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# Evaluation to examine the whole system family approach to supporting those who have been imprisoned / people on probation and reduce reoffending



Rebecca Harrison, Dr Hannah Timpson, Rebecca Bates, Dr Carly Lightowlers, Professor Zara Quigg



# EVALUATION TO EXAMINE THE WHOLE SYSTEM FAMILY APPROACH TO SUPPORTING THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED / PEOPLE ON PROBATION AND REDUCE REOFFENDING

Rebecca Harrison<sup>1</sup>, Dr Hannah Timpson<sup>1</sup>, Rebecca Bates<sup>1</sup>, Dr Carly Lightowlers<sup>2</sup>, Professor Zara Quigg<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Public Health Institute (PHI), Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), *World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Violence Prevention*, <sup>2</sup> University of Liverpool

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For further information contact Zara Quigg: [z.a.quigg@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:z.a.quigg@ljmu.ac.uk)

## About this report

Merseyside is one of the 18 areas allocated funding since 2019 by the UK Government to establish a Violence Reduction Unit. To inform the continued development of the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP), in November 2019 (Quigg et al, 2020), July 2020 (Quigg et al, 2021) and June 2021, the Merseyside Academics' Violence Prevention Partnership (MAVPP)<sup>1</sup> were commissioned to evaluate the VRP as a whole, and selected work programmes. This report forms one of a suite of outputs from the 2021/22 evaluation work programme, and specifically presents an evaluation of the MVRP's whole family approach to support those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families and reduce reoffending. Additional evaluation reports for 2021/22 explore:

- The overall development and implementation of the VRP (whole system evaluation; Quigg et al, 2022).
- The Beacon Project (Bell and Quigg, 2022).
- The Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme (Butler et al, 2022).
- The Navigator Programme (Quigg et al, 2022).
- Operation Empower (Bates et al, 2022).
- The Red Umbrella Project (McCoy et al, 2022).

Evaluation outputs are available on the MVRP website: [www.merseysidevrp.com](http://www.merseysidevrp.com) or via the author.

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<sup>1</sup> MAVPP includes academic representatives from Merseyside universities, who represent a range of disciplines including public health, criminology, policing and psychology.

- The intervention deliverers at Magistra, Merseyside Offender Mentoring Service (MOMS), Partners of Prisoners (POPs), Time-Matters UK, and the Department for Work and Pensions who work collaboratively with these interventions to deliver support to those who have been imprisoned.
- All of those who took part in an interview or focus group.
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# Executive summary

## Introduction

Reducing reoffending is one of five outcomes within Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service [HMPPS] Strategy (HMPPS, 2017). It is estimated that the economic and social cost of repeat crimes is £18.1 billion, of which £16.7 billion is specifically attributed to adults (ages 18+ years) (Newton, May, Eames and Ahmad, 2019); one third of which may be attributed to young adults (aged 18-25 years) (McGuire, 2015; The Police Foundation, 2018).

Much policy and guidance related to re-offending has focused upon the general adult prison population (18+ years) and how they may be supported whilst they are imprisoned and upon release so as to reduce their chances of reoffending. In more recent years, however, there has been the acknowledgment of the need to tailor prison and community-based interventions aiming to support those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families and reduce reoffending for those young adults aged 18-25 years.

This report focuses on the evaluation of the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP) activities to support those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families and reduce reoffending and is part of a suite of themed evaluation reports that complement an MVRP 2021-22 whole systems evaluation report (Quigg et al, 2022) and builds on previous MVRP evaluations (published in 2019-20 and 2020-21). The aim of this evaluation is to:

**Examine the whole system family approach to reducing reoffending, including developing a logic model as a framework to assess progress in meeting identified outputs and outcomes.**

## Methods



**A rapid literature review** to provide context to the research and aid the interpretation of research findings and development of recommendations. This looked to explore: programmes/interventions to support those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families and reduce reoffending – examples of what works well and what does not; the impacts of these programmes; how such programmes may be evaluated – what are the measures of success.



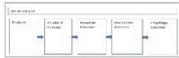
**Semi-structured interviews and a focus group with key stakeholders and service users** - Eight online interviews (4xTime-Matters UK; 1xMerseyside Offender Mentoring Service; 2xPartners of Prisoners [POPS]; 1xMagistra) were carried out with stakeholders involved in the delivery of four of the MVRP funded programmes/interventions. An additional interview was conducted with a representative from the DWP – this has been included in the evaluation as part of the wider programme of work that is ongoing in this area. For Time Matters an additional telephone interview was carried out with one parent and an online focus group was conducted with three young people (aged 12 to 15) to explore the needs of individuals, barriers to accessing support, journey experiences and impact of support.



**Review of programme documentation** (e.g. monitoring forms; outputs; meeting notes; reports).



**Development of two case studies** for Time-MattersUK and POPS. These case studies were requested by the MVRP as part of the wider evaluation; and both target the whole family.



**Development of a logic model** to demonstrate how the programmes supporting those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families are working together to influence change.

## Key Findings

### Working with the MVRP

Programmes spoke about welcoming working with the MVRP, with benefits including not having to 'navigate services' as partnership working helped to cut out 'some of the barriers' and also provided a 'platform' through which to access other partners within and outside of the MVRP. The MVRP were also seen to help raise awareness around the work of the programmes on their social media and website; as well as keep the programmes up to date of other funding opportunities that may be available to them.

### Contributing to the Overarching Ambitions of the MVRP

In line with best evidence, a key aim of the MVRP is to develop a whole systems public health approach to prevent violence across Merseyside. In terms of supporting those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families and reducing reoffending, it is evident that the programmes funded by the MVRP, and broader activity (such as that delivered by the DWP), are working to achieve positive outcomes. The programme providers spoke about their understanding and experiences of working with the MVRP, specifically with reference to how they contribute to the strategic aims of the partnership. Programmes were seen to focus on the early intervention aspect of violence prevention as well as providing targeted family support where domestic violence or other forms of violence had already been identified/experienced.

### Joint Working across the System

The evaluation has highlighted some, albeit limited, examples of joined up working between the supporting those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families and reducing reoffending programmes, such as the promotion of other programmes or referrals into others. For example, with partners receiving referrals from and making referrals to the other MVRP funded programmes. Monthly meetings at which all of the programmes met to discuss progress and challenges etc. were also cited.

Regarding 'family ties' it was seen to be important to highlight that not all families will want to connect with those who are imprisoned and should not be made to feel guilty or responsible for the behaviour of a loved one in terms of their original offending behaviours or potential reoffending.

### Evidencing Impact

This evaluation has highlighted how the MVRP monitoring proformas could be developed further to capture measures for *evaluating* the success (or otherwise) of the funded projects (see Section 3.2). At present, it is difficult to quantify the success of the programmes in terms of outcomes and reach. In light of the limited evidence, and challenges encountered by the programmes, it may be beneficial for the MVRP to support interventions to collect the most meaningful data to evidence the benefits of their operations, as well as understand what works (and what does not), for whom and why, and help them to identify how they may improve their value. This could, in part, be achieved by setting out clearer expectations for data capture and supporting interventions to capture and extract the necessary information in their case management records, e.g., getting accurate numbers of referrals and appropriate pre- and post-outcome measures. This would have the additional benefit of ensuring interventions are well placed to evidence their successes for future re-commissioning or in applying

for future funding. Future data collection may then be utilised by the MVRP for both evaluative purposes and strategic whole-systems insights.

## Recommendations

It is recognised that an effective whole systems approach to support those who may reoffend and reduce offending involves partners working together to provide sustainable programmes that bring about short, medium and long-term outcomes. A number of recommendations are made, with reference to the actions required for the effective delivery of preventing offending/reoffending programmes highlighted by CAPRICORN (PHE, 2019):

### Ensure there is a clear approach and vision – understanding the system and how it works

All of the programmes included within this evaluation had a range of individual strengths and qualities, and collectively provide a very strong base of support to people who are/have been imprisoned and their families. This work has the potential to have a positive impact on those aspects of people's lives that we know directly affect the likelihood of reoffending (e.g., accommodation, employment and training, finances, personal relationships) and for those working within whole family approaches reduce the likelihood of generational offending behaviours.

- This work should continue to be supported by the MVRP, but activity should be undertaken by the MVRP to increase awareness and communication of how these programmes work as a system and contribute to broader change across Merseyside.

### Clear leadership

Whilst the programmes delivered within this theme all have clear individual programme goals, their knowledge about how this contributes to wider violence prevention activity in Merseyside is less understood.

- The MVRP should provide clear strategic oversight in terms of how each work programme influences change and a clear communications strategy should ensure that wider partners have clarity and understanding about how and where they fit into the system.

### Use a place-based approach

At present, the programmes included within this initiative have been developed in response to local need, by professionals who understand the needs of their local population. It is recommended that this should continue with the support of the MVRP.

### Use data from across the system

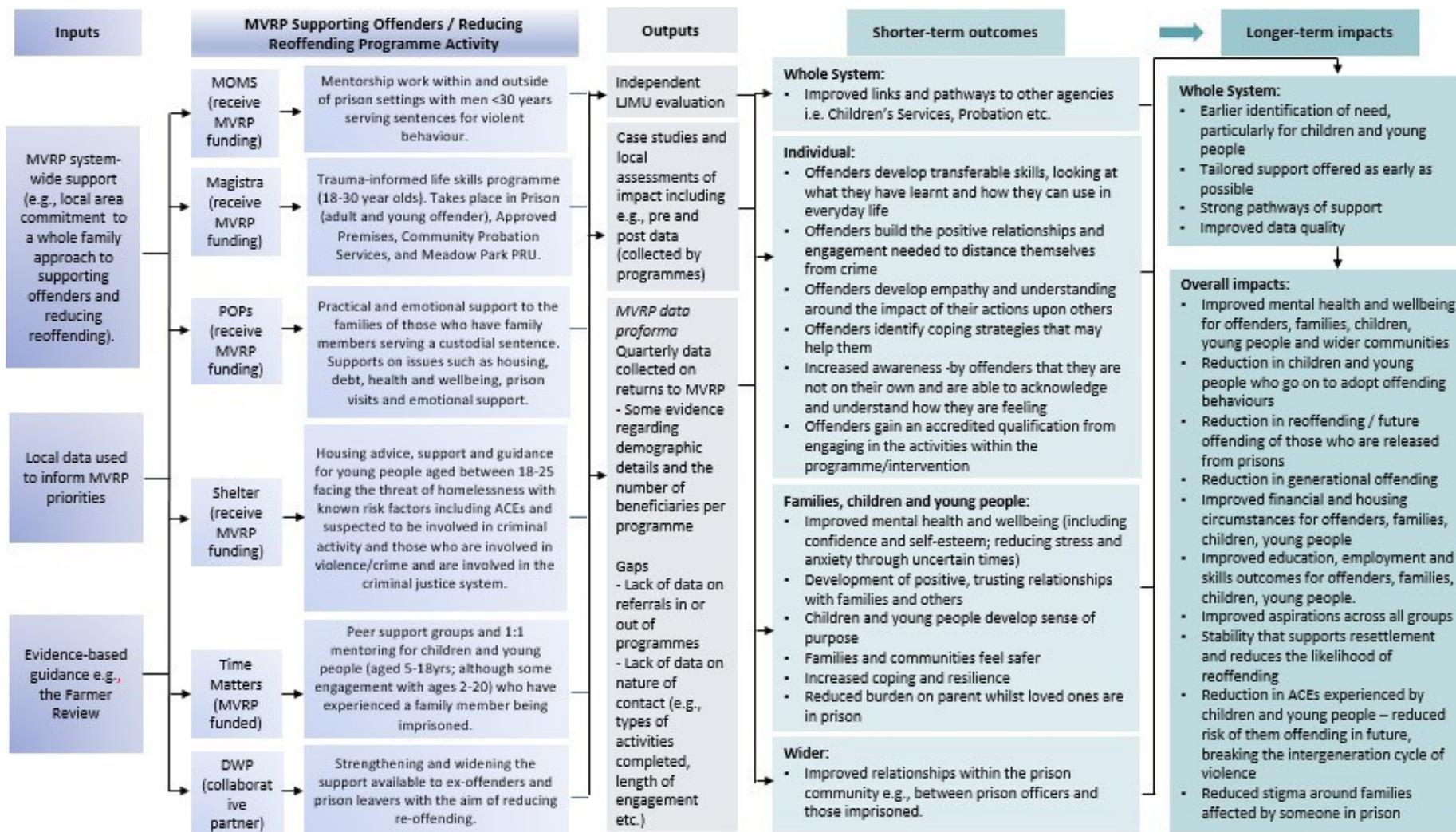
This evaluation has highlighted a number of challenges in capturing and evidencing impact through routine programme monitoring. A number of recommendations are made as to how this could be improved:

- **The MVRP data reporting tools could be expanded to include an overview of the number and features of programme referrals and beneficiaries**, including demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and location; a referral pathway, baseline measure(s) of intended outcomes (which can be both primary and secondary) and post-intervention measures.
- **Data to evidence community demand for services** and the extent to which projects are meeting this would be valuable. This would allow projects to assess and make projections as to future growth in demand, the need for resources, and assist in planning ahead to ensure

the services can be sustainably delivered. Moreover, situating the need for their services within the wider context of the communities in which they are based and serving could draw upon violent crime data and levels of deprivation contained in the MVRP Data Hub. Doing so will provide better strategic insights across partner organisations/the MVRP and could be made a pre-requisite of any funding application in the commissioning process.

- It could prove useful to identify **whether clients are engaging with more than one service, are being referred on from one service to another, or are coming to the attention of the Police during their engagement with services.** It was also suggested that it would be useful to be able to examine the **longitudinal trajectories of service users** across services and criminal justice system contact, to monitor the progress of individuals who engage with the various programmes and measure the impact of such. This could be achieved by linking data about individuals engaging in the projects with police records to examine any re-presentations in these data, or with Probation records to assess whether their risk of reoffending has reduced. For example, the Ministry of Justice offer a 'Justice Data Lab' service for evaluating reducing reoffending initiatives which might be a resource the MVRP could draw upon and support organisations to monitor the impact of their work (at least in part). Further information about the work of the Justice Data Lab can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/justice-data-lab>. To achieve some of the suggested insights about wider programme connectivity and beneficiary engagement with services as well as their wider trajectories, individual level client information (as opposed to aggregate data) would need to be returned to the MVRP by individual projects.

## MVRP Supporting Those Who Have Been Imprisoned/People on Probation and Their Families – Reducing Reoffending Logic Model



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Literature review

Reducing reoffending is one of five outcomes within Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service [HMPPS] Strategy (HMPPS, 2017). It is estimated that the economic and social cost of repeat crimes is £18.1 billion, of which £16.7 billion was specifically attributed to adults (those over the age of 18) (Newton, May, Eames and Ahmad, 2019); one third of which may be attributed to young adults (aged 18-25 years) (McGuire, 2015; The Police Foundation, 2018).

Much policy and guidance related to re-offending has focused upon the general adult prison population (18+ years) and how they may be supported whilst they are imprisoned and upon release, so as to reduce their chances of reoffending. In more recent years, however, there has been the acknowledgment of the need to tailor prison and community-based interventions aimed to support those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and reduce reoffending for those young adults aged 18-25 years. The most recent Prisons Strategy White Paper (Ministry of Justice [MoJ], 2021a) highlights the more immediate and long-term delivery goals for prisons to provide a 'safe, stable and secure' space where those who are imprisoned may be reformed. Despite this, however, reoffending rates in the UK still remain high. Areas of focus within this White Paper include: the role of restorative justice, education, work-focused skills, training and employment delivered in prison, strengthened family ties, and tackling substance use and mental health issues so that each individual is afforded the best opportunity to desist in their criminal activity. The Prisons Strategy (MoJ, 2021a) also acknowledges the importance of improving services outside of prison to help individuals upon their release achieve by working in partnership with agencies such as law enforcement, accommodation, treatment, jobs and skills. Priorities specific to reducing reoffending in the North West include providing greater opportunities of direct employment to those with a criminal record, investing in accommodation, ensuring that all prison leavers have access to accommodation on release, and improving substance misuse support with health authorities, in line with national priority areas (Probation Service North West, 2021).

### Individual and social factors and the risk of reoffending / desistance

There are a number of individual and social factors that have been identified to impact upon an individual's risk of reoffending (MoJ, 2014). These include: drug and alcohol misuse, impulsivity or low self-control, attitudes that support crime ('pro-criminal'), social networks, lack of/poor family and intimate relationships, lack of employment, suitable accommodations (May, Sharma and Stewart, 2008; MoJ, 2014), sentence length (May, Sharma and Stewart, 2008), and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (Van Duin, Robbé and Marhe, 2020). All of these factors may be seen to impact upon individuals reintegrating into communities and their subsequent offending behaviour (May, Sharma and Stewart, 2008).

There are also a large number of factors that have been identified to aid the desistance of crime and reduction of reoffending, namely: family and relationships, including family ties (MoJ, 2014, 2016; De Claire and Dixon, 2015; May Sharma and Stewart; Niven and Stewart, 2015; Farmer, 2017, 2019); preparation for life after release (providing work activities and experience of key employability requirements); support around finances, benefits and debt management and engagement with Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) Work Coaches (MoJ, 2016); help with accommodation (MoJ, 2014, 2016; May, Sharma and Stewart, 2008); hope and motivation; having something to give

to others; having a place within a social group; not having a criminal identity; increasing age and maturity; and being believed in (MoJ, 2014; MoJ, 2016; May, Sharma and Stewart, 2008, Probation Service North West, 2021).

### Targeted programmes and interventions

Guidance from the MoJ and the Prison and Probation Service (2018) recommended that prison and community-based programmes and interventions focus upon a number of key areas: problem solving; perspective taking; managing relationships; self-management; the development of new skills; all of which should motivate, engage and retain individuals. To provide the greatest benefit it is important that such programmes and interventions are well-designed (evidence-based), targeted correctly and delivered by properly trained staff so that individuals are provided with the right level of support and appropriate programme content that is adapted to the needs of the individual (circumstances, abilities and strengths) (MoJ and the Prison and Probation Service, 2018). Also, that programmes and interventions are delivered in a joined-up and integrated manner, with evidence suggesting that interventions delivered to individuals whilst in prison are more effective in terms of reoffending when followed up with community interventions and support post-release (MoJ, 2014; HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2016).

Areas in which specific interventions and approaches can work towards reducing reoffending include: drug and alcohol treatment (prison and community-based), accommodation, employment, education, mental health services, offending behaviour programmes (e.g., cognitive skills, anger management), mentoring, and family relationships and parenting (focus with young people who have been imprisoned/are on probation) (MoJ, 2014). In 2021, there were a number of programmes accredited by the MoJ Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice Panel (CSAAP) for delivery in custody and in the community (see [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/960097/Descriptions\\_of\\_Accredited\\_Programmes\\_-\\_Final\\_-\\_210209.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/960097/Descriptions_of_Accredited_Programmes_-_Final_-_210209.pdf)).

### Young adults (18-25 years)

*“It has been recognised that the 18 to 24 year age range is a key stage of development; the brain is still developing, independence is gained, socialising activity increases, and experimentation with drugs, alcohol and sexual relationships takes place. This coincides with a time when they are most likely to come into contact with the police” (National Police Chiefs Council [NPCC], p.4, 2015)*

Young adults (those aged 18-25 years) have distinct needs, that differ to children (those under 18) and adults (those 25 years and above) in relation to their physical and mental development and how this impacts upon their decision making (NPCC, 2015; House of Commons Justice Committee, 2016; Prior et al, 2021). In 2016, the House of Commons Justice Committee identified existing policy and operational arrangements to be unsatisfactory and that there was a need for the criminal justice system to be changed in relation to its treatment of young adults, and an acknowledgement to be made around the impact of factors such as social background, psychological and neurological maturation and learning disability.

By treating young adults as a specific group within the justice system, and providing tailored support and access to interventions, it is believed that the root causes of offending can be identified and managed early. It has been identified that young adults have a particularly high risk of reoffending and are more likely to carry out drug, robbery and possession of weapons offences, and be caught up in gang crime. Young adults (aged 18-25) are responsible for a ‘disproportionately high volume of

crime' and whilst making up approximately one tenth of the British population account for one third of the prison population (McGuire, 2015; The Police Foundation, 2018). It is important to understand the challenges that are facing this group and how this impacts upon their actions including the impacts of 'contextual drivers' such as austerity and continuing cuts to local authority budgets (The Police Foundation, 2018).

The collaborative approaches to preventing offending and re-offending in children (CAPRICORN) resource was published by Public Health England (PHE) in 2019, and although specifically targeted at young people who have been imprisoned/are on probation (aged 10-17 years), highlighted risk factors at individual, family, community and society level that are pre-cursor to future offending and re-offending behaviours alongside actions that utilise a public health approach to improving outcomes in this population. This resource highlighted the importance of partnership and shared vision with a coordinated approach to reducing youth offending and reoffending; along with the provision of a range of interventions that improve the outcomes of those in contact with the criminal justice system (CJS); and identify vulnerable children in all policies and decision making.

A review of evidence published by Revolving Doors (Bennet and Corry-Roake, 2021) specifically focussed upon how those young adults (18-25 years) who commit repeat, low-level crime may be diverted away from the CJS into support. It identified the 'cliff edge' of individuals turning 18 and barriers encountered in gaining support for those who transition from youth justice and child social care services into the adult system. The importance of engaging with young adults at this 'turning point' through specifically targeted interventions and programmes, such as those with treatment and rehabilitative elements, as well as prison-based offending behaviour programmes and those which focus upon restorative justice, and the influence of this upon future offending behaviour has been highlighted (McGuire, 2015).

When looking at how young adults may engage with programmes and interventions when presenting with specific needs (e.g., around mental health, substance use), it is important to ensure that other 'basic needs' are met that enable them to successfully engage (Bennet and Corry-Roake, 2021). Gender and cultural sensitivities also need to be taken into account when providing support (Bennet and Corry-Roake, 2021). All of these factors also mean that individuals will engage differently with programmes and interventions and there is therefore a need to deliver individually tailored responses that are trauma-informed so as to understand the root causes of crime and minimise harm (Bennett and Corry-Roake, 2021). It is essential that interventions and programmes should be properly targeted and build upon the strengths and abilities of young adults; with release back into the community being planned and structured, providing links to sustainable and long-term support to prevent future offending (McGuire, 2015; Bennett and Corry-Roake, 2021). There is, however, limited robust evidence around those interventions and programmes that are specifically targeted at young adults (McGuire, 2015; House of Commons Justice Committee, 2016).

The recent Reducing Reoffending Plan for the North West (Probation Service North West, 2021) has a priority that specific groups such as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, 18-25-year-olds and women would receive greater support with specific areas of need.

### Whole System Approach

Across the North West, The Reducing Reoffending Plan (Probation Service North West, 2021) focuses upon working collaboratively with partners (e.g., Local Authorities, NHS/Health Services and the Third sector) to make a significant impact upon reoffending across the North West through data and evidence led actions. This includes the commitment to redesign services and strengthen partnership arrangements and provide more opportunity for individuals upon release from prisons.

When exploring the whole systems approach, CAPRICORN (PHE, 2019) identified a number of key factors that may be more widely applied outside of the specific area of focus upon young people (PHE, 2019). A whole system approach relies upon local partners working together closely to provide wider, longer-term stability and effectively to prevent offending/reoffending in the short, medium and long term (Probation Service North West, 2021). It is important within the system to know/understand what each organisation contributes and how all the different aspects work together to make up the approach. There are a number of key actions that were highlighted for consideration:

- Be clear about your approach and vision
- Explore distributed leadership
- Use a place-based approach
- Understand the system and how it works
- Use data from across the system to build a picture
- Use an asset-based approach
- Bring it all together

In March 2021, a £3 million pilot was launched with the aim of reducing reoffending and improving outcomes in young adults who have been through the criminal justice system (Ministry of Justice, Probation Service, The Rt Hon Robert Buckland, 2021b). This pilot, developed by the Ministry of Justice and the Mayor for London's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) has a specific focus upon providing a range of specialist services including drug, mental health, housing and employment support to 18–25-year-olds under probation supervision under one roof at Newham Probation Office. It is considered that services being able to work collaboratively within The Transitions to Adulthood Hub, will enable the early identification of any issues that may cause young people to reoffend as well as providing them with other much needed support. The pilot is running from July 2021 to March 2023 and is being independently evaluated.

