose broke, I'd spoke to Debbie and I'd seen Debbie, and I knew what area of work she worked in so I felt like I could approach her and tell them about my attack (Caroline, street-based sex worker)

There is no doubt in my mind, in particular with the rape allegation, that that person, that suspect wouldn't have been found guilty at court because she would never have got that far without having the support from Debbie that she'd built-up over many, many months before (Police Officer, Serious and Complex Crime)

... it's different now because when a customer will ask for his money back, you don't have to give him back. You can call the police and they will say, 'No, you cannot take the money back because if you buy bread, you eat it half and after you want the money back? [Laughter] That's not possible (Krista, migrant sex worker, worked indoors)



The value of a Sex Work Liaison Officer,
according to sex workers

“Even if something happened, I wouldn't feel like I could just call 999. I wouldn't explain the full story”

I'd be more likely to report to a specialist officer - I see them as an advocate instead of fearing stigma.

Lessons from limitations

Limited effects on justice gap faced by SWs - lack of wider systemic change

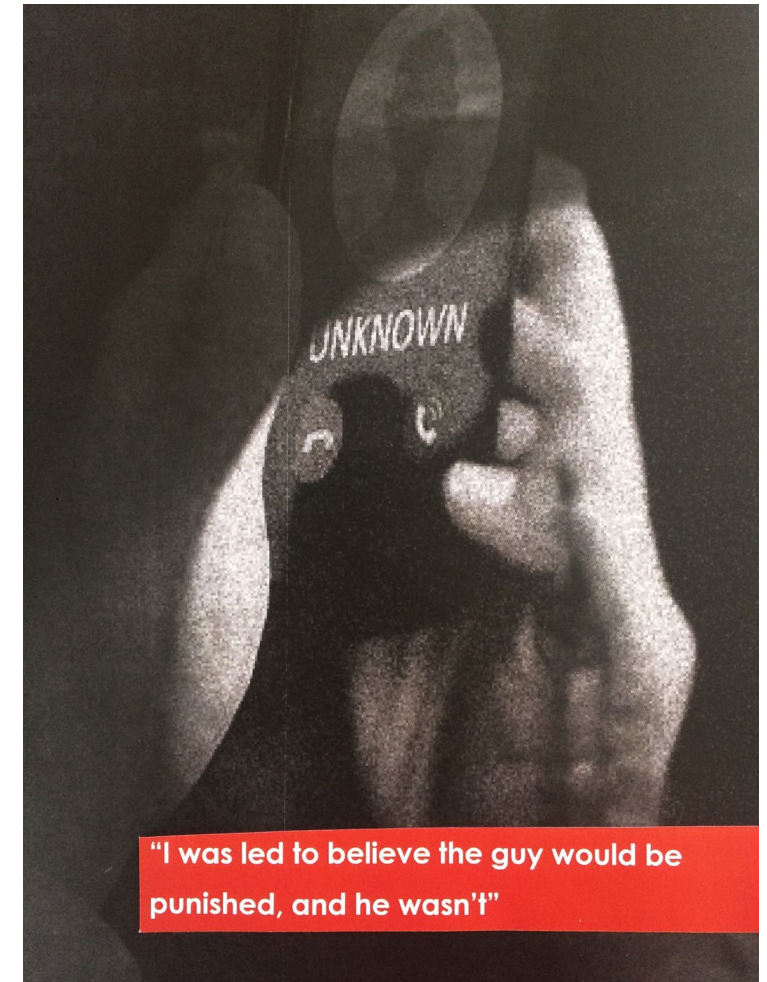
SW reluctant to engage with other police - forensic windows missed etc

Arrests and cautions at fairly high levels during fieldwork (2017-18)

85% reports to SWLO resulted in NFA: 'You hand them the criminals and the criminals go free. Where's the justice in that?' (arts workshop discussion).

