Supporting Rehabilitation: A pilot study exploring the role of community and land based models

Key Findings Report

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A key findings report on supporting rehabilitation: a pilot study exploring the role of community and land based models.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this report we detail key findings from a pilot study examining the role of community and land based interventions in supporting rehabilitation (in its widest sense), and the potential benefits to those who access them. The research tackled how such interventions and projects could support people’s journeys, for example: transitioning from prison to the community, on their recovery journey, desistance readiness, or supporting them to overcome barriers that have a negative impact on their lives. The aim of the study was twofold: to gain further insight into how these projects operate, and to start documenting in a coherent fashion their strengths, outcomes and challenges. This pilot study will identify gaps in knowledge and, in so doing, identify future areas for research.

The pilot study builds on the body of criminal justice system related research undertaken by the team (see Brown et al., 2015a; Brown et al., 2015b; Brown et al., 2016; Bos, 2015; Halliday et al., 2016) and research in the area of community food growing and land based activities (Box and Kneafsey, 2014; Bos, 2016). The study employed a systematic-based search, review of the literature, and primary data collection with a number of key stakeholders.

This report draws on land based community interventions and provides an opportunity to focus specific attention on those who experience, or have experienced substance misuse, homelessness, poor mental health or have a history of offending (or a combination of these). Land based and community interventions cover a wide spectrum of programmes; for the purpose of this study the criteria adopted for the selected case study interventions included projects that:

- Work with offenders and/or individuals with life challenging issue (targeted at those involved in the criminal justice system, experiencing substance misuse, or other marginalisation such as homelessness)
- Projects involving the use of land, which included activities such as construction, building and food growing
- Projects delivered by the public, voluntary and community sector
- Projects that utilise a group or community setting

The title of this report is ‘supporting rehabilitation’, we argue for an intersectional approach to rehabilitation (Brown et al., 2016) as our research highlights that successful rehabilitation is the outcome of a complex set of factors that are both within, and outside, of an individual’s control. We also recognise that rehabilitation is part of wider (and interconnected) processes linked to concepts such as desistance (the cessation of offending) and resettlement.

2. KEY THEMES IN THE LITERATURE

2a. Key themes: policy and grey literature

It is necessary to understand the current political context underpinning the criminal justice system (CJS) and the role of third sector and voluntary organisations working with marginalised communities. The key themes are detailed in the following section: an overview of the criminal justice system, probation, partnership working and voluntary and community sector organisations, a holistic approach and employment.

Overview of the Criminal Justice System

- There are currently 142 prisons in England and Wales, accommodating over 85,000 offenders. Fourteen prisons are run privately by three companies: SERCO, G4S and Sodexo.
- The number of people incarcerated is continuously increasing. Between 1993 and 2014, the prison population in England and Wales increased by more than 40,000 people (a 91% rise).
- The average annual cost of keeping someone in prison is £36,237.
- The reoffending statistics show that 45% of adults are reconvicted within one year of release and reoffending poses vast societal costs of around £7-10 billion a year.
- The (Coalition) Government’s programme ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ came into effect in February 2015 (based on ‘Transforming Rehabilitation: A strategy for reform’ launched in May 2013).
- Under the Government reforms, some prisons are being changed to resettlement prisons with the ambition that they will provide more focused resettlement for offenders who live in the local area, and are nearing their release date (approximately four months before release) (Clinks, 2016).
- Michael Gove, the current Justice Secretary, acknowledges there is a need to consider new and innovative ways of tackling reoffending, which considers the ways in which offenders are being, and can be supported whilst in prison and on release.
- A Ministry of Justice survey*, found that nearly all prisoners want to stop offending (97%) (Edgar et al., 2012), however, people face various obstacles, which this initial section of the report will expand on.

Probation

- ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ outlines a number of reforms regarding how offenders are managed in England and Wales which now involves outsourcing a large proportion of the probation service.
- The new structure replaces the 35 individual probation trusts with a single National Probation Service (public sector). The National Probation Service (NPS – public sector) is responsible for the management of high risk offenders on release, and 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) (private sector).
- NOMS (National Offender Management Service) is the ‘over-arching organisation responsible for managing offenders and reducing re-offending, with responsibility for both community and custodial offender services.’ The delivery of prison and probation services in England and Wales is overseen by NOMS which includes both public and contracted prisons, Community Rehabilitation Companies, and the National Probation Service (Clinks, 2016).
- The CRCs came into effect in June 2015 and are responsible for the management of low and medium risk, and short sentenced (less than 12 months) offenders on release.
- The reforms aim to ‘reduce reoffending rates whilst continuing to protect the public’ and now see market providers as having responsibility for providing supervision and rehabilitation for service users.

Partnership Working and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Organisations

- Probation staff work in a variety of roles and organise and manage the different elements of community orders. This includes unpaid work, group work programmes, and individual supervision and interventions (Home Office and Ministry of Justice, 2013). Probation staff also work with other public, private and voluntary organisations to provide offenders with help with accommodation, employment and education, drug treatment, and debt advice (Clinks, 2016).
- Partnership working is a key part of the reforms; the NPS and the CRCs will “work with a wide range of partners to deliver services, reduce reoffending and protect the public” (Home Office and Ministry of Justice, 2013).
- A central aspect of the reforms by the government is the increased emphasis and central role of partnership working, in particular, VCS organisations delivering services as they are often best placed to meet local needs.
- The Transforming Rehabilitation Programme focuses on putting the majority of probation services out to tender which therefore means that services will be provided by the private and voluntary sector, including social enterprises (Clinks, 2015b). Part of this process involves payment (to providers) based on the reductions in reoffending in which they achieve, with contracts combining elements of fee for service and payment by results (Clinks, 2013).
- Payment by results “is intended to provide financial incentive to deliver agreed reoffending reductions across the whole offender cohort. (Many have) commented [that] P4P and the use of binary outcome measurements would possibly create perverse incentives for providers to cherry pick and not engage with the most difficult-to-engage offenders” (Clinks, 2013:4).
- There is some ambiguity over how delivery will work in practice; Clinks (2013) found that a number of organisations felt the new Contract Package Areas “would be too large to complement
services which could reflect local variations in need adequately” (Clink, 2013). As such, larger third sector organisations are likely to be involved in both making decisions and providing large partnerships which raises questions around smaller third sector organisations and whether this creates competition between VCS organisations.

- Most VCS organisations focusing on supporting those in the CJJS are locally run; the local connection (and commitment and independence of the sector) can give credibility to (ex) offenders who may feel failed by the state. As such, trust can be built and maintained over a sustained period of time with hard to reach (and underserved) groups. Furthermore, the VCS can be more responsive and innovative (compared to the statutory sector); having a holistic outlook means that the VCS can “meet complex individual needs in changing circumstances before, during and after sentencing” (Clinks, 2015a).

- However, research shows that the efforts of the VCS are not enough without the cooperation from other sectors. In particular, there is a greater need for “better joint working between different sectors to prevent people being bounced backwards and forwards between services without anyone taking responsibility for their welfare” (Making Every Adult Matter Coalition, 2015: 20). Research by the Making Every Adult Matter Coalition suggests that decision makers should 1) listen to frontline voices and tackle stigma, 2) deliver flexible and more joined up services, 3) support people toward independent living (2013: 9).

- VCS organisations vary in size and their income is generated through a number of means: the largest funding stream is from statutory and / or public bodies, then grant funding (some of which are contracts), with a very low proportion through public giving (Clinks, 2015a).

- The increasing demand for services coupled with the decreasing access to funding continues to cause tensions and erode the sector’s ability to provide a quality service at the required scale. Furthermore, the majority of the sector is having to make redundancies whilst initiatives such as payment by results take up large amounts of resource as well as policy rhetoric, whilst remaining relatively limited. As more time is spent on funding applications, resources are diverted away from front line activities, which impacts on service users (Clinks, 2015a).

**Holistic Approach**

- Those who have experienced incarceration often face multiple challenges; viewing someone’s offending history only addresses part of a number of potentially complex issues. For example, half of women in prison are victims of domestic violence, nearly half of men in prison were excluded from school, over 70% of prisoners suffer from more than two mental health disorders, and nearly 65% have alcohol or drug related problems. Furthermore, black, Asian and ethnic minority (BAME) groups account for around one quarter of the prison population, but for just 9% of the general population. (Clinks, 2015c). This disproportionate representation highlights that this group of offenders are more likely to experience the criminal justice system and associated multiple deprivation.

- It is estimated that 18,000 people face problems of homelessness, substance misuse and offend in any one year, people facing multiple needs are in every community. Within the group a majority will have experienced mental health problems, and it should be recognised that women are under-represented in these figures (but despite this face significant and distinct challenges). Furthermore, people from BME communities experience a range of social inequalities which contribute to their experience of multiple needs… Those experiencing multiple needs often have ineffective contact with services, as in most cases services are designed to deal with one problem at a time and to support people with single, severe conditions… People with multiple needs are likely to live in poverty, to experience stigma, discrimination, isolation and loneliness; they are often served by no-one, perceived to be “hard to reach” or “not my responsibility” (Making Every Adult Matter Coalition, 2015).

- Common needs relate to health and wellbeing (mental), access to accommodation, and financial stability, with policy changes and welfare reforms having a negative impact on these areas. Clinks (2012: 5) report that “the needs of service users are increasing and becoming more complex. … a number of organisations providing services have declined, many existing organisations have tightened their assessment criteria, further reducing the support available to service users.”

- The following quote demonstrates the holistic and personable approach needed to work with those facing release:

> “To be most effective, it (is) important that commissioning recognises that change belongs to the individual; services must be able to mediate links for the offender into the community; and central to this process is resolving conflicts between the offender and his or her community. The last of these is rarely recognised or addressed in practice” (Edgar et al., 2012: 71).