## 2. The MVRP 2021-22 Whole System Family Approach to Supporting Those Who Have Been Imprisoned / People on Probation and Reduce Reoffending

In light of current recommendations, and building on previous activity, the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP) 2021-22 work plan continued to prioritise a programme of activity that supports those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families and reduces reoffending. Funding was provided to those programmes that provide support for: those who have been imprisoned/people on probation to reintegrate and desist from crime; family members of those who have committed a crime; and for those at risk of crime.

### Partners of Prisoners (POPs)

This project aims to provide practical support to the families of those who have family members serving a custodial sentence, e.g., going through the processes involved when family members first arrive at prisons, how to book a visit, and how to alert the prison to any support needs their family member may have etc. POPs' Family Support Workers (FSWs) provide practical and emotional support for families of those who have been imprisoned who are preparing for release, have been released on licence, or are serving a community sentence in the Merseyside area. It offers families support on issues such as housing (tenancy, arrears, and eviction), debt, health and wellbeing, prison visits as well as emotional support, providing links to other agencies i.e. Children's Services, Probation etc. as appropriate. POPs currently provides support services for families in 11 prisons across the North West and Yorkshire, as well as having a number of community based projects supporting families upon release. POPs also deliver 'Hidden Sentence' training that aims to inform and educate professionals who work with children (e.g., teachers, pupil referral units, and non-teaching staff), families and those who have been imprisoned/people on probation the impact from arrest to release and introduce them to strategies and resources that will help to support children and families. Through all of their activity and engagement POPs aims to help families to bring about positive changes as a family unit as well as build community resilience.

Through the MVRP funding, POPs aimed to extend their current offer by adding a dedicated FSW to be placed within The Court Building in Liverpool City Centre to work alongside the Probation Services Court Team. The programme has a number of hoped for outcomes:

- Increased and effective interventions around serious violence within schools
- Increased support for the most vulnerable students across all educational settings notably using effective mentoring and restorative practice approaches
- Improved access to accommodation for young people who have been imprisoned/are on probation and their families
- Empower individuals and communities to bring about positive change
- Better support for at risk individuals who have been imprisoned/people on probation including their families – e.g., Identify family-based issues and establish actions to facilitate resolutions

- Increased knowledge and understanding of ACEs and provision of support in organisations including suitable referrals
- Reduce risk through information sharing
- Improvements in data quality by recording sharing information, identifying common issues, hot spots and recording outcomes

See Appendix 7.1 for the POPs case study.

### Merseyside Offender Mentoring Service (MOMS)

The Merseyside Offender Mentoring Service (MOMS) was established in 2011 and is part of the wider work of Sefton CVS. It operates both within and outside of the prison setting to provide support to men (under the age of 30) serving sentences for violent offending behaviour who:

- have 12 weeks left until their release and can be provided with information, advice and guidance to help with their resettlement;
- have been newly released from HMP Liverpool to successfully resettle back into Merseyside, but also for prison leavers from Warrington and Preston (HMP Risley and HMP Kirkham) who are resettling back into the Merseyside area.

Adopting a trauma-informed approach, individuals are allocated a mentor who provide intensive and bespoke support to remove the triggers of offending behaviour, by assisting with issues such as accommodation, drug and alcohol misuse, finances, health and wellbeing, and education employment and training. MOMS received funding from the MVRP between October to March 2021-22, in order to support the service to sustain its provision and increase its outreach to more people released from prison. Expected outcomes for individuals engaging with MOMS and wider communities include:

- Successful resettlement (working around maturity, social and emotional development, and work readiness as elements that contribute to this);
- An increase in the number of young people provided with mental health interventions;
- Improved feelings of safety within communities and young people including reduced fear of violence;
- Access to better support for at risk individuals who have been imprisoned including their families; and,
- Increased understanding of ACEs and provision of support in organisations including suitable referrals.

See Appendix 7.2 for details of service case studies and engagement.

### Magistra Restorative Lives Project (Merseyside)

The Magistra Restorative Lives Project builds upon previous work with Prisons (HMP Liverpool, HMP Hindely and HMP Altcourse) and Approved Premises in Merseyside with individuals convicted of violence offences, as part of their release/resettlement planning and encompasses a number of trauma-informed Life Skills programmes. Individuals completing these programmes will achieve a level 2 Open College Network (OCN) qualification and a Personal Journal with programme content enabling further reflective practice beyond the programmes. An example of one of these programmes is the Lifeboat Programme, which is a restorative programme aimed at young people, comprising eight interactive group work sessions delivered in prisons to develop problem solving, communication and

decision-making skills. The programme is centred upon the concept of a boat trip to encourage participants to work together. It draws on restorative practice, social learning and cognitive behavioural theories to explore attitudes, values and beliefs that impact on behaviour. Techniques are introduced that encourage young people to explore connections with their environment, with the aim of reducing conflict and repairing harm; and supporting positive changes in attitudes and behaviour, which contribute to the creation of a restorative culture. This programme initially engaged with those aged 18 to 25 years. However, given some lengthier sentences for those engaging with violent offences, the age range was subsequently expanded to include those up to the age of 30.

It is hoped that through taking part in the Magistra programmes, individuals in Prisons and Approved Premises will improve their life skills in a number of areas such as communication, problem-solving, decision-making, empathy, assertiveness, teamwork and restorative practice. In turn it is hoped these skills will help in the desistance of crime as well as helping individuals to develop social capital and integrate successfully into their communities.

See Appendix 7.2 for details of the Magistra operational model and evaluation framework

## Shelter

With a focus on prevention and early intervention, this project provides housing advice, support and guidance for those young people aged between 18-25 years living in the Liverpool City Region (Liverpool, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens, Wirral). The focus of this service is upon those who are facing the threat of homelessness with known risk factors including ACEs and are suspected to be involved in criminal activity (these young people may be known to police/authorities but have not received a conviction) and those who are involved in violence/crime and are involved in the criminal justice system. The young people (and their families where applicable) are supported to keep their existing tenancies or are relocated and resettled elsewhere. The Shelter programme documentation speaks about taking a whole household approach to delivering support, so that goals of the whole family are considered when developing plans and throughout support. Any interventions are then tailored to support each member of the family with their goals, with the aim of improving the household's ability to successfully manage their housing and finances independently. The funding from MVRP has helped Shelter employ a key worker who manages this project in Merseyside. Some of the potential outcomes of the programme that have been identified are:

- To empower individuals and enable them to act independently
- Increased confidence (for young people and their families)
- To enable people to feel secure in their residence
- Engagement in education
- Engagement with health services
- Engagement in new activities e.g., volunteering, helping to co-produce campaigns/services/strategies
- Developing of new skills, e.g., in decorating
- Reduction in the likelihood of offending/re-offending
- Improved family relationships

- Increased pathway support for children/young people who are vulnerable to criminality / who have offended
- Individuals and families feel more connected to their communities.

See Appendix 7.2 for the Shelter model of delivery.

### Time-MattersUK

This project provides peer support groups and 1:1 mentoring for children and young people (aged 5-18yrs; although there is some engagement with those as young as two and as old as 20) impacted by parental or familial imprisonment and their parents/carers. Engagement occurs both face-to-face and online, and families are provided with the opportunity to take part in cultural and sporting activities together. The MVRP has provided financial support for administrative staffing and sessional support worker time. It was also hoped that Time-MattersUK would be able to set up electronic case files for children in a central management system to better enable them to understand each child's engagement, their individual needs, any contact with other professionals, risk factors, and progress made as a result of engagement in the programme itself. Hoped for outcomes of Time-MattersUK include:

- Increased coping and resilience for children and young people due to the additional stress, responsibility and stigma that having a family member in custody can bring
- Helping those who are imprisoned to engage positively with the prison regime knowing that their family is being supported
- Reduced likelihood of re-offending on release as family relationships have been nurtured throughout their custodial sentence
- Increased opportunities for children and young people to speak on a national and international level about their experiences
- Raised awareness of others, e.g., teachers, to the challenges that the families of those who are imprisoned experience and the damaging impact of media.

Please see Appendix 7.1 for the Time Matters case study.

### The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

The DWP do not receive direct MVRP funding, however, they are key to the whole system approach to supporting those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and reducing reoffending. In 2021-22, an advisor from the DWP was loaned part-time to work with the MVRP in order to improve utilisation of the pre-existing support and provision already in place within the DWP, and to strengthen and widen the support available to ex-offenders and prison leavers with the aim of reducing re-offending. The DWP offer guidance and support for ex-offenders and prison leavers with issues such as employability, training, claiming for benefits and housing issues. Due to staffing and funding issues the DWP could not do a formal secondment, however, were able to lend a member of staff part-time on a three-month rolling basis.

There are four main activities that the DWP engage with:

- Firstly, when someone initially goes into prison, their role involves making sure their benefits stop if necessary or also importantly should continue, if necessary, because housing payments can

continue for six months when someone first comes into prison. Similarly advocating to employers to ask if they can hold an individual's job until they are released.

- While they are serving their sentence the DWP deal with general inquiries about benefit payments and employment. The DWP operates employment hubs across two Merseyside prisons along with other support services to give advice on employment and training prior to release.
- The DWP engage with those who have been imprisoned 12 weeks before they are due to finish their sentence. At this point they offer support to those looking for employment, training or those who need to claim Universal Credit. Those without a bank account or ID in order to claim benefits are referred to suitable partners who can source these. This ensures that those leaving prison are able to access advanced payments of Universal Credit either on the day or day after their release from custody. They also offer voluntary training such as CSCS test practice.
- Finally, as a result of the collaboration between the DWP and the MVRP support is now being offered in the community. The DWP attend probation offices to offer people on probation support and guidance.

## 3. Evaluation

This report focuses on the evaluation of the MVRP activities to support those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and reduce reoffending and is part of a suite of themed evaluation reports that complement an MVRP 2021-22 whole systems evaluation report (Quigg et al, 2022) and builds on previous MVRP evaluations (published in 2019-20 and 2020-21). The aim of this evaluation is to:

**Examine the whole system family approach to reducing reoffending, including developing a logic model as a framework to assess progress in meeting identified outputs and outcomes.**

### 3.1 Methods



**Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders** involved in the design, delivery and/or implementation of the supporting those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families and reducing reoffending programmes across Merseyside. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders involved in selected programmes either via telephone or using an online platform (e.g. MS Teams). Interviews were carried out with representatives from Time-MattersUK (n=4), POPs (n=2), Magistra (n=1), DWP (n=1) and MOMS (n=1), and explored individual's experiences of, and progress in, implementing the work programme/intervention; supporting and impeding factors to implementation (and if and how impeding factors were addressed); areas for development; actual and anticipated programme/intervention impacts; and programme sustainability.



**Engagement with service users** (Time-MattersUK): a semi-structured telephone interview was carried out with one parent/service user; and an online Zoom focus group was carried out with three young people/service users aged 12 to 15 years.



**Development of two case studies** for Time-MattersUK and POPS. These case studies were requested by the MVRP as part of the wider evaluation; and both target the whole family.



**Review of programme documentation** e.g. monitoring forms; outputs; meeting notes; reports).



**Development of a logic model** to demonstrate how the programmes supporting those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families are working together to influence change.

### 3.2 Data analysis

All interview and focus group data has been transcribed using transcribing software (Otter.ie) and analysed thematically to identify themes and sub-themes. Analysis has also been carried out on quarterly data that was reported to the MVRP by each of the programmes who received MVRP funding. Programme documentation has been used to inform the context for evaluation and to frame the findings. Individual programme findings have been triangulated to inform an assessment about how and where the targeted activities are contributing to violence prevention across Merseyside, and to reflect on how a whole systems approach is being achieved.

The two case studies (Time-MattersUK and POPS) are presented separately, although findings from these case studies have been integrated into the whole system evaluation.

### 3.3 Consent and ethical approval

All participants were provided with age-appropriate participant information sheets, which outlined what was involved if they chose to take part, and how the information that they provided would be used. Participants were asked to sign a consent form or provide verbal consent at the start. In the case of the focus group with the young people, consent was also sought from the parent/carer via a gatekeeper. All interviews and the focus group were recorded and transcribed. Ethical approval was obtained from Liverpool John Moores University.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Qualitative Findings

The information from the interviews and focus group have been used to produce the below process and outcomes narrative. Supporting quotes are provided where applicable.

#### Overview of the interventions

The suite of programmes that are included in this evaluation engage, in different ways, with: those who are at risk of committing violent behaviour, those who have been imprisoned, people on probation, and their families. A brief overview of each of the programmes is given below, with more detailed information provided in Section 2. Whilst the work of the DWP has not been funded by the MVRP, it has been included as an example of the broader activities that are ongoing and the collaborative nature of the work.

Programmes working with those who have been imprisoned / people on probation	
<b>Restorative Lives Project (Magistra)</b>	<p>Magistra deliver their programmes in prisons and approved premises as part of prisoner's release/resettlement planning. They have a specific focus upon working with those individuals who have a history of violent offending; and work with those aged 19-30 years of age.</p> <p><i>We're a small company, but we're a restorative organisation with 50 years combined experience of working with people in the justice and social sectors. All of our programmes are underpinned by restorative practice, which means participation is on a voluntary basis. Also, because our programmes focus on Life Skills rather than offending behaviour per se, this contributes to successful outcomes achieved because people are ready to engage with something that's going to have a benefit to them going forward.</i></p>
<b>MOMS</b>	<p>MOMS are a project based within the Merseyside area, providing support to those individuals newly released from prison. The project supports men only through the gate to successfully resettle back into Merseyside by engaging them with a volunteer mentor who works with them on a weekly basis to remove the triggers of offending behaviour, by following established pathways out of offending and provide them with the resettlement support they need within the community.</p>
<b>DWP</b>	<p>The DWP became involved in the MVRP to help improve prison leavers access to employment &amp; training opportunities with the aim of preventing re-offending.</p> <p>Prison Work Coaches can fast track ex-offenders and prison leavers onto schemes such as Sector-based Work Academy Programmes [SWAPs] &amp; Kick Start to get them into work to help to break the cycle of re-offending</p> <p><i>Case workers can fast track ex-offenders onto schemes such as sector-based work academy programmes, kick start initiatives for young people to get them into work, job subsidy scheme to get experience and general help and advice.</i></p>

<p><b>Shelter</b></p>	<p>Shelter work with those aged 18-25 years of age who have a history of violence or are at risk of violence to provide low-intensity, short-term support around tenancy, relocation and resettlement within Merseyside. This also includes access to a hardship fund to help individuals buy furniture and pay deposits.</p> <p>Shelter will also work with those outside of this age group, specifically up to the age of 35 years ‘when caseloads allow’ because ‘housing issues will be experienced from those up to the age of 35, simply because of the benefits system’.</p> <p><i>The kind of support I offer really, it varies...It's basically anything to do with housing issues. It's been I've helped people to find properties and to retain properties...furnishing properties, landlord liaison. It's a wide range of things. Other ways to enable people to maintain the tenancies, which is like benefit maximisation and making them aware of their rights and responsibilities as a tenant.</i></p>
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<p><b>Programmes working with those who have been imprisoned / people on probation and their families</b></p>	
<p><b>Time-MattersUK</b></p>	<p>Time-MattersUK, based in Merseyside, provides peer support groups and 1:1 mentoring for children and young people (aged 5-20yrs) impacted by parental or familial imprisonment. They also engage with other family members (parents/carers/grandparents), providing whole family support. In addition to peer and 1:1 support they also provide opportunities for children and young people and their families to undertake activities such as going to the theatre and attending residential.</p> <p><i>So parents who have a partner in prison, and they're looking after the kids there is nothing more isolating. Because there's just nowhere else to go for support and the amount of stigma and shame...I think what's really important is that there are both spaces that children have time on their own and the Mums and saying Mums in this sense, because it often is, but the parents have, and sometimes Gran's as well, actually, that they have time themselves. (TM2)</i></p>
<p><b>POPs</b></p>	<p>POPs is a bespoke service delivered to meet the needs of those who have been imprisoned and their families. Support is provided both in the prison and community settings and provides links between those who have been imprisoned and their families / homes. Initially the VRP funding was awarded to work with 18–25-year-olds that have been convicted of a violent offence, however, due to several issues particularly around the number of referrals the criteria were expanded to help support a larger number of people. The organisation predominately works with males who have been imprisoned and their families due to the gender of the prisons that the service has access to, however, the service is also open to females who have been imprisoned and their families, but these referrals are less frequent.</p> <p>POPs family support services provide emotional and practical support (e.g., housing, debt, health and wellbeing, prison visits) to families. They aim to compliment and provide a link between families and other professional agencies and partner</p>

organisations (e.g., Children’s Services, Probation, Magistra, Time-MattersUK), as well as provide resettlement support for families of those who have been imprisoned/people on probation returning to Merseyside. Dedicated Family Support Workers work within the community alongside NPS/CRC teams in Liverpool, Wirral, Knowsley & Sefton and The Court building in Liverpool.

*The MVRP project is a community project, so it works with people who are either coming out on license from prison or are on a community sentence with the probation service. So, the idea with this project is to offer those families support, support for resettlement when they are coming out of prison. The family would like some support in kind of getting used to that because we know there is a honeymoon period with people coming out of prison. It’s kind of the first six weeks and everyone is happy, in love and everything is great then things kind of fall into old routines and that’s where families start getting stressed out. The men or whoever start to get stressed out and it creates difficulties within the family home and that’s when you are kind of more likely to have something happen that would cause a recall.*

## Programme development and implementation

Across the programmes, it was evident that, regardless of whether the target group to engage with is those who were imprisoned or their families, there were a number of common factors that ran throughout. The programmes provide both practical support (e.g., signposting to other services and helping with housing, employment, finances/debt, health and wellbeing, prison visits) and emotional support through one-to-one mentoring and group work. They illustrate different ways of engaging through both formalised programmes of delivery (e.g., the Restorative Lives programme) and through structured, operational models of delivery, including referring and signposting people to other programmes within the system. It was clear that all the programmes had been designed due to gaps in provision and the need to support those who are imprisoned and their families.

*“...there was a mass exodus of skilled staff, and an influx of staff who weren't necessarily getting the right level of training...and additionally, offenders and prisoners were not actually accessing the right interventions, even though their Sentence Plans and Parole Reports were saying what they had to do to make progress they weren't accessing them. So that was our real concern that there was this disconnect within Services and what was supposed to be happening. That's why we got our heads together and said, Okay, let's start designing some early engagement programmes ourselves that people can access and we set up this CiC company”. (Magistra)*

*“So, the support that we offer is around the seven pathways, so say training, education and employment, a mentor with the mentee may start off by creating a CV, then it could be referring them to any courses, applications with them. We could also refer them to services so around say drug and alcohol or if they wanted to engage in extra services so it could be making referral to them, it could be helping them register with a GP, dentist, obviously support with mental health and referring them to mental health services. It could be registering with property pool if they need help with accommodation, you know, it’s absolutely endless all of the things that the mentors can do.” (MOMs)*

*“That’s crucial because obviously we don’t want people to lose their homes when they are serving short sentences, making problems worse, so that’s crucial. Also, we look at if we can help preserve their employment and ask if they would like us to contact their employer and see if they would be open to holding their job for when they come out of custody” (DWP)*

#### Support, flexibility and a readiness to engage

The provision of a safe, supportive, non-judgemental and understanding space to share experiences was seen to be important. One of the participants spoke about their programmes providing a supportive non-judgmental environment, which individuals engaged well with. Also, that they followed a trauma-informed approach, creating safe spaces to enable individuals to do things that they have not done before, and where individuals are able to make connections. Making connections with those delivering the programmes as well as other service users/ clients was seen to be a precursor to being able to fully engage with the support on offer.

*“...it's always a mixture of enabling the children and their parents if they want to talk about the difficulties of having a, you know, a parent in prison in the family. So it's a safe space to just to discuss, you know, what's going on in an environment where nobody's going to judge them. People understand. And people can sort of tend to share coping strategies. And obviously, other families will have their own lived experiences of the criminal justice system, which is far more valuable than my, you know, what I can offer because of the parents can, you know, advise one another about how to navigate things like prison visits, or how to comfort the children if they're upset, you know, it's shared...” (TM1).*

*“All of our programmes are underpinned by restorative practice principles, which is obviously about being non-judgmental when engaging with people, etc...we also adopt a trauma-informed approach, encouraging disclosure about what's gone on before, because this combined approach creates a safe space. And when they're in a safe space, they feel able to do things that they haven't done before. So we think that's what the key ingredients of success are with our programmes.” (Magistra)*

It was also highlighted, however, that regardless of what the programmes are, they need to be appropriate, and there needs to be a willingness and readiness of people to engage, in order for programmes to be effective. For example, one stakeholder described how they had developed their programme to meet the complex needs of the people they were targeting, where underlying trauma needed to be addressed before they would be ready to attend the MVRP funded programme.

*“...what we found was that a lot of the women were not ready for the Lifeboat programme. They all had a lot of underlying trauma and [were] also very high-risk women, very serious cases...what we did therefore was we actually brought in two gender specific programmes, one's called Intuition, which looks at building confidence and self-esteem and then Intuitive Relationships, [which] follows on from that, because a lot of the women identify relationships as one of the factors that impacted on their behaviours and their lack of self-esteem. Initially, Intuition wasn't one of the programmes that was proposed in the work with the MVRP, however we went to them and we said, look, we think this is the right thing to do, because this is more likely to meet the needs of the women, than pushing through a Lifeboat programme because we've got a contract for this.” (Magistra)*

Some programmes involve group work. Here, stakeholders described how it was beneficial to keep the structure simple, but also necessary to have that structure, so that it is possible to frame the time that is available for engagement and make it meaningful. The importance of taking a flexible approach, in order to tailor delivery to the needs of the service users, was also highlighted.

*“There's an understanding that you might start off thinking we're going to do activity A, B, and C, but actually activity might lead to Z or X ... I think you have to approach this very flexibly and listen to the people you're with... so that you can adapt.” (TM2)*

### Collaboration and innovation

Being able to work collaboratively with colleagues to ‘share the load’ was seen to be important, with some programmes designed to be very interactive and innovative. Examples were provided where programmes gave opportunities for service users to be involved in the delivery of sessions. For example, one service described how they gave those who have been imprisoned a role in delivering sessions so that they understand what is involved and can help to identify that some of their behaviours can be disruptive (thus, supporting them to develop empathy). Additional examples included children and young people being able to undertake peer training and providing support to their peers and enabling children and young people and their families to have ‘fun’ together through days out, ice skating, trips to the theatre and residential.

*“So what we're hoping to do is provide the evidence to say, you know, don't do it in silos, work collaboratively. Also, it's not one size fits all for anything, so it's important how we work together rather than competing among organisations for referrals. Working collaboratively also provides the resources and the flexibility to respond to different needs.” (Magistra)*

Programmes for those who have been imprisoned described focusing on ‘early engagement’ to engage individuals with other support services and identify areas of need. Two programmes spoke about specifically engaging with those who have been imprisoned approximately 12 weeks before their release date to see what targeted support is needed by the individuals and their families their transition from prison and resettlement back into the community. Both of the programmes also had community elements to their provision to provide support post-release, with one saying that this element of their provision would not have happened had they not engaged with the MVRP.

*“Usually about 12 weeks before they leave at resettlement boards in both prisons and at that point we see again if they need help with looking for work, what types of things are they thinking of. Do they have a CV, have they got a bank account, have they got ID to claim benefits if they need to do that.” (DWP)*

*“Finally, out in the community, we do work out in the community as well as in prisons, even though within the prisons we have a work coach team, we do some outreach in local probation offices. Now that has only come about because of the work we've done with the VRP.” (DWP)*

One programme described the suite of interventions that they deliver and highlighted which of these specifically engage with the MVRP.

*“We designed a suite of eight interventions, which we thought were relevant to the needs of the offender population. Of these eight, the MVRP commissioned six*

*programmes as part of Magistra's Restorative Lives Project including Intuition, Intuitive Relationships, Connect, Intuitive Parenting, Restoring Minds and Lifeboat, which has been the most popular. Lifeboat looks at attitudes and community identity, which is why it fits well with the violence reduction partnership in looking at how people see themselves and their attitudes, how they fit into their community. In total during 2021-22 period there were 128 referrals and 121 individuals completed a programme and achieved an OCN Life Skills qualification at Level 2." (Magistra)*

#### Methods and duration of engagement

Peer support groups and group work were seen across a number of the programmes as a good way of facilitating conversations between children and young people, parents/carers, and those who are imprisoned; bringing all of the voices into the room and giving people the time to speak and say what they need to. For those programmes that bring children and young people and parents/carers together into one space, the provision of separate activities was seen to be vital. One of the programmes also spoke about being able to offer engagement in a number of different ways, i.e., online, face-to-face, over the telephone and on a one-to-one basis. This same programme spoke about the success of volunteers (some of whom have lived experience) engaging with their service users and also peer mentors in helping individuals to realise that they are not alone.

