



I wish I could be back in prison!

Community Based
Support for offenders
with Communication
Support Needs

**SOLD conference report
26th April 2022**

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The work of SOLD is funded by the Scottish
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Introduction

This report collates key points from presentations and workshop discussions at the SOLD conference - *"I wish I could be back in prison" Community Based Support for Offenders with Communication Support Needs (CSN)* - held on 26th April 2022 in Edinburgh. This event highlighted the challenges faced by people with CSN after release from prison or a non-custodial alternative. We explored what best practice in community support looks like and how policy and practice might be developed to improve services and reduce offending.

We use the phrase 'communication support needs' (CSN) to mean any person whose ability to understand and communicate is significantly impaired due to some form of cognitive or neurological impairment. This can include people with learning disabilities, acquired brain injury, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, dementia, autistic people, and people with other neurodevelopmental disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).



The conference was chaired by Sheriff James Mackie (retired but active on various Boards and advisory groups) and Allan Speirs, chair of the SOLD 'User Group' (who represent people with lived experience). We heard from speakers with key roles and backgrounds in Scotland's Justice system including: Steve Robertson (Deputy Chair of the SOLD User Group); Catriona Dalrymple (Deputy Director of Community Justice and Parole, Scottish Government); Karyn McCluskey (CEO of Community Justice Scotland); James Maybee (Justice Social Work Policy & Practice Lead, Social Work Scotland); Lady Dorrian (Lord Justice Clerk).

We also held four workshops on the themes of *Health* (particularly mental health); *Mentoring* (and peer support); *Accommodation* (and supported accommodation); *Employment* (access and employability support). These were co-facilitated by an expert in each area and a member of the User Group. Facilitators were: Dave Scott and Jana DeVilliers; Darren Woods and Charlie Martin; Steve Robertson and Jim Cantley; Allan Speirs, Dughall Laing and Fraser McKinlay.

The conference was fully subscribed and 63 people attended in total. For many, this was the first in-person conference since the covid-19 pandemic and so we were happy with the turn out and the range of organisations represented. We only received a handful of evaluation forms, but comments included:

“Great conference”
“Excellent! Informative, engaging and plenty food for thought!”
“The most inclusive conference I’ve ever attended”
“Need more community support”

Organisations Represented

Access to Industry
ARC Scotland
Castle Huntley Prison
Children and Young People's Centre for Justice
Community Justice Scotland
CoSLA
Disclosure Scotland
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Families Outside
Fedcap Employment
Fire Scotland
Forensic Network
Lord Justice Clerk
Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland
NHS Borders
NHS Lanarkshire
NHS Lothian
NHS Scotland
North Ayrshire Council
People First (Scotland)
Personal Support Worker
Recruit with Conviction
Right There Your Home
Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission
Scottish Drug Deaths Taskforce
Scottish Police Federation
Scottish Sentencing Council
Social Work Scotland
SOLD Advisory Group
SOLD User Group
Stop It Now! Scotland
The Richmond Fellowship Scotland
The Scottish Government
The Wise Group
Turning Point Scotland
University of Glasgow

Background

The topic for this conference came out of discussions with the SOLD User Group who had identified appropriate support in the community as essential for preventing reoffending and for fair and equal access to community-based disposals, as well as for a normal quality of life.

Without adequate support, people with CSN are less likely to understand and adhere to bail conditions, increasing risk of remand. When they are released from remand or a sentence (community or prison based), full inclusion in the community and public life is fraught with difficulties. Without support to access services, manage daily living and deal with issues that may have led to offending, they are at higher risk of reoffending. People with CSN are much less likely to be in employment, education or a relationship than the general population. Encounters with Justice could be opportunities to identify needs and provide support, but often the experience pushes protective factors even further away. The quote in the title of the conference came from a person who found life so hard after release they said, "I wish I could be back in prison".

As well as talking to people with CSN and lived experience of Justice, we drew upon the **Good Lives Model**, a strengths-based approach to offender rehabilitation, as a model to help frame our discussions. The approach assumes that we all have similar aspirations and needs, and that criminal behaviour is a maladaptive attempt to satisfy life values, often precipitated by lack of access to more socially acceptable means of fulfilment. The SOLD User Group wanted to focus on some key areas that are fundamental to achieving a fulfilling life where offending would have no place.