- Due to the often complex and multiple needs facing ex-offenders, this requires a flexible approach which can adapt to individuals’ personal priorities (Edgar et al., 2012). The importance of an advocate or support when accessing services was key in the Making Every Adult Matter Coalition report (2015). People felt that as well as support from well trained professionals, the support and understanding from those who had already been there could not be substituted. Furthermore, offenders are influenced to change by the people closest to them, highlighting the important role of social networks (Edgar et al., 2012).

**Employment**

- A survey by the Prisoners Education Trust found that 76% of prisoners said that they intended to seek work when they returned to the community. Almost half (44%) expressed interest in volunteering (Prisoners Education Trust, 2011). (Edgar et al., 2012: 7).

- Research with offenders shows a link between employment and perceptions around desistance. Over half of prisoners (68%) in the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction report (SPCR, 2010) said that having a job would be important in helping them to stop reoffending; 48% reported needed help with finding a job on release. Work experience (after release) is also related to reoffending rates – with lower reoffending rates for those who had a paid job to go to and with those not wanting to work having the highest reoffending rates (May et al, 2008 in Edgar et al., 2012: 54).

- In terms of how prisoners would find support in looking for work (from a Prisoners Education Trust Survey); the majority (75%) said they would rely on the Job Centre, just over half (55%) said they would turn to their families, a similar number said they would turn to a recruitment agency. Slightly fewer cited a voluntary organisation, a back-to-work scheme or the prison resettlement unit (Edgar et al., 2012).

- For those facing release, research shows that those who have an address to go to are around three times more likely to have paid work set up compared to those who do not have a place to live (Hennon and Olguduyaye, 2002 in Edgar et al., 2012: 23).

> “Studies show that offending diminishes when offenders gain employment and people who had a job before coming to prison were less likely to reoffend after release (SPCR, 2010 in Edgar et al., 2012: 54).

- Sustaining links and strong networks during time in prison is important; over half of prisoners had jobs or training arranged on release because of pre-existing contacts through family or friends or a former employer. Smaller numbers of offenders were recommended to this through prison job clubs, pre-release programmes, prison education departments or the employment service (Crown 2006 in Edgar et al., 2012: 59). Around half of offenders (33% men and 58% women) cited unemployment and a lack of skills as problems that contribute towards reoffending – as such, training is found to be a common feature in prisoners’ resettlement needs (Edgar et al., 2012: 66).
The literature review was conducted following a systematic approach. In terms of the search and the use of codes, a range of land-based interventions in supporting offenders desistance journeys particularly in the transition from prison to the community (as well as the individuals journey of change, who are impacted by a range of life changes) were identified. The literature from these models were also looked at. Whilst the full systematic review is not included in this report, the key themes arising from the review are given. For the purposes of this report, the literature can be broadly divided into three areas 1) Horticultural and gardening interventions; 2) social enterprise initiatives; and 3) social support, in the context of working with marginalised communities. The main themes emerging from the literature are outlined below.

1. Horticultural and Gardening Interventions

Firstly, the concept of care farming will be introduced. There are a number of definitions of care farms but what they all have in common is their focus on promoting or providing health and social support for a range of groups (usually identified as ‘vulnerable’), through farming activities. Care farming can be described as: “the therapeutic use of agricultural landscapes and farming practices” (Hasink, 2003; Haubenhofer et al., 2010). Care Farming UK, in 2013 in Bragg et al., 2014. In addition to the above definition, Elsey et al., (2014: 4) emphasise care farming to use “commercial farms and agricultural landscapes”, and the importance of “promoting mental and physical health through normal farming activities (Care Farming, 2014)” Whilst the health aims are commonly outlined, Care Farming UK also incorporate social and educational care services in their definitions, as well as creating new agricultural skills and also provide further detail around the nature of the activities. Care Farming UK assert that “care farms utilise the whole or part of a farm, providing horticultural or farming activities for a range of vulnerable groups of people, provide a supervised, structured programme of farming related activities, provide services on a regular basis for participants, and are commissioned to provide care farming services, as well as delivering the therapeutic, health and social support, through farming activities, for a range of ‘vulnerable’ clients, on a long term basis (as opposed to a one off visit), with Elsey et al., (2014) recognising the difference in the degree of ‘farming’ and ‘care’ on each farm. As such, care farming activities can comprise a diverse range of activities and work with a range of clients. In recognising that “the care farming approach has been adopted in a range of countries which provide evidence to support the delivery of care farming interventions and their positive impacts on the participants, particularly in terms of health, wellbeing and social interaction (Grabbe et al., 2015; Sempik et al., 2014). For homeless women involved in a gardening project, this activity ‘interrupted the participants’ negative ruminations, offering stress relief and elements of social inclusion and self-actualization’ (Grabbe et al., 2015: 238). Participating in gardening activities was also identified to increase self-efficacy, self-confidence and empowerment for the homeless (Brandt-Meyer and Butter, 1999; Pearce and Seals, 2006). Such benefits of being involved in gardening activities are on the individual but also group level, where the social support and positive partnership working. For participants on probation, Hale et al., (2005) found that engaging with a horticultural programme not only resulted in an increase in self-esteem and horticultural knowledge, but also reduced recidivism rates compared to non-programme participants. Recommendations for future research have featured in these studies which call for larger and longer studies (to follow recruitment for longer), the utilisation of quantitative and qualitative methods and the use of control groups, thus recognising the need for a stronger evidence base generally, longitudinal studies, and additional research that examines evidence of the effectiveness of such activities (Hale et al., 2005; Chisholm and Goodyear, 2012; Sempik et al., 2014). It can therefore be ascertained that there is a lack of evidence around the longer term impact of engagement in a horticultural programme, for a range of marginalised groups, in terms of supporting participants' desistance journey of change (and the various factors impacting this).

2. Social Enterprise Initiatives

Resulting from the search was literature around social enterprise initiatives working with a range of groups including homeless substance abusers (Conahan, 2012), those recovering from mental illness (Gilbert et al., 2013), those with disabilities and added to life (Lyagh et al., 2014), and offenders (Cosgrove and O’Neill, 2011; Cosgrove et al., 2011; Hunter and Boyce, 2009; Harley, 2014). Therefore, similar to the previous section, papers are predominantly focused on one particular group. Again, a variety of geographical locations are represented in the literature including USA, Norway, and UK. It is important to outline the philosophy of social enterprises, as stated within the literature: “social enterprises are commonly defined as ‘a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested in the business or in the community with the need to maximize profits for shareholders and owners’” (DTI, 2002: 13).” (Cosgrove et al., 2011: 2). Social enterprises share five defining features (Pearce, 2003 in Cosgrove et al., 2011):

1. Having a social mission or purpose, for example, creating employment, training or the provision of local services
2. Achieving that social purpose by engagement, on some level through the production of goods or services within the marketplace
3. Holding assets and wealth for the benefit of community rather than the benefit of individuals
4. Ensuring the democratic involvement of members of the organisation within its governance
5. Having accountability to members of the enterprise venture and the wider community (2012)

Social enterprises can therefore be an innovative means of finding longer term solutions to assisting people long disconnected from the jobs market, in finding a route into work, employment, education and training” (Cosgrove et al., 2011: 2). Social enterprise initiatives may be in the form of a social enterprise model, a range of communities (e.g. Lyagh et al., 2012, Hunter and Boyce, 2009), or they may provide other services such as housing (Conahan, 2012). Existing studies have looked at horticultural and gardening activities for therapeutic purposes. Included within this body of work are systematic reviews, which helpfully outline some of the key findings from the papers reviewed. For example, Annersted and Währborg (2011) focus on Nature Assisted Therapy (NAT) and ascertain that a number of reliable studies support the “effectiveness and appropriateness of NAT as a relevant recourse for public health” (significant improvements were found for varied outcomes in diverse diagnoses) (385). York and Wiseman (2012) critically reviewed gardening activities and occupational health. They found the processes of participating in gardening offered satisfying and meaningful methods of recovery for people who are marginalised within society, at the individual and community health level, thus highlighting fundamental links with gardening and wellbeing (2012). Focusing on the role of care farming, Elsey et al., (2014: 4) set out a protocol to test the cost-effectiveness of care farms in the prevention and management of co-occurring psychological and social harms. Significant improvements were found for clients across a range of outcome measures, particularly on mental health and quality of life. Although the care farming activities are widely acknowledged, nevertheless “care farms” to have been characterised as interventions with “limited evidence of the effectiveness of care farms in improving health and well-being” (Elsey et al., 2014: 4). What this pilot study is broader than care farming, the findings of this study may be of significant interest. To summarise, all reviews study the limited amount of papers identified in their respective studies.