Community safety agendas in context of criminalisation - vocal residents concerns dominated agenda; this affected SW safety

Street and migrant focus of SWLO, but vast majority SW indoor/online



The background of the slide is a photograph of a person's arm, likely a sex worker, wearing a grey sleeve. Several red roses are pinned to the fabric of the sleeve. The roses are wrapped in green paper, and one has a blue ribbon around its stem. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

Sex workers need specialist responses in the criminal justice system

“It feels like because we’re working, we don’t
deserve justice”

Messages and imagery developed with sex workers

N8 POLICING
RESEARCH
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of York

SPECIALIST SEX WORK POLICING ROLES:

Sample role descriptor for police forces

ROLE TITLE

Sex Work Liaison Officer (SWLO)

Job description/purpose

Overall purpose of role

To provide a single point of contact and reference for police officers and external agencies to facilitate effective support for sex workers as victims of crime, using early intervention and prevention principles to maximise sex worker safety, reduce vulnerability and target those who exploit or cause harm to sex workers. To investigate/support investigations of crimes against sex workers across all sex work environments, including those more hidden from view, and to liaise with, build and maintain strong relationships with partner agencies using innovative and evidence-led approaches to ensure appropriate interventions with sex workers.

Key outcomes/accountabilities

1. To be a definitive point of contact for those within the organisation and to provide advice and guidance in dealing with crime in ways that increase the safety of sex workers, reduce vulnerability and target those who exploit or cause harm.
2. To work with colleagues and partners to ensure correct policy and practice when dealing with sex workers in line with NPCC guidance.

needs of sex workers, working to ensure the police engagement and vulnerability-based approach is clearly understood by all affected.

Expertise and capabilities (listed desirable/essential)

- Knowledge of relevant legislation, Force policy and procedures which relate to role, including the NPCC guidance on sex work.
- Can demonstrate a strong commitment to safety and justice for sex workers.
- Can demonstrate successful proactive policing skills, especially tenacity, effective problem-solving and a 'can do' attitude.
- Skills to reassure, support and obtain evidence from marginalised groups who may be reluctant to report to police for fear of judgement or criminalisation.
- Can demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly, effectively and to support sex workers in an approachable, compassionate and non-judgemental manner, always being respectful to sex workers.
- Demonstrated ability to manage relationships of dialogue with marginalised/criminalised populations and agencies that support them, negotiating to achieve mutually beneficial aims.
- Ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of stakeholders: partners, colleagues, residents, communities, councillors, including in public, multi-agency and formal forums.
- Willingness to work flexibly/flexible shift pattern.
- [Generic items as required by Force as appropriate].

Expertise in role, after initial development

- Knowledge of sex worker motivations, rights and types of sex work, as well as of issues facing sex workers in the criminal justice system.
- Can demonstrate ability to listen and take account of sex worker views and experiences in order to take forward

Thank you for listening

Please do get in touch for further info

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Image: OPSEU/SEFPO



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Positive Outcomes Project

Sergeant Susan Brown
Positive Outcomes Project (POP)
Glasgow City HSCP and Sacro



What is the



The Positive Outcomes Project (POP) is a joint initiative staffed by Police Scotland (Greater Glasgow Division), Glasgow Health and Social Care partnership (HCSP) and the Scottish Community Justice Organisation, SACRO.

POP works with males who are:

- Over 16 years of age
- Reside within Glasgow City
- Committing offences to support a drug or alcohol dependency.





POP Plus is two lived experience Peer Mentors, who use their life, recovery and work experience to engage with and support detainees within Greater Glasgow's police custody cells.

The Peer Mentors ability to build rapport with detainees allows them to signpost them to agencies who can help tackle a whole range of issues such as addictions, bereavement, anger management etc.

**“.....is so inspirational to me. Massively.
..... just an incredible figure, inspiring. Not
just to me, to a lot of people out there that
are on the path to sobriety**

Outcomes/Aims

- To significantly improve detainees access to support and recovery initiatives.
- To reduce offending by breaking the cycle of offending behaviour linked to drug and alcohol misuse.
- Improved attitudes of police to those dependent on substances/in recovery and for Service Users towards police.

POP PLUS

Since Feb 2023, the CPM's have spoken to over 339 detainees that stated they wished further support. Around 32% have been referred onto other agencies.

The CPMs have referred detainees on to around **22** different support organisations. This list continues to grow.