The conference theme fitted well with some key concerns of Justice policy. The **National Strategy for Community Justice** and the **Vision for Justice in Scotland** emphasise early intervention and prevention; alternatives to prosecution, remand and custody; rehabilitation and reintegration; access to community sentences and community support.

"We will be supported in rehabilitation by the most effective means, primarily remaining in our communities with support and opportunities for fair work, employment and housing".

(The Vision for Justice in Scotland, 2022, p.4)

The impact of the covid-19 pandemic has brought long-standing issues, such as the need for more availability of person-centred community support, to the fore, forcing a rethink about where resources are targeted.

About SOLD

SOLD aims to reduce offending and improve support for offenders with significant communication support needs in Scotland.

We do this by:

- 1. Providing a forum for professionals from all relevant sectors to share learning, identify challenges and develop solutions**
- 2. Enabling people with communication support needs to inform and contribute to all aspects of the work of SOLD**
- 3. Increasing knowledge and awareness of approaches to meet the support needs of people who have communication support needs in the justice system**
- 4. Achieving change that improves support for people with communication support needs who are accused or convicted of committing a crime.**

The work of SOLD is funded by the Scottish Government Community Justice Division.

SOLD is led by a partnership between People First (Scotland) and ARC Scotland. Support and guidance for our work comes from a user group of people with learning disabilities who have experience of the criminal justice system, and an advisory group of professionals, which includes a representative from the user group.

ARC Scotland is a national charity that advances knowledge, practice and policy in health and social care for the benefit of people with learning disabilities or other additional needs. We are committed to people with learning disabilities or other support need being at the heart of their services and communities.

People First (Scotland) is a collective self-advocacy organisation that seeks to change the way people with learning disabilities see themselves and are thought of by society, and to influence law and social policy that affects people with learning disabilities.

There are over 400 members of the SOLD network from a broad range of backgrounds including: voluntary sector providers, Police Scotland, NHS, Social Work, academic institutions, Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service, Scottish Government and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal's Service (COPFS).

Summary of Presentations

My life from custody to community: a personal perspective

Steve Robertson

Steve talked about how support stopped when the Order finished. He suggested the perception that help might only be available if you are on an Order or in prison might encourage people to reoffend.

Support on Order

- Got helpful support during my Order
- It opened doors to other agencies and services

After the Order

- I got little or no support – just here and there
- I felt I had been left to manage on my own
- I sometimes felt, is it worth carrying on?
 - It was a dark tunnel without any light
- Life was easier on the Order than after it
 - That is not the way it should be

Avoiding reoffending

- Support makes a big difference
- After my first offence, I only got a short Supervision Order.
- But after my second offence, Social Work admitted I had not had the right support.
- Next time I got a three-year Order, which made all the difference.
 - At least until the Order finished.
- Services only listened to me when Social Work were involved.
- When I was on my own, they would not listen.
- It is hard to get housing when you have a history.
- I can understand why somebody would be tempted to re-offend.
 - Because they think they will get the support they need.

Sentencing to community: plans and priorities

Catriona Dalrymple

Catriona stressed the importance of the topic for the Scottish Government and related it to broader plans for community justice. She said a key policy position in the Vision for Justice was shifting the balance between custody and community sentences, ensuring prison is only used where no alternative and reflected that community sentences can be much more effective at supporting reintegration and preventing reoffending.

She drew on her own experience of giving evidence in court, which she described as “terrifying”, despite having worked in courts for 20 years - “I can’t imagine how overwhelming it must feel for someone with CSN”.

She recognised that for anyone who had been in the Justice system, finding housing, employment, support services, rebuilding relationships can be challenging. She said this is

even more so when you have a CSN and acknowledged support needs might not be fully recognised or met.

Vision for Justice - Person-centred justice services will ensure that a person's needs and values will be respected. People will be treated with empathy and provided with the support they need to thrive.

