

Co-producing Justice: International Social Economy Network

Programme Report

March 2019



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Programme Context

While the significance of employment to desistance (giving up crime) is well established, there are multifarious obstacles to people with convictions accessing and sustaining work. Social enterprises are businesses that trade for a social purpose, rather than for the enrichment of shareholders or owners. It has been shown that social enterprise and cooperative structures of employment can circumnavigate some of the systemic obstacles to employment, such as criminal records and employer discrimination that people routinely encounter.

Yet, one in six people in the UK have a criminal conviction; a large proportion of people are, therefore, affected by the impacts that contact with the justice system has on access to employment and, relatedly, opportunities to move on from offending. The House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee (2016) recognise that employment significantly reduces reoffending and can lead to other outcomes that can reduce reoffending (e.g. financial security and stable accommodation). The [Scottish Government \(2016\)](#) has recently co-produced, with the social enterprise sector, a ten-year Strategy to encourage the further development of the sector and contribute to an overarching 'inclusive growth' agenda, demonstrating considerable appetite for an evidence-informed approach for this demographic.

Despite this, not only are such structures providing paid work a rarity in the UK justice system, the potential of social enterprises and co-operatives in this context has hardly been explored. Recent research (Roy et al., 2017; Weaver 2016; forthcoming) provides important evidence to suggest their potential to support desistance, recovery and integration; this project sought to build on this by exploring approaches to their implementation, connecting a range of multi-disciplinary international and local experts who can differently contribute towards their realisation. By combining these largely disconnected strands of research, siloed within specific disciplines, our aim has been to advance a more coherent interdisciplinary theorizing and exploration of the interactions, synergies and distinctions in these disciplinary fields and to influence the direction of future research, policy and practice in justice contexts.

Main Objectives

The project aimed to develop a network of international, multi-disciplinary academic and industry leaders to inform the development and implementation of social enterprise/cooperative structures of employment in work generation and integration for people with convictions. By sharing international research evidence, policy and practice expertise across academic and professional disciplines that have heretofore developed separately with the overall aim co-produce a more coherent, interdisciplinary, evidence-informed strategy, by sharing expertise across otherwise distinct research, professional and policy domains.

Our objectives were:

1. to examine ways that social cooperatives/enterprises, as manifestations of coproduction, can support social integration, recovery and desistance;

2. to develop a coherent multi-disciplinary theorizing of, and strategic approach to, the development of social cooperatives/enterprises in supporting work generation, meaningful work activity, and integration for people with convictions;
3. to take the learning from established social cooperatives/ enterprises in Italy and Sweden and further afield to inform the development of future structures of employment in a community justice context in Scotland, and beyond;
4. to identify the potentials, opportunities, tensions and challenges in developing social enterprise/cooperative structures of employment in a community justice context in the UK, and to explore mechanisms for establishing their value and social impact; and
5. to forge and deepen links between policy, practice and academia through close engagement between participants throughout the project to form a sustainable multi-disciplinary, international network.

Programme Structure and Core Insights

To achieve these objectives, this programme, which ran from October 2018-March 2019, brought together international multi-disciplinary academic and industry leaders in the respective fields of social cooperatives, social enterprise and the social economy; community justice, social work and public health; and economic sociology, criminology, governance and public policy from 10 countries. We hosted three events over six months, each building on the last, to explore how such structures can be developed, and to what effect. Ongoing conversations informing the events and including a broader base of participants were enabled via an online discussion forum and social media. We recorded all of the inputs from our events which are available on our [project website](#).

Event 1: Thematic Focus: What and Why? A multi-disciplinary perspective:

This event, held on 26th October, 2018, addressed the following questions:

- What different legal contexts, organisational forms and governance structures are found, and to what extent do these differences matter to the people and communities they exist to serve?
- Can we identify best practices in creating supportive legal frameworks and policy environments for a supportive organisational 'ecosystem'?
- How important is democratic governance in the organisational form? In what ways is this important?
- How do we know the difference they make and to whom?
- What can be learned from case studies?