*"...we selected five of our brilliant teenagers who don't need us, but want to help. So we have a model where children help children. ...they did a six week peer mentor training programme last Christmas... And that is really coming into its own. So for example, we had a little boy who's just started with us whose Dad has gone to prison is crying for his dad every night very upset. He's about I think he's seven maybe. And one of our senior school peer mentor kids who doesn't need us now goes on with the mentor onto the Zoom to say, 'you know, when I was your age, this is how I used to cry for my Dad, and I'm, you know, I'm coping better'.... It's just like the best thing ever. (TM1)*

*"And you can see, even when new people join the peer support group, and they're sitting there, with all these other young people with someone in prison, they still will say, 'I thought I was the only one you know', even though they can see that they're not it takes them a long time to really understand they're not the only one because it's it feels like that, and it feels very isolating...And that good people do bad things and your Dad who's in prison can still be a good Dad, it's all those nuances. And sometimes Dad is in prison is not a good Dad." (TM2)*

The time frame for engagement was seen to vary across the programmes because of the nature of their offers and the need of the service users. For example, one of the programmes spoke about having no time frame but described that they always prioritised newcomers and there is a role for those older children as peer mentors. Another had a set programme that was delivered over an 8-week period; whilst others spoke about engaging with those who were imprisoned approximately 12 weeks before their release.

*"The priority are newcomers, you know, as part of the community or family, that's the priority. So there's a little bit of intensive focus on just making sure that we're meeting their needs, you know we're offering them something that is flexible, its needs led, and the kind of link worker is appropriate...it's really important that we can have quite a tight*

*a team that we can delegate stuff to. And the older young people, the older generation can really support up on that. That's the model we want to want to use." (TM4)*

*"We've had more time, so I've said so far to staff, if you need to keep it open you can, we've not got a massive backlog of cases waiting, so if you need to keep it open for a bit longer to support them then keep it open, but I would say as a general rule 3 months will be the target. I would say right now it's probably closer to 5 or 6 six months that we are working with cases." (POPs1)*

### Referrals and sign posting

All of the programmes described providing unique support to those who have been imprisoned / people on probation and their families and explained how the type of engagement determines the services and organisations that they refer/signpost to. It was acknowledged by one programme/intervention, that there is a 'wide mix of need'.

Participants spoke about receiving referrals from and referring individuals to other programmes within this targeted suite that aims to support those who have been imprisoned / people on probation and reduce reoffending. One programme spoke about seeing an increase in referral from one of the MVRP partners - POPs. They had also been asked to produce a video to publicise their service for another MVRP partner, Magistra, that would be presented with a carousel of other services on screens that are found in prisons, so those who have been imprisoned may inform their family members about the programme to see if they would like to access it. This same programme stated that they also refer/signpost to a number of services such as Children's Social Service, early help intervention, schools, the education authority, social services, Young Person's Advisory Service (YPAS) and the Merseyside Youth Association (MYA) and mental health services.

*So we've had like an increasing number of referrals from POPs, which is one of the main VRP partners...and also, there was one of the partners...They were doing a carousel of services that were going out into the prisons...I'm not quite sure how whether they've been displayed like the prisons sometimes have these screens that have like, videos or carousels of things going on the prisoners can see. So the prisoners themselves might see something about our service, they might then say to their partner on the phone, okay, look, the kids could do with this help, and then the partner might contact us via the prisoner. But a few of our VIP partners asked me to do like a little video spiel that I think went out somewhere. (TM1)*

*And then it's been with the other partners really, more with MOMS. I've had quite a few cases in common with MOMS. (Shelter)*

Whilst two of the programmes highlighted that, due to the nature of the programmes they delivered, there was not necessarily a crossover with the other MVRP partners, but that they may refer in if appropriate.

*"Well, I don't think we do loads of direct work with [name of organisations] because there's a lot of people that have been on probation or on release. And the only thing that I would say with those organisations is that if they've got children, they want to come to our project. They're welcome kind of thing. But the crossover between what we do and what they're doing is, is so minimum. And again, with like [name of organisation], which is a housing organisation, again, unless I became aware that somebody was in need of*

*housing, and it fitted their criteria, there wouldn't really be a direct crossover between partners, if that makes sense.” (TM1)*

*“...it's difficult sometimes to be honest, because for instance we make fewer referrals directly to Time Matters, because of the nature of what we do with groups we tend to refer through POPS for family support and then POPS refer to Time Matters specifically to support children. So, we refer to POPS in terms of looking at the family engagement and support, and then if there are issues around children needing support POPS will do a referral to Time Matters. Since we started working at HMP Styal however we have made referrals directly to Time Matters as most women are primary carers, whose children are being looked after by relatives needing support. So that's why the programmes are seen as a little bit catalyst to be honest, because we bring information about all MVRP Partner services into the final sessions of each group when participants are drawing up their own Support Plan.” (Magistra)*

One of the programmes highlighted some of the challenges that they had experienced when receiving referrals / trying to refer into these services; with some referrals they were seen to be time limited, for example, for those people on probation moving into approved premises.

*“Most of them if they have children, they're only young themselves, like 18 to 25. If they have children, they're too young for Time Matters. Because Time Matters is from five. Most of the people I'm working with are single. Most of them don't have that much contact with the family. So they've always declined POPs involvements. Some of them have been involved with Magistra, but not many. I've had a few referrals from Magistra. Unfortunately, they what happens is when they've just sent the referrals through, the people have been in a supportive, they've been in an approved premise. Which is time limited.” (Shelter)*

This programme also spoke about most of their referrals coming from community probation workers for those people on probation, with little engagement with those who are imprisoned. As well as highlighting the relationships they had developed with supported living schemes who had 'taken on a lot of new clients' as well as Talen Match around providing access to support such as food banks.

*“Nearly all of my referrals come from community probation workers. There is very few within the prisons. In all honesty, I have supported a couple of people who've come out of prison and then I've helped them to find somewhere or they've been put into promisor hospital some parents, and then I've started working with them...And there's been a few people who have never been into prison, they might be working with probation for whatever reason. But actually met for this service has been people who have perpetrated violence or have the propensity to do so. So I've had people who have just been arrested for assault but not actually convicted.” (Shelter)*

## Facilitators and Barriers/Challenges

There were a number of facilitators and barriers that were identified by the programmes, some of which were specific to the delivery of their particular service.

### Funding and resource

Funding and resource were identified as overarching and interlinking facilitators as well as barriers/challenges. The MVRP was seen to have opened up opportunities in terms of staffing,

activities and the reach of the programmes that they had funded, beginning to change the narrative associated with those who have been imprisoned / people on probation and their families.

*"...it seems to be a really good partnership. I think it has been, you know, it's opened up opportunities. And it's given [name], and Time Matters options, if you like, and different avenues, and it's helped. And I think it is going to help or has helped address that narrative of, you know, we must start viewing children in and of their own right, and not as future offenders, or it's a narrative that unfortunately, government seems to love. But yeah, so I think I as a partnership, it's worked well, it's, it's allowed the expansion of Time Matters in terms of staff, but also in terms of its activities and its reach. And I think that's really positive." (TM2)*

*"The funding that we get is ploughed into what we've got and that's it. Like I said we do get small pockets of funding here and there and we try and put together small bids but for proper sustained family support work, it costs money. To have staff who know what they're doing and know how to do it cost money. So, it's not sustainable unless we are funded, I'm afraid." (POPs1)*

The programmes spoke about the MVRP being 'brilliant', 'approachable' and 'genuinely interested' in the work that was being done, with many stating that without the MVRP funding they would not exist. The exception to this is the DWP programme of work, which is government funded; however, it was highlighted that the community arm of their work would not have happened had it not been for their engagement with the MVRP. One of the programmes spoke about it enabling them to reach more families and give them 'as much as they could' and that their work was important in helping to not only challenge but change the narrative associated with children and young people who have been impacted by having a family member who is imprisoned.

*"We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership. We would not exist I don't think. It's one of our only funding streams. And it is about early intervention. And it's about challenging that myth that if a parent's in prison a young person's going to carry on the same..." (TM4)*

One of the programmes highlighted that they were one person working across the whole of the Liverpool City Region in their role and that this posed challenges in terms of managing a case load, with a waiting list being implemented; but also in terms of referrals etc. being received, for example, when they were on annual leave.

*"It's important ultimately, things as well, like I'd never talk leave or long periods of leave because I was too conscious of the fact that the service users shouldn't be left..." (Shelter)*

#### Covid-19

Covid-19 was cited as a barrier to implementation by a number of the programmes as it was not possible for practitioners to engage easily with their respective service users. For example, in the case of two of the programmes, it was not possible for practitioners to go into the prisons - for one programme this meant they were unable to deliver their sessions, which meant their focus was directed towards approved premises for the first six months of their implementation, until restrictions within the prisons were eased; whilst for another it meant that they did not receive many referrals for support as they were unable to engage with those who have been imprisoned directly. A number of

the programmes commented upon it not being possible to see service users face-to-face with engagement being carried out over the telephone/online.

*“Prisons were subject to Gold Command throughout Covid lockdown and operated subject to Emergency Delivery Models (EDMs) across 4 stages dependent on outbreak status. Magistra introduced a contingency by adapting the Connect Programme, which looks at the Impact of Imprisonment on Family Relationships, into an Individual Learning Pack that people could complete in their cells and linked with POPS to provide support for Family members further impacted by Covid Restrictions during lockdowns. Based on the success of this programme Prisons engaged really well with us and invited us in to discuss how they could support the work of MVRP now that regimes are opening up resulting in the delivery of 5 programmes in Prisons between January and March 2022 and they're really welcoming the fact that they can be part of the MVRP.” (Magistra)*

*“We just need more referrals, absolutely that's has always been the biggest issue for us and it's not really anyone's fault we got awarded this contract and a week after we were due to start the first lockdown hit. All the probation offices were shut down. So, this contract has only ever ran through Covid, so it's made it very difficult to really get the service embedded into the probation service and even within other services, we've opened it out to the likes of YOS for young offenders and their families.” (POPs)*

*“...it was tough to begin with, in the sense of, you know, we couldn't do face-to-face. I couldn't go out to meet the people involved. Once we got started, it was, it flew. I actually implemented a waiting list. I've had to implement a waiting list several times.” (Shelter)*

#### Age, stage and gender of service users

A number of the programmes that engage with individuals who are imprisoned, cited that they specifically work with individuals up to the age of 25 at a particular point in their incarceration; with some of the programmes also being predominantly or solely delivered to single genders. For one programme it was deemed that this age group was a barrier as it excluding a large range of individuals they felt it would be beneficial to access. In this instance, they expanded their age group to include those up to the age of 30 and this was seen to increase the reach of their programme/intervention.

*“In terms of Approved Premises they have to go through this process of easing their way back into the community as they all tend to be high risk individuals who serve longer sentences. So restricting the age category to under 25 didn't necessarily fit. Well, actually was excluding a lot of people to be honest that were in approved premises as a lot of them may have served up to 10 years in custody. So we had a discussion with the MVRP who agreed to lift the age category up to 30. So we've had, you know, a lot more compliant referrals because what was happening before, the prisons in particular, were putting people on groups who thought would benefit from the intervention, but were over the age limits. However, it's working well now, in terms of having a specific criteria.” (Magistra)*

*“I think it would be good to get a women service around the table. I know there is one in Liverpool and I think it would be good if they were involved because the VRP isn't solely open to men, even though it's the majority of men that would fit the profile. It isn't solely open to them and I think it would be good to have a women service especially seeing as we kind of broadened the horizons but also some of the cases that we work with, especially some of the license condition cases where they're coming out of prison, some*

*of them are women and it would be good to be able to have a bit more of a direct link into a women's service." (POPs)*

Programmes spoke about the benefits of being able to be flexible around the age ranges of those they engaged with. One of the family-focused programmes spoke about their target age range being children and young people aged 5 to 18, however, they included those both younger and older (up to the age of 20). This was seen to be a key strength of the programme/intervention in that it brought all ages together and they were seen to 'mix really well' regardless of age, gender and the stage they were at in their experience. Whilst one of the programmes spoke about wanting to work more with those aged 17 years and above.

*"...I've never really managed to understand how she does it, she holds, I've seen her, over the years facilitate groups with children as young as five, and young people up to 18/19. And they are in that space together. It's pretty extraordinary, actually, because I've not really seen others manage that in the same way. So they'll often be together for a bit at the beginning of it at the end of then she might separate them into activity tables around their age group. But they often are mixed as well. And it's, that's a really key strength of that organisation is that it doesn't matter what age of stage you are a boy or girl, they kind of mix really well. And I think a lot of that's the way [name] brings herself to it,, I think it just kind of works. It feels like a very safe space. And it's the children will say a lot. It feels like a family and, and it kind of does. But it's so funny. It's a really interesting thing to watch someone bring themselves to something in a really authentic way." (TM2)*

*"I would like to see it open up to younger people as well because I've worked with YOT quite a bit. So those people who are coming over from probation, so those 17 and a half. So, to be able to work with kids and their families because I've found those have always been my harder cases with more things involved and more help is needed. So, for example one of the first ones I got he was 17 and his mum was living below the breadline, like she was really struggling, she was on PIP, on disability and her youngest son had a disability also. So, she needed help getting PIP for them, she needed to check her universal credit was okay, she needed help moving. Her 17 and a half year old was in a gang so they needed to move, her son is back in prison and she wants to move to start a new life, so it just seems to be a lot, like they need a lot more help and if we could try to get to these kids younger and try to show them that it's not a life you want for you and your family." (POPs, Practitioner 2)*

### Developing partnerships

Programmes spoke about the importance of developing and maintaining partnerships in the best interests of the service users. For example, one of the programmes that took place in a prison setting spoke about depending on where individuals are in their sentence, they are able to link them in with the prison Activity Hub to explore aspects such as apprenticeships and other things that they can start getting involved in whilst they are in prison; or the DWP Work Coaches in terms of the kinds of jobs/apprenticeships that are available in Merseyside, or start processes for apprenticeships so that they can get into it on release. Whilst another spoke about the benefits of developing partnerships with local schools.

*"I think developing a partnership within schools is important. Again it's just about have we got capacity to do that, but you know, I'm a firm believer in if you get schools on board*

*and supporting young people while they're in school. Most of the issues are coming from schools, sorry the school environment...members of staff or teachers need to be a bit more clued up on it as well." (TM4)*

*"In both prisons we staff something called employment hubs, along with all the partners where we give general employment advice and training and you know advice to serving prisoners." (DWP)*

One programme that delivered programmes within the prison setting also spoke about seeing the service users as partners and that they asked for feedback from individuals around developing the programme as well as involving them in programme delivery. They felt it important that their activities not just been seen as a tick box exercise.

*"When they talk about their probation programmes the view was very much that they're called in to a tick box approach, they're told to fill things out...and they don't believe there's any building the social skills that they need, the life skills that they need to be able to get their lives back on track." (Magistra)*

They also spoke about bringing in other MVRP partners to provide information about the support that they offer. This was seen to have been easier now that they were allowed back into the prison setting. As well as working collaboratively with the prisons (in those cases where those who are imprisoned are moved to another prison) to ensure that where training was being carried out, individuals were able to put this 'on hold' rather than losing the input they had given thus far.

*"More recently, obviously, we've gone back into the prisons now, we've done quite a lot of programmes in the prisons...And so what we do is we bring in all the other partners, we've asked those that can come in and present themselves in person and say, you know, I can offer this support etc. For MVRP services unable to come into the prison we have put together a short film with partners introducing their support services and how to access them. We also engage the Work Coaches and Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) services both in prisons and the community." (Magistra)*

*"So what you can do when people are on a course in prisons is put a note on their record 'on hold' for the course so we've now have that conversation with the prison to prevent transfers out in the middle of the programme, and they're doing that with everybody now that starts a programme". (Magistra)*

#### Additional needs of those who are imprisoned

##### *Neurodiversity*

Neurodiversity (e.g., ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia etc) within the prison population was felt by one programme to be an issue that is not addressed and is an excluding factor for some of those who are imprisoned because 'they'd be seen as too difficult'. They spoke about tailoring their activities within their sessions to allow individuals to, for example, move about as this was seen to help them concentrate more. They also highlighted that many younger people who have been imprisoned have a diagnosis and medication, but they do not necessarily like taking medication because of how it feels.

*"...We let them walk around, because if they've got neurodiverse issues, they need to distract themselves to concentrate. There was a set of bongo drums in the Chapel (where the session was taking place. We work in a circle, because it's restorative practice, and*

*one guy got up in the middle of the session and started playing the bongo drums. So it might be distracting for other people, but it's not distraction for them. It's actually a way of listening to [what we're saying]. We discussed this openly with him and with the Officers present to ensure it was managed effectively without excluding the individual. In [name of prison], where, obviously, the younger people are, a lot of them had a Neurodiverse diagnosis. They were put onto medication, which they don't take because they said it makes them feel like a zombie...and they don't want to be zombies. They want to be 'normal', as they put it. So they don't take the medication, which again impacts on their behaviour.” (Magistra)*

This programme/intervention spoke about looking to begin a new project raising awareness to staff such as police and probation, developing responsiveness, as well as looking at training in schools.

*“...so the guys with you have neurodiversity issues. Again, they would normally struggle to access any of this because they're generally seen as a problem and would be excluded. And they find it difficult to concentrate, so people see them as rude. They see them as not caring. They do things impulsively, etc. So we have proposed a project to raise awareness for staff across the police, prisons and probation of how to identify somebody with a neuro divergent approach and to not take their behaviours/responses personally, which is a problem we seem to have at the moment with staff take things very personally, rather than understanding it is how that individual's brain works.” (Magistra)*

#### *Support plans*

It was identified by one of the programmes supporting those who have been imprisoned, that there are challenges around individual sentencing and support plans. Another service offered information and guidance during a 'confusing and stressful transition period'. It was felt that those who have been imprisoned benefit from information on what their sentence means and how certain aspects of the criminal justice system works.

*“...we are now in a position where we have built up a significant amount of evidence, which we will put together into a thematic report. And then the thematic report will be shared with probation and probation managers and we can suggest they pick up on these issues, it may help you with engagement as a lot of the guys are telling us they don't even know their probation officer is when they're in prison... And, most of them report not having had sentence plans done.” (Magistra)*

*“We are here just to offer support and it might be anything from understanding what the order is, how RAR days' work, how the conditions of the order work, how tagging works.” (POPs)*

Programmes commented that being part of the MVRP has enabled them to develop their activities so that individuals do not have to navigate services on their own, and that engagement with probation and the prisons may not have resulted in these effects.

*“...we've never been the type of people that are competitive with other organisations, we know that you don't get things done if you compete against each other. In fact, people fall through the loops. So, we've always been the kind of organisation that works with other people...as I say, we trained POPs staff to deliver the Connect programme in a couple of prisons that they worked in, and I know that Prison Family Support services are being*

*recommissioned now so they've asked can they build it into their bid. So we agreed to help them to build it into their bid this time and they'll be able to evidence now what they've been doing. I also don't think we would ever get this far if we had gone through the prisons or probation commissioning processes as they are not ready to focus on one of the things we're keen on, which is the longer-term outcomes. The other benefit of working with the police is they've got access to the PNC to follow-up in terms of recording reoffending rates." (Magistra)*

*"...we do work out in the community as well as in prisons, even though within the prisons we have a work coach team, we do some outreach in local probation offices. Now that has only come about because of the work we've done with the MVRP." (DWP)*

## Outcomes

Across the different programmes, there were a number of outcomes that were identified on the wider system, family, and individual levels. These outcomes are also detailed in the whole system logic model (Figure 2).

### Individual-level Outcomes

On an individual level there were a number of different outcomes that were identified by the programmes. For those programmes that provided activities within the prison setting, it was hoped that through taking part and feeling supported, those who were imprisoned would be able to:

- increase their motivation to take part
- develop transferable skills - looking at what they have learned and how they can use in everyday life
- build the positive relationships and engagement needed to distance themselves from crime
- develop empathy and understanding around the impact of their actions upon others
- identify coping strategies that may help them
- increase their awareness that they are not on their own and be able to acknowledge and understand how they are feeling
- gain an accredited qualification from engaging in the activities within the programme/intervention

*"We keep saying they're not offence focused programmes, none of them are, however during discussions they all talk about their offences, which enables discussions about building empathy, you're talking about understanding the impact on others of what they've done, which again, brings in the restorative practice approach. What harm has been done? Who was involved? What was the impact? How can they use the Life Skills they have learned to make things better and prevent future harms? So those are the themes that come through each of the programmes." (Magistra)*

Other hoped for outcomes highlighted by programmes that supported those who have been imprisoned/people on probation included: increased engagement in health and education services as well as new activities e.g., volunteering, and the development of new skills. Access to accommodation

and feeling secure where they lived was also considered to be an important outcome for those reintegrating back into their communities.

Overarching outcomes of these programmes were to empower individuals and enable them to act independently as well as improving the support pathway for those who are vulnerable to criminality.

For those family focussed programmes a number of individual focussed outcomes experienced were seen to include:

- Increased resilience and improved mental health and wellbeing (including increased confidence and self-esteem) in the children and young people and parents/carers, by helping them to realise that they are unable to control the actions of others.

*“I think I personally see more enjoyment and more, like, more mental health benefits...the kid who I mentor, again, was so nervous to go to the first one, and then every time we go on Zooms he’s like right, when’s the next one [name], what can I do now, and he like really wants to see people who are like him.” (TM3)*

*“...it’s like that kind of coffee morning shared experience isn’t it, where nobody’s going to judge them. And people are going to share both, you know, empathy, as well as advice and guidance through peer support...[name] and [name] are looking after the kids doing pumpkin carving, and you’re sitting around having a coffee, you’re getting a break, don’t forget, everybody’s in an involuntary single parent capacity. The other parent is in prison often, so it’s a break. So there’s that, but also again, their own self esteem. So, for example, we had a Mum come to us this year, she’s not long come out of prison, and she was so anxious about coming, but now she doesn’t ever miss a group. So for her, it’s like, it’s fellowship, I guess. Reduction in anxiety I guess is a big one.” (TM1)*

*“I think resilience...for the kids to understand that they can’t really control other people’s actions...One of the biggest things that they do is that they blame themselves, they harbour guilt. So we have kids who are like eight or nine that think it’s their fault that their parents offended. And they really do blame themselves. If I’d have been a better kid, if I’d have been more polite, if I’d tidied my bedroom, if I’d stopped my Dad taking those drugs, if I’d have made him stay in at night...some of them do live in really chaotic families, that when these things happen, that you’ve got enough resilience, enough people to go and lean on to get you through it, to get you through the bad times.” (TM1)*

- Children and young people and parents/carers were able to develop positive, trusting relationships.

*“Things like how to cope if you’re missing, somebody. How to cope if you’ve become really angry with the person who’s away for doing what they did. Schools will often refer to as because they’ll say that, you know, this child in their class is really angry because their Dad did whatever, or they’re crying their eyes out, because they’re missing their Mum, and the teachers need extra support to be able to handle that. And then you have wider and wider issues that are all too common. But if the parents committed a crime that’s plastered all over the press, that brings a whole host of awful kind of repercussions for the children...We’re building positive relationships...positive relationships are key to whether these children are going to be able to cope with this or not.” (TM1)*

*"They're used to not trusting professionals. Because, yeah, in case, you know, they say, I've had a horrible week with the kids, and it's going to trigger some kind of referral to social services, you know, they just want normal, normality." (TM1)*

- Children and young people were seen to be able to develop a sense of purpose through engagement in the wider opportunities that are available to them.

*"One of our peer mentors is going to come into the Uni next semester and get to talk to my students... I think what we're really good at is defying the stereotypes. You know she said can I come in and talk in one of your lectures. So I'm like absolutely you can... We had a big international conference that I headed just a few weeks ago with kids with parents in prison from America, Canada, Africa, New Zealand, and we had our kids from the Time Matters project coming on to that conference." (TM1)*

#### Outcomes for Families

One of the programmes spoke about their work helping to make families feel safer.