More empirically focused studies have looked at gardening-based projects working with a diverse range of communities such as offenders, homeless, refugees, and drug and alcohol users, from a range of care farmers. Generally, mental health was the common goal and also provide further detail around the nature of the activities. Care Farming UK assert that “care farms utilise the whole or part of a farm, providing horticultural or farming activities for a range of vulnerable groups of people, provide a supervised, structured programme of farming related activities, provide services on a regular basis for participants, and are commissioned to provide care farming services, as well as delivering the therapeutic, health and social support, through farming activities, for a range of ‘vulnerable’ clients, on a long term basis (as opposed to a one off visit), with Elsey et al., (2014) recognising the difference in the degree of ‘farming’ and ‘care’ on each farm. As such, care farming activities can comprise a diverse range of activities and work with a range of clients. In recognising that “the care farming approach has been adopted in a range of countries which provide evidence to support the delivery of care farming interventions and their positive impacts on the participants, particularly in terms of health, wellbeing and social interaction (Grabbe et al., 2015; Sempik et al., 2014). For homeless women involved in a gardening project, this activity ‘interrupted the participants’ negative ruminations, offering stress relief and elements of social inclusion and self-actualization’ (Grabbe et al., 2015: 238). Participating in gardening activities was also identified to increase self-efficacy, self-confidence and empowerment for the homeless (Brandt-Meyer and Butter, 1999; Pearce and Seals, 2006). Such benefits of being involved in gardening activities are on the individual but also group level, where the social support and positive partnership working. For participants on probation, Hale et al., (2005) found that engaging with a horticultural programme not only resulted in an increase in self-esteem and horticultural knowledge, but also reduced recidivism rates compared to non-programme participants. Recommendations for future research have featured in these studies which call for larger and longer studies (to follow recruitment for longer), the utilisation of quantitative and qualitative methods and the use of control groups, thus recognising the need for a stronger evidence base generally, longitudinal studies, and additional research that examines evidence of the effectiveness of such activities (Hale et al., 2005; Chisholm and Goodyear, 2012; Sempik et al., 2014). It can therefore be ascertained that there is a lack of evidence around the longer term impact of engagement in a horticultural programme, for a range of marginalised groups, in terms of supporting participants’ desistance journey of change (and the various factors impacting this).
and reduce stigma. Thus, Lyons et al. (2012) found that social firms can be a viable alternative “for creating employment opportunities and training for and enhancing social integration of people with mental health disabilities.” (455) Challenges are problematic short-term nature of project funding. Furthermore, questions regarding relapse include how to take a long term view point for people in recovery (Conahan, 2012). These challenges can also apply to those on a desistance journey experiencing setbacks.

Studies have looked at the role of social enterprises and employment opportunities for offenders specifically in relation to the ‘Good Lives Model’. It is commonly acknowledged that “[e]x-ofenders face numerous challenges once released from a period of incarceration. In addition to financial, social, family, and community integration, offenders face numerous hurdles to employment.” (Harley, 2014: 10). The challenges facing offenders transitioning into the community and employment are not new, however the magnitude and scale of issues are, and include: employers’ attitudes toward those with criminal records, a lack of stable housing, substance misuse, mental health and other health issues, financial concerns, educational challenges, and legal barriers; often, unmet practical needs and delays in the transition to the community that the pursuit for employment is also delayed (Harley, 2014). Thus, viewing employment as a singular aspect is often unhelpful as it cannot be viewed in isolation from the other aspects of offenders’ lives. Initiatives aimed at preparing for employment feature in some cases. Hunter and Boyce (2009) found that offenders engaging in a prison training programme found a number of benefits such as opportunities to obtain a qualification and work experience, undertaking a fulfilling role in comparison to other employment opportunities in prison, and an increase in self-confidence. The importance of stable employment for desistance (and successful re-entry) is commonly recognized, but as Harley (2009) highlights, ex-offenders tend to be employed in unskilled and low paying jobs - educational attainment highly correlates with employment and rates of recidivism for ex-offenders. However, due to a range of complexities already set out, mainstream employment may not be suitable for a large proportion of ex-offenders.

In terms of the evidence base for employment and reoffending despite the clear connections in the prevention and reduction of offending (Crow, 1989, Farrington et al. 1996, Maruna, 2001 in Cosgrove et al., 2011), there is a lack of documentation on the activities and achievements of social enterprises, particularly in relation to their impact on reoffending. Drawing on the work of Cosgrove and Neil (2011) and Cosgrove et al., (2011) the following section provides refreshing insight into the subject of social enterprise initiatives in reducing reoffending in a UK political context. In line with other literature the report has so far drawn upon, Cosgrove and Neil (2011) assert that in the area of social enterprises and reoffending, there remains a need for robust critical analysis over time beyond the delivery of outputs to determine whether programmes are positively impacting on reoffending. The lack of a robust evidence base (recognised by HCOS) of expenditure allocation or funding within social enterprises, and is due to the small scale nature of social enterprises. This makes it difficult to ascertain the full impact of programmes and the presence of success tends to be not well-driven without any detailed evaluation of social value or impact.” (Cosgrove and O’Neill, 2011: 51).

As outlined in section 2a, the VCS provides a key resource in terms of supporting ex-offenders. In the context of the ‘rehabilitation revolution’, solutions to the problem of ever increasing reoffending rates must be innovative and creative in light of rapidly reducing budgets (Cosgrove and O’Neill, 2011). In regard to this, and the challenges facing social enterprises aiming to support ex-offenders, key learning points are now set out:

- There is often a lack of awareness (regarding social enterprises) in prison and probationary institutions and services; embedding an ethos is challenging in light of the complexities around demonstrating social impact and value. One proposition is to also integrate this within NOMS core standards and targets (e.g. priority areas).
- Social enterprises should complement existing criminal justice system initiatives, and have an acute understanding of the pressures, challenges and stigmatisation faced by ex-offenders following a conviction or time spent in prison.
- Smaller social enterprises may experience difficulty engaging with prison and probation (limited finances and scope) but may have stronger links with relevant agencies and support services (compared to larger projects) to support desistance.

A major challenge is balancing the tensions between social and economic objectives. If projects are financially sustainable, a viable business model can be developed (addressing any reservations about profit making) and dependence on grants will decrease.Balancing personal values with the demands of the market some social enterprises have engaged with community payback for example despite questions they may have around the disciplinary nature of the scheme.

Becoming non-dependent for survival through diversifying and developing services to offenders and local communities comes with approaching the social enterprise as a business model.

- Self-initiated participation rather than imposing strict discipline is advocated, whereby supervision is like to promote ownership and responsibility.
- Referring to desistance and the Good Lives model which 1) encourages offenders to take responsibility for their rehabilitation and 2) highlights the significance of equal partnerships between offender and criminal justice system professionals (Ward and Maruna, 2007). Therefore, it is desirable for offenders to be aware of the way social enterprises are governed and run, and to be involved in their operation and development; this transparency creates a sense of commitment, value and ownership.

Therefore, a system is needed that enables offenders to desist from reoffending of their own will, rather than as a result of being coerced through monitoring and enforcement (Cosgrove and O’Neill, 2011).

For Cosgrove and O’Neill (2011) offering alternative approaches to offender management, social enterprises working in partnership with criminal justice agencies are at a promising stage in their development in the UK. They can complement other rehabilitation interventions (in the CJS) around providing valuable work experience and roots into employment but can also address offending behaviour by restoring self-esteem, offering a renewed sense of purpose, empowering individuals. Nevertheless, this is not without its challenges. There is a need for social enterprises to secure the trust and confidence of prison and probation personnel, manage complex working arrangement and importantly, demonstrate their impact on reoffending, to achieve a more prominent place in the market of offender management” (Cosgrove and O’Neill, 2011). To conclude this section, Muir et al. (2010), also promotes a need to better investigate the role of social enterprise more broadly, in terms of tackling social exclusion more generally, and creating spaces of empowerment for marginalised and excluded groups.

3. Social support

Although comprising few studies, this section is nevertheless an important one which complements the existing themes in the review so far. The papers reflect the importance of social relationships, in the form of social support networks (Pettus-Davis et al., 2011) and a health-monitoring service (Doors et al., 2013). Both interventions use former prisoners in their models, in one paper to promote reduced relapse to substance misuse and crime (Pettus-Davis et al., 2011) and in another, to use an Offender Health Training service to improve offenders’ health (Doors et al., 2013). Social support interventions are seen as a potentially effective, low cost resource in light of the need to identify interventions that will reduce the high costs associated with re-offending, which has been neglected in the literature (Pettus-Davis et al., 2011). However, for Doors et al., (2013) constraints meant that the longer-term outcomes were unable to be identified, however, but promising trends were revealed regarding behaviour change and self-perceived health and wellbeing, and how the initiative has helped probation clients tackle interwoven problems and build hope and self-belief. “Of particular importance was the health trainers’ experience of the criminal justice system, which resonated with and inspired clients, developing trust and motivation to change” (199). Thus, this model has shown to be “effectively implemented within the probation setting, making a valuable contribution to the improvement of offenders’ health and well-being by working in ways that add to the connections between personal lifestyle and wider determinants of health” (199). Future research to explore the effectiveness of social support models are called for, Doors et al., (2013) suggests are important to develop second that highlight these links and to invest in appropriate evaluation that can generate further learning about ‘what works and why’” (Doors et al., 2013: 199), which is in line with other recommendations outline.

The literature therefore outlines a number of themes, including:

- The number of reported benefits associated with land-based (namely horticultural) activities for a range of participants (although from a small body of literature), including the individual and community benefits associated with horticultural activities.
- Horticultural and gardening activities largely approached using a therapeutic / health framework
- Indications of the importance of peer – support and peer – mentoring for desistance
- The importance of institutional support for outside interventions
- Employment opportunities having a positive effect on desistance, albeit the presence of labour market marginalisation
- The tendency to focus on / target one particular group of community of people facing marginalisation
- The need for more robust and longitudinal research, and the role of evidence in promoting and substantiating the role of interventions / social enterprise activities (in terms of social value)
- The report will now outline the methodological approach and introduce the case studies, before focusing on the key themes from the qualitative research.
3. METHODOLOGY

The literature review was conducted following a systematic approach to ensure that searching and reviewing the literature was undertaken rigorously. The team devised a search term list and a number of databases to search and search terms were divided throughout the team and applied to the chosen databases. The focus of the systematic review was the role of land based interventions in supporting offenders journeys of change particularly in the transition from prison to the community (or individuals impacted by a range of life control issues); papers focused on social enterprise models were also looked at. The literature review focused on interventions targeted at adults (as opposed to youth) and only peer reviewed papers have been included. Whilst the full systematic review is not included in this report, the key themes arising from the review are presented in the following section.