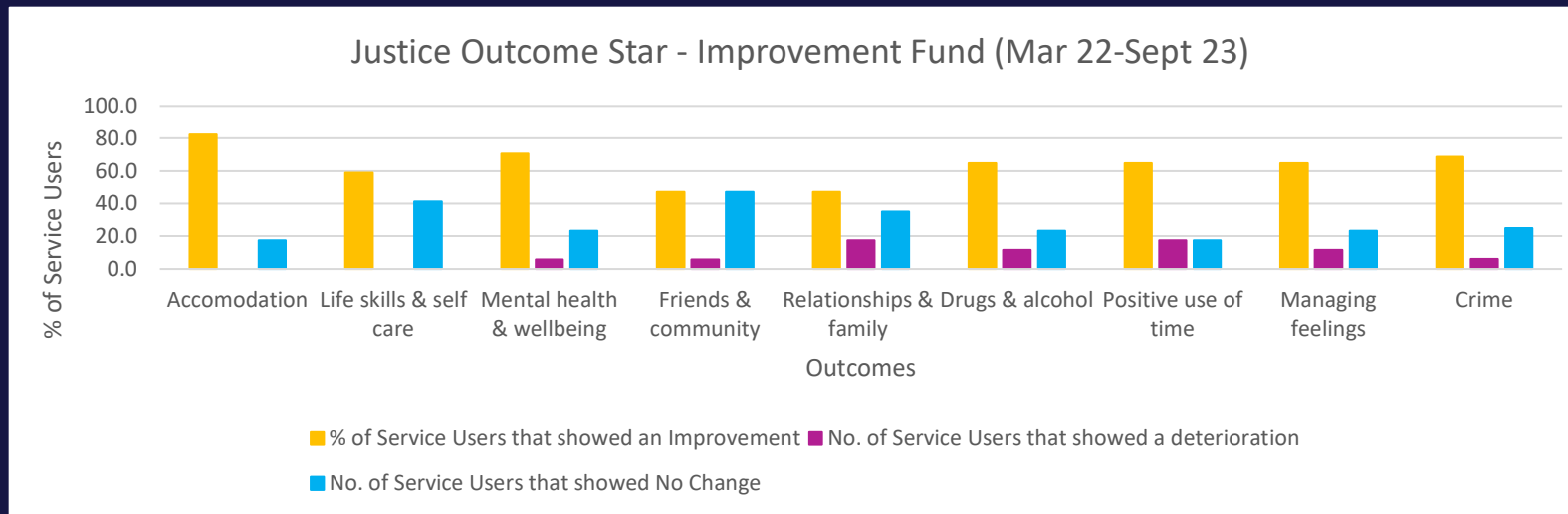
During test of change - 21.7% more detainees decreased their custody admissions if they engaged with the service compared to those that did not.



Measurements of Success

POP

Preliminary analysis of Justice Star data revealed that POP Service Users felt they had improved the most in the areas of “Living a Crime Free Life” and “Drugs & Alcohol”, “Positive Use of time” & “Accommodation”.



By analysing **pending cases**, 44% of service users that engaged with the service showed a decrease whilst working with POP. One year after working with POP, this increased to 71% of Service Users and 2 years after it decreased to 60%.

By reviewing **custody admissions**, 63% of service users that engaged with the service showed a decrease whilst working with POP. One year after working with POP this increased to 75% of Service Users and after 2 years it decreased to 65%.



Evaluation of POP

Dr Danni Glover (Community Justice Glasgow)

Peer Mentors

“They did help me. They actually drove me to the [housing] and gave me bus fare to get back... I just didn't know how to go about it. I've got really bad dyslexia so didn't know how to get a house. I'm sleeping on a couch and they showed me and phoned the number and got it organised for me.”

Addiction Workers

“I've been in care since I was 7 so I've always had a social worker.... I've got five kids, and I've been in panels against social workers, so to an extent I do still hold a grudge. But POP gave me the courage to contact social work myself with my issues.”

Police

“I really did have a hard time trusting the police, but the ones that are working with POP - it's really made me realise that I thought I was one side of the fence and the polis were the other side of the fence. Since POP I've realised, he's just a normal guy and I'm just a normal guy. We've just gone our separate ways in life; it's just a job at the end of the day...”



Action Plan

Continue to build on success

Expand the service to achieve more

Identify new premises to accommodate this

Offer training and skills development

Continue to identify new partners

Develop performance reporting to evidence future funding

Contact Details

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sacro