*"I just think it does ultimately, reduce it helps families I suppose to be safer, I guess. Some of our families, there has been instances of domestic violence, and then they might rethink about, you know, they might have better ways to keep themselves safe. Or they might consider using other services, because they, you know, talk to us, for example, if they feel that they need to. So I yeah, I imagine that, I don't know, for sure. But I know that through conversations that we've had with some families that, you know, because we raised the self-esteem of the parents as well, they, they may be able to cope better with some of the domestic issues at home." (TM1)*

Whilst another found that having support from a service helped release some of the stress and uncertainty during a very tumultuous time; with improved family relationships being cited as a hoped for outcome by a number of the programmes.

*"Client was extremely thankful for all the support provided by POPs as she didn't have anyone to listen to her thoughts and feelings surrounding her sons arrest and release. Because this was her first time experiencing someone in the criminal justice system, she was grateful for the advice and questions answered. This therefore ensured that she worried less and was able to support her son with all the correct knowledge. She is continuing to work closely with her son's probation officer." (POPS)*

#### Wider Outcomes

Improved outcomes for the prison community due to improved relationships between the prison officers and those who are imprisoned was identified by one programme/intervention.

*"Then you use the restorative questions, then you say what happened? You know, that had an impact on us and then they said, 'Oh, I'm really sorry, you must feel really bad. We didn't want to upset you, that was really horrible to do that, you know, we shouldn't have done that'. Just getting them both in that position, where they were apologising for their behaviour and recognising the impact on others was very positive...and also valuing the fact that they weren't being punished for it because obviously it could have resulted in them being kicked off the group, and could have lost privileges. We had to talk to the officers as to why we wanted to deal with it this way rather than go through the formal*

*adjudication processes...and he said there's just so much just came out of that meeting that we didn't know and we have learned a lot about how to talk to the prisoners that will help us going forward, and his attitude to staff has improved so much. So that's why we know that staff are open to training, you know, about anything like this, because it makes their life easier as well. That's the point, for anybody to do anything, it's got to have some impact for them. So once you point out to the officers that actually, if you have a better relationship with them, the people you're working with, then it makes your life easier, you're going to get less stress, you're going to get less disruption on the wings, they'll just quietly do what you're asking them to do. Because you're all relating well.” (Magistra)*

*“You do get old fashioned officers who think why are you helping them? Why are you bothered? You do get that quite often to be honest, it's a bit of a power trip and they like it, so that is a barrier that anyone in POPs will probably tell you. But we are always pushing for the family because they do tarnish them, like that's their family so, especially if they have had a run in with that person they will penalise the family.” (POPs)*

The work of some of the programmes was seen to focus upon reducing stigma through challenging perceptions and mindsets from the top-down. One of the programmes spoke about the importance of challenging stigma that had been perpetuated through government narrative and the press around children and young people in these circumstances being on a trajectory where they may end up in prison themselves. Through reducing stigma, individuals and families may then feel more connected to their communities.

*“Very unfortunately, we have a government who's bought into this narrative that you know, [if you] have a parent in prison, you're X number of times more likely to end up in prison yourself. So a very dangerous narrative based on some very outdated research...and a lot of people in this field would really question the wisdom behind using research like that to make headlines that you often see. And they're extremely dangerous. And I think children and young people...are well aware of that narrative. They're perceived in certain ways. There's a lot of stigma around that. And they challenge that all the time, by the way they speak. You just have to listen to them... they speak extremely well about how they're perceived. And if you listen to them, you know, in that group, there are future astronauts, footballers, teachers. You know, they're not young people who are on a trajectory of ending up in prison. Now, we know that because they're getting all the support they need. So their resilience is incredibly high. Lots of young people who get no support, have no resilience, and then are more susceptible, vulnerable to unhelpful behaviours. So if there's a link, it needs to be much more unpacked.” (TM2)*

In the longer-term it was hoped that through these programmes, there would be a reduction in those who are released from prison reoffending as well as generational offending with a reduction in children and young people going on to adopt offending behaviours (preventative, early intervention).

*“I think it could reduce the amount of people who offend...I mean, we went on a residential and the kids were saying, ‘we've never been on holiday with our family's before’ or they go to the theatre and how many kids on low income, I'm not saying everyone, is on a low income, but it's a single parent household now. A parent's in prison. How many children will get that experience? I just think, if they see the good that we're doing, maybe later on in life, they might think, ‘oh, no, because I had that experience when I was a kid. And, you know, it was lovely. And I don't want to go down that route’.” (TM3)*

*“The offending literally just says offending, so I take it as, so when I speak to them it’s not are you going to re-offend because I think a load of them will just be like no I’m not going to re-offend. It’s more around how do you feel like you are coping now you are out, are you feeling okay with probation, it’s a lot more broad than just offending.” (POPs)*

## Ongoing resourcing and sustainability

### Creating and developing stronger partnerships

The programmes spoke about the importance of developing relationships and promoting the work that they are doing (raising awareness to other staff and service providers), as well as the importance of continuity of intelligence in terms of the data that is collected and how this is shared. They highlighted the importance of collaborative practice going forward and that adequate resources, flexibility of approach and a strong foundation upon which they could build were key factors that would be important in helping to address ongoing need.

*“I spoke with [name] about what the data that we collect, so that we can share that data with them. And in her role. And what was fascinating is when I was mentioning individuals, she knew them. So you’ve got that continuity of intelligence, if you like, as well, in terms of doing that.” (Magistra)*

*“...ideally it’d be great to have that solid foundation so you can work closer with your mentees and closer with your staff, have a really strong support team, do some training with your staff...and I can see it whenever we come together I can see that, but we want that sustained, you know full time five days, seven days a week.” (TM4)*

One of the programmes spoke about wanting to concentrate on creating partnerships and developing stronger partnerships and the importance of being able to embed their programme into other services, which included a more ‘flexible’ and ‘mobile’ service. They also highlighted the importance of having appropriate referral processes and pathways.

*“...I do think creating partnerships now could be another aspect. Because, you know, [name of programme/intervention], it’s on its own really. It’s quite unique. But if we can embed ourselves into other services... over the next 12 months, we’re looking at maybe developing stronger partnerships with people and developing a more comprehensive service, which is flexible and mobile. So you don’t have to wait for someone to come onto Zoom if they can’t stand looking at their mush...We can go out and see them. And then you can learn a lot by knockin’ on someone’s door, which I’m always keen on. You can see a lot...it’s more real. That’s what we probably want to want to do.” (TM4)*

### Sustainability and Funding

The programmes were forward looking and proactive around their ongoing resourcing and sustainability. One spoke about their programme now being fully embedded in prisons and that conversations had already begun (at the time of their interview in November 2021) around funding for the next 12-months. They also had additional activities that they were looking to carry out, funding for which had been secured from the Probation Service; as well as additional funding that had been received from the MVRP education funding stream to deliver a revised version of one of their programmes to young people at Key Stage 3 who are in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) – this work also included training police school officers, prison officers and probation.

*"The probation approved premises lead for the region is funding it. We're actually going to train probation staff in approved premises in January... so they're funding it themselves. And then obviously, it's under Licence so Magistra provides all Quality Assurance and Staff Support as they deliver however they will need to find the funding next year for the licence." (Magistra)*

*"We're also now working with the education workstream. And we're working with [name] pupil referral unit, we've had a couple of sessions with them, we've given them the manuals to look at... So they've gone through it with their staff team, their staff team are really keen to work with the students who are very much on the cusp of the justice side of it. And so what we're going to do is adapt the programme and we'll probably rename the Lifeboat programme to fit with the younger population." (Magistra)*

One of the family focussed programmes spoke about receiving funding through the Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services (LCVS) HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) Fund, with which they had been able to provide food parcels to families.

*"We've had loads of support this summer with food. So we've been able to feed families, which has been amazing. You know, we got, I got me Mum actually to do some menu recipes. And we shared the recipes with all our families, and we watch your videos coming back, seeing families, children chopping up, making things, making pizzas and just seeing like this vision of families cooking together, eating together, which is very rare. So again, just trying to bring that solid kind of family base unit that people ignore now, together, and again the magic of cooking as a family. It's been amazing the photographs and videos we've got of Mum's saying I haven't cooked for ages and this is dead easy. It's all healthy. So again, we're just laying little seeds there about...having a laugh to be free and have fun with your children, to cook with your children." (TM4)*

The same programme also spoke about becoming a CIC, which was felt would open up opportunities for further funding.

*"...we're in the process of converting our organisation into a CIC. I think if we do become a CIC, that should open up more opportunities for us to apply for funding. And we yeah, there's a couple of big bids out there that we are going to there's something called the Youth Endowment Fund that we are hoping to be part of going forward. We had a meeting the other day, with Everton in the Community, and other partners. So we're hoping to be part of a consortium going forwards, so we can get that funding. But yeah, we're just we're just looking around to be honest, at options." (TM1)*

One of the programmes spoke about the importance of the longevity of their programme of work and that there was a 'massive need' for it, especially as it was across the whole of the Liverpool City Region. They also felt that the programme would benefit from an additional person to manage the increasing caseload.

*"So it's Liverpool's City region wide, so that's huge. The money obviously needs to come in from the VRP. And we are looking at maybe other supplementary streams. I'm in talks with our business development team about that, and also our community fundraisers to see if they're able to raise money specifically for this service." (Shelter)*

## 4.2 Review of Monitoring Data

This evaluation included a review of the quarterly reports that all MVRP programmes are asked to complete, as part of the routine monitoring process. Additional information about the monitoring of outcomes was explored through qualitative interviews and review of programme documentation. This section provides a summary of the information that was obtained for the evaluation, alongside an assessment and summary of the quality of the data.

### MVRP Data Capture

Some of the funding applications submitted to the MVRP by programmes presented a range of quantitative data in their proposals to evidence the scale and scope of their target audiences, as well as details about the prospective beneficiaries they might reach with the additional funding. Such information clearly helps quantify the (potential) reach of the programmes. However, in the applications, outcomes were often referred to in ‘softer’ qualitative terms and less frequently supported by ‘hard’ data, such as reductions re-offending rates, number of persons in education/jobs/housing, or similar. It is valuable to take baseline measures from which distance travelled and impact may be assessed for those being supported, and to provide an indication as to whether the intervention is working as intended.

In preparation for the programmes commencing in 2021, the MVRP developed and issued a proforma for all funded programmes, with the purpose of understanding how their investment was supporting a reduction in offending and increasing the reach of such support. The information requested from the programmes across each quarter included: beneficiary details (whether children or adults and age groups); details of any secondary beneficiaries; ethnicity; and place (Ward, LSOA, post code). Additional written narrative was also requested around: the activities carried out with the MVRP funding; what difference this has made to the beneficiaries and the wider community; challenges experienced during the quarter and how these were addressed; further information relating to secondary beneficiaries; details of unexpected/unintended outcomes (positive and negative); and stories of change. These proformas were collected on a quarterly basis during 2021/22. The initial proforma issued in the first quarter was returned to the MVRP as a completed word document. In the second quarter, efforts were made to streamline data capture, and the form was amended and hosted online for beneficiaries to make their quarterly reporting returns. The uptake of the old and new proformas differed between programmes. An overview of the data returned from each programme is provided in Table 1 below. Sefton CVS (MOMS) did not start until Quarter 3, which is why no data was returned before this time.

An overview of the quarterly data captured is presented in Table 1 below. This highlights how changes in the data capture form has – alongside the relatively short time series – limited the ability to explore changes over time.

**Table 1: Overview of the available data return format from each programme/intervention, 2021/22**

Programmes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Time-MattersUK</b>	Old form	Old form	New form	New form
<b>Shelter</b>	Old form	New form	New form	New form
<b>POPs</b>	Old form	New form	New form	New form
<b>Magistra – Restorative Lives</b>	N/A	New form	New form	New form
<b>Sefton CVS (MOMS)</b>	No return	No return	New form	New form

There were a number of challenges that were identified in the capture of the data, which are detailed below.

#### Challenges in completing MVRP data returns

During the qualitative interviews, programme leads were asked about their experiences of completing the data proformas. Here, the programme leads described how the forms were challenging to complete; this was, in part, due to the lack of practical direction on the proforma itself and a lack of distinction and definition of categories and metrics therein (explored further in **nature of data captured** below).

A representative from one of the projects commented on how their data returns to MVRP represented the number of clients actively engaging in the service (i.e., those who had been allocated a mentor or attending a group). However, this did not include the many other referrals dealt with, screened and more informally supported. Although resource intensive, such contact was not captured in the data returned to the MVRP. This service also recognised that, owing to a lack of resource/capacity in being able to capture and analyse these data, they were not always capturing data to better understand how prospective clients find out about their services and the relevant referral pathways through which they arrive at their service. It was also felt that, due to the challenges around resource, analysing these data to provide such insight was difficult, and discussion focused on the possibility of additional support provided by, e.g., the evaluation providers (e.g., LJMU) in helping programmes to establish ways to capture information about their stakeholders.

#### Nature and utility of the data captured

In its current form, it was felt that the way in which the data are captured may possibly cause confusion, for example, it is unclear whether the data captures the number of unique beneficiaries or whether returns reflect duplicate presentations. This may pose potential challenges associated with double counting across quarterly data returns. It is not always clear whether the quarterly returns ought to or do represent the total current case load, the case load in that quarter, or only new referrals in the quarter in question. For example, a representative from one of the projects suggested the return is completed each quarter based on the total number of persons accessing the service at that point in time. However, this means it is not possible to identify the number of unique referrals or the number of new referrals in any given quarter as a proportion of the total case load. Consequently, it is possible that other projects may be returning data based on the number of new/unique referrals in any given

quarter, and, if so, different units are measured between projects in the quarterly data returns. (This might also vary depending on who is interpreting the form in any given quarter).

Illustrative examples from some of the data returns are detailed here to further highlight some of the additional challenges in completing data returns and the ambiguous information that results. Whilst some aggregate level information about basic demographic characteristics of beneficiaries is captured each quarter, in their current form they do not enable further exploration and understanding of the relationship between categories. In the example depicted in Figure 1 below, we can see how the number of total beneficiaries reported by an intervention may be unclear/ambiguous. For example, it may be that a total of 39 beneficiaries are being reported (if all are unique presentations). Or it may be the case that 21 adults are reported as beneficiaries, of whom 19 are parents or carers (if beneficiaries can be represented in more than one category). Moreover, how these data are entered or intended may differ dependent upon who is entering the data from any given intervention and in the absence of instructions and definitions on the form itself.

**Figure 1: Excerpt of quarterly data return**

		Quarter 1
<b>Children: Age Group</b>	0-4 years	
	5-11 years	
	11- 16 years	
	16 – 18 years	
<b>Adults</b>	N/A	
	Lone Parent	
	Parent/Carers	18
	18 - 25	5
	25+	16

Another project reported 70 individuals as beneficiaries in one quarter. However, the sex breakdown was reported as comprising 18 female and 10 male beneficiaries. As there is no further question in the form asking for the number for whom sex is unknown, it is not clear whether the sex for the remaining beneficiaries (assuming there were in fact 70) is unknown or whether this is an inputting error. In a third project quarterly return, a total of zero beneficiaries were returned, whilst in another non-numeric data were returned; instead indicating ‘yes’ next to a category rather than detailing the number of beneficiaries in that category. Some of these examples related to the older form, which has since been superseded with an online form that may be better able to constrain the format of responses, they illustrate how clear instructions for data inputting, formatting and examples can help improve the design of the form, so it returns meaningful data moving forward. Ambiguities such as these preclude any meaningful interpretation and analysis of the data such as a breakdown of beneficiaries by demographic characteristics. When exploring the current (online) data capture form, it was felt that further information may be gleaned that would enable the MVRP to determine more about the **nature of the contact** or work with beneficiaries once they are referred into a service – for example, how long clients engaged for or how often, or whether they completed the intervention (if set in duration or activities).

Participants mentioned the **value of having insights into referral pathways and onward referrals**, however, currently this information is not captured in MVRP data returns. Whilst some free text narratives offered provide some context as to how the questions had been interpreted and returns completed, the data collection proforma does not provide a way in which projects can evidence their **outcomes**. One participant noted the data captured focuses on outputs (e.g., number of persons seen), rather than outcomes (e.g., the impact of the contact on the individuals seen / activity of each

initiative). By incorporating information around outcomes, and the impact the interventions may be having, it would be beneficial for the projects as they would be able to use such evidence in future funding bids. It was suggested that whilst services are familiar with capturing referrals and output data, they may be less confident and skilled about evidencing impact and effectiveness (i.e., the quality of intervention). One project commented on the nature of the outcome measures captured suggesting that having an evaluation framework that enabled them to not only capture information about people accessing their service but evaluate the benefits of attending (e.g., distance travelled, and change(s) experienced) would help them evidence the impact of their work, which they shared with other partners.

Due to some of the challenges outlined above, it was suggested that the narrative information provided in the quarterly returns was essential to provide contextual information and further understand the quarterly activity and impact relating to each intervention. It is acknowledged, however, that this may be both resource intensive to provide and interpret and also limits any comparison over time and/or between interventions in the number of types of beneficiaries worked with. There was agreement amongst some of the participants that there needs to be a clear purpose to what was being asked for, which was primarily thought to be evidencing outcomes associated with project activity. Presently the quarterly data returns are read by the MVRP Probation lead. It was suggested that it would be useful for programmes to receive further detail about what happens to this information, how it is used, and who by.

## 5. Summary of Whole System Impact

### Working with the MVRP

Programmes spoke about welcoming working with the MVRP and also about coming together at monthly meetings where all the programmes of work were able to discuss how things were developing and any cases they may have in common.

*“But we did used to have one a month. And it was like an operational meeting really, where we could get ideas from each other to see how each other were going and discuss any cases that we had in common.” (Shelter)*

One saw the benefits of being part of the MVRP was that they did not have to ‘navigate services’ because through working as a partnership it helped to cut out ‘some of the barriers’ and also provided a ‘platform’ through which to access other partners within and outside of the MVRP.

*“It [the MVRP] gives us that platform because obviously there are other agencies outside of the VRP as well that we can also direct them [prisoners] to and say, “Well, have you spoken to this group or that service?” For instance, with women we talked about Working Chance, they're a very good charity, in terms of supporting women into employment, as a lot of women really struggled to get into employment, particularly because of their high risk if they're in approved premises. But obviously, there's lots of other issues around childcare and other issues as well. So that, hopefully, at some point post Covid, public services will get back on track and this is a way of being able to just pick something up and run with it.” (Magistra)*

The MVRP were also seen to help raise awareness around the work of the programmes on their social media and website; as well as keep the programmes up to date of other funding opportunities that may be available to them.

*“We went to a funding meeting actually for a different pot...We were invited to that meeting by the guy from the VRP. So it's about making us aware, raising awareness of other funding opportunities to enable us to sustain ourselves as well as just directly providing the funding...You know, we send them stuff that we've done, they promote us on their website and social media and so I guess they're marketing as well.” (TM1)*

### Contributing to the Overarching Ambitions of the MVRP

In line with best evidence, a key aim of the MVRP is to develop a whole systems public health approach to prevent violence across Merseyside. In terms of supporting those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families and reducing reoffending, it is evident that the programmes funded by the MVRP, and broader activity (such as that delivered by the DWP), are working to achieve positive outcomes for the individuals and their families who use them. The programme providers spoke about their understanding and experiences of working with the MVRP, specifically with reference to how they contribute to the strategic aims of the partnership. One partner described how their programme focused on the early intervention aspect of violence prevention and acknowledged that many of the MVRP programmes also provide targeted family support where domestic violence or other forms of violence had already been identified/experienced.

*"I know that the overall strategic aim [of the MVRP] is to reduce violence. And I know that the part that we play is very early intervention, whereas a lot of the other partners are working with families where they're targeted because there has been major instances of violence, whereas with our children we're trying to stop them from becoming violent...I probably know some organisations better than I know others within the MVRP, because the crossover is more obvious with some of the partners than it is with other partners. Would I be able to tell you in depth what everybody does? Probably not in depth, but I've probably got a very vague idea of what each partner does." (TM1)*

## Joint Working across the System

The evaluation has highlighted some, albeit limited, examples of joined up working between the programmes, such as the promotion of other programmes or referrals into others. For example, one partner described how they were receiving referrals from other areas and programmes, and how this was thought to be due to awareness raising activities happening within prisons, where people who are imprisoned find out about the service and then mention it to the partner, who then makes contact.

*"We've had an increasing number of referrals from POPS, which is one of the main VRP partners. There was one of the partners...they were going out into the prisons...So the prisoners themselves might see something about our service, they might then say to their partner on the phone, okay, look, the kids could do with this help, and then the partner might contact us via the prisoner. But a few of our VRP partners asked me to do like a little video that I think went out somewhere." (TM1)*

Magistra described their experiences of working with partners. Here, the representative from this programme described how they had worked with Shelter and POPs to provide joined up support for their service users and alert them to additional support that they and their families were able to access. Time Matters was also asked to provide a video to promote their programme. They also described how they identified the need to include the DWP within their programmes and were currently exploring the development of a mentoring programme for women.

*"We flagged that up after the first couple of groups that we did, to be honest. We said why are we not involving DWP in this, because the partners you've got obviously, you've got the families, and MOMS...we're exploring the idea of developing our own mentoring programme for women. Whilst we are aware of two women's services in Merseyside they don't seem to connect with each other... And the other challenge is that Shelter only work with people in the last two weeks of their sentence, which is not helpful, because you can't organise somewhere to live in the last two weeks of a sentence. So we fed this information back, and we've had that conversation with Shelter, however, they shared that it's the contract that they have...So they have prepared a little film for us that we show in the final session. And obviously, POPs is always based in the prisons. So we bring their local manager in to talk about what POPs offers. Time Matters also they did a little film for us..." (Magistra)*

One of the programmes spoke about monthly meetings at which all of the programmes met to discuss progress, challenges etc.

*"On a monthly basis we set up a VRP operation meeting which will be Shelter, POPs, Magistra and Time Matters. So we all attend and then we would go through our caseload and if we had any cross referrals that we are able to identify any sort of things that we*

*need to address, any problems. Sort of how many referrals we had going forward. So we would do that on a monthly basis with the partners of the VRP.” (MOMS)*

One partner described the recommendations published within the Farmer Reviews (Farmer, 2017, 2019), which focus on ‘family ties’ and upon which some of the programmes delivered to support those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families in Merseyside focus. This partner felt it important to highlight that not all families will want to connect with those who are imprisoned and should not be made to feel guilty or responsible for the behaviour of a loved one in terms of their original offending behaviours or potential reoffending.