Community Justice Strategy - One key aim is to ensure services are available to address the needs of those accused or convicted of an offence, and that those services will respond to each part of a person's needs or circumstances.

Some priority actions:

- Access to health and social care on release from prison
- Housing needs are addressed and met. Ref to SHORE – people that have secure housing are less likely to offend
- Enhance individual readiness for employment
- Enhance community integration through voluntary throughcare

Meeting your needs: Community Justice services – Needs, Gaps and Opportunities

Karyn McClusky

“Prevention is the most important thing we can do”. Karyn said that we should always be thinking about how we can support people to stop coming back into the justice system. About how people can be supported to get a job and have a good life.

Karyn drew attention to the CJS online toolkit that shows all the support services out there in the community. She said she had a search to see what there was that mentioned communication needs support. And there was very little - “it's not good enough”.

“I love community justice. And if we get it right, we can transform this little country we live in. Investing in public services is so important, because it will make it better for everyone.”

Karyn said she had not been to a conference about people with CSN since 2005, where the need for more Speech and Language Therapy services was identified. She suggested that whilst a relatively small proportion of the general population have CSNs, there was overrepresentation in the justice system. She suggested there may have been a reluctance to raise the issue because of the potential impact on demand for services. Now this has changed, and Community Justice Scotland is very aware of CSN and wants to see how to improve things across every local authority as part of their Outcomes Performance Improvement Framework (OPIF).

Revised Community Justice Strategy - after this is published, a revised OPIF will be published, which will include a framework for all local authorities and justice partners to assess the effectiveness of their pathways for communication support needs - “We've done this to ensure no one is at a disadvantage in the CJS because they have a CSN. We've looked at the system from arrest, through sentencing and out the other side”.

Communication Support Needs Pathway - will set out outcomes we want to see and what justice partners, police, courts, etc., need to have in place, so we can evaluate how we are doing. It will also give a basis for reviewing what services need to be in place.

Support for people post-sentence: getting back a 'normal' life

James Maybee

James was pleased that Social Work Scotland, Community Justice Scotland and the Scottish Government were saying much the same thing - that we should only use prison where there is no alternative. **However, Scotland has the highest prison population rate in the UK and one of the highest in Europe, at 133 per 100,000.** He said that there are relatively few dangerous people needing to be imprisoned for public protection, and that screening indicated 40% of Scottish prisoners have some learning disability/difficulty. There is some way to go for a justice system that end-to-end meets CSN and is adapted to those needs.

Whilst figures are unclear, SOLD has shown that the case for safeguarding is undeniable. People with CSN are vulnerable to bullying and reoffending without adequate and sustainable support. So how to better support post-sentence?

Long term prisoners have Social Work from start of sentence and subject to supervision on release. Support is integral – they will get it whether they like it or not.

Need to focus on short term prisoners

Support for post-sentence needs to start at the beginning.

CJSW will advise court on sentence suitability and should include info on CSN. But without, people arrive in prison with differing amounts of information to inform SPS's integrated case management process. SPS are developing a strategy for LD and ASD, and has a screening tool but this is not applied to all on arrival.

Given we don't know prevalence of CSN, we might want to think about routine screening. Same in the community.

Throughcare for short term prisoners

We have not collectively got it right. Good practice should be rooted in a community integration plan, with clear lines of accountability – one person responsible in prison, one in community. If things go wrong and the person ends up back in prison, we must continue planning for next release. Not start all over again. Why are we not doing it consistently? Throughcare Support Scheme is sadly suspended, but had its limitations. We know better now, what works. Rather than simply reintroduce it, it needs to be part of a much wider collaborative approach. That might cost money, but if we get it right, it will be a spend to save approach.

Is CJSW the best agency to be delivering voluntary throughcare? Are there other agencies better suited to that?

Long term prisoner release has specific programme for LD, planning for an offence-free life. Why do we have nothing similar for short term prisoners? This is a gap that needs to be closed.

The role and challenges of community-based interventions

Lady Dorrian

Lady Dorrian began by considering sentencing guidelines.