Description of case study projects

Following a systematic search of the literature, and reviews of a range of literatures, visits to a number of projects took place where observational data was collected. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with staff members from selected projects. In total, nine stakeholders (project staff / initiators and commissioners) were interviewed from a number of charitable, third sector and public body organisations in The Midlands and Devon (England, UK). The stakeholders interviewed are from (or support) organisations working with people currently experiencing ‘life control’ issues - a term used by one of the stakeholders which seems appropriate for the range of issues people who engage with the case studies experience. The table below outlines the case studies included in this study. It should be noted that many more similar initiatives exist nationally and the case studies included in this report are therefore presented as examples. A range of case studies have been included in the pilot study: a local authority funded community-based project for people experiencing substance misuse, a faith based intervention using the land to support people with life control issues, a care farm working with adults with severe learning difficulties, and pupils from disadvantaged areas, and a land-based community project working with offenders released on a temporary licence (ROTL) and men in the community on licence. Furthermore, a stakeholder from a horticultural intervention for substance misusing offenders in a secure setting took part in the study which highlighted some similar themes for interventions in the community and in prison. For the purpose of this pilot study, it was necessary to talk to a range of stakeholders to gain a wider a number of common themes, which are outlined in the following section.

4. KEY FINDINGS

This section of the report presents the key themes arising from the stakeholder interviews, and draws on the literature presented in section 2 of the report.

4a. The role of projects

4b. Ethos, approach and practicalities

4c. Effectiveness and outcomes

4d. Challenges

4e. Looking forward

4a. The role of projects

This initial section of the findings provides understanding around the focus of case study projects and what they aim to achieve. The box below displays quotes from the key stakeholders managing or initiating projects, to illustrate the projects aims.
"We're focusing on both treatment and recovery. The two go together and one without the other isn't good for us because we know that people, in particular the substance misuse problem ... the majority of people do have beyond drug issues, so we need to make sure that we've got the support mechanism, whether it be in accommodation, education, training, around them so that if they do falter that we're saying to them you've failed, you've merely had a pause in your journey and just rekindle, regroove, come back again and let's go to the next stage. Let's get to the end of the journey ... but from the outset we need to make sure that the individual is aware of how did you get to the end of their journey if they want too?" (Stakeholder, Project 2).

Throughout the interviews it was widely acknowledged that people are on a journey, as well as appreciating that participants are unlikely to face a particular issue in isolation. As the following quote shows, Project 2, in addition to supporting people on their recovery journey, also provides a space for them to reflect on their experiences and to engage with (reflecting on the multifaceted nature of people's lives).

"the intention is to help them address those issues with regards to substance misuse, get them the support that they need, get them off the substance, get them back into the community as fully functioning members of the community, so the whole function is around being reflective and it's not just the individual that we're helping, it's also maybe the sibling or their parents or because they're not the only one who's affected so if you're trying to do is try to keep the family together, make sure that they're not being kicked out of their properties so that they're actually staying within their families, but if not then we've got the mechanism in place to help support them." (Commissioner, Project 2).

Stakeholders, from working with their members or clients, recognise the need for the provision of an opportunity for support as well as type of support. Being able to provide something different than what is currently available, was common throughout the interviews.

"we restructured our induction earlier in the year, so our induction type of support. Being able to provide something 'different' than what was there was important, then you can't just look at the crime, it's the life around that you have to look at ... so for one man's crime that he is tried for, say was done for burglary, etc., by his family, he may have been stealing for years, his influences have probably been appalling, he'd had very few role models but if you looked just at his crime and tried to assess what the issues were there would make the wrong judgement, the support you put in place just because he's seen as a burglar and that's relevant to what's going on in his life, so you've got to look at the bigger picture around one individual ... you know you can take that for any sentence, any crime really there is always another life story behind it and that is really what you have to try and help people move away from." (Stakeholder, Project 1).

This type of person-centred approach is also seen in the prison horticultural approach is also seen in the prison horticultural project space. One stakeholder reflects: "We don't judge anyone, we don't read their files before they come out, we have got no preconceptions of who they are and what they have done, where they are in their recovery even really. We just meet them on an individual first time basis and then we form our opinion of them from day one. We treat them like we would any other person, regardless." (Project worker, Prison). Providing more holistic support in terms of this being beyond the space of the project can be seen particularly in the example of Project 1. Here, the project may assist people when coming out of prison or attending meetings where they benefit from some form of advocacy. Being an independent charity allows for such support, and even if they were to say was normalising, they are allowed to be normal. ... so once we've established who they are and possibly what their difficulties are, we can actually build on that together. And once we've got to that stage we try to allocate them or find them employment and support them into that and even beyond that we'd find them accommodation." (Stakeholder, Project 1).

Another stakeholder from Project 4 emphasises the importance of long-term individual relationships. "Prisoners come from the environment where it's very dog eat dog in there and anyone who's nice to you is nice for a reason and then it's going to come back and bite you ... and then they realise they think that takes a couple of months and then they actually blossom and you see them blossoming and they've got an opportunity to show themselves." (Stakeholder, Project 4).

In terms of who projects support (Table 1), Project 2 engages with people experiencing substance misuse as that is what they are funded for. Similarly, Project 3 supports disadvantaged pupils as that is what they are funded for. Therefore we don't have the tools for people to support us, we have to support them and that's why we're very dog eat dog in there, and it's not just about can you give someone the skills to be able to get someone a job, there's a whole raft of support that people might need from housing, from relationships, from communication, from work life skills and all sorts of things, and really this project is positioning itself as a tool to be able to assist with that. As a project objective it would be that, to facilitate in that journey ... working with people through areas to help them achieve their potential." (Stakeholder, Project 3).
What we have identified is that mentoring, based on membership; members may then become a volunteer, and never have mixed with before, and vice versa, and that answers another want people to share stuff with. A lot of them are lonely and isolated bit wishy washy but I think they know when people are just a project with marginalised people and creating a supportive environment (Christian values) is based on loving, non-judgemental relationships often whatever their challenge is, part of the support we offer and well we are all here just working out how to do life together. Because I haven’t whatever their challenge is, part of the support we offer and the way that we operate means that their challenge becomes our challenge.” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1).

The type of approach taken by Project 1 (underpinned by their Christian values) is based on loving, non-judgemental relationships with marginalised people and creating a supportive environment which is something they consider as fundamentally important.

“I want to be gospel here, is that alright? I’d just say the Good Samaritan story. So it’s about love, it’s about who to love, who to care, with the wounds they’ve got and they need caring at times and you know, and love. That’s the bottom line of it, I mean that sound a bit wishy washy but I think they know when people are just a project and well they’ll say you’re not a person, they gather, they want friends and they want people to share stuff with. A lot of them are lonely and isolated and just trampled on, they need somebody to have a conversation with so they’ve got people to have a conversation with” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1).

The communal aspect and links with (and educating the wider) community is incredibly important for Project 4 “…we positively encourage people to mix with other people who they probably would never have mixed with before, and vice versa, and that answers another of our aims were we try to inform the community about the difficulties of these men’s lives and the impossibility of trying to reframe if the community won’t accept them.” (Stakeholder 1, Project 4). For Project 2, creating a communal environment is also important. This project is engaged in projects with members of the broader community, as well as engaging with community members to find out how to change the community context. To partly encourage people to think about their behaviour / lives, Project 1 also have a thought of the day, based on scriptures from the Bible in the morning, before activities start, “the reason we do that is because we get people to think about where they want to go, they want to get there and to challenge them on their values a bit” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1). This creates a space for people to be supported and to journey with others towards a person, but guided by mentors. Recognised within the literature is that people are influenced by the people closest to them (Edgar et al., 2012) and creating spaces central to relationship has scope to be effective. Agnew is also shown in the following quotes which demonstrate how members are involved to some degree with deciding how the space is used. “We’ve always done student reviews and student forums so they have always got to say what they want, what they enjoy, what they don’t enjoy, what they would like to see more of. So that hasn’t really changed, we have always been fairly democratic in a way and inclusive.” (Stakeholder, Project 3).

For Project 2, as previously suggested, they aim to have people feel they’ve been listened for our members” (Stakeholder 2). Understanding and aiming to meet the often complex and multiple needs of service users is also reflected in the commissioning of the following quote. “We talk about our view of how our people want to be seen on the board service user viewpoints because we want to make sure that we’re checking the service to meet what the client requires, not what we think they require, but what we’re trying to make sure that is that we’re dealing with the whole picture, not just one element of it” (Commissioner, Project 2). This inclusive approach is part of the ethos and community feel; ensuring democratic involvement is a defining feature of social enterprise as recognised by Peace (2003 in Cosgrove et al., 2011). Practicalities – providing positive spaces

As outlined in the previous table, three of the projects are located in rural areas and one project in an urban locality. The benefits of being in a rural area are that there is a lower vibe of people being “on display” and is further discussed in section 4c. “I think the rural location of the project is important, I think it’s important because it gets people out of the way. Its an environment where you are living in a rural environment and in an urban situation in many ways, you are very close to people, so our rural location is quiet, it’s peaceful, it’s the exact opposite of prison actually and I think it is important, I think for those coming away from urban environments especially trying to get away from the streets, if you know they’re just going to be confronted by the urban environment so that might be, but it is certainly not an urban environment…” (Stakeholder 1, Project 4). Building on the key findings so far, projects are important in terms of providing alternative spaces for people. The following quote shows how Project 2 participants, they are able to access the space on a regular and informal basis.

“we have people who are members have their card they swipe in and out, they use the place as they want, as long as they abide by the rules they can come and go, and which was a bit of a problem but now we have got a system which is working well and everyone can just check in… very informal… we don’t key work, because we just can’t do that, that’s how we function that and people can book time with their recovery champions, one to one, we have something that we call active floating, where recovery champions grab a coffee and just wander around the café and sit down and say how are you doing, I haven’t seen you for a while, so we have a lot of that important informal stuff happening.” (Stakeholder 2, Project 2).