*“I think it's respecting the fact that, even with major government documents, there will be outsiders. We want to make sure that we say ‘children impacted by parental imprisonment’ and not ‘children with a parent in prison’. Just because they're impacted, they don't necessarily want a relationship with them. And we have to respect that. But they still need support...So we can't say that support is pinned on family ties...it's probably worth raising in terms of nuance.” (TM1)*

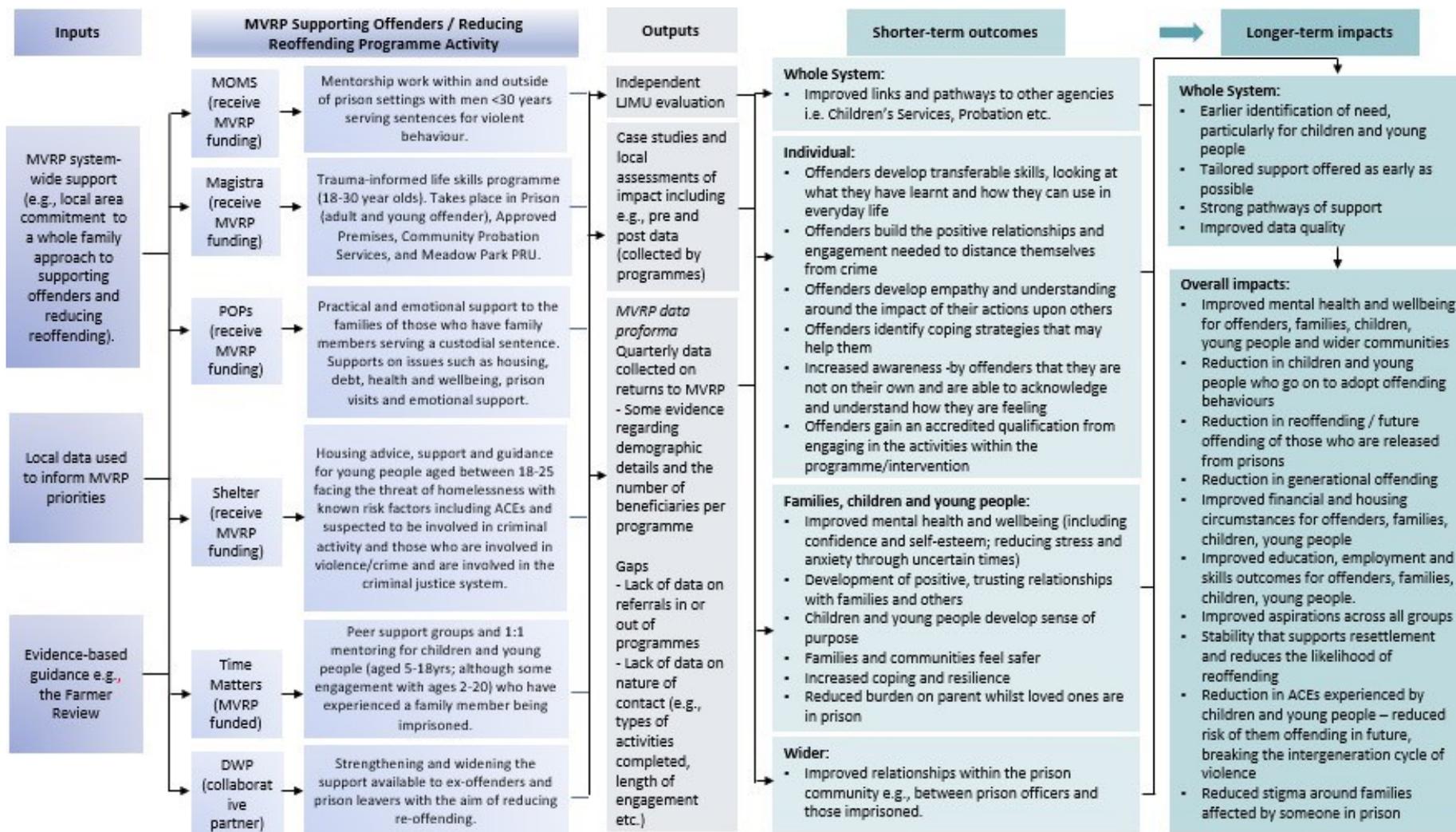
### Evidencing Impact

This evaluation has highlighted how the MVRP monitoring proformas could be developed further to capture measures for *evaluating* the success (or otherwise) of the funded projects (see Section 3.2). At present, it is difficult to quantify the success of the programmes in terms of outcomes and reach. In light of the limited evidence, and challenges encountered by the programmes, it may be beneficial for the MVRP to support interventions to collect the most meaningful data to evidence the benefits of their operations, as well as understand what works (and what does not), for whom and why, and help them to identify how they may improve their value. This could, in part, be achieved by setting out clearer expectations for data capture and supporting interventions to capture and extract the necessary information in their case management records, e.g., getting accurate numbers of referrals and appropriate pre- and post-outcome measures. This would have the additional benefit of ensuring interventions are well placed to evidence their successes for future re-commissioning or in applying for future funding. Future data collection may then be utilised by the MVRP for both evaluative purposes and strategic whole-systems insights.

### Whole System Outcomes

A logic model has been developed that provides the theory about how the programmes delivered to support those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families and reduce reoffending are working together to influence change (Figure 2). This model provides a framework through which ongoing impact can be evaluated.

Figure 2. MVRP Supporting Those Who Have Been Imprisoned/People on Probation and Their Families – Reducing Reoffending Logic Model



## 5.1 Recommendations

It is recognised that an effective whole systems approach to support those who have been imprisoned/people on probation and their families and reduce offending involves partners working together to provide sustainable programmes that bring about short, medium and long-term outcomes. A number of recommendations are made, with reference to the actions required for the effective delivery of preventing offending/reoffending programmes highlighted by CAPRICORN (PHE, 2019):

### Ensure there is a clear approach and vision – understanding the system and how it works

All of the programmes included within this evaluation had a range of individual strengths and qualities, and collectively provide a very strong base of support to people who are/have been imprisoned and their families. This work has the potential to have a positive impact on those aspects of people's lives that we know directly affect the likelihood of reoffending (e.g., accommodation, employment and training, finances, personal relationships) and for those working within whole family approaches reduce the likelihood of generational offending behaviours.

- This work should continue to be supported by the MVRP, but activity should be undertaken by the MVRP to increase awareness and communication of how these programmes work as a system and contribute to broader change across Merseyside.

### Clear leadership

Whilst the programmes delivered within this theme all have clear individual programme goals, their knowledge about how this contributes to wider violence reduction activity in Merseyside is less understood.

- The MVRP should provide clear strategic oversight in terms of how each work programme influences change and a clear communications strategy should ensure that wider partners have clarity and understanding about how and where they fit into the system.

### Use a place-based approach

At present, the programmes included within this initiative have been developed in response to local need, by professionals who understand the needs of their local population. It is recommended that this should continue with the support of the MVRP.

### Use data from across the system

This evaluation has highlighted a number of challenges in capturing and evidencing impact through routine programme monitoring. A number of recommendations are made as to how this could be improved:

- The MVRP data reporting tools could be expanded to include an overview of the number and features of programme referrals and beneficiaries, including demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and location; a referral pathway, baseline measure(s) of intended outcomes (which can be both primary and secondary) and post-intervention measures there.
- Data to **evidence community demand** for services and the extent to which projects are meeting this would be valuable. This would allow projects to assess and make projections as to future growth in demand, the need for resources and assist in planning ahead to ensure the services can be sustainably delivered. Moreover, situating the need for their services

within the wider context of the communities in which they are based and serving could draw upon violent crime data and levels of deprivation contained in the MVRP DataHub. Doing so will provide better strategic insights across partner organisations/the wider MVRP and could be made a pre-requisite of any funding application in the commissioning process.

- It could prove useful to identify **whether clients are engaging with more than one service, are being referred on from one service to another, or are coming to the attention of the Police during their engagement with services.** It was also suggested that it would be useful to be able to examine the **longitudinal trajectories of service users** across services and criminal justice system contact, to monitor the progress of individuals who engage with the various programmes and measure the impact of such. This could be achieved by linking data about individuals engaging in the projects with police records to examine any re-presentations in these data, or with Probation records to assess whether their risk of reoffending has reduced. For example, the Ministry of Justice offer a 'Justice Data Lab' service for evaluating reducing reoffending initiatives which might be a resource the MVRP could draw upon and support organisations use to monitor the impact of their work (at least in part). Further information about the work of the Justice Data Lab can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/justice-data-lab>. To achieve some of the suggested insights about wider programme connectivity and beneficiary engagement with services as well as their wider trajectories, individual level client information (as opposed to aggregate data) would need to be returned to the MVRP by individual projects.

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## 7. Appendices

### 7.1 Case studies

Time-MattersUK



*“They make you feel seen in your situation...you feel recognised in what you’re feeling”*

This case study has been developed from interviews with four staff and volunteers from Time-MattersUK; a focus group with three young people who attend Time-MattersUK and are also peer mentors; and an interview with one parent. Within the quotes given below, in order to ensure anonymity, those who took part have been assigned prefixes: Time-MattersUK staff and volunteers - ‘TM’, young people who took part in the focus group – ‘YPPFG’, and parent ‘Parent’.

The logic model (Figure 1) has been developed to illustrate the key activities, outputs and outcomes associated with Time-MattersUK.

#### Overview of the Service

Time-MattersUK was seen by all those who were interviewed as a ‘family’, with relationships built on trust. It was founded in 2017 and is a family-orientated organisation, which supports the whole family and provides a safe, supportive space for children and young people and their families who have been impacted by the imprisonment of a significant person (e.g., parent, sibling, close family member) in their lives. The children and young people who attend are aged between two and 20 years of age and the parents/carers who attend with them include those who have previously been imprisoned. Time-MattersUK is seen to look beyond the children and young people being defined by their experiences and situations, and it was felt that for all those who attend there are two ‘powerful messages’ for the young people to know which are ‘that you are not alone’ and ‘this is not your fault’.

*The families see it as a very family organisation...I think what she’s [the lead] done and achieved is extraordinary, there is absolutely, so little by way of support for children who are affected by parental imprisonment but to have a space, a safe space like that...what I really love about Time Matters is it’s for children affected by imprisonment, but it doesn’t define them through that issue. It sees the potential beyond the problem, it says, you know, yes, you’ve had this experience, but you are so much more than this. And it gets to the nitty gritty of some of the issues, and they’re really tough and complex. (TM2)*

*...the life, the period, the process, the court, the arrest, everything must be so stressful. And there’s so much kids and families lose during that process. And it’s so important to try and pull it back and escape from that and realise that life can go on, they’re gonna be ok, hopefully they’ll come out and they’ve learned something from that. (TM4)*

*I think it makes you feel safe. It makes you feel included. And it makes you feel happy to know that there’s other people there with you, and to support you, and to go through the same thing, some people that can help you, and you can help them. (YPPFG – P2)*

The aims of Time-MattersUK focus around enabling children and young people and their parents/carers to share their own experiences and coping strategies in a safe, non-judgemental and understanding space; but also providing them with new/different opportunities.

*...it's always a mixture of enabling the children and their parents if they want to talk about the difficulties of having...it's a safe space to just to discuss, you know, what's going on in an environment where nobody's going to judge them. People understand. And people can sort of tend to, they share coping strategies. And obviously, other families will have their own lived experiences of the criminal justice system, which is far more valuable than my, you know, what I can offer because of the parents can, you know, advise one another about how to navigate things like prison visits, or how to comfort the children if they're upset, you know, it's shared...the other side of the coin is that these are children and I'm really strong on children just having fun, able to access opportunities that they might not otherwise have been able to access... (TM1)*

*It was basically to not be on your own through this and it was a safe place to come and you could speak about your worries and she understood what you were going through. That was the main thing in the beginning. (Parent)*

It is seen to offer an innovative service, providing unique support, through a model which has been drawn upon by others; as well as one which enabled families to take things at their own pace.

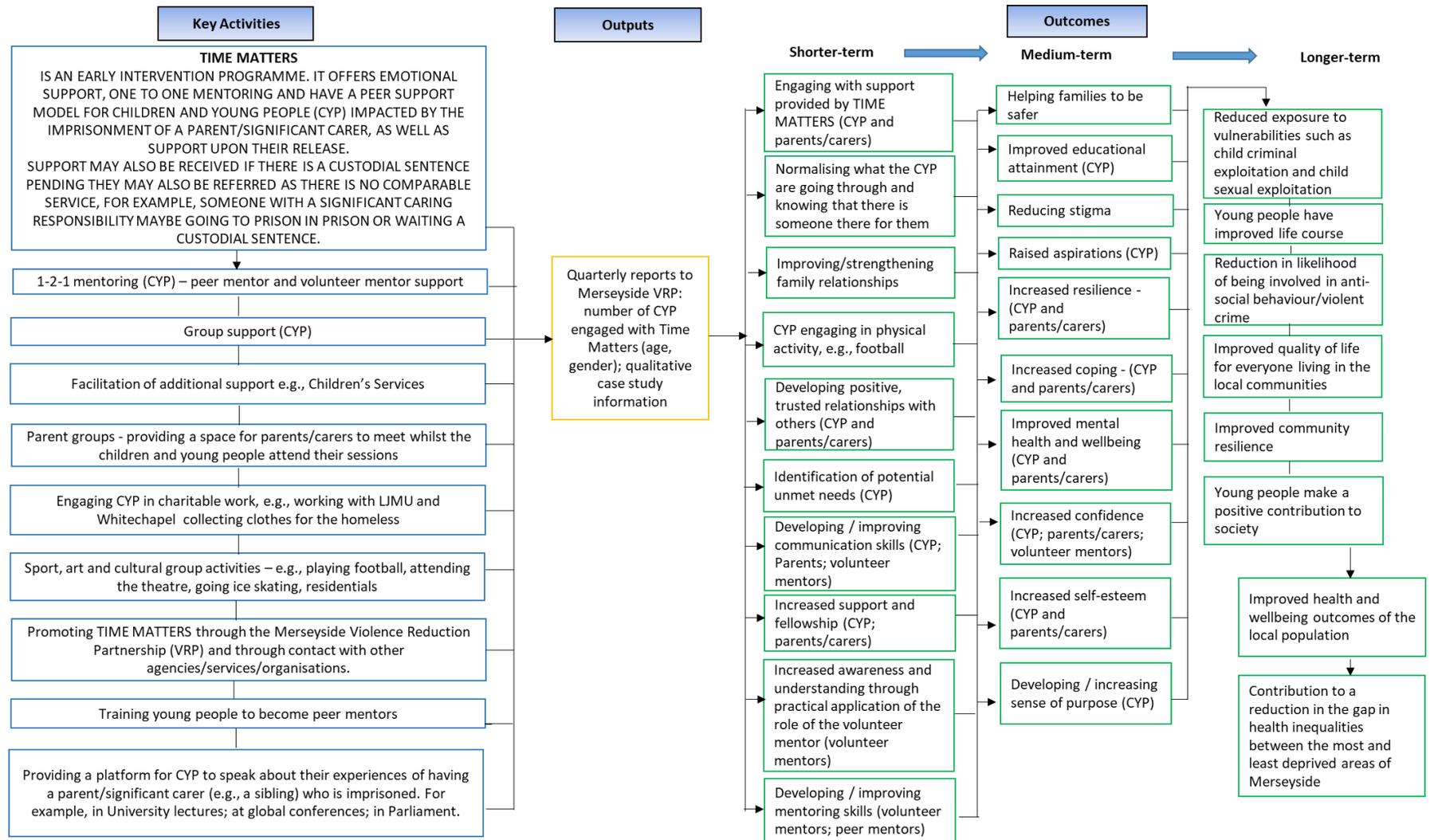
*...what she [the service lead] had started doing in terms of peer support groups was really cutting edge, you know, very, very few people around the country. It's now beginning to be emulated...lots of organisations around the country have drawn on what [name] has done... (TM2)*

*The initial period was the most important because we were like a deer in the headlights and [the children] thought it was only their Dad who went to jail in the world. And they were able to have, they were quite quiet at first and they were able to go into meetings, to be able to listen to other people. So that brought them out of it a lot...The main concern at the time was I just really wanted my children to grow up in a nice way. Not to be affected too badly by this, not to blame the wrong people. It was very much baby steps with them. And it just helped them to talk and to deal with it. (Parent)*

Currently, Time-MattersUK is staffed by the service lead, one youth worker and a project administrator (both of which are part-time) and a number of adult volunteer mentors and peer mentors. It was felt that the last 12 months have given them the opportunity to further grow and establish themselves.

*...we were even smaller than we are now. So, you know, maybe dealing with, you know, handfuls of kids, sort of maybe, I don't know, around 15 Kids, I would say, and their families...our target for this year has been 40 children, but then with their families and their grandparents and siblings, you know, that just expand to you know around sort of 100 people that we're dealing with. (TM1)*

Figure 1: Time-MattersUK logic model



## Development and Implementation

Time-MattersUK is seen to offer emotional support through one-to-one mentoring, group work and they also have a peer support model in place, that has been established more formally in the last 12 months. Time-MattersUK also organises 'fun activities' for children and young people and their families to take part in.

A key strength of Time-MattersUK is seen to be that it does not matter about the age, stage or gender of those attending the programme, it is just that they are able to talk about any aspects of their lives that do not even necessarily have to relate to the person who is/was imprisoned.

*... I've seen her, over the years facilitate groups with children as young as five, and young people up to 18/19. And they are in that space together. It's pretty extraordinary, actually, because I've not really seen others manage that in the same way. So they'll often be together for a bit at the beginning of it at the end of then she might separate them into activity tables around their age group. But they often are mixed as well. And it's, that's a really key strength of that organisation is that it doesn't matter what age of stage you are a boy or girl, they kind of mix really well. And I think a lot of that's the way [name] brings herself to it,, I think it just kind of works. It feels like a very safe space. And it's the children will say a lot. It feels like a family and, and it kind of does...It's a really interesting thing to watch someone bring themselves to something in a really authentic way. (TM2)*

Discussion focussed on the fact that there is no time frame within which children and young people and their families can engage with Time-MattersUK and that they 'never close the door'. One of the participants highlighted the importance of this continuing support. It was, however, highlighted that the 'intensive focus' and priority will always be those newcomers to ensure that their needs are being met and that there is a model in place that ensures everyone is receiving the support that they need.

*... we have children that have been with us for years, whose parents have been released, who are settled who are doing well in school...I've got two siblings, one of them all in top sets in school, one of the siblings is in [name of school]...the Dad's been released for a number of years now. Very, very stable household... literally, they're functioning far better than I could ever wish to as a parent. They're the most polite, well rounded, gorgeous kids, but they come to every single event and what so what we have done that one of the things that we which has just been amazing is that we've had sort of our veteran kids were teenagers and kind of grown up with us. (TM1)*

*We're all there for a reason and that's the most important thing is that we're all there together and if anybody's worried or upset they've got somebody there with them. It's so hard at the start and the middle is really hard and when they're coming out it's really hard because it's like you don't need them anymore because you pay our bills, you're in your routine is, it's all new when they come back out...(Parent)*

*The priority are newcomers, you know, as part of the community or family, that's the priority. So there's a little bit of intensive focus on just making sure that we're meeting their needs, you know we're offering them something that is flexible, its needs led, and the kind of link worker is appropriate...it's really important that we can have quite a tight a team that we can delegate stuff to. And the older young people, the older generation can really support up on that. That's the model we want to want to use. (TM4)*

## Group work

When looking at an example of the group work, one of the participants spoke about facilitating conversations such as talking workshops that provide talking spaces for children and young people and parents/carers. Participants spoke about being able to talk about their feeling and emotions, with one mentioning that there is an emotional check-in at the beginning of every session that the children and young people attend at Time-MattersUK, where for example, each will say their name and who is in prison. It was felt that doing this 'sets the tone' and helps to remove any feelings of shame the children may be feeling. Sessions then end with each child saying one thing that they feel is positive.

*But what we do like inside groups, we talk about feelings, emotions, and we try and help everybody. And like, and the group has really helped me because I was five when my Dad went and [name] really helped me. She's watched me grow up and it's dead nice being in the group. (YPFG - P2)*

The children and young people and parent/carer groups are held in separate spaces, and it was considered important to enable families to have that time apart. Where possible, for the children and young people, groups were split into primary and secondary so that it was possible to focus upon specific topics - one participant commented that being able to hold smaller groups was beneficial and there was always a 'real core of attendees'. For parents/carers, it was seen to provide them with the opportunity to speak to others going through similar experiences and it was highlighted that some of the parents/carers attending may have previously been imprisoned and that 'it's good to speak to somebody who's been through the other side of it'.

*So parents who have a partner in prison, and they're looking after the kids there is nothing more isolating. Because there's just nowhere else to go for support and the amount of stigma and shame...I think what's really important is that there are both spaces that children have time on their own and the mums and saying mums in this sense, because it often is but the parents have, and sometimes grans as well, actually, that they have time themselves. (TM2)*

*So we've kind of been split and of primary to secondary...we talk about a number of issues with a number of individuals around their friendship, you know, the importance of friendship because we've got a lot of vulnerable kids who you can find it hard to think about what is in a friendship, instead of being taken advantage of...touching on support and what that means at home. And, you know, the relationships, you know, in terms of relationships with families and peers, and sisters and brothers and just trying to help them children understand a little bit more about what works well and what doesn't really... with the primary kids, looking at one word, exploring one word like friendship and trust and help, just so they can kind of understand what's around them. So hopefully, that's helped. And then with the most senior young people, it has been a little bit more issue based around mental health around anxiety and really working on that and, and I think what's really helped on that is the small groups where they can just share experiences. That's really worked well. (TM4)*

*At the end of the day we're all just Mum's and Dad's really trying to do our best. Like most people we've all been through something similar, and we all sit together, but we don't discuss anything. I wouldn't dream of asking another Mum about what her husband's done or anything like that. (Parent)*

It was seen that for those attending the peer support groups (as well as engaging with Time-MattersUK in other ways), there was the realisation that they are not going through this experience on their own and that things will get better.

*And you can see, even when new people join the peer support group, and they're sitting there, with all these other young people with someone in prison, they still will say, 'I thought I was the only one you know', even though they can see that they're not it takes them a long time to really understand they're not the only one because it's it feels like that, and it feels very isolating... (TM2)*

*...when we were younger...we thought we were the only children the world that could understand how we were feeling. And then we went to [name] group and it changed like we realised that there was so many others. So I find I take it quite personally to make sure that every kid knows they're not alone in the situation. And I use, we use the words 'you're not alone' quite a lot because we recognise like it's what a lot of people feel. (YPFG – P1)*

The group sessions were felt to have an inclusive approach that 'brings all the voices into the room' through the use of 'a very simple structure' in an environment where everyone feels safe.

*I've seen, you know, children who just don't want to say anything for weeks, weeks, and weeks and weeks and weeks. And that's okay. They don't, but they're given opportunities. They're included, [name] will mentioned by name. So there's a very lovely, inclusive approach. Even with children who, you know, start off feeling I don't want to be here, I don't want to say anything. That is kind of like that's accepted. It's not that you're forced into speaking. And she kind of lets them find their place, I would say, with the other children in a way that's really lovely to watch. (TM2)*

Both children and young people and parents/carers were seen to be good at allowing each other to speak and having respect for one another. It was commented upon that sometimes, however, the sessions can be 'quite highly emotionally charged', for example, where it may get too much or there is a dominant voice. This was seen to be managed 'extremely well' through the use of 'different tactics' that help to minimise disruption.

*I think for parents...it's hugely important...And that can be quite hard to as a facilitator to not let one person dominate. But equally sometimes, they just need that. And they're quite good with each other allowing, you know, it's this person's week to just let it all out, you know, I'd say the parents are quite good at kind of respecting them among themselves...you know that kids have a really good sense of that [as well]. (TM2)*

It was felt that this structure was needed to keep everyone 'safe' and also to ensure that the Time-MattersUK activities are 'meaningful' and give the sessions shape. It was also acknowledged, however, that it is important to build in flexibility to this approach so that it is possible to adapt to the needs of those attending.

*I think there's an understanding as well that you might start off thinking we're going to do activity A, B, and C, but actually activity might lead to Z or X...I think you have to approach this very flexibly and listen to the people you're with... so that you can adapt. And you can say, right, actually, we were going to do this, but this seems really important here, you guys are bringing something up, that really matters to you, I'm hearing that*

*let's, discuss it. And the same with the adults. And you just can't predict that with the best will in the world. And so you need both the structure...But you need the flexibility. (TM2)*

### One-to-one support

One-to-one support was seen to take place online as well as face-to-face or over the telephone. Providing a listening ear to children and young people to identify the areas that they want to talk about in more detail (e.g., home life, school, significant person who has been imprisoned) was seen to be important.

*...we've actually spoke to them on the telephone...for a few kids, it's been courtesy calls, it's been like, you know someone there to just listen to them to find out how things are going at school, and at home, and maybe just kind of touching on things that they could work on a little bit really. (TM4)*

One of the participants felt that there is a strong need for male role models for those younger boys and men who are 'struggling because Dad's not there'.

*I still feel there's a real strong need for male role models...And it's not rocket science. It's just giving the young people a bit of attention. Or biggin them up or making them laugh or just kind of listening to what they're keen on you know, whether they're playing football or they're on their bikes...it's just having that presence really. (TM4)*

### Activities

It was seen to be very important that the children and young people have access to 'fun things' that they would not necessarily do because of their situation. This included trips to theme parks, ice skating, and to the theatre to watch the pantomime. A number of the participants also spoke about the residential that had taken place in the Summer of 2021 and how it had been a great experience for all the families and staff involved. Participants commented that it had been invaluable to meet and get to know new people and others who were in similar situations, with one of the volunteers stating they had found it 'literally life changing'.

*I got to know a lot about the other kids in the group [whilst on the residential], mainly the older kids, because they normally don't really have much of a say, because they're kind of like, shy, because they're going through teenage years. But when we went there like, everybody just was talking to each other. I learned a lot about everybody. (YPFG – 2)*

*There's been lots of little days out and lots of bowling and things like that, but the one that was which is the best... we did go away for a few days. And it was the best...there was lots of like team building activities for Mums and Dads and it was the first break with my husband since he's been out of prison and we've been away as a family... And all the children got together and asked if they could stay out a bit later, it was only downstairs. And they all got to chat and everyone seemed to get to know each other a lot more so I would say that was the best. (Parent)*

It was felt that the residential has been a catalyst for what has happened since and that this and the other activities that the children and young people and their families take part in, take them out of their current environments to somewhere different where they can be themselves.