Michael Roy, Glasgow Caledonian University, opened the event by providing an introduction to '[the complex and dynamic world of social enterprise](#)'. In so doing, Michael located contemporary interest in social enterprise within a context of continual welfare reform and crises. Drawing principally upon the UK context, he provided an overview of the different social enterprise forms that have arisen, often with varying governance arrangements, and the range of social enterprise discourses and traditions that are prevalent. He raised important questions, such as whether these differences actually matter to the people and communities that social enterprises exist to serve.

Despite these diversities, **Pauline Graham**, Social Firms Scotland, summarised the learning that she has gained from her experience of working with a range of different social firms across Scotland, detailing [best practices in creating supportive legal frameworks in policy environments for social firms in Scotland](#). She argued that the extent of the contribution and potential of social enterprise models of employment in both work generation and integration for people with convictions is not well enough understood, nor recognised. Despite social enterprise having a strong and growing presence in Scotland, underpinned by progressive policy and strategies, she observed that there are a number of barriers to improving the prospects of people with convictions securing and sustaining employment. While, as she explained, these barriers are complex and inter-related, there are some good practices for a supportive organisational 'ecosystem' that could help mitigate some of these barriers. Pauline discussed, in particular: the role and potential of the Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE) model, the values and principles that underpin the model, and the supportive eco-system for the development of social enterprise in Scotland; the wider policy landscape around employability, justice, fair work and equalities will be explored; and the opportunities for social enterprises to do more to deliver better outcomes for people with convictions and those in the care of the Scottish Prison Service.

Offering an international perspective, and advocating for [diversity as a mechanism for change](#), **Samuel Barco** joined us from Spain, and explored how we might become equal to the challenges faced by systemic change in the area of Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) with and for people with convictions. He highlighted the need for a plurality of types of governance models, to develop a more resilient ecosystem, to build successful advocacy coalitions and improve systemic social innovations.

Building on questions of governance, **Sarah Soppitt** of Northumbria University, discussed the role of [democratic governance in meaningful work generation and social integration](#). She noted that, when workers experience meaning from their 'job', it can fulfil an individual's sense of value and worth, or itself make a broader contribution to finding purpose and direction. The 'value' therefore may not lie in monetary terms, but rather the impact on an individual's life. In exploring this further, she examined the ideology of 'good governance' in supporting meaningful work, and the role of stewardship in ensuring that the development of social enterprise and cooperatives remains focused in terms of their value base and proposition. Many of these themes were brought into view from a practice perspective by **Davie Parks**, [The Skill Mill](#), who drew on his experience of navigating the opportunities and challenges of moving from a grassroots project to scaling up and engaging with policy focused agendas and platforms.

Social Enterprises, in the various guises, are perhaps the most common social economy structure for supporting work integration in the UK. **Beth Weaver**, of Strathclyde University, however, shared the findings from her research into the ways in which [prison and community-based social cooperatives, in Italy and Sweden, and social enterprises in the UK work to support social integration and desistance](#), focusing on the difference they make to people with convictions. Social cooperatives, she argued, play a distinct role in supporting social integration and desistance to the extent that the culture of the cooperative is shaped by cooperative values. As Sarah Soppitt also suggested, Beth found that cultural and relational environment of a social cooperative is as significant to job satisfaction, social integration, and wider processes of change as participation in paid work. Participants described their experiences as being as much a process of resocialisation as a means of work integration. Where social cooperatives are embedded in and inclusive of the local community, they can ameliorate some of the

stigma experienced by multiply-marginalised employees and encourage their social integration through opportunities to exercise active citizenship and develop economic, human and social capital. Taking a similar approach, but with a focus on [health and wellbeing](#), **Michael Roy** concluded our first event by discussing his research undertaken in Scotland, which focused on the differences that social enterprises make to people - often vulnerable people - in communities. Through a critical realist-inspired analysis of practitioner discourses, he presented an empirically informed conceptual model of the ways in which social enterprises can impact upon health and well-being, thus providing a solid platform for future research on this topic.

Event 2: Thematic Focus: International Perspectives: Lessons from Home and Abroad

This event, held on 17th November 2018, addressed the following questions:

- What is happening here and elsewhere?
- How does it work, and to what effect?
- What are the challenges, opportunities, areas for development and points of learning?