It is not only about the physical space and the activities provided, it is also about the interaction between the staff and the members, within a particular space (see Brown et al., 2015) and as shown by the following quote from the stakeholder working in the prison environment. “I think it’s probably to do with the freedom that the garden offers, it’s a new environment in a prison, the garden is away from the wing and it’s partly the way that we do it facilitate it. I’m not very good at blowing my own trumpet but I keep being told what you and [name] are doing is brilliant and I say yeah yeah yeah but I suppose in a way, it’s how we treat the people that are on the programme.” (Project worker, Prison). This is described by the project works as “a whole kind of holistic package like there is at Rye Hill prison, with all those other things attached to it (…)otherwise it becomes an allotment site then doesn’t it!” (Project worker, Prison). Along with the evidence provided so far, this suggests that it is not only about the physical environment, but also a number of different aspects related to the approach, as outlined in this section. The report will now focus on the outcomes associated with the land.

4c. Effectiveness and outcomes

The findings so far have shown that the spaces provided by the case studies take a holistic, longer term social approach, incorporating personal and professional development. In addition, case studies show that projects comprise a number of dimensions which makes them effective. The interviewees spoke a lot about the benefits of the land. As shown in the following quotes, the outside environment is considered to be particularly important for good mental health and it’s just that heaviness of life focusing it on people, well it just being so heavy on people and you just need something simple to take people out of that. So sowing a seed, going to collect eggs, it just takes people out of that mind-set, out of prison they’re into something new you know and I think that’s really important.” (Stakeholder 2, Project 1). Another stakeholder (from the care farm) “we do have a project where we do a lot of outdoor work in the garden, it’s a therapeutic space. It is absolutely crucial isn’t it? We know that there is a nature deficit syndrome and people definitely need spaces like this…” Another stakeholder (from a care farm) “for good mental health and I think that is ordinary people as well as all of these group that we work with who have got identified problems… We all need to go away to our desert islands sometimes don’t we…” (Stakeholder 1, Project 3). The therapeutic benefits are well recognised in the literature in terms of health and wellbeing (Annested and Währborg, 2011; York and Wiseman, 2012; Elsey et al., 2014). Activities such as growing food are reported to provide a sense of achievement, satisfaction and purpose as it is largely tangible. “I mean the thing about gardening is you can see it. You physically see whether you’ve done it right or not, you know, and there’s an end product, so if you’re not doing it right then you just don’t get the product” (Commissioner, Project 2). Furthermore, food growing is considered an activity suitable for the majority of people. “I think its growth for people who haven’t done anything before and also growth in plants, in planting a tomato seed and then seeing it grow and then taking the tomatoes from it, if you like from seed to table, this is what we’re doing, this is what you’ve done. Oh right okay, it’s taking them through the process…it gives them a sense of achievement, that I was involved in that, and you know you do see the joy in that, you know, it’s a process that they think about and that they’re involved in and purpose, which lots of people may not have.” (Stakeholder 2, Project 1). Engagement in food growing therefore yields social outcomes too (Grabbe et al., 2015; Brentd Meyer, 1999). One stakeholder (from a care farm) “It’s an intervention particularly in a secure setting, in terms of prisoners’ health, and physical and behavioural changes.”

“Well I’ve seen the benefits of it. It obviously depends on the actual individual prison and the space that they’ve got and the regime and how it all fits in but I mean I’ve seen it first-hand the benefits at Rye but I suppose it’s difficult to say whether or not it’s made an actual improvement. I mean 80% of prisoners have a mental health related issue apparently nationally, and I’ve had stories back to me from the Prison Officers on the wings where they’ve actually seen and witnessed...
a behaviour change of the offender, initially they were aggressive, hard to handle. They’ve seen a change physically, towards them and they’ve put it down to the project that they’ve been on, they had such a change in personality and we can only put it down … I mean there could be other factors … but I think there are some benefits that they’ve seen and gleaned from the project.” (Commissioner, Project 2).

The following quote by a stakeholder working in the prison, demonstrates the importance of the alternative environment the project creates as well as the project ethos, “the changes that we have seen with the majority of the people that have been through the programme have been quite significant really and it has helped them on so many different levels, it’s not just about learning, sorry teaching people you know to grow their own vegetables, flowers whatever. It’s, it covers so many different things but they are embedded into the actual programme and people with very, very complicated personal issues have been able to find, maybe a sense of calm in the garden, in the space where they can take themselves away from the prison environment and in some cases actually discover who they really are. And in other case, come to terms with what they have done and be able to progress and be able to move on and find and draw their own conclusions and be able to move on.” (Project worker, Prison). Both in the community and in secure settings, such spaces are considered safe, in addition to wider recognised benefits. “I think space, fresh air, and back to basics, you know, I think they’re spaces are considered safe, in addition to wider recognised benefits. (Commissioner, Project 2).

Engagement in land based activities provides therapeutic benefits that can pave the way for a range of opportunities and skills which are wider than gardening and create potential future prospects (see Hale et al., 2005). It provides an activity that all people can engage with at different degrees and as stated is an ideal ‘entry’ activity to gauge who is interested in and suitable for employment for example. “So at the beginning establishing the farm as a therapeutic venue where we can get to know people on a one to one basis but then also develop work experiences, and I suppose likes and relationships with businesses and organisations that we can place them into once they are ready for it and also if they learn a particular skill they then want to get into.” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1). Another stakeholder from the same project states how this approach is ideal, “the building without the farm means that you are taking too many risks with people, whereas the farm house vet people, find out about people, see who is suitable for a stronger work experience thing so it works well, start people at the farm and they transition to the building” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1). Project 4, whilst also recognising the therapeutic benefits associated with food growing, place importance on the enterprise aspect of their project, as shown in the following quote.

“Well it’s enterprise I think… as in making a wooden stool to sell, but people aren’t very keen on planting lettuces or cabbages, but they quite like seeing ten quid come in when we sell them… that quickly engages people and the fact that enterprise can be as simple as planting a seed then harvesting it, nature grows it… so it’s a very simple form of enterprise which people can understand and people can engage with that… some people who work at the project believe that working the land and getting your hands in the soil is very therapeutic and to a certain extent I agree with that, but that’s fine and I think you could do that anyway, you could do that in a window box if you want in a high rise skyscraper, but what you can’t do there is create this enterprise and I think enterprise is important because at the smallest level a seed that costs nothing… half a pence or whatever, or .0001 of a pence is planted in the ground and it grows, it flourishes and it’s cropped and is sold on, at say 10 pence, that is enterprise and that is… people see the whole thing going around from nurturing to harvesting to selling, I know I’m repeating myself a bit, but it is this cycle that they see and I think it’s often quite eye-opening and there is a belief from that, that you can do stuff yourself … not only does it build confidence, but it builds belief in yourself that things can happen, you can, people will, are willing to buy something that you have made or something that you’ve grown and that’s quite a big statement, very small scale, very simplistic, but it is quite a big statement and I think that overrides the fact that, the good that comes from working with wood or putting your hands in the soil, which is undoubtedly there, but that’s not the biggest part, the biggest part really is the enterprise, for me I see it as that… very clearly” (Stakeholder 1, Project 4).

This section has shown that there are numerous benefits of the positive person centred approach focused on change and empowerment. Furthermore, using the land has undoubtedly particular benefits associated with it. However, this needs to be further evidenced along with the range of outcomes associated with projects via data collected from individuals supported by projects. The following section discusses the importance of employment and skills more generally and how projects can aid in promoting these.

Employment and skills

A key theme throughout the interviews was the role of skills and employment in helping to support people. For people who are incarcerated, accrediting the prison horticultural programme activities was something driven by the participants; essentially whilst this doesn't change the nature of the project, it does provide a qualification, recognisable in the community (and also increases esteem, see Hunter and Boyce, 2009). “The whole accreditation thing, I always used to say don’t worry about it, I haven’t got any qualifications whatsoever but, in the real world sometimes it does help doesn’t it.” (Project worker, Prison). As shown by Brown et al., (2015) and by the following quote, such spaces provide opportunities for people to excel in a skill they have previously had, or to learn a new one, “what I have seen is that prior to their issues with substance they were individuals doing what they did and that can be anything from being a Social Worker or a Psychiatrist or a builder or being unemployed but they had skills before and it’s about dealing with their substance so that they can go back to what they did or start doing something new.” (Stakeholder, Project 2). The following quote emphasises how learning new skills is only part of what spaces like Project 1 offer for people.
what’s unique about this space particularly is the setting of it and the food. We’re not trying to provide free food where people can just either take time out or think about who they are or what they are or where they are and what they need to do to move forward and I think what the outdoor space here does, it provides that. It also then provides the opportunity to engage people in specific things, training for new skills, maybe things they haven’t done before.” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1).

Throughout the interviews it was recognised that mainstream employment may not appropriate for all, and thus, is not a fundamental aim. For Project 1, using the land is a good tool to provide experiences around working and structure, so responsibility and producing something tangible aids with this. However, there is the recognition people need to be enabled to desist, and to take responsibility for their rehabilitation (Cosgrove and O’Noll, 2011). What we’re using is working the land. .it could always be any kind of work, although I think that life lessons learnt can be pretty powerful and the sort of encouragement of planting something growing and eating it, does something to the individual. . so far me it’s the gospel but we want people to engage with work and increasingly we want that work to be commercial. I think we started off it was just about therapy but increasingly we feel like we want people to at least know, to experience a product from beginning to sale, and even be involved in it at point of sale, which we are not there, but that is what we want it to be commercial, we want them to see that. .it’s challenging because there will be some people ready for that kind of pressure if you like, because commercially it’s pressure, some people won’t cope with being part of that, some people will really thrive on it and see the point of it. .so we have got to get the right balance for the right people.” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1). Being engaged in something productive and meaningful is a key part of Project 4, who also report on the importance of taking on responsibility and learning by doing. This essentially enables people to be part of something, and to be valued, which is a key part of their rehabilitative journey.