The guidelines should help ensure consistency in sentencing. But this does not mean that all similar cases should be treated in the same way. A one size fits all approach to sentencing will seldom be the correct approach. The factors that lead to offending behaviour are not the same for everybody. Court should recognise that sentences will have a different impact on offenders depending on their circumstances.

First guidelines on the principles and purposes of sentencing Nov 2018:

- Key principle 1 - sentencing should be no more severe than necessary to achieve intended purpose.
- Key principle 2 - all relevant factors of the case must be considered, including the particular circumstances of the offender. Requires a delicate balancing act, particularly where the victim has suffered harm. But it is implicit that the court must consider the circumstances of the offender, and the sentence must be proportionate.

Second guideline

This was on the sentencing process, and how courts reach the sentencing decision. Again, it aims to achieve consistency of process rather than outcome, allowing for discretion of court to take into account individual circumstances. Mitigating factors might include mental illness or disability, particularly where linked to the committing of the offence.

Once these two guidelines were in place we turned our attention to young people.

Sentencing young people guideline

A young person is under 25 at time of establishing guilt. Court must consider YPs best interests in every case. Where under 18, best interest must be primary concern, in line with UN Convention on Rights of Child.

This is informed by research of cognitive development and how this can be affected by trauma and adversity. This does not mean that every offender under 25 must be sentenced in the same way, or that no one under 25 can ever go to prison. The court must consider a person's maturity at the time of offending when assessing their blameworthiness.

Court should take an individualised approach, and rehabilitation must be the primary purpose of sentencing. Informed by research findings:

1. 25 is the age at which brain reaches maturity.
2. Parts of the brain that govern emotion develop before those that assist with self-control. Explains risk-taking behaviour.
3. Brain development can be affected by various factors such as mental disorder, trauma, injury, alcohol abuse, etc.

Court should take account of information about young people, including:

ACEs

Brain maturity

Addiction

Physical health

Mental health

Speech, language and communication development

Young people with learning difficulties, mental health issues, autism, etc., are over represented in the courts.

Proportionality - a key principle, and courts should be aware that some sentences could have more of an adverse effect on young people than on an older person, because of their age, maturity and personal circumstances. E.g., loss of job or education.

Sentencing should address the underlying causes of offending. Focus on rehabilitation and preventing reoffending.

In relation to community sentencing, rehabilitative, non-custodial sentences need to be available to the courts.

Judicial Perspectives of community based disposals (Scottish Sentencing Council)

- A survey found the Judiciary broadly supportive of community-based disposals, viewing them as providing a better chance of rehabilitation than custodial sentences. And they were appreciative of the support provided by CJSW.
- However, they did not always feel fully informed of what was available. They felt there should be greater consistency in provision of community based programmes for a wider range of offending, and to address a wider range of issues.
- Also, greater consistency in development and funding of programmes.
- Judicial confidence in community disposals would be enhanced by improved management and supporting successful completion of disposals, through provision of more sentencing options.
- When resources allow, we will address issues of sentencing for people with mental disorders and welfare issues.

Workshops

You should get help when you get out and that. To look at stuff and see what you can do, even if it's voluntary. I think there should be more things for when people get out of jail. So that they're not getting themselves into crime all the time.

Employment & Disclosure

Dughall Laing of Recruit with Conviction provided an update on the changing laws in Scotland regarding fair access to employment, Fraser McKinlay of Invest in Renfrewshire outlined their wraparound support, its impacts and benefits for those seeking work.

We had an open discussion based on Alan's own experience to explore best practice in employability support and how it could be integrated into existing or new provision.

1. What works well in employment and disclosure?

- Supported employment services that provide long-term holistic/person centred support, not just employment outcomes.
- Opportunities for training, education and qualifications
- Conversations – employers and employees talking to one another
- Connecting with people during their sentence or CPO and making referrals
- Support to write disclosure letter, CV, applications etc.
- Employers with experience of employing people with convictions
- Knowledge of legislation
- In advocacy organisations in my experience, there has been realistic consideration on the relevance of offences in respect of the role, whether professional or voluntary
- Not held back under new law
- Access to employers
- Positive changes to Disclosure Act ('spent' convictions less likely to hold people back)
- Training made available