The event began with speakers sharing the learning they had gained from their stewardship of, or involvement in, social enterprises actively employing people with convictions in Scotland. **Trevor Gregory**, [Trade Right International](#), discussed the process of development, impacts and effects of Trade Right International, which works with people in prison in Scotland in collaboration with a cooperative in Ghana, Carishea. **Callum Hutchison**, Navigator, Street and Arrow followed with a compelling input which provided an overview of the work of [Street and Arrow](#), who serve street food and provide catering for events. Callum explained how his involvement in Street and Arrow shaped his own journey towards recovery and desistance. Building on these presentations, **Barry Mochan** discussed the process of development of the social enterprise, [Glasgow Together](#). Glasgow Together provides paid work in property renovation and construction for people with convictions and as such is oriented both to supporting work integration and desistance. Barry outlined the model adopted, the social impacts and effects that Glasgow Together has delivered, as well as future plans and next steps for their work.

Yussupova Aziza then outlined both the [work of ENSIE and approaches to the integration of former prisoners in Belgium](#). The European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE) was officially established in Bruges (Belgium) on May 11, 2001. You can find out more about what they do [here](#). Our next presenter, **Katri-Liis Reimann**, building on a presentation given by Davie Parks at our first event, discussed the [challenges of putting the research on public sector management and innovation into practice](#) in the form of creating new social service design models (social service hackathons) and social enterprises (including The Skill Mill).

Distinctively, the Swedish social consortia of social cooperatives, Vagen ut! began in 2002 as a grassroots movement, between – at that time – a small group of probation officers and people with lived experience. Today, Vagen ut! have 13 social cooperatives, employing 125 people, 90% of whom have at one time themselves been distanced from the labour market, and supporting a further 150 people. **Pernilla Svebo** provided a full and interesting account of the development, growth, dynamics and effects of the [Vagen ut! Cooperatives](#). **Valerio Pellerossi**, of ConfCooperative Federsolidarieta, joined us from Italy. As Beth suggested from her research in the first event, Valerio argued that providing a path in the form of social cooperation with a focus on [re-inclusion or social reintegration to prisoners and ex-prisoners](#), especially through work, has a positive impact in the reduction of

recidivism. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that there is no consensus about the general extent to which it exerts this effect, and the measure of positive and negative effect on prisons management and security is still controversial. He identified that there is, then, a need for a deeper investigation of the effect of work inclusion policies on the general economy of a country. In this context, Valerio Pellirossi's presentation proposed updated elements of analysis to the debate, with an overview of evidence from international studies. The presentation focused on the Italian context, with particular attention to social cooperatives working with offenders, and provided an analysis of the evolution of the Italian normative framework and national policies in the sector of work inclusion of prisoners and ex-prisoners. Valerio illustrated how social cooperatives actually operate in the sector and presented an overview of the most recent data on work activities in Italian prisons, with learning from the investigation of best practices.

Mary O'Shaughnessy, of Cork Business School, Ireland advised that, since it first emerged in public policy discourse, in the 1990s, the concept of social enterprise has been mainly viewed as a mechanism of job creation/integration and service provision in disadvantaged communities. This perspective has been significantly influenced by European policy. In contrast, the interpretation of social enterprise in Irish academic discourse is more varied. In all, these variations have contributed to an ambiguous national understanding of the social economy as a sector and social enterprises as distinctive entities, which in turn has compromised attempts to estimate the scale and potential of the sector in Ireland to date. As part of the policy response to the unemployment crisis of the economic recession, the Irish government commissioned an examination of the job-creation potential of social enterprise. The [Forfás report](#), published in 2013, offered a new official definition of social enterprise, characterised by many of the features of the [EMES 'ideal type'](#). Furthermore, the description and examples of social enterprises presented in this report confirmed the dominance of one model of social enterprise in Ireland—the work integration social enterprise, or WISE. In this presentation, exploring ['The Irish Experience'](#) Mary showed how social economy and social enterprise are understood in Ireland and explained how WISEs have evolved as the dominant Irish social enterprise model to date.