“The project allows an individual to start to believe that he can actually achieve something, so . we start them off with a very basic level of doing basic cooking and as they grow in confidence we start to allow them to take on their own little projects, so for someone who perhaps has built a simple wooden stool, perhaps we go onto start creating a shed and then perhaps starts to be given a larger project of cleaning a whole area of ground and perhaps constructing something on that area, so it’s about them starting to take some responsibility, not just for themselves but around others, so by cooking (for example) people move out of themselves a little bit and start to provide a meal for others so they are actually taking responsibility for other people and also that they can feel the enjoyment and satisfaction from that as well, so that’s how we do it. . I believe very strongly that we should allow people to discover that they can do things and then allow them to take it on further. . so we don’t educate as such, I think we allow them to learn by example and also, we support their learning but we don’t preach to them about how things should be done or how life should be we try to allow them to explore that and discover for themselves”. (Stakeholder 1, Project 4).

Being in a family – like, communal environment assists with being able to create a safe culture of taking responsibility across the projects, promoting confidence and social skills.

“The sort of therapy of working I think is something that a lot of the client group don’t understand and don’t believe in until they experience it. So they believe, lots of people believe, that being on benefits is going to be perpetual free food so not only do they not taste work and they quite like it, so I think that giving people that work experience is part of it and I think having a day, having to work with other people, having to listen to instruction and carry it out and to have money altogether because, its kind of being forced into a kind of family type atmosphere, I think it is much needed, so I think we’re here because there is a section of society that don’t manage to integrate within a human being so very easily and they don’t manage for a variety of reasons to work, to support themselves.” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1).

One stakeholder comments on the some of the changes in individual’s behaviour from working, “when people [men on ROTI] go out to work, you see such a change they come back and they behave and talk as if they’re normal equal human beings. . you talk to each other with respect and I think treating each other as normal human beings, I think that’s what they get from going out to work.” (Stakeholder 2, Project 4). The projects detailed provide people opportunities for people to be given a chance (Harley, 2011) and they recognise that the opportunities provided could be life changing. As previously mentioned, some of the stakeholders thought about the importance of skills. Project 4 initially thought that education and skill sets as outcome measure would be important, “but actually they’re not, I mean qualifications and skill sets… well course they’re not bollocks but they are to a certain extent if you’ve come from a, if you’ve got yourself down as, so far below the scale of what’s acceptable to society to try and get yourself above that line again. Skills and qualifications they help but they’re not, you’ve got to believe that you will be accepted that’s the thing. .and that’s what [project 4] does… Of course bringing people up to speed on literacy skills is vital but we struggle to do that at the moment, we’re getting better . . the argument that that’s the bell all and end of everything that’s not . the case. . of course it’s wonderful if people can be taught to read, of course it’s great if people can start to add up, but that is not the panacea, that is not the cure, that is not what the problem is, it’s much bigger than that . .the problem is their background and they believe they’re shit basically, that’s what it is and that’s what you’ve got to break, you’ve got to restore some belief in themselves.” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1). Thus, in the case of these projects, education and qualifications as approach very broadly, in line with what is important to supporting individuals. Nevertheless, Project 4 also recognises employment as a successful outcome, along with reductions in re-offending, and accommodation, which they have been able to achieve to their approach. “I think the employment is very high indicator of a good outcome . . we have an astonishingly high statistic of 90% in employment for day release prisoners who have been through the project, which I am sure we will maintain actually, somewhere around there, which is incredible and that is because of the identification of building long term individual relationships really and supporting them” (Stakeholder 1, Project 4).

Providing activities where people can learn new skills, Project 1 is also seen as a key way in helping to empower people and is something that people would contribute towards being able to obtain employment (or to engage in purposeful activity), “to be honest I think we need to give these people the chance, so either in building or farming or, we probably need to be that first step where we can give people a reference… I’m just conscious with people with the big records, and trouble and prison, are going to find it really difficult to get jobs so I’d like to see that developed” (Stakeholder 2, Project 2). As highlighted in the initial section of the report, offending diminishes when offenders gain employment, and over 75% of offenders wish to seek work when returning to the community (Edgar et al., 2012; Prison Eduactions Trust, 2011). However, there is recognition that there is an important role for employers to play, to create opportunities for people on their recovery journey to seek employment, or people following incarceration for example. These opportunities may be jobs, or may be helping with entrepreneurial skills, which is part of the holistic support package . . “we need to make sure that they’ve got the support mechanism, that’s why we’ve linked with the university so that we’ve got business mentors, we’ve got volunteers already to deal with their substance abuse and accommodation issues, but that we’ve equally got to have the local support to help them with the business side” (Commissioner, Project 2). Whilst this is the focus of the following section, there is a lot of potential for partnership working to fulfil some of these aspirations around employment opportunities but also other provision such as affordable housing. “I would like to be able to, as a charity, to be able to offer people practical support to find employment and provide some of that employment, so to have some business or connected to come business that are sort of partnering with us or even we are the business or the company that we can employ people that maybe employers won’t employ… we would also love to through the relationships we have built with individuals to be able to support safe, positive housing, that’s something that we look at quite a bit, so a long term dream of mine is that we build houses and that people that help build them get to live in them.” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1). The aspect of housing and wrap around services is discussed by Corahon (2012) who found better outcomes for those on a substance abuse treatment programme when housing was provided. What has been stated so far in the report is in line with the following quote from a commissioner highlighting how projects require a long term vision and support from committed people in the community. "The collective finding is that there is a large community support, in other words what we’re trying to nurture is that offenders who have come out of prison who have got a keen interest in setting up a business, we want to put them in alongside liked minded individuals … but we want to put people who want to set up their own businesses with similar people who have got businesses who can work together and then sort out their own … so they’re working … helping one another and it might be that there’s a person setting up his own … in one case just getting a white van and moving stuff … but that person can help set up and support somebody else and what we want to try and do is to say well once you get into your own business can you employ somebody else? Maybe an ex-offender? This is not a one year fix. This is a ten year plan where you’ve got a … developing the persons skills, setting the scene in the prison setting, giving them the skills etc., but nurturing it, developing it and when they’re coming out giving them support and there could be business matters, not just from the university, but we see ex-business people who want to volunteer one day a month to sort of support clients to set up their own businesses, they’ve done it before. They want to put something back themselves into society.” (Commissioner, Project 2).

For Project 3, the following quote shows how these spaces may not lead to employment for some people, but how they also provide a safe haven to prevent people from risky situations, which is true for the other case study projects too. “Well these are elderly as well as people who have got, well the guy washing up for instance, has never worked, was never ever going to work. . And for some people, this is their anchor point for the rest
of their lives... for some of the people who are more able adults, in a funny sort of way they are more vulnerable because they want to go out, they want to feel normal, they are the ones who are likely to end up in town, they are the ones who will get drawn into crime and end up in prison. It generally comes around the corner sort of thing. We do keep quite a lot of them out of trouble from trampling the streets and so on, whereas (name) washing up, they are going to have to be looked at wherever they are in so a way they are less vulnerable to the society’s problems than more able ones.” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1).

The report has so far outlined project’s activities and ethos, and has looked at some of the outcomes associated with involvement in the project. However, threaded through the interviews were also a number of challenges. The following section provides insight to some of the common challenges faced across projects.

4d. Challenges

A challenge faced by Projects 1 and 2 in particular was knowing when to stop supporting someone, as the goal is to help them to be independent. This is not necessarily a goal of Project 3, due to the therapeutic space of the project not necessarily geared to providing transitional support or people desisting from an issue. This project however faced other similar challenges in terms of sustainability, with support not being provided beyond its origial remit, as trainees moved into the community. Its response, encountering lacunae, had been to extend its scope to include a therapeutic community. Its community became a sort of thing. We do keep quite a lot of them out of trouble from trampling the streets and so on, whereas (name) washing up, they are going to have to be looked at wherever they are in so a way they are less vulnerable to the society’s problems than more able ones.” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1). This shows that it is probably not easily reconciled with income generation.

Retaining volunteers / members

A stakeholder from Project 1 gives one example of when it was sensible for someone engaging with the project to become a volunteer, “there is a lady who helps in the kitchen who has come through... so by come through, do you mean like independent now?”. More independent yes, willing to take on a particular role and not just coming up and saying well, what do you want me to do today. Taking some responsibility through, do you mean like independent now? more independent yes, that’s the reality. “(Stakeholder, Project 1). Devising tools to capture data requires a particular skill set, time and resource to be able to do this. It is likely that few projects may have the resource or expertise for this and it also deters away from key activities which project staff need to deliver, impacting service users (Cosgrove and O’Neill, 2011; Clinics, 2015a). Demonstrating impact or the success of these interventions is not necessarily therefore in the skill set of people to measure. The next point in the chain is usually an organisation that recognises their own strengths and weaknesses, “the ability to position ourselves in the market as a viable project that can access funding”. Taking ownership of the skill set, that’s the challenge for us and so I have been of the opinion for a long while that when we get the charity up to speed we will need to stay below ground for a while and build enough income to be able to employ somebody for a 12 month contract that would be, that can pull it together and help us be more strategic, help us record results better, all of that sort of stuff, all of which we are just not good at, that’s the reality.” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1). Devising tools to capture data requires a particular skill set, time and resource to be able to do this. It is likely that few projects may have the resource or expertise for this and it also deters away from key activities which project staff need to deliver, impacting service users (Cosgrove and O’Neill, 2011; Clinics, 2015a). Demonstrating impact or the success of these interventions is not necessarily therefore in the skill set of people to measure. The next point in the chain is usually an organisation that recognises their own strengths and weaknesses, “the ability to position ourselves in the market as a viable project that can access funding”. Taking ownership of the skill set, that’s the challenge for us and so I have been of the opinion for a long while that when we get the charity up to speed we will need to stay below ground for a while and build enough income to be able to employ somebody for a 12 month contract that would be, that can pull it together and help us be more strategic, help us record results better, all of that sort of stuff, all of which we are just not good at, that’s the reality.” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1). Therefore, as the following stakeholder states, engaging with people on a journey of change is not as straightforward as measuring a beginning and an end. “If you’re building a wall you can look it at measurable and say oh yes we have done so much today...whereas if you’re building a wall you can look at it as a whole, you can see if it’s going forward or not.” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1). This shows that it is probably not easily reconciled with income generation.