2. What does not work well in employment and disclosure?

- Lack of availability of support
- Potential employees understanding of what they need to disclose
- Very confusing landscape of provision of employability services
- Employers not feeling confident in raising questions about convictions during recruitment
- People being excluded due to minor offences
- Applicants disclosing unnecessarily

- Lack of knowledge of legislation
- In some third sector advocacy organisations I believe that training to update assessment makers is not always accessed when new legislation is passed
- Sectors not working together
- (lack of) Accessible recruitment procedures
- Legal blocks
- Employment support not having experience of people who have a conviction

3. What changes would improve support in employment and disclosure for people with communication support needs?

- Support at the point of access to one's conviction history.
- Support for employers / good practice guidelines/ understanding about reasonable adjustments
- Consistent funding for supported employment services that provide holistic support, not just employment outcomes.
- Improved provision and funding of training for job-seekers
- Training / awareness raising for employers
- Work experience opportunities
- Digital inclusion opportunities
- Clear easy read and accessible guidelines available to all (regardless of digital skills / opportunities)
- Learn from 'Invest in Renfrewshire project and scale up.

The prison staff and care workers should have a closer connection. They could get things sorted for you before you leave and have the support ready for you. Then you wouldn't need to be searching around like I was.

The power of mentoring

Charlie Martin gave an overview of the effectiveness of mentoring. This included a particular focus on mentoring in a justice setting and a brief section on current justice mentoring programmes in Scotland.

We had an open discussion based on Daren's own experience to explore how mentoring could work within attendees own services, and how best to set up a mentoring programme.

1. What works well in mentoring?

- Realistic goals

- No timelines – ongoing process
- Listen, support, guide to understand for themselves
- Engage with the person, find who they really are and want
- Relatable experience / [illegible]
- Good relationship
- Being understanding
- Willing to share own journey – people learn from one’s experiences
- Listening, motivating the individual to find their personal goals and then supporting them on their path towards achieving their goals
- Current work being done
- Meeting someone on their level
- Goal setting (the mentee setting their own goals)
- Building an honest relationship and building trust
- Staff having time / capacity to mentor other staff as well as individual

2. What does not work well in mentoring?

- Not listening to the person
- Deciding what is best for the person without their input
- Telling what to do
- Deciding for people
- Use same method for everyone
- Not relatable
- Focusing on what the mentor wants / thinks is the best way, other than listening to what the person wants
- Creating a sense of over expectation, not acknowledging the individual’s limits and personal goals
- Inconsistency
- Lack of process of mentoring
- The disconnect of the system
- Assuming power or creating a power imbalance

3. What changes would improve support in mentoring for people with communication support needs?

- Peer mentoring scheme – funding to facilitate this
- Training, taking time, communication tools, make sure they understand
- Empowering / additional training
- Allowing them to reflect on what made difference – how mentoring has helped them
- More funding
- Better training to understand communication support needs
- A more relaxed atmosphere where the situation is made less official in terms of authority driven
- Collaboration and partnership – cascading to people with communication support needs
- More open discussion and willingness to look at alternative ways of communicating
- A better system of diagnosing and understanding communication support needs
- Would be helpful to have more [guidance?] on how to set up

John saw a psychologist and found support through the social work action group for people with learning disabilities. They supported John with shopping, cleaning and tidying up the house. They helped him find a new house in a better area.

Accommodation

Key to the Door - exploring good practice examples in the provision of accommodation. Jim Cantley gave an overview of some of the challenges and potential solutions to the provision of accommodation to people with communication needs in the justice system. This included an exploration of the potential for the private rented sector to be part of the solution.

We had an open discussion based on Steve's own experience to explore how best to ensure a joined-up approach to providing suitable accommodation.