*... [the residential's] been the catalyst of what's happened since really, because for the first time since whenever we had the community together, living together, working*

together doing activities together, and parents together...you know just seeing Mum's in canoes, and sons who don't want to do anything in a canoe. And yeah, it was just magical... And I knew that because I've always done residential I know that there's a power in it, and you can really see it turn people's lives around just that, you know, once you get them out of their environment they can start being who they really are, you know, with no barriers. That was brilliant. And then since then everyone's turned up to everything. (TM4)

Participants spoke about Time-MattersUK receiving funding through Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) Fund, with which Time-MattersUK had been able to provide food parcels to families. One of the participants spoke about how they had included recipe cards and they received numerous videos of families making food together. This activity was seen to bring the 'solid family unit' together, with families having fun cooking together and eating together.

*We've had loads of support this summer with food. So we've been able to feed families, which has been amazing...I got me Mum actually to do some menu recipes. And we shared the recipes with all our families, and we watched the videos coming back, seeing families, children chopping up, making things, making pizzas and just seeing like this vision of families cooking together, eating together, which is very rare. So again, just trying to bring that solid kind of family base unit that people ignore now, together, and again the magic of cooking as a family. It's been amazing the photographs and videos we've got of Mum's saying I haven't cooked for ages and this is dead easy. It's all healthy. So again, we're just laying little seeds there about...having a laugh to be free and have fun with your children, to cook with your children. (TM4)*

## Volunteers and Peer Mentors

### Peer mentors

Five of the young people who were considered to be 'senior members' had undertaken a six-week peer mentor training programme in Christmas 2020. These young people are in senior school and have accessed the Time-MattersUK programme for a number of years. One of the young people spoke about the training looking at 'different emotions and how to help people' and 'make people feel better' looking in detail at how people may be expressing their emotions (e.g., blue words - nice words, red words – angry words).

*... we selected five of our like sort of brilliant teenagers who don't need us but want to help...And that is really coming into its own. So for example, we had a little boy who's just started with us whose Dad has gone to prison is crying for his dad every night very upset. He's about I think he's seven maybe. And one of our senior school peer mentor kids who doesn't need us now goes on with the mentor onto the Zoom to say, 'you know, when I was your age, this is how I used to cry for my Dad, and I'm, you know, I'm coping better'. It's just like the best thing ever. (TM1)*

*...and showing people how we care about them. And at the end, we really like talked about how to help, and how to talk to, like older people, and maybe parents who have going through it, and talk about how like to deal or to help deal with that and to talk to them. (YPFG – P2)*

The role of the peer mentors was seen to be to support newcomers and the younger members of the programme, but also that it gave the peer mentors confidence and enthusiasm because of the

responsibility that came with their role. It was hoped that the training would be repeated every 12 to 24 months. One of the young people spoke about how they had helped another young person, whilst a second spoke about other aspects they had undertaken relating to their peer mentor role.

*Now that my Dad is back and out of prison. My focus now is to not just looking about how well I'm doing, it's trying to help other kids and especially younger kids, because I know what they're going through. And I did help a boy...I helped him. I went on a Zoom call and he got an he talked about his Dad for the first time and the peer mentor group helped me with that, so hopefully, we can do that again, for other kids. (YPFG – P2)*

*I haven't had one to ones with other children just yet, but I've definitely been...sometimes I do speeches during the meetings, like expressing my experiences and how I felt. And then it gives people an opportunity to then talk about theirs and like it sparks a conversation between that group on how everyone's feeling. (YPFG – P1)*

One participant spoke about how being a peer mentor and attending Time-MattersUK had enabled their child to recognise when someone was in need of help. The same participant also spoke about the benefits of peer mentoring in that 'sometimes it's easy when another child tells a child that it's ok to feel this way and that things will get better, much better than an adult'.

*...the children took it really seriously and [name]'s just started secondary school and basically without saying anything to us, he saw the girl who had some marks on her upper arms and on the top of her legs. And he noticed it and he just quietly went to the teacher and said, 'Look, this is a bit of a concern to me'...he had the common sense to go and tell a teacher and not to speak to anyone else about it. And he's learnt that through the group about looking out for people. He wants to help and he knows the right way to do it. (Parent)*

#### Volunteer mentors (adults)

The volunteers have recently undergone training, which brought the team together to talk about the ethos of Time-MattersUK and what the offer of support is (what Time-MattersUK does and does not do) and what the role of a volunteer involves. It was also seen to have provided volunteers with a platform to feed back around into how their roles may be developed. It was discussed how time is spent matching the children and young people with a volunteer with, for example, similar interests. Participants also spoke about how their roles had helped to provide them with new skills in, for example, group work, and also to challenge their own perceptions and assumptions.

*...it's a, you know, a learning opportunity as well...Just that sense of how to, I think working in this field, it's so easy to focus everything on the fact that you've got someone in prison, and you've got to just always see the bigger picture and not make any assumptions about the young people in front of you. So they might be coming with anything in their lives, and not necessarily related to Dad or Mum, being a prisoner. (TM2)*

*We had a gathering the other night with all our volunteers and I think it's looking at...it's quality rather than quantity. We have got some brilliant volunteers who do brilliant jobs who are happy to support young people.... So we assign a young person to the person who we think they would match, with a similar interest or you know in terms of their experience as well. So it's having a pool of colleagues in a way who can do a job, you know, who can do it well. (TM4)*

One of the participants spoke about their experience of being a volunteer with lived experience and how they felt that this helped them in their role and the support they were able to provide. They described playing games such as Roblox with the young people when they had their online one-to-one support session. This was seen to be a good way to take the young person's mind off things and provide a relaxed environment for them to talk about what they wanted.

*...my role within Time Matters is I'm a volunteer, so I support a young child on Zoom, at the moment, once a week...and we talk about how he feels, how we can help...I'm a lived experience volunteer. So I basically use my personal knowledge and what I've obviously researched over the years to support young people to just cope and just accept it because it's weird at first. (TM3)*

The same participant commented that they felt they had benefitted a great deal from their time volunteering and that it was important for volunteers to be able to commit to their roles. They did not consider mentoring one child to be too onerous and spoke about being happy to respond to e-mails from the young person they mentored at any time.

*...I feel like I get I get a lot from it. And I think if you want this to be successful, the volunteers have to be in it 100%. Like I work full time, come home, and I work for hours. But we'll give as much time as [name] will need, because at the end of the day, it's making a huge difference...So you need just commitment from everyone, everyone to be equal. (TM3)*

#### Referrals and promoting Time-MattersUK

All of the participants spoke about there being nowhere else like Time-MattersUK and the support that it provides.

*I don't know where they'd go for support and I'm not being arrogant or big headed, but there's only one me and there's only one [name]. (TM4)*

When looking at referrals into Time-MattersUK, these come from schools, Children's Social Services, Family First (and similar organisations where there is not a safeguarding risk, but there is early help intervention), and also self-referral. When looking at how self-referral works, Time-MattersUK was seen to be promoted through word of mouth, information in prison visitor centres, and also people performing internet searches that would enable them to find out about Time-MattersUK and access support.

When speaking about places where Time-MattersUK referred to, it was usually Children's Services, for example, where families accessing Time-MattersUK were at the point of early intervention (so deemed lower-level risk), but through engaging with families and making observations it may be, for example, they have to make recommendations for families to be moved up to child in need or child protection/safeguarding. Other services included schools, the education authority, social services, Young Person's Advisory Service (YPAS) and the Merseyside Youth Association (MYA). It was acknowledged that there is 'a wide mix of need'.

*...there are cases when you've got to communicate in a multi-disciplinary way and raise your concerns. Protect the children. And so yeah, they will definitely case and some of our children are raised by grandparent carers, and then we've had kids where they've been raised by the grandparents and then the grandparents have died. They've got no one. So you've got beyond the control children who are very, very vulnerable. (TM1)*

One of the participants highlighted that they also referred to mental health services, but that Time-MattersUK was able to provide more immediate, non-clinical support that they felt was important particularly at the moment with services being overwhelmed.

*We do refer to a lot of services but a lot of services that these young people need are mainly mental health services. Just the waiting list is vast. And sometimes you want to make a less clinical immediate impact or [provide] immediate support. And that's exactly what we offer...we've been supporting one mum who's got a problem with a child in school who's SEN [special educational needs] but he's not registered as SEN. And she's very anxious about getting him support, so I've been working with her and referring her and giving her some suggestions on referrals to other services and it's just frustrating sometimes because you've passed the buck and then they come back and say nothing's happened. But that's the reality of life at the moment. (TM4)*

The same participant also spoke about the importance of developing partnerships within schools as many of the issues that young people are coming to Time-MattersUK with are based in the school environment.

*I think developing a partnership within schools is important. Again it's just about have we got capacity to do that, but you know, I'm a firm believer in if you get schools on board and supporting young people while they're in school. Most of the issues are coming from schools, sorry the school environment...members of staff or teachers need to be a bit more clued up on it as well. (TM4)*

When looking at referrals from MVRP partners, Time-MattersUK was seen to have had an increase in referrals from POPS. They had also been asked to produce a video to publicise their service for another MVRP partner, Magistra, that would be presented with a carousel of other services on screens that are found in prisons, so those who have been imprisoned may inform their family members about the programme to see if they would like to access it.

*So we've had like an increasing number of referrals from POPS, which is one of the main VRP partners. So and also, there was one of the partners...They were doing a carousel of services that were going out into the prisons... So the prisoners themselves might see something about our service, they might then say to their partner on the phone, okay, look, the kids could do with this help, and then the partner might contact us via the prisoner. (TM1)*

Time-MattersUK was seen to be very active on social media. It was hoped that the organisation would be promoted more in the future with plans to, for example, put up posters in Children's Centres and advertise in prisons more. It was, however, identified that Time-MattersUK would need to have the capacity in its team to be able to address any increased demand that such advertising may drive.

*We do want to promote ourselves more with things like posters up in Children's Centres. And so we've designed a poster...we have social media as well, we use Twitter, Instagram, Facebook...(TM1)*

*I just think, honestly, it's just amazing...I just wish more people knew about it because I know that there'll be families out there who just think there'll be nothing. (TM3)*

## Facilitators and Barriers/Challenges

Funding and resource/capacity were identified as overarching and interlinking facilitators as well as barriers/challenges to the delivery of Time-MattersUK. It was stated that a constant flow of funding is needed by Time-MattersUK in order 'to survive'.

*The funding is the most important thing, because we literally have needed this funding to survive, and we are going to need funding in the next financial year, we are actually running out of money. (TM1)*

A key facilitator to Time-MattersUK being able to provide support to children and young people and their families was the funding that had been received from the MVRP. The MVRP was seen to have opened up opportunities in terms of staffing - the funding had paid for the employment of the part-time administrator and youth worker. It was felt that the role of the Youth Worker had been invaluable in helping to build and develop trusting relationships with the children and young people and their families. It had also increased the reach of Time-MattersUK, establish themselves as a service, and enabled them to begin changing the narrative associated with the children and young people and their families.

*...it seems to be a really good partnership...it's opened up opportunities. And it's given [name], and Time Matters options, if you like, and different avenues, and it's helped. And I think it is going to help or has helped address that narrative of, you know, we must start viewing children in and of their own right, and not as future offenders, or it's a narrative that unfortunately, government seems to love. But yeah, so I think I as a partnership, it's worked well, it's, it's allowed the expansion of Time Matters in terms of staff, but also in terms of its activities and its reach. And I think that's really positive. (TM2)*

It was highlighted that the MVRP had been very helpful in raising awareness of other funding opportunities that were available to Time-MattersUK as well as promoting Time-MattersUK through the MVRP to other services/organisations. Converting Time-MattersUK to a Community Interest Company (CIC) would also open up opportunities for funding. It was discussed that Time-MattersUK was exploring the Youth Endowment Fund and working with Everton in the Community as part of a consortium going forward to obtain funding. When looking at future proofing and sustainability it was felt that ensuring the right systems and structures are in place for becoming a CIC that are not just reliant upon one person was vital.

*I think the coming of CIC seems to be the right step forward...I think it's about creating the right structures around you... in terms of sustainability, you know, making sure the systems and structures are in place that it's not reliant on one personality, but that's, it's really hard. (TM2)*

Regardless of the level of funding, the focus was seen to be upon 'quality over quantity' and ensuring that those who are engaged with Time-MattersUK are well supported, rather than spreading the resource they have thinly so that they can engage with more children and young people and their families.

*I'd say funding and time [are the biggest challenges/barriers]...I think we will continue to get referrals if we carry on like this, but it's quality over quantity. So I would rather we, you know, supported 40 or 50 children really well, and gave them loads of really amazing life opportunities, than say, well, we've got 100 kids on the books who we hardly ever*

*...speak to or contact because it's pointless...So it's depth rather than breadth of things. But I do worry that as referrals keep coming in, how are we going to manage going forward without the right amount of funding and without the right staff on board? That is, that is a challenge how to keep up with the never-ending demand. And this demand isn't going anywhere, we're gonna continue to imprison people in prisons, often children. So there's just going to be no shortage of service users. (TM1)*

*We're so fragile funding wise....we've come so far and we're ready to explode, I think. (TM4)*

## Impact of Engagement with Time-MattersUK

*When I look at all the kids, not just me own, but all of them, I said to [name] before, these kids are absolutely lovely. The way they are, the way they act, how kind they are with each other...they're all lovely kids and do you know what, I've got a feeling they're all going to do well. (Parent)*

There was seen to be an overarching sense of community at Time-MattersUK, with the service giving back 'normality', 'happiness' and 'freedom' to families.

*...even a new families that are coming in you know, obviously quite nervous, they're just blending into this community where there's young people, toddlers, Mum's, Dad's, and everyone...there's just a bond because I think they know what Time Matters is. And there's no elephants in the room...they can just be who they are. And I think there's just a real magic to it where you just see them all being so relaxed, and they just form friendships quite naturally. (TM4)*

There were a number of outcomes that were identified to be experienced by the children and young people, their families and also the wider system. These are explored in more detail below and are also evidenced across this case study.

*...it's just a lovely environment, like a family. Really, I think it's kind of like normalised with the feeling of being a bit like, this is crap...It's a dire situation. But do you know what there's a light in this dark, dark time. (TM3)*

## Children and Young People

Overall, Time-MattersUK is seen to help [increase resilience](#) and [improve mental health and wellbeing](#) in the children and young people, by helping them to realise that they are unable to 'really control other people's actions'.

*I think resilience ...One of the biggest things that they do is that they blame themselves, they harbour guilt. So we have kids who are like eight or nine that think it's their fault that their parents offended. And they really do blame themselves. If I'd have been a better kid, if I'd have been more polite, if I'd tidied my bedroom, if I'd stopped my Dad taking those drugs, if I'd have made him stay in at night...some of them do live in really chaotic families, that when these things happen, that you've got enough resilience, enough people to go and lean on to get you through it, to get you through the bad times. (TM1)*

*And the first thing that I think that [name] and me felt was 'why me' and I try and say it's not only you and it's not your fault. And there's a lot of people here to help you and*

*support you. And there's loads of people here who are going through the same thing. And [name] and [name] they can talk to you and you can talk to them about it (YPFG – P2)*

*It's mainly like support groups and things like that to try and help people that don't feel comfortable talking about situations and bringing them more confidence and things like that. And the support groups have helped me quite a lot. (YPFG – P3)*

Attending Time-MattersUK is seen to help the children and young people normalise what they are going through and make them realise that they are not on their own in what they are experiencing and that there is support available for them. They are also able to begin to **acknowledge and understand** how they are feeling and **identity coping strategies** that may help them. **Developing positive, trusting relationships** was seen to be key to this.

*Things like how to cope if you're missing, somebody. How to cope if you've become really angry with the person who's away for doing what they did. Schools will often refer to as because they'll say that, you know, this child in their class is really angry because their Dad did whatever, or they're crying their eyes out, because they're missing their Mum, and the teachers need extra support to be able to handle that. And then you have wider and wider issues that are all too common. But if the parents committed a crime that's plastered all over the press, that brings a whole host of awful kind of repercussions for the children...We're building positive relationships...positive relationships are key to whether these children are going to be able to cope with this or not. (TM1)*

*...my children have basically been empowered by this. It has been a great support system especially at first. They've gone, now we've gone through it themselves, they feel like they can help people, which they do do. (Parent)*

Through attending the one-to-one and group sessions as well as the activities that were available through Time-MattersUK, children and young people are seen to **make friends** with others and **increase their confidence and self-esteem**.

*I think I personally see more enjoyment and more, like, more mental health benefits...the kid who I mentor, again, was so nervous to go to the first one, and then every time we go on Zooms he's like right, when's the next one [name], what can I do now, and he like really wants to see people who are like him. (TM3)*

*It's just the way they can articulate themselves, and I think that's a testament to how we, how we communicate with them, maybe treat them like young adults. And that allows us to express themselves really openly. (TM4)*

They are also seen to **develop a sense of purpose** through engagement in the wider opportunities that are available to them, such as speaking at conferences, becoming peer mentors, speaking at Parliament about why the government are not doing enough to support the children of imprisoned parents, presenting to students at Liverpool John Moores University about their experiences, being involved in helping to write a play, charitable work with e.g., Whitechapel Homeless and Housing Charity.

*One of our peer mentors is going to come into the Uni next semester and get to talk to my students... I think what we're really good at is defying the stereotypes. You know she said can I come in and talk in one of your lectures. So I'm like absolutely you can...We had a*

*big international conference that I headed just a few weeks ago with kids with parents in prison from America, Canada, Africa, New Zealand, and we had our kids from the Time Matters project coming on to that conference. (TM1)*

*There's been more set up for, I think, lots of all sorts of extra sorts of things that can take part in to further our interests. So for example, like [name] got me involved in like the UN Child Rights Committee...So I like spread awareness to like the UN about what kind of struggles children who have parents in prison and children who are younger because many of them are like more 17,16, so they don't understand what the struggles are as a younger teen. So it's great to have like that balance. (YPFG – P1)*

*So it's basically what we're doing is we've spoke, we had a few interviews with the directors and they've created the sorts of scripts around our collective experiences. There's also delivering an overview to like teachers, about like, what we go through and what we need from like the education system to support us because lots of us have experienced, like, poor experiences with teachers. So like, for example, like the teachers would know about my situation, like years after happened. So instead of it being like mine or [name] choice to share, if they already knew they would just talk about it in the staffroom, which is just not on for me. (YPFG – P1)*

*We've went out and done conferences to Westminster and things like that, which is talking to a bunch of MPs, which I found really enjoyable. Things like that. (YPFG – P3)*

All of these wider opportunities are also considered to help to **defy the stereotypes** and **reduce the stigma** associated with having a significant person in their lives who is/was imprisoned.

*You've got 10-year-olds who can go into school and say that I'm speaking at a global level on an international conference forum. So that's another thing...our kids have said we're a stigmatised, misunderstood group in society, so this year, we want to help the homeless...John Moores have supported us, so children of prisoners are now collecting clothes for the Whitechapel...so I'm bringing all those things together. So instead of them going into school and saying I go to a prisoner's children's project, which is so stigmatising and who wants to admit that they can say I helped the Whitechapel this year. Because if someone goes to them, 'why'd you go to Time Matters?', they don't have to say it's because my dad went to prison. (TM1)*

In the longer-term, participants also explained how they felt that engaging with Time-MattersUK could lead to a **reduction in children and young people going on to adopt offending behaviours**.

*I think it could reduce the amount of people who offend...I mean, we went on a residential and the kids were saying, 'we've never been on holiday with our family's before' or they go to the theatre and how many how many kids on low income, I'm not saying everyone, is on a low income, but it's a single parent household now. A parent's in prison. How many children will get that experience? I just think, if they see the good that we're doing, maybe later on in life, they might think, 'oh, no, because I had that experience when I was a kid. And, you know, it was lovely. And I don't want to go down that route'. (TM3)*

*There's no communities anymore. There's no youth centres in communities, there's no services in communities, young people are in their own communities, so the only guidance and advice is off another thirteen year old who knows nothing themselves and it's just a*

*horrible cycle... And I think you're the great thing about what we see in Time Matters is we haven't had any real incident, well we haven't had any young person involved in anything like that, which is great, because I just think that intervention is working, that early intervention is working And again, it's about care. And it's about attention. It's about love and I think the kids feel that and I think that's making them just see the world in different ways, you know...(TM4)*

## Parents and carers

Many similar actual/hoped for outcomes were identified for parents/carers. Having a partner or family member who was imprisoned was seen to be isolating and stigmatising and associated with feelings of shame. It was considered that engaging with Time-MattersUK helps parents/carers to **develop trusting relationships** with the staff and volunteers as well as other parents/carers. This enables them to be honest and open about their experiences and how they are feeling in a non-judgemental environment.

*They're used to not trusting professionals. Because, yeah, in case, you know, they say, I've had a horrible week with the kids, and it's going to trigger some kind of referral to social services, you know, they just want normal, normality. (TM1)*

Being able to access peer support and fellowship where parents/carers can share their experiences, as well as share and receive advice and guidance is seen to be invaluable in helping them to know that they are not on their own, but also to help them to **cope better**. Attending these peer sessions is also seen to **improve mental health and wellbeing** by **increasing self-esteem** and **reducing anxiety**.

*...it's like that kind of coffee morning shared experience isn't it, where nobody's going to judge them. And people are going to share both, you know, empathy, as well as advice and guidance through peer support...[name] and [name] are looking after the kids doing pumpkin carving, and you're sitting around having a coffee, you're getting a break, don't forget, everybody's in an involuntary single parent capacity. The other parent is in prison often, so it's a break. So there's that, but also again, their own self esteem. So, for example, we had a Mum come to us this year, she's not long come out of prison, and she was so anxious about coming, but now she doesn't ever miss a group. So for her, it's like, it's fellowship, I guess. Reduction in anxiety I guess is a big one. (TM1)*

## Wider impacts

When exploring the wider impacts, it was hoped that the work of Time-MattersUK helps to **make families feel safer**.

*I just think it does ultimately, reduce, it helps families I suppose to be safer, I guess. Some of our families, there has been instances of domestic violence, and then they might rethink about, you know, they might have better ways to keep themselves safe. Or they might consider using other services, because they, you know, talk to us, for example, if they feel that they need to. So I yeah, I imagine that, I don't know, for sure. But I know that through conversations that we've had with some families that, you know, because we raised the self-esteem of the parents as well, they, they may be able to cope better with some of the domestic issues at home. (TM1)*

There was also a focus upon **reducing stigma** through challenging perceptions and mindsets from the top-down. Participants spoke about the importance of challenging stigma that had been perpetuated

through government narrative and the press around children and young people in these circumstances being on a trajectory where they may end up in prison themselves. It was felt that the children and young people had been able to challenge these perceptions very eloquently.

*...very unfortunately, we have a government who's bought into this narrative that you know, [if you] have a parent in prison, you're x number of times more likely to end up in prison yourself. So a very dangerous narrative based on some very outdated research...and a lot of people in this field would really question the wisdom behind using research like that to make headlines that you often see. And they're extremely dangerous. And I think children and young people...are well aware of that narrative. They're perceived in certain ways. There's a lot of stigma around that. And they challenge that all the time, by the way they speak. You just have to listen to them... they speak extremely well about how they're perceived. And if you listen to them, you know, in that group, there are future astronauts, footballers, teachers. You know, they're not young people who are on a trajectory of ending up in prison. Now, we know that because they're getting all the support they need. So their resilience is incredibly high. Lots of young people who get no support, have no resilience, and then are more susceptible, vulnerable to unhelpful behaviours. So if there's a link, it needs to be much more unpacked. (TM2)*

*I think we need to talk to our MPs more and people in power, so we can get word across about how it's affecting the children and how it's affecting the family members. (YPFG – P2)*

*We talked about things we didn't necessarily agree with, say like, publishing things in newspapers and things about kids that were going to share certain situations. And I talked personally about like, my story and things like that. (YPFG – P3)*

*...for my children, they want to because they're older now, they want to do more like going to Parliament trying to get laws passed, things like that...they want to start making things happen like changing the laws especially over papers and things, because they're basically just sensationalising the headlines, which aren't true. Whoever's done the crime goes away and the people at home and left with all of us. It's just seems really unfair. And we sensationalise everything, so it's very harsh. And my kids, especially [name] won't forgive them for that. (Parent)*

## Next Steps and Sustainability

*I just hope that it can continue. It does really help a lot of people. We've really benefited from it, so I just hope it continues...I think it's really important, because you don't really hear the people supporting us, you know if you're married to a criminal, people treat you a certain way...It's hard, but you know, not a lot of people have got not a lot of sympathy for you, when you're going through this. (Parent)*

When exploring next steps and sustainability of Time-MattersUK, it was felt that Time-MattersUK is still a 'very young organisation' and is 'still tiny' when compared to other organisations. They were seen, however, to be growing 'at an alarming rate' with the service adapting as needed.