Financial sustainability has also become an issue, despite successful fund-raising activities, with the requirement for individual support not easily reconciled with income generation.

Political and funding environment

Building on the previous section alongside the importance of demonstrating impact for funding requirements, many of the projects spoke about the difficulties associated with being reliant on short-term contracts and having to renew them on a yearly basis. “We haven’t got a 10 year contract or 5 year contract, I think the biggest we had was 18 months and with the cuts you never know quite whether they are going to renew the contract so” (Stakeholder, Project 3). This situation not only makes it difficult for future planning but the uncertainties associated with the austerity context also raise anxieties about the future of projects, “everybody has thought about how they are going to be funded next, how is the contract going to be renewed. We haven’t got a 10 year contract or 5 year contract, I think the biggest we had was 18 months and with the cuts you never know quite whether they are going to renew the contract so” (Stakeholder, Project 3). In light of the uncertainties around funding for some of these projects, there was a general consensus throughout the interviews that project activities (e.g. food growing) alone were not considered as a viable income generating option for the running of projects. For example, one project generated around £3,000 from produce over one year (without taking into account costs). Another stakeholder reflects on their farming activities. "The eggs work well, that’s not bad, I think we are probably able to make about £3,000 so when you think of that as a charitable income that’s not that bad of a good income, when you compare it to other projects it is quite small but within our context... so at the moment we are doing okay but again you never know whether the cuts are going to mean personal budgets are going to be slashed and they won’t be able to come at all” (Stakeholder, Project 3). In light of this, projects often have to look at other ways to raise income from other sources of income.
a charity and a company, the company which generates incomes from undertaking building and construction work, and the money generated will fund the charity, “the aim is in time, the charity itself will have funding to be able to pay the company for the people, so the charity is doing all the people stuff, the company is doing the farming” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1). Linking with the business element (through building/construction) enables sufficient income to be made and also provide employment opportunities, “we can make more money out of building and we can farming, and it’s equally good work experience, probably better because it’s more commercial” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1).

Having business or church support for the Project I was a vision of one of the stakeholders. “I would love it to be that we don’t charge anybody to come up here. So I’d love to be able to go to agencies and say you can send your people up, there’s no cost and we’re available for all people. I’d love that, I’d love the money not to be an issue. So I’d like a business or churches to get behind it” (Stakeholder 2, Project 1). This model allows them to remain independent and to have the freedom to implement their vision. However, they are cautious that they want to remain true to their vision and not to let the income generation activities compromise their charitable activities. “We want to be sustainable and also we want to teach people good work ethic and we want our standards to be high so we want what we do produce to be of value but we want the activity to be meaningful. But we have just got to check ourselves every now and again because we don’t want that to be the end goal, the be all and end all” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1). Project 4, as noted above, has also recognised this tension between income generation and the core focus of the project, that is providing a supportive route (for prisoners and men on licence) back into the community and employment. This had resulted in a change to its business model. Originally the Project Manager had hoped that it might achieve a 60:40 split between external funds and internal income generation but now acknowledged that an 80:20 split was more realistic. As noted above, that is not to say that the role of enterprise and employability was not deemed central (and more opportunities were being explored to generate revenue) but that the distinction between therapeutic work and commercial work was evident. In this particular instance the tension was compounded by funding regulations governing the nature of the work that can be done by offenders on licence.

The tension between balancing economic and social (values) objectives is highlighted in the literature (Cosgrove and O’Neill., 2011). Despite the challenges raised in this section so far around the changing political and funding environment, one commissioner reflects on the significant role of the VCS, the opportunities associated with opening the third sector, as well as noting some potential challenges.

“Well certainly what’s it’s doing is it’s giving new ways of thinking and news ways of working. That’s for sure, and that’s to be welcomed. I think it’s a bit too early to say whether or not it’s going to work … but I think everyone will move in that direction and that it will work but I mean there’s a lot of very experienced third sector organisations working in the field and have been for many, many years and I think what we’re now seeing is we’re actually seeing that work recognised nationally, that there’s an appreciation of the … if you like the third sector, the voluntary sector and the part that they can play. I think up until very recently, the last few years, it’s been predominantly focused on treatment … I can call it the professionals rather than the work that is done by the third … and they’re equally as professional in their approach and in how they tackle things … tackle their clients, so I think there’s an opportunity now to nurture that. I don’t think we’ll know that for four or five years, being realistic. … (But you’ve recognised a change?) Oh yeah. A change in approach. I think it’s recognised that the current system hasn’t worked … and I think the Government is now determined to crack that and I think they’re looking at ways to do that” (Commissioner, Project 2).

This also reflects the need for monitoring and evaluation over a long term period to assess the role of the VCS and the effect of their provision of services. However, in terms of public sector funding, much of this depends on local commissioners; for example, in one county the local commissioners have invested into such social models. However, other local authorities may not. Thus it is very context and key person dependent. “From what I gather a lot of it does come down to the commissioner and their stance on how to deal with the issues for example, I can’t remember which commissioner I spoke to know about it who was public health, about a Master Gardener Programme and they basically said it’s not my problem, you need to go and see someone else about that!” (Project worker, Prison). Having a self-sufficient model or having to rely on external funding streams is necessary, as food growing is deemed not a viable activity to keep generation activities compromise their charitable activities. “We want to be sustainable and also we want to teach people good work ethic and we want our standards to be high so we want what we do produce to be of value but we want the activity to be meaningful. But we have just got to check ourselves every now and again because we don’t want that to be the end goal, the be all and end all” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1). Project 4, as noted above, has also recognised this tension between income generation and the core focus of the project, that is providing a supportive route (for prisoners and men on licence) back into the community and employment. This had resulted in a change to its business model. Originally the Project Manager had hoped that it might achieve a 60:40 split between external funds and internal income generation but now acknowledged that an 80:20 split was more realistic. As noted above, that is not to say that the role of enterprise and employability was not deemed central (and more opportunities were being explored to generate revenue) but that the distinction between therapeutic work and commercial work was evident. In this particular instance the tension was compounded by funding regulations governing the nature of the work that can be done by offenders on licence.

Local partnership working

For many of the projects, relationships with key people are crucial, who understand what they do or are trying to do, which is often established over a period of time. From interviews, and views from stakeholders, to support the person is seen to be key, and there is a desire from projects to work more closely with agencies, regardless of financial constraints, “the Offender Manager and Probation Officers and Probation Services and some of the recovery services that are in (location) that I was working with, they still want to work with us but because we lost that council contract we don’t get any funding for that partnership now. And so we have just got to be really careful. I think there are a lot of agencies that would support the work we do and refer people to us, but they don’t have the money to pay for a place or to pay for referrals and at this point in time we don’t have the money to offer some sort of bursary scheme or anything like that where we can say it doesn’t matter about the money just send us the individual” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1). The same stakeholder reflects on how it doesn’t appear easy for agencies to partner with their project. “There was an Offender Manager who was desperate to get a group of six guys up to the farm as she thought it would be really beneficial but she herself wasn’t 100% clued into what was happening with the funding…I think a lot of people don’t really have the control to be able to say yeah we want to use this, I will find the money to make it happen. There seem to be so many channels you have to go through.” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1). Outlined in the literature is how there is often a lack of awareness of agencies in terms of food growing and generating income from produce, there is consensus that this is not a viable means of income generation, but rather an additional activity or a tool used to promote person centred support.

The data indicates how relationships with key people take a long time to establish, some of the interviewees reflect on how current changes have negatively affected how agencies and projects engage.

“[Have the changes in probation impacted you in any way?] Yes, purely down to staff really because you have key members of staff, who know what we do and how we do it and make referrals, and new staff come in and all that changes, we will have inappropriate referrals. So someone will refer someone to us who has just committed a racially aggravated offence and they are in the BNP and we have a lot of people here who are non-white who are from different countries, they could present a risk to us, also sex offenders who have licence conditions stating they can’t have contact with under 16’s children here, so it’s inappropriate. We can’t keep up with the changes in Probation and new staff… it will stabilise and once it does, then maybe what we need to think about doing is having some kind of meaningful conversations to tell them exactly who they can refer and who they can’t” (Stakeholder 2, Project 2).

For Project 4, changes at ministerial level were felt to have affected the project’s operational context. This was most evident in the closure of many Release on Temporary Licence (ROTl) schemes nationally and the constraints this placed on the project’s relationship with the local prison, which was felt to have become more risk adverse in its approach. This poses a particular challenge for the maintenance of numbers. To even be considered for ROTL and hence admission to the project, for example, offenders have to be on the resettlement wing of many Release on Temporary Licence (ROTl) schemes nationally and the constraints this placed on the project’s relationship with the local prison, which was felt to have become more risk adverse in its approach. This poses a particular challenge for the maintenance of numbers. To even be considered for ROTL and hence admission to the project, for example, offenders have to be on the resettlement wing.
noted: “I am aware that [Project Manager] doesn’t want the numbers to drop too much so it’s us trying to get suitable people and once we get them we want to identify them in Liverpool, The Bank. We’re also aware of the project that’s in Nottingham. Really good projects that we’ve been keen to look at so we could develop them for ourselves and obviously if something’s working somewhere else why not just replicate it somewhere else? (Participant 3, Project 1).” However, the project does not always understand why other agencies have remained supportive and visits to the project were considered an important link in the transition between prison and the community and the shaping of more positive attitudes to authority.