1. What works well in Accommodation Services?

- Supported accommodation
- Advocacy support
- Rapid rehousing strategies
- Robust but person-centred tenancy sustainment support
- Well-trained staff with an assertive approach to enable engagement with services / stickability
- Building up good working relationships with clients – trust, reliability, stickability, having someone to walk with them through the process as it can be daunting.
- Allowing more choice around where their TFF will be based
- Linking them into services and people within their community
- Being realistic as to what is achievable
- Supported accommodation is a great asset in providing relevant and focused help for people who have additional needs. Unfortunately, there is not enough of it.
- Specialist support from projects such as housing first appears to be a success. However, only a limited number of people are eligible for the project.
- Working together with support services and helping link people with their community
- Active support – involve individual early in process makes accommodation a home

2. What does not work well in Accommodation Services?

- Lack of joined up services
- Not enough temporary or secure affordable housing stock
- Being unrealistic – expecting people to change overnight
- Expecting people to get full time jobs
- Not building supportive relationships and forcing the relationship
- Being judgemental, disrespectful, not being reliable, closing people as soon as they don't engage. Treating people like a number
- There can be a disjointed approach between different authorities
- There is a lack of suitable temporary accommodation
- People in isolated areas with limited access to support
- HMOs without matched tenants

3. What changes would improve support in Accommodation Services for people with communication support needs?

- Better communication
- Rethink how services / people are funded to enable easier access
- More social housing
- Utilise smart digital options to enable / improve communication with people with support needs
- Linking them into support within their community in order for them to see it as their community
- Understanding individuals' communication support needs so that staff can provide the correct support to them
- Making clients aware of what they are entitled to
- Introducing peer workers
- More availability – support needs are not only required during office hours!
- Greater accessibility and visibility – it can be difficult for people to access the support they need
- Ensure they are supported to understand their rights and choices
- Trial communication methods when no full history of comms needs exist
- We would like to find a way to identify people's support needs earlier on.

I find life really hard on the outside, really hard. I don't even eat meals.

Mental Health

Dr Jana de Villiers outlined the services at primary, secondary and tertiary levels that should be available to people and considered key issues relevant to people with learning disability when considering physical and mental health care provision. She highlighted the health inequalities experienced by people with intellectual disabilities and proposed some key elements of good practice in physical and mental health care.

We had an open discussion based on Dave's own experience to explore informed what best practice in physical and mental health care for people with learning disability looks like.

1. What works well in Mental Health Services?

- Accessible information
- Access to screening programs
- Health passports
- Longer appointments
- Making 'reasonable adjustments' (like support from support workers whilst in hospital) supported decision making.
- Multi-agency approach, good partnership working and joined up approaches
- Well trained staff
- Adequate resources
- Greater understanding of the impact of ACEs, trauma-informed models
- Relational/attachment approaches especially in community mental health teams

- Mental health workers in court
- Pre-crisis teams in some authorities
- Shared responsibility patient history booklets like health passports
- Getting the right support from the start
- Client centred ways to support client to have their voice heard in the journey
- Good communication support that is individualised
- Access to supported decision making and advocacy
- Involvement of family members who know and care about the person
- Good information about services and supports
- Accessible information and good easy read - one standard won't work for everyone, needs to be tailored to individual
- More access to speech and language therapy
- Better screening at first contact
- Availability of high quality community support
- Support for skill development (Occupational Therapy and supported employment).

2. What does not work well in Mental Health Services?

- Inflexibility
- Untrained unsympathetic staff and attitudes
- Family not included
- Lack of investment in relational attachment approaches
- Lack of consistency with services across local authorities
- Lack of identification across services/services unaware of an individual and their needs
- Not enough low-level mental health support
- There is not always a multi-agency approach
- Not always the most appropriate treatment or course of action is taken
- Time-limited care
- When comorbid conditions aren't accounted for
- Silo working - dual diagnosis
- Reasonable adjustments not made
- Only get support at crisis point
- A lot of people are not identified and not known to services
- Services in silos - difficult to meet criteria.
- When people successfully complete a program of support they can be left on their own and find they don't meet eligibility criteria anymore and have to deteriorate significantly before they can access anything
- Risk averse services – public perceptions based on media reports and stigma.
- People may be put off seeking help for fear the Police will be called on the basis of a their diagnosis or past record.
- Certain offences may preclude people from some services so they can't access things that help e.g. accommodation and jobs difficult to get community support.
- Reasonable adjustments are not always made - people can get turned down for services on the basis of not meeting needs.