*People are literally living on the breadline. So people will turn to crime...So I just think I can only see it getting bigger really...we've got like a five-year plan, and have been like, the only way it can be is up now, we're in such a good position. (TM3)*

*I think over the last 12 months, it's grown massively. I mean, in terms of what we've been able to offer, we're kind of assessing exploring how we can offer comprehensive support for everyone, which is really tricky because our community is quite vast. It's over maybe three or four wards of Mersyside, and it's been quite tricky, but I think the Zoom's gone really well. It's been nice because people can hook up wherever you are and speak and be part of something. (TM4)*

There were a number of areas in which it was felt that Time-MattersUK could develop. Integrally, this was seen to involve having a 'solid foundation' that was not only focussed and creative but also flexible to the needs of its community to provide the best possible service. Drive, determination and a strong team of support were all seen to be key qualities that would keep moving Time-MattersUK forward.

*...ideally it'd be great to have that solid foundation so you can work closer with your mentees and closer with your staff, have a really strong support team, do some training with your staff...and I can see it whenever we come together I can see that, but we want that sustained, you know full time five days, seven days a week. (TM4)*

It was commented by one participant that there was possible streamlining of the number of volunteers that were needed for the number of children and young people who were requiring one-to-one support. Another participant also spoke about a parent-peer mentoring course becoming available.

*And we've got a number of them, but I think we've got too many. We've got about 10 or 15 volunteers and right now we need a team of six, maybe. We're working with maybe 25 young people, not needing as much intensive support than others. So we can really I think we can balance it out and have a real small team. And that's, that's the plan in the future. (TM4)*

*...[name]'s asked me before and I shied away from it, but it's basically helping people or parents who are just going through this, you know providing some kind of support. I've always been a bit worried that because you're in such a fragile state, I'd hate to hurt somebody by saying the wrong thing. And she said, 'You wouldn't you'd be perfect for it'. So I'm going to go to these courses. If I learn one thing it might make me more confidence for helping other people. So I would like to help other people in any way. You know, it's a horrible time that they're going through, you know especially at first because basically, you lose all the power....It's a horrible thing. (Parent)*

The Board of Advisors was highlighted as having an important role in the transition of Time-MattersUK to a CIC, but also to ensure that Time-MattersUK remains true to its overarching aims and objectives and its focus upon the children and young people and their families.

*Although Time Matters isn't a charity, and it's looking now to become a CIC status, which I think's really important. It's currently a limited company. But I've been very, very keen all along that you know, you need a board of advisors... it must be about the children....and for that you need a board of advisors needs robust systems or structures in place to keep everyone safe and take you know, to make sure it's doing what it says. (TM2)*

It was identified that it would be beneficial to further develop relationships and create partnerships so that Time-MattersUK could be embedded into other services. One example was given within the school setting. It was felt that funding the Youth Worker role full-time, would enable them to go into

schools and engage with them more, provide support for young people on a one-to-one level whilst promoting the service more.

*I think I need to be full time in this job so I can go to schools, and I can support young people on one-to-one levels, and I can promote the service...we can do a lot more if we've got the time to do a lot more... (TM4)*

Providing a flexible and mobile service that would go out into the community was also given as another possible response to growing need and adapting the service.

*...I do think creating partnerships now could be another aspect. Because, you know, Time Matters, it's on its own really. It's quite unique. But if we can embed ourselves into other services.. over the next 12 months, we're looking at maybe developing stronger partnerships with people and developing a more comprehensive service, which is flexible and mobile. So you don't have to wait for someone to come onto Zoom if they can't stand looking at their mush... We can go out and see them. And then you can learn a lot by knockin' on someone's door, which I'm always keen on. You can see a lot...it's more real. That's what we probably want to want to do. (TM4)*

*“Prisoners’ families founded POPS and they remain at the heart of everything we do”*

This case study has been developed from interviews with two members of staff from Partners of Prisoners (POPs) team. Within the quotes given below, in order to ensure anonymity, the staff have been assigned the pre-fix Practitioner 1 and 2.

The logic model (Figure 1) has been developed to illustrate the key activities, outputs and outcomes associated with POPS.

### Overview of the Service

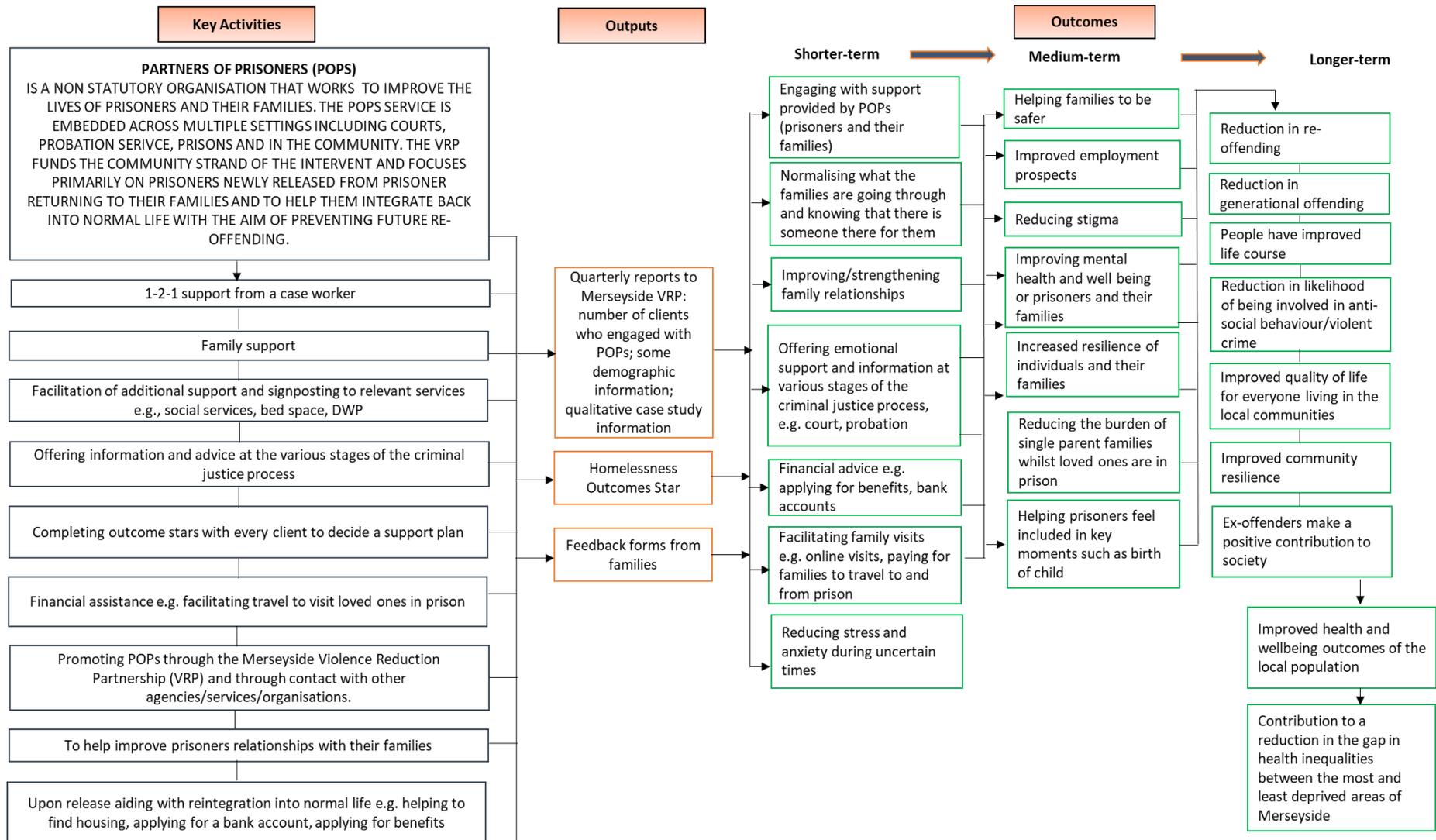
POPs was established in 1988 as a peer support group for offenders’ families. In 1989, POPs became a registered charity and is now estimated to support over 200,000 families a year across all services, supported by 85 staff members and volunteers. POPs aims to be completely user lead by providing some of the most vulnerable families with support with whatever needs they may have, including being a voice for that family by advocating on their behalf, supporting with mental health, finances, housing problems, or family problems.

*The team is there to support families who have loved ones in the criminal justice system with pretty much whatever their support needs are. We are very much a user lead service, so it’s about what they feel they need support with. It could be emotional support, very kind of basic support in terms of just information or it can be a lot of mundane stuff like sorting out housing problems, rent arrears or it can be more serious stuff where there are child protection issues, and the family doesn’t feel like they are getting their voices heard. Things like that. (Practitioner 1)*

POPs works across multiple settings, for example, representation across several criminal justice courts and it is also embedded in six prisons where staff members base themselves in the visitor centres offering family services. The Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership (MVRP) funds part of the POPs operations that focuses primarily on their work in the community and preventing future or further offending. Initially, the MVRP funding was awarded to work with 18–25-year-olds that have been convicted of a violent offence, however, due to several issues, particularly around the number of referrals the criteria were expanded to help support a larger number of people. The organisation predominately works with male prisoners and their families due to the gender of the prisons that the service has access to, however, the service is also open to female prisoners and their families, but referrals from this group are less frequent.

*The VRP project is a community project, so that works with people who are either coming out on license from prison and or are on a community sentence with the probation service. (Practitioner 1)*

Figure 1: Partners of Prisoners logic model



## Development and Implementation

### Referrals and promoting Partners of Prisoners

Referrals are made into POPs through a variety of different methods. There are, however, three main avenues that make up most referrals. Firstly, through the Probation Service, probation case managers can refer into the service if they identify one of their cases where a family might benefit from support. The Probation Case Manager needs to get permission from the individual and complete a referral form. The form is very short and only includes the contact details of the person they wish to refer and any risk information that may be relevant. The service is open to any Probation Officer, and they are encouraged to refer any case where support may be beneficial.

Secondly, referrals are made through prisons. Prisons can refer individuals who are being released on license from prison. POPs has representation within several local prisons. Individuals returning to local Merseyside communities will most likely be released from the Prisons that POPs attend. This was seen as the most common referral pathway into the service; staff believed that this was due to POPs staff being visible and having a base in the prisons which enables them to build relationships and rapport with prison staff, those who have been imprisoned and their families. POPs will open a case with a prisoner 12 weeks before they are due to be released to help prepare them with the transitions and then refer them to their community project for post release support.

*Prisons can refer into us people coming out on license. Now that's a bit easier for us because we have stuff in HMP Liverpool and HMP Hindley which are the two prisons that people come back to Merseyside from the most. We have links to others as well, so in fairness, getting referrals from the prisons is probably our biggest source of referrals. (Practitioner 1)*

Finally, the third most popular referral avenue comes from court referrals. Caseworkers base themselves across the different courts in Merseyside every weekday morning to try and identify families who are going through the criminal justice system and offer them support. This could be support on the day, for example, helping them understand the court processes or further support depending on the outcome of the court order. Families will either be referred to the community team for support or to the prison team depending on the court's decision.

*We have a case worker who is based in Liverpool combined courts which is the magistrates and the crown court. They work in the courts every morning to identify families that are going through the criminal justice system and offer them support, so making sure they understand what's going on with the court process, to identify where that person that they are supporting is going whether they are going to go on a community order, to a prison and then referring them on to either the community team or the prison team depending on what's happened to them. (Practitioner 1)*

Additional referrals are also made from Lancaster Farms which is a category C prison if the individual lives in the Merseyside area. It was highlighted that all referrals are welcome to the service regardless of where they are from. Several referrals have been made via other organisations as well as self-referrals however, it was highlighted that these referrals are less common.

*A woman called up and she actually said, my social worker told me to give you a call. I tried to find out the name and who told her to refer in, but she didn't know. (Practitioner 2)*

It was noted that the majority of families that are offered support take up that offer. Out of the 60 families referred to the POPs service since April 2021 only six families refused help from the service. This indicated that there is a need and a want for support from these families. Further to this, the majority of those who did take up the offer of support completed the project until they felt their needs had been met and no longer needed POPs support.

*..it's a high take up rate. There is quite clearly a need when you speak to the families about from those 6 said yes, we would like the service and of those all bar 5 of them have gone on to work with us to the completion of when they consider their support needs are met. (Practitioner 1)*

## Activities

Those who took part in an interview specifically mentioned the bespoke nature of the service and how support is tailored based on need therefore POPs activities vast vary. The MVRP funding covers the community-based project rather than the work that is done solely within prisons, however, there is a significant overlap between the two by supporting families and their loved ones in prison, clients supported in prison can move onto the community programme upon release. Helping families in this transitional period is seen as crucial in preventing re-offending.

*The VRP project is a community project, so it works with people who are either coming out on license from prison or are on a community sentence with the probation service. So, the idea with this project is to offer those families support, either support for resettlement when they coming out of prison. The family would like some support in kind of getting used to that because we know there is a honeymoon period with people coming out of prison. It's kind of the first six weeks and everyone is happy, in love and everything is great then things kind of fall into old routines and that's were families start getting stressed out. The men or whoever start to get stressed out and it creates difficulties within the family home and that's when you are kind of more likely to have something happen that would cause a recall. (Practitioner 1)*

*We had a referral through from a lad that was on remand from Walton prison, he wanted help with his mum to get care in. So, first time I've had that one. So, I would go to hers and help her set a care plan up. Then she got really ill, she's passed away now. I would even go in when it was COVID. I went into the hospital to see her and because obviously you could see no one and she couldn't see her son. So, I went in with a laptop and had a visit on the laptop, I had to get chaplaincy involved and stuff. (Practitioner 2)*

A significant element of the work that POPs does is to offer information and guidance during a time of great transition that is often confusing and stressful for not only the individual going through the criminal justice system but also their families. This includes more information on the logistics or stipulations of their conviction and help understanding legal terminology. The service can also provide information relating to finances, for example, helping individuals apply for a bank account or getting information about benefits, information regarding housing and information relating to child protection issues.

*Things I have a lot from probation, it's more like, it's a lot more housing, a lot of people don't have bank accounts and stuff like that really, I'll just help them with basic needs that you don't realise you need. (Practitioner 2)*

*I get a lot of people that need help with property pool, filling in the application, it's a long process because it's not just the application you need to send the documentation of by email. Then I get a lot of too and from emails where they want more information from them, so I do think people struggle. (Practitioner 2)*

The work done by the organisation with those who have been imprisoned was felt to have a big impact on their families with the overall aim of preventing re-offending in the future. One way POPs do this is to help rebuild or strengthen the incarcerated individual's relationships with their families whilst they are in prison. Some activities include but are not limited to helping families visit loved ones in prison by aiding with logistics such as paying for expenses such as travel. The service helps organise video calls with those who have been imprisoned and their young children through a programme called Story Time where they can read stories to their children over video calls (copies of books are sent to the individual and their family so that the children can follow along). POPs also provide expecting families and new families with baby packs and also organise video calls for individuals whose pregnant partners give birth whilst they are incarcerated; the POPs support workers also help them to make a new-born baby pack to help them feel more included in the birth of their child.

*We do new baby packs in the prisons with men whose partners are pregnant when they go into prison, if they give birth we support them by setting up a video call when the baby is born and then do a four week new born baby pack with the men so they can understand what their partners and the child are going through in those first few weeks so that they can feel part of it and feel like they are bonding with the child even though they're in prison. (Practitioner 1)*

## Facilitators and Barriers/Challenges

### Facilitators

Staff's previous experience and links to other organisations were seen as a big benefit to the service. Due to the fact that the service is up and running in other area help with the service starting up in Merseyside. It meant that when funding was awarded, and the service had recruited new members of staff and found an office space, they could begin working with families straight away with very little planning and set up. Pre-existing professional relationships within prisons across Merseyside were also seen as an important factor in the service offering the best support to clients who access POPs.

*I got a referral from a probation worker for a lad that is still inside who needs a home when he comes out, he is due to come out in like two months or something, so they want me to start now so he's not coming out homeless. That happens a lot more than you might think it's horrible. When I worked there it's horrible knowing they have nowhere to go but I've still got security to go into that prison, so I was able to phone him and get the ball rolling now. So, it's helped having both jobs in the past because I'm able to go that extra mile and speak to him now rather than needing any security to be there. (Practitioner 2)*

Something seen as a huge benefit to the service was the staff's ability to be down to earth and relatable. This made building relationships and trust with client much easier. This also made clients more likely to be more open with their needs if they felt they were not being judged.

*This might sound funny but being down to earth, the POPs staff being down to earth then they are more willing to open up to you. You've got to relate to them, we've got staff that have had someone inside, or are streetwise, they understand what goes on in the world*

*and aren't closed. When you are more open and realistic then people are more open and willing to get help from you. (Practitioner 2)*

## Barriers

One major barrier to most services over the past two years has been COVID19. Receiving funding shortly before lockdown made embedding the service and getting referrals difficult. For example, it had made building relationships with other organisations challenging. Organisations such as Liverpool Crown and Magistrate courts, probation services and other community organisations were either running at minimum capacity or completely shut down. This made getting word out about the service and making other organisations aware of POPs very difficult.

*We just need more referrals, absolutely that's has always been the biggest issue for us and it's not really anyone's fault we got awarded this contract and a week after we were due to start the first lockdown hit. All the probation offices were shut down. So, this contract has only ever ran through Covid, so it's made it very difficult to really get the service embedded into the probation service and even within other services, we've opened it out to the likes of YOS for young offenders and their families. (Practitioner 1)*

*The court side of things and getting referrals, Covid played a big role, at first they were saying only one person could go through, I have seen more families coming through recently. I have found that when someone is waiting on their own, their anxiety levels are through the roof and don't really want to interact with me but when they are with their families, they are usually the ones who say hang on a minute you could use that and not just push us away. That's one thing I've noticed with covid. Also, I know a lot more people don't turn up as well, I've noticed at court a lot of people are no shows so it's quite scarce there at the moment. (Practitioner 2)*

A lull in new referrals was, however, seen as a benefit as it allowed staff the time to have more flexibility and resources to work with clients more in-depth and for longer. This also meant that there was not a backlog of clients waiting for support for new people being referred into the service.

*We've had more time, so I've said so far to staff, if you need to keep it open you can, we've not got a massive backlog of cases waiting, so if you need to keep it open for a bit longer to support them then keep it open, but I would say as a general rule 3 months will be the target. I would say right now it's probably closer to 5 or 6 six months that we are working with cases. (Practitioner 1)*

In terms of integrating with other services and increasing referrals, an example of good practice was highlighted. POPs is also operating across the Manchester area where they have representatives in the probation offices; here they have access to probation cases resulting in any individual who meets the criteria automatically being referred to POPs. It was felt that such an approach in Merseyside may be beneficial.

*[in Merseyside] It falls on the probation officers to identify and make the referrals, even though we have made the referral process as simple as possible it's just up to people to remember it. Whereas we literally had a spreadsheet setup in Manchester, where any case that fit the criteria was automatically populated. (Practitioner 1)*

The service is hoping with the government's easing of restrictions will enable them to attend services in person which will increase POPs visibility. It is also hoped that attending services in person will help

build relationships with other organisations and allow POPs to become a go to service for organisations to refer people to for support.

*I mean the probation office just slowly started opening up to us, so we have started attending them now a bit more regularly. Probably only in the last 6 to 8 weeks and so I am hoping that will have a knock-on effect on referrals, but again I can't say this enough the more referrals we get, the more we can prove the benefit of this work. (Practitioner 1)*

Another challenge, which is a by-product of the covid pandemic, was the increase in online meetings. POPs staff felt that this hindered them as they find talking about the support they offer is better done face-to-face. The practitioners felt people can switch off during online meetings, not turning on their camera/mics etc., which can result in low engagement and less buy in to the service.

*Such a barrier right now, you know you can't get into people's offices. You can't speak to them face to face and it makes it so hard. I can't tell you the amount of Teams meetings I've been on, and you go on these meetings, and it says 37 people and there is one person with their camera on and one person talking everyone else cameras off, microphones muted. So, unless you are physically there in person and kind of are able to get their attention, people get on with their jobs they are not really listening to what some weird, bearded guy from a charity is offering. (Practitioner 1)*

Another barrier mentioned was that some officers particularly in the prisons can be biased against helping individuals who have been imprisoned and their families, making it difficult to get referrals.

*You do get old fashioned officers who think why are you helping them? Why are you bothered? You do that quite often to be honest, it's a bit of a power trip and they like it, so that is a barrier that anyone in POPs will probably tell you. But we are always pushing for the family because they do tarnish them, like that's their family so, especially if they have had a run in with that person they will penalise the family. (Practitioner 2)*

### Impact of Engagement with Partners of Prisoners

The impact of the service is recorded and monitored in several different ways. Firstly, when the service opens a new case with a family or individual, they complete an outcome star form. The tool used is the homelessness outcome star, which consists of 10 different points covering a range of different issues they might be facing such as managing money, housing, drugs and alcohol misuse (Figure 2). They are then asked to rate themselves on where they think they lie at the moment of each of the points. Once the POPs team have an idea of what issues are most affecting that individual, they can make an action plan to offer support and guidance on how to improve their scores. The outcome star is completed with families every 3 months unless their case closes sooner before the three-month period.

*So when we meet a family we complete with them an outcome star, we use the homelessness outcome star, so it has the 10 points around housing, drug and alcohol problems or all those things and the family gets to kind of rate themselves on a scale of 1-10 where they think they are and then they will use that to identify any issues and then we say to them is this the kind of thing you would like support with and then we make an action plan. (Practitioner 1)*

*The offending literally just says offending, so I take it as, so when I speak to them it's not are you going to re-offend because I think a load of them will just be like no I'm not going to re-offend. It's more around how do you feel like you are coping now you are out, are you feeling okay with probation, it's a lot more broad than just offending. (Practitioner 2)*

Figure 2: Homelessness Outcomes Star tool

In addition to the outcome star forms families are also asked to give feedback upon completion of their work with POPs. Families can do this by completing a feedback form in their own time and returning it via post. For the most part, the feedback has been positive, practitioner noted that negative feedback is usually related to more complicated cases where families have been reported to social services due to safeguarding concerns. The data collected by POPs is sent to the VRP monthly which includes outcome data, good news stories and additional impacts. However, POPs record these on an online VRP form so were unable to readily access this data.

POPs provide two case studies to reflect the types of people who access the POPs service, support offered and impacts of this support (Box 1 and Box 2)

## Box 1: Case study 1

### POPS Case Study 1 – January 2022

#### **Family structure:**

Client A (POPS client) was referred through POPS' Family Support Court Worker. It was client A's first experience within the criminal justice system. She is a single parent to 4 children, and it was her son who was sentenced.

#### **Issues Identified:**

Client A mainly needed emotional support as well as some financial advice. Client A works part time and is a single parent, her son being charged and later sentenced was extremely overwhelming for her. Not only because this was her first time involved with supporting a loved one within the criminal justice system but due of the nature of the crime, she was worried and upset for the repercussions it may have for the rest of the family.

Client A was a little worried about finances as previously her son had worked and contributed to the family home and now, she would have to support him in prison. Client A was also worried about prison regime, how to access visits and what property to send. She was anxious about her son's restrictions and where he would live upon release.

#### **Interventions applied:**

- POPS worked alongside Client A to produce a budgeting plan and completed POPS' budgeting spreadsheet.
- POPS emotionally supported Client A by listening to her thoughts and feelings and interjecting when necessary.
- POPS assisted Client A in finding local counselling services.
- POPS gave support concerning prison advice and contacted probation officers when needed.

#### **Recommendations:**

- To contact POPS again if she is feeling overwhelmed with any conditions of her son's licence.
- To continue to follow her budgeting plan.

#### **Impact:**

Client A was extremely thankful for all the support provided by POPS as she didn't have anyone to listen to her thoughts and feelings surrounding her son's arrest and release. Because this was her first time experiencing someone in the criminal justice system, she was grateful for the advice and questions answered. This therefore ensured that she worried less and was able to support her son with all the correct knowledge. She is continuing to work closely with her son's probation officer.