In the case studies there are examples of some positive partnerships with local organisations. For example, Project 2 has links with the local visual arts centre, providing a creative outlet. “We have an instant default referral programme from S2S who is our treatment provider. So anyone who accesses their service, there is an automatic referral to us. We don’t always know at that point whether someone is an offender or not, and we may never know and it doesn’t really make a difference unless someone poses a risk to us.” (Stakeholder, Project 2).

Project 2 are also “currently hosting a relapse prevention group from Aquarius” (Stakeholder, Project 2). Local organisations and agencies working together is very much the desire of one commissioner, “it’s really a case of making sure that the agencies involved, are tuned in together so that we’re providing the support mechanism to address that client’s needs, so it’s making sure that the treatment agencies address the substance misuse but that we’ve got the support mechanism around it so that when they finish their treatment, or whatever form of treatment, that a number of agencies are there to support them.” (Commissioner, Project 2). Forming partnerships with local organisations and making them aware of the project may not provide short term opportunities but may pay off in the long run as shown by the following quote. “When we started we have been round schools, we have been to local authority, we have talked to all sorts of people and they all said, what a lovely idea, oh no there’s no money, but to actually every single one of those people we talked to after we got a bit of a proven track record they came back to us.” (Stakeholder, Project 3).

There is a degree of frustration in areas where local partnership working is not currently happening as demonstrated by the following quote. “If there is a clever way of getting organisations to work together and share information then it will immediately then get very good but how you do that I don’t know!” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1). The fundamental ethos of the project raises questions around statutory support and suggests that there is potential for better partnership working and more support from statutory agencies in their experience. “We have people here today, they have been with us for a long time but other agencies have got to understand that’s who we are and we do what we do because that’s what we believe and as long as they are comfortable with it then great. It’s down to individuals to decide. So I think probably our frustrations have been in that statutory agencies are not really highly respectful of what we do and whether they are people centred...have they actually got the person’s best interests at heart? If they do want to go somewhere or do something are they free to?” (Stakeholder 3, Project 1).

This raises questions around the potential for shared working on a larger scale to address some of the challenges raised so far and in light of the positive examples in one country. “We try to keep tabs on what’s going on nationally and the manager of [Project 2] is very very aware of different projects that are taking place. We’re aware of the provision for this client group is dwindling, less and less, so you know, if we manage to be self-sufficient, deliver this would then I think it will be invaluable” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1). However, as the following quote reflects, it is important that we want to this to compromise their vision. “so I would say that’s a goal to be self-sufficient, that’s obviously, that’s a goal that isn’t the end in itself, the end that we are supporting we and people are seeing and we want to do that to we need to be able to be self-sufficient, but we believe that the end goal remains to connect with people either out of prison or people that we have met through our outreach work and provide them with an environment they can consider and manage change” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1).

For other projects, maintaining funding is part of their future vision or objectives. “...other aims break down into objectives around funding, where we look to fund the whole project for suppose, forever, if possible, to work towards self-financing and to continue to identify new income streams and new innovative ways of funding” (Stakeholder 1, Project 1). All of the projects spoke about having links with the wider community (which is integrated into Project 4’s model) and some projects were aware of not wanting to become a ‘ghetto’ project. This links to some of the literature pointing towards how projects can promote and facilitate social interaction, and break down barriers and stigma, within the community (Lyagh et al, 2012).

“We think that in some ways we have a silo of substance misuse people, you could call it a ghetto and what we need to do is to think about what we are going to do in the future, how do we normalise what we do and how do we bring other elements of normality into here. And do we decide that, we’ll be an allotment and a spin-off from that, I think it’s with a local parish council, we are doing some work on a cemetery so we send people out to work on that and we actually won an award, a bronze award for a community venture, we also run a football programme with Northampton Town, so then we’ve got people that go out and play football with a whole bunch of others, for example people with disabilities. So we are starting to do that, we don’t provide short term opportunities but you may pay off in the long run as shown by the following quote. “When we started we have been round schools, we have been to local authority, we have talked to all sorts of people and they all said, what a lovely idea, oh no there’s no money, but to actually every single one of those people we talked to after we got a bit of a proven track record they came back to us.” (Stakeholder, Project 3).

Projects have also recently achieved independent charitable status, one of its initial aims. As a young project it continues to evolve and the project does not provide short term opportunities but may pay off in the long run as shown by the following quote. “When we started we have been round schools, we have been to local authority, we have talked to all sorts of people and they all said, what a lovely idea, oh no there’s no money, but to actually every single one of those people we talked to after we got a bit of a proven track record they came back to us.” (Stakeholder, Project 3).

To conclude this section of the report, the following quote from a commissioner sets out advice for projects providing support for ex-offenders and ex-offenders.

“Advice for other organisations” “I think be committed. It’s been proven, an ex-offender once they get settled in they are one of the best employees because they recognise the fact that if they don’t toe the line that they’re going to lose their job and getting another job is going to be twice as difficult as it was and they work out to be extremely loyal and good employees and they’re, we’ve got 85,000 men and women incarcerated as we speak today. That’s a hell of a lot of people who could be utilised fully within the work place, if you look at the cost of that, £35,000 per person in a prison setting, we ought to really be utilising … tapping into … and some of those clients … some of those people have got fantastic skills, really good skills that we need in the communities and we don’t want to lose sight of that. And if we don’t then we’re not getting very far with the Government.” (Stakeholder, Project 1).

What has been highlighted throughout the report is the role of key people in having a vision and a deep commitment for the projects to support people. Ultimately, anyone working on the projects needs to share the same vision and commitment. On the other hand obtaining extra support to help with activities such as administration is also problematic due to a lack of funding in some cases. The role of key people in having a vision and a deep commitment for the projects to support people. Ultimately, anyone working on the projects needs to share the same vision and commitment. On the other hand obtaining extra support to help with activities such as administration is also problematic due to a lack of funding in some cases. The role of key people in having a vision and a deep commitment for the projects to support people. Ultimately, anyone working on the projects needs to share the same vision and commitment.
5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This pilot study has identified the need to further explore the role of community and land based models in supporting rehabilitation (including desistance, and resettlement). There are clear calls in the existing literature for further research to investigate the role of social enterprises in tackling social exclusion and creating spaces of empowerment (Muñoz, 2010). There are also calls to generate wider research demonstrating the impact of horticultural activities within community and secure settings (Hale et al., 2005; Chisholm and Goodyear, 2012; Sampson et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is recognised, in light of the changing nature of the current political climate highlighted in this report, that VCS organisations are increasingly under pressure to generate robust evidence, demonstrate their impact and value, whilst appreciating the barriers and challenges in doing so (Cosgrove and O’Neill, 2011). Nevertheless, the increasing role of the VCS in the CJJS is viewed as opportunistic for VCS organisation to be innovative and creative, and there is much potential for the underdeveloped sector of social firms in the UK (Cosgrove and O’Neill, 2011; Gilbert et al., 2013). However, a sound understanding of the individual contexts and nuances in which different organisations and institutions operate is needed. Key points also reflect the need for better partnership working and stronger links between statutory agencies and other organisations working with marginalised communities. An increased understanding of what VCS organisations / social enterprises have to offer to complement existing services would help with this (Cosgrove and O’Neill, 2011).

Whilst there are a number of differences across projects, there are strong commonalities. The case study projects have demonstrated their commitment in providing alternative spaces for people experiencing multiple and complex life control issues. There are a number of ways in which projects do this:  
- View people beyond a singular issue  
- Ethics of providing holistic, ‘life’ support / skills, based on relationships  
- Recognise that people are on a journey  
- Long-term / life time support  
- Utilise peer mentoring / social support networks in a range of ways  
- Use a number of activities to engage with people  
- Provide a social, community environment  
- Recognise that people need to be ready for change  
- Scope to link with businesses (for employment opportunities)

The opportunities for further development and future research centre on:  
- Understanding participants lived experiences, bearing in mind the role of gender, race and class in shaping experiences  
- What is best for their members / clients in terms of when they are ready to discontinue engaging with the project  
- Having long term security (financial)  
- Tensions associated with evidencing and demonstrating impact / value  
- Enhancing visibility  
- Having better and stronger links and partnership working on a range of levels  
- Wider links with the community  
- Mapping journeys and sharing learning (with other initiatives)

As previously outlined, the case study projects have been used as examples of types of projects using the land and / or community based models to support people facing a range of issues. Projects are diverse in nature and focus on different things however they share a similar ethos or approach, and face similar challenges. The evolving nature of the models suggests there is further scope to refine and improve their services, something that can be achieved when time is taken to reflect and evaluate their services and model. Therefore, taking an action research approach to evaluating their services would be beneficial for projects, by drawing on the expertise of independent researchers, as often the resources (such as skill set and time) required for these activities are not currently available within current project structures. As suggested in the report, VCS organisations and social enterprises are in a unique position to support the most marginalised members of society, and through their innovative approach are best placed to do this, however documenting and recognising their full value is much needed for their future existence and to fully support those who are experiencing marginalisation.

Having a sound understanding of VCS organisations working in this area  
To explore any impacts or implications associated with self-payment

References


Footnotes

1 http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Prison%20the%20facts%20May%202015.pdf


3 See Bragg et al. (2014).

4 Stakeholders from project 4 were interviewed as part of as part of an evaluation (funded by the Big Lottery) and a Sociology of Health and Illness Mildred Blaxter Post-doctoral fellowship, Plymouth University.
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