3. What changes would improve support in Mental Health Services for people with communication support needs?

- Detailed health passports which includes communication needs

- Staff training in communication support especially the invisible areas of communication issues e.g. understanding and social communication
- Appropriate support to be available and consistent
- Easier access to services
- More training for social work and partners regarding mental health
- Much more mental health support in prisons
- Ongoing training throughout schools, primary care, A&E, anywhere where people with communication support needs attends.
- Support for families and carers
- More joined up to 3rd sector services that can support
- Inclusion of family members for people in custody
- Better communication and more consistent support through life course and key transitions including from child to adult services.

Conclusions and Next Steps

This conference highlighted the importance of support for people with CSN at risk of committing an offence. Many people with CSN are excluded from key protective, recidivist factors such as employment or a steady relationship, that help reduce the risk of an individual committing an offence. We heard how, without support, people with CSN may struggle to achieve equal access to these protective factors and may even seek to enter into the justice system in order to access support and services.

There is a significant disparity between the number of individuals with CSN known to local authorities and receiving some form of additional support and the proportion of individuals with CSN in the Justice system. We suggest that limiting access to support for individuals who may for example present as having mild learning disabilities, but who may well be affected by trauma and lack of access to protective factors, is a false economy. Late intervention, in the form of a prison sentence is not a cheaper alternative to providing some support to help people with CSN access and maintain housing, employment, good mental health, meaningful relationships, etc.

As the justice system in Scotland continues to develop its focus on community-based approaches, early intervention, prevention and community sentences, SOLD is uniquely placed to:

- ensure the voices of people with communication support needs contribute to shaping a justice system that is fair and respects the rights and diverse needs of users;
- bring together a wide range of professionals required to deliver rights-based and holistic services to people with communication support needs at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

Proposed actions for SOLD

1. Work alongside the SOLD user group to co-produce a training product to improve knowledge and approaches about supporting offenders with communication difficulties in community settings.
2. Deliver workshops and training sessions to organisations that will encounter people with CSN at risk, including community justice, education, employability, health and housing.
3. Collaborate with justice organisations in the development of relevant and accessible easy read material and other training and awareness raising materials.
4. Work with partners to explore a proposal to develop a support service to engage with people with CSN who have been convicted of an offence.
5. Identify a Community Justice Partnership location in Scotland where we can pilot a Community Justice Support Service.
6. Further develop the economic case for early intervention and prevention and against late intervention.
7. Continue to engage with key partners including Community Justice Scotland, Scottish Government Justice Division, Social Work Scotland, Police Scotland, academic institutions, Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), Law Society of Scotland, Scottish Prison Service (SPS), NHS Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, to identify areas where we can offer support,
8. Work with the SOLD user group to identify some key areas for development we can recommend Community Justice Partnerships include in their local improvement plans.
9. Work with third sector partners to explore where we can collaborate to enhance supports available to people with CSN.

Further information and key contacts:

SOLD <https://soldnetwork.org.uk/>

The Wise Group <https://www.thewisegroup.co.uk/community-justice/>

Forensic Network <https://forensicnetwork.scot.nhs.uk/>

Recruit With Conviction <http://recruitwithconviction.org.uk/>

Right There <https://rightthere.org/>

Invest in Renfrewshire <https://investinrenfrewshire.com/criminal-convictions/>

Good Lives Model <https://www.goodlivesmodel.com/index.shtml>

Community Justice Scotland <https://communityjustice.scot/>

The Vision for Justice in Scotland (February 2022)
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/vision-justice-scotland/documents/>

National Strategy for Community Justice (June 2022)
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-strategy-community-justice-2/>

Get involved with SOLD

Membership of SOLD is free and open to anyone who shares our aim. This including people with communication support needs, their carers, professionals in the justice system or those providing support for people with communication support needs. To join, visit our website: www.soldnetwork.org.uk

For more information, contact:

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Alice Squire: alice.squire@arcuk.org.uk

Franck David: franck.david@peoplefirstscotland.org

Or phone the ARC Scotland office: 0131 - 663 4444