### POPS Case Study 2

#### **Family structure:**

Client B was in court to support his brother, where I approached him. Client B lives with his two sons (13, 16). At the time I met him he was homeless and living in a hotel that housing options were providing for him for that week. He was very stressed at where they were going to be next week quoting *"If it was just me, I would live in my car. But I can't have my boys do that."* His brother was very worried about the situation Client B and his nephews were in more than his own court appearance.

#### **Issues Identified:**

Client B had already established contact with housing options. However, they would only be able to confirm he had somewhere to go with his two sons weekly. Which meant he would have to check out the hotel every Monday and wait for a call confirming he had somewhere else to go that night. Mondays would be stressful as he would have to pack their things in a car then check out all in time to take the kids to school.

He also had a lot of stress due to his children's mental health at this moment in time. He told me that the children were given to him by social services for their protection, so, he didn't what to cause any more stress to the children than they have already been through.

#### **Interventions applied:**

- POPs worked alongside Client B to complete a property pool application
- POPs called housing options and explained the need for Client B to have a more stable time frame for living in hotel rooms due to his children.
- POPs called Client B twice a week to give emotional support.
- For Client B to speak to a doctor about how he is feeling at this time

#### **Recommendations:**

To continue to have emotional support with POPs until they feel they no longer need it.

#### **Impact:**

Client B is now in a house with his two sons with the organisation bead space. They're now settled into a house and Client B is now enrolling on courses and trying to get back into work. His sons are now in school and after school activities and are making friends in their new area. Client B quotes *"I feel like I have my life back on track"*. His brother has been able to focus on getting his community order completed and moving forward with his own life knowing that Client B was supported and now settled with his sons.

#### **Client's comments:**

*About 6 months ago now I went through homelessness. I was homeless me and two teenagers one of them 16 and the other 13. Three of us was homeless we had nowhere to go. Because of me being homeless I couldn't thing right, my head was all over the place. I've never cried in my life; I use to cry every day thinking why this has happened to me. Till I met case worker, I was at the right place at the right time. The help and support she*

## Next Steps and Sustainability

Continued funding was seen as essential to the continuation and sustainability of the POPs programme. In order for the service to continue to provide high quality care and support to its service users, they need stable funding to allow them to get the right staff in place and become embedded across Merseyside.

*The funding that we get is ploughed into what we've got and that's it. Like I said we do get small pockets of funding here and there and we try and put together small bids but for proper sustained family support work, it costs money. To have staff who know what they're doing and know how to do it cost money. So, it's not sustainable unless we are funded, I'm afraid. (Practitioner 1)*

POPs also aim to become more established in probation offices and continue developing professional relationships. In doing so they hope to have regular access to probations current cases and be able to identify all families that meet the POPs criteria allowing them to get a greater number of new referrals that the probation officers may have otherwise missed.

*For me 400 to 500 referrals should have been made so kind of going to probation officers or probation managers and saying here is the breakdown of how many referrals have come from your office this week. We know for a fact that more people than 10 fit the criteria, why haven't they come through. Bear in mind everything I have said, I get it, but families are missing out on a service that could be really beneficial. That could help reduce the risk of re-offending, all the evidence shows us that it can reduce the risk of re-offending if you support family's needs as well as the person on probation. (Practitioner 1)*

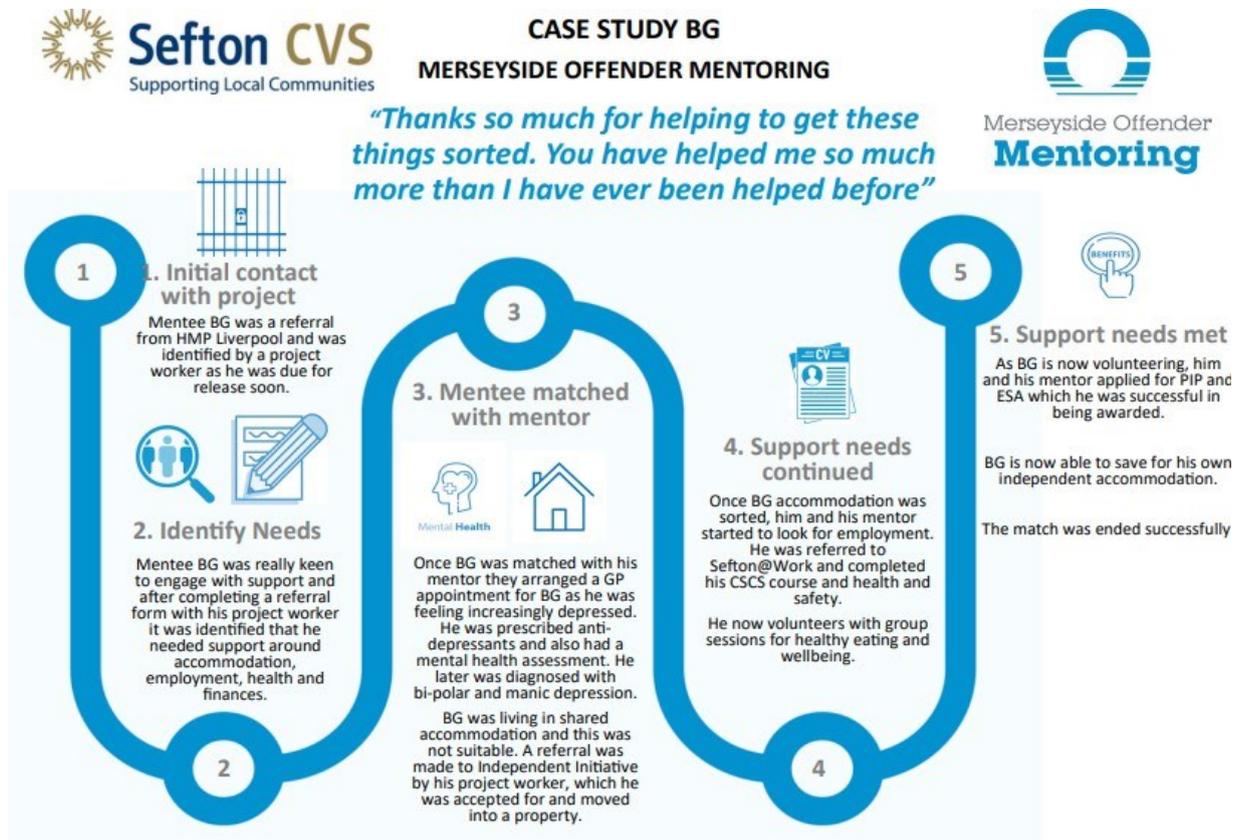
POPs hope to expand the service in the future to work with families of young people who are on the cusp of committing a crime and to work with those most at risk of committing violent offences in the future. The aim would be to work preventatively with these families to stop the young person from committing a crime in the first instance.

*I would like to see it open up to younger people as well because I've worked with YOT [Youth Offending Team] quite a bit. So those people who are coming over from probation, so those 17 and a half. So, to be able to work with kids and their families because I've found those have always been my harder cases with more things involved and more help is needed. So, for example one of the first ones I got he was 17 and his mum was living below the breadline, like she was really struggling, she was on PIP, on disability and her youngest son had a disability also. So, she needed help getting PIP for them, she needed to check her universal credit was okay, she needed help moving. Her 17-and-a-half-year-old was in a gang so they needed to move, her son is back in prison and she wants to move to start a new life, so it just seems to be a lot, like they need a lot more help and if we could try to get to these kids younger and try to show them that it's not a life you want for you and your family. (Practitioner 2)*

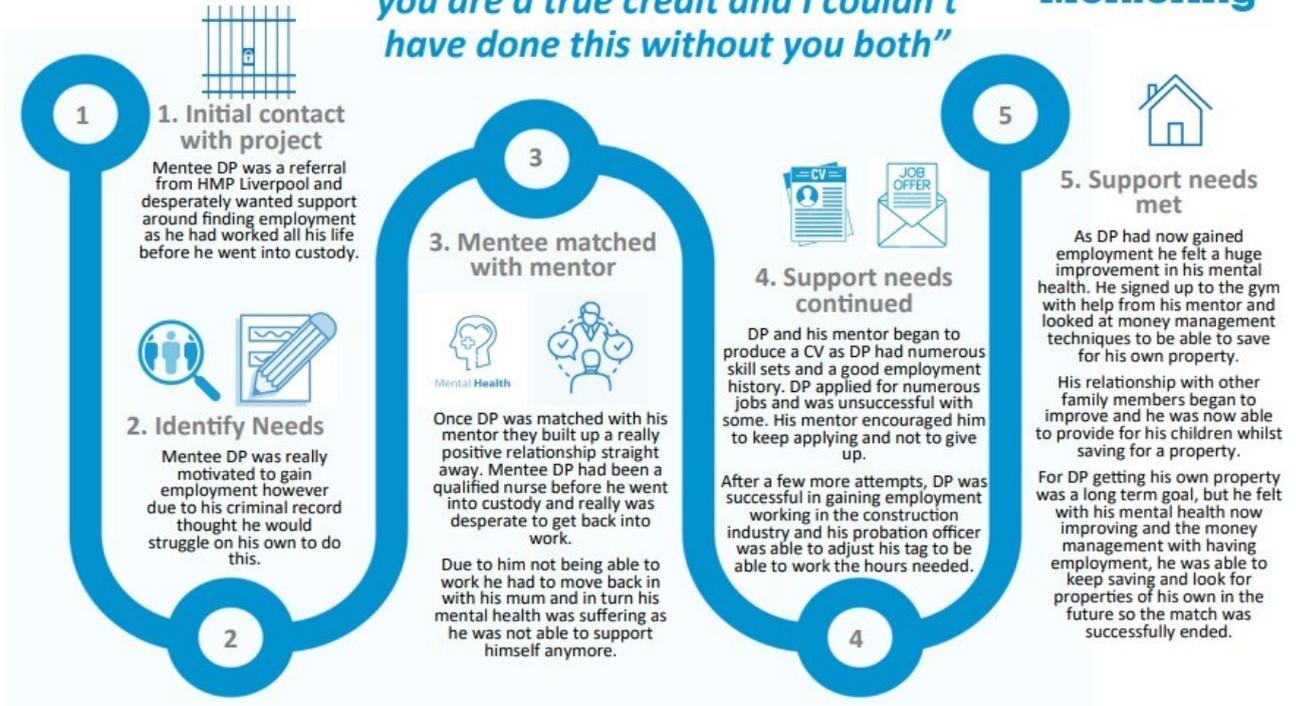
## 7.2 Additional documentation for those programmes funded by the MVRP

### MOMS

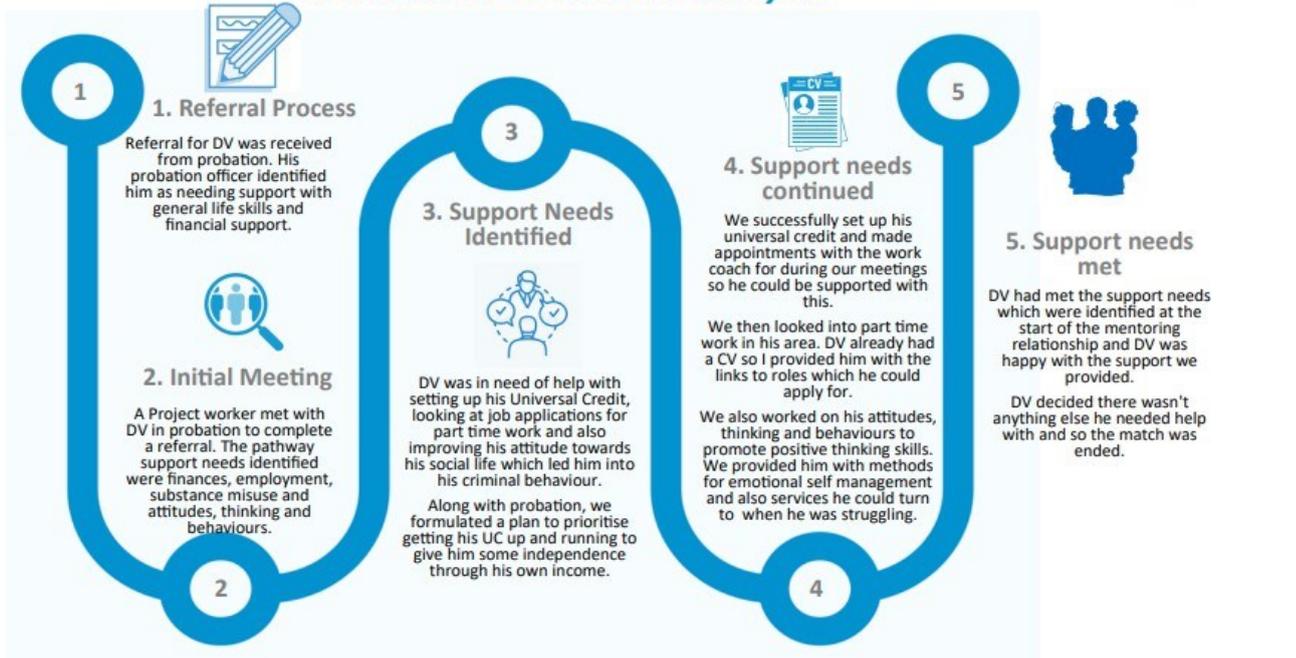
#### 4 case studies



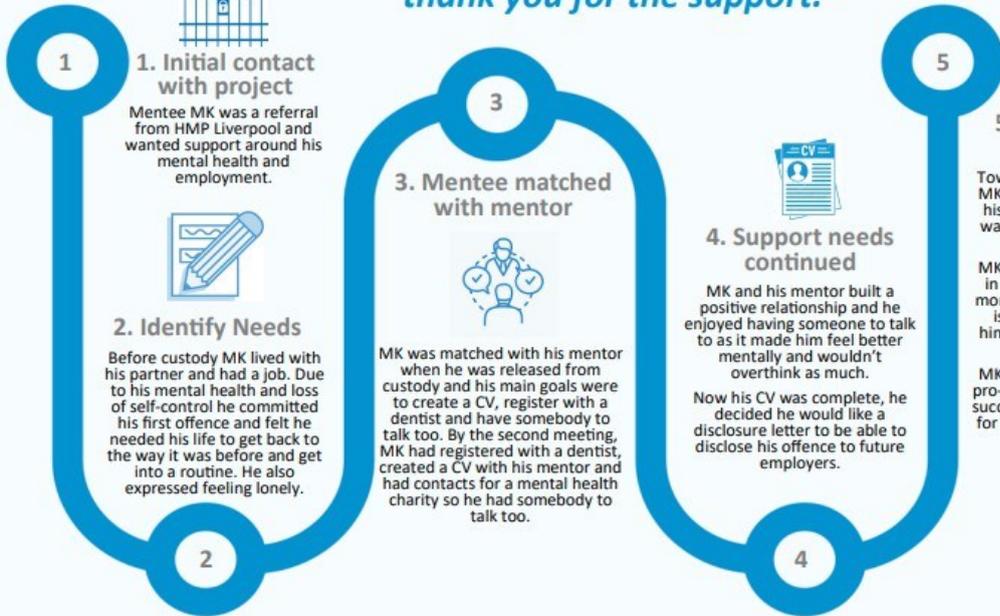
*“Honestly you have been amazing, you are a true credit and I couldn't have done this without you both”*



*“Thank you for the support, I wouldn't have known how to do it without you”*



*"I feel so much more settled now and you have helped me so much, thank you for the support."*



1

**1. Initial contact with project**

Mentee MK was a referral from HMP Liverpool and wanted support around his mental health and employment.



**2. Identify Needs**

Before custody MK lived with his partner and had a job. Due to his mental health and loss of self-control he committed his first offence and felt he needed his life to get back to the way it was before and get into a routine. He also expressed feeling lonely.

2

3

**3. Mentee matched with mentor**



MK was matched with his mentor when he was released from custody and his main goals were to create a CV, register with a dentist and have somebody to talk too. By the second meeting, MK had registered with a dentist, created a CV with his mentor and had contacts for a mental health charity so he had somebody to talk too.



**4. Support needs continued**

MK and his mentor built a positive relationship and he enjoyed having someone to talk to as it made him feel better mentally and wouldn't overthink as much.

Now his CV was complete, he decided he would like a disclosure letter to be able to disclose his offence to future employers.

4

5

**5. Support needs met**

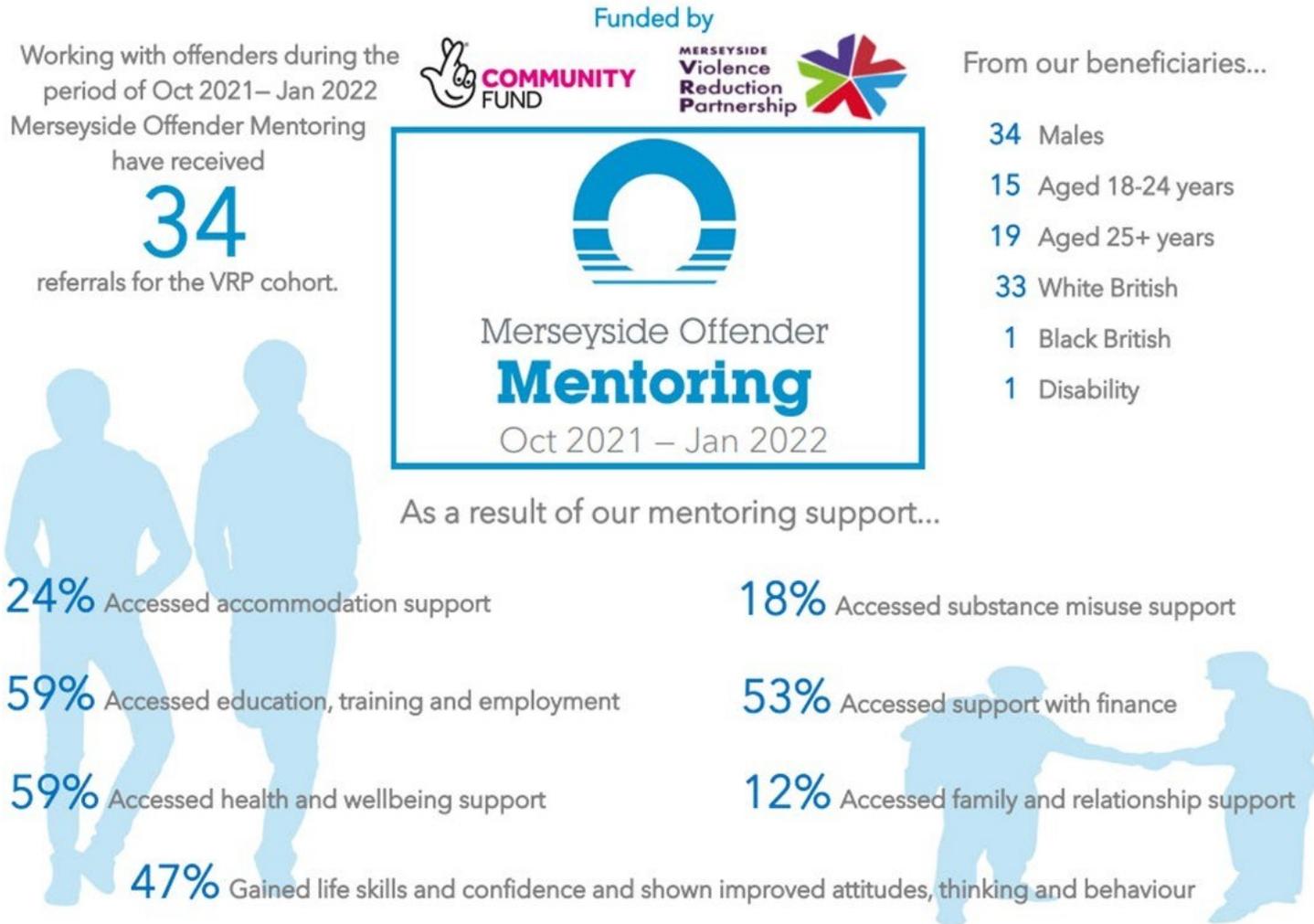
Towards the end of the match, MK was able to open up about his thoughts and feelings and was engaging with the mental health charity.

MK still lives at home but feels in a much better routine and more independent and feels he is able to look for work for himself now he has his CV and disclosure letter.

MK is now very motivated and pro-active and the match ended successfully and he has contacts for mental health services if he ever needs them.



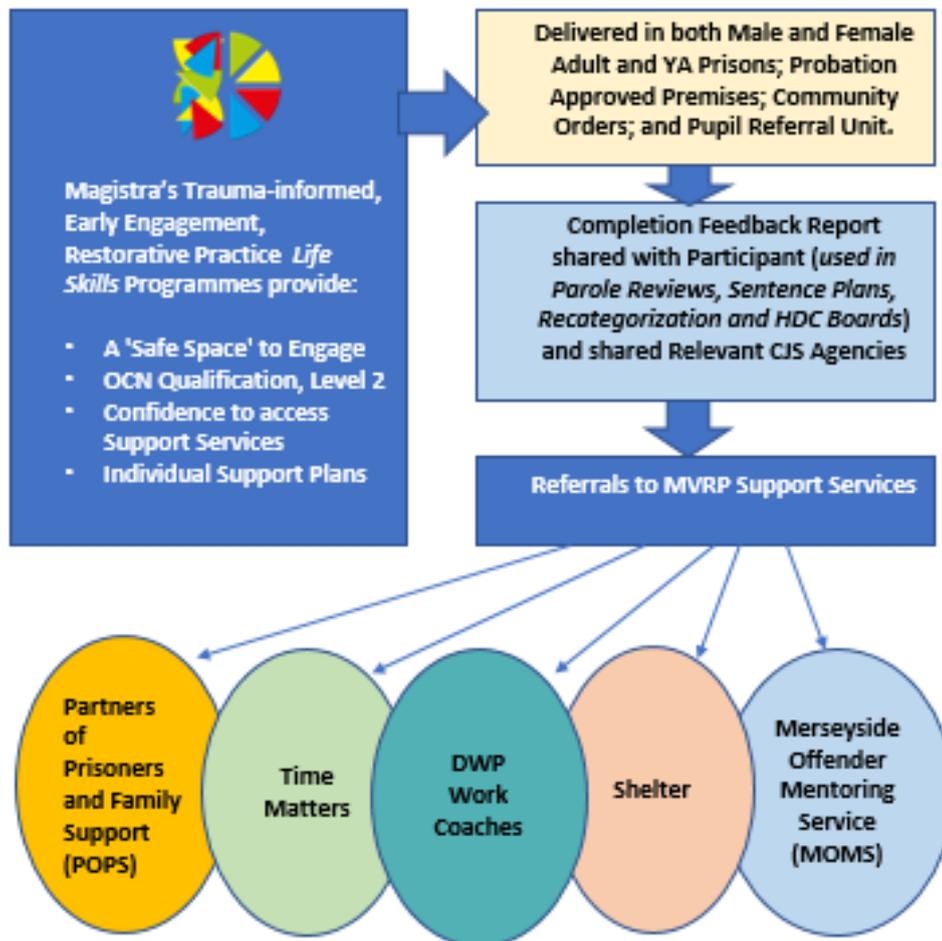
Mental Health



Merseyside Offender Mentoring Project is managed by  
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### Magistra MVRP Operating Model



Magistra's Operating Model evidences how individuals engage with the MVRP through participation in Magistra's various Life Skills programmes on a voluntary basis. During the programme individuals acquire a set of 'transferable' skills that enable them to identify additional support they require through MVRP services to develop the social capital that will assist in sustainable desistance from further violent offending.

During the period 2021-22 Magistra received 127 referrals to its programmes and 120 individuals completed a programme funded by MVRP and received an Open College Network Level 2 Qualification in Life Skills.



## PROGRAMME EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

<b>Referral Assessment form</b>	Ensuring appropriate targeting of referrals in terms of eligibility and suitability for the programme
<b>Compliance of Attendees</b>	Evidence participants attended as required, thus receiving all aspects of the programme.
<b>Programme Integrity Checklist</b>	Evidence the programme content has been delivered in accordance with the building block design, using written records and video recording.
<b>Participant Feedback</b>	Self-reported evidence of positive change and programme effectiveness.
<b>Facilitator Feedback</b>	Facilitator feedback on effectiveness of the programme content in achieving the objectives of each session; Individual Participant Progress Reports; and Participant Completion Reports
<b>Pre- and Post- Measure</b>	A static measure using psychometric questioning to test the effectiveness of the programme.

# Shelter

## Shelter support pathway