Complementing Mary's academic analyses, **Siobhan Cafferty**, [charted the development of WISEs in the Irish criminal justice sector](#). Siobhan, whose role is to develop this sector, noted that the launch of Ireland's Department of Justice and Equality social enterprise strategy, *A New Way Forward*, in May 2017 signalled a progressive change in thinking for the Irish criminal justice sector. No longer seen as the sole responsibility of the public and private sector, Siobhán Cafferty explained that the employment of people with a history of offending became a shared issue that required a considered response. Development of and investment in Work Integration Social Enterprises became part of that solution. Her presentation expertly charted the journey of WISEs in the Irish criminal justice sector, how far they have come, while also highlighting how far they have yet to go.

We were joined by **Jessica Gordon-Nembhard** from John Jay College, New York who discussed her research into [developing worker cooperatives with incarcerated workers](#). Jessica Gordon-Nembhard addressed racism, exploitation, and humanism through alternative economics in the criminal justice system, using the example of incarcerated worker co-ops in Puerto Rican prisons to explore the potential of the co-op model to address prison reform/abolition in a solidarity economy framework. She also addressed curricular needs of and legal constraints to using this model in the U.S.A., as well as current coalitions and efforts in the US to develop incarcerated and returning citizen worker co-ops.

Our concluding presentation was given by **Isobel Findlay**, University of Saskatchewan, who shared her learning on [Co-operatives and the Criminal Justice System in Canada](#), which she described as Learning Communities. Isobel explained that the operating contradictions of colonization and capitalism largely shape the contradictions of Carceral Canada. The impact on those marginalized by a centre that presumes its right to both judge and enforce its judgments is felt keenly, while the incriminating record of the colonial and neo-colonial state and extractive industries that have produced dispossession, pollution, and inequality is largely ignored. The colonial/capitalist legacy and a tough on crime agenda is clear in patterns of Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system and in statistics on victimization to violence and their under-representation in education, employment, and earning power in Canada. It is against this background that a social economy of safety and receptivity is most needed on the way to redistribution, reconciliation, and justice—and is inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action. The public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms is a process of healing of relationships at the heart of reconciliation and justice. Drawing on initiatives across Canada, Isobel tracked efforts within and beyond Corrections Canada to rebuild community and reimagine justice in communities of learning, including Walls to Bridges (building on the US Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program) and the Justice Trapline in Saskatchewan. She concluded with a review of challenges and opportunities associated with decolonizing the Canadian criminal justice system and lessons learned about what we all can gain from Indigenizing thinking and practices and displacing disciplinary monocultures that have wasted so many lives.

Event 3: Thematic Focus: Key Issues: Transferring the Learning into Action

This externally facilitated event, held on 25th February, 2019, focused on transferring the learning from preceding events to develop a potential solution that was consistent with a distinct ‘Scottish Approach’ to public policy. We explored how best we should work with, develop and embed social cooperative/enterprises in community justice in Scotland, from a multi-disciplinary, non-academic perspective.

This highly participatory event culminated in an outline of a strategic approach and action plans on which to build beyond the programme, which we outline below.

Recommendations

Our first two events generated an enormous amount of learning around the global social economy movement, training attention on how that sector interfaces with carceral and community contexts. It is beyond the scope of this final report to distil the findings and implications of these here in their entirety: instead, we focus on how our participants interpreted these findings and applied them in thinking through what a Scottish Approach to developing work integration social enterprises in justice contexts might require.

➤ Policy development:

In addition to [Scotland’s 10 year Social Enterprise Strategy](#) [Glasgow City Council’s Social Enterprise Strategy](#), and the overarching [National Performance Framework](#), an obvious policy context for taking any pilot project forward is the [National Strategy for Community Justice](#) but we also need to engage with local level community justice partners right across the spectrum, including health, housing, employability, recovery communities and the various thematic and geographic social enterprise

networks. The justice policy landscape is positive and has potential to be progressive because it explicitly recognises that more needs to be done to remove barriers to people with convictions securing and sustaining employment – but barriers to work cannot be addressed in isolation. [No One Left Behind: Next Steps for Employability](#) aims to deliver more effective, integrated and aligned employability support across Scotland. This implies the need for a joined up and collaborative policy approach.

In Scotland, we have an opportunity to support work generation and work integration for relevant groups, including the specific needs of people who have committed offences and their families, while contributing to the wider, ‘inclusive growth’ agenda. However, we also appreciate that employment needs to be considered alongside other areas such as housing, health, education, financial inclusion, families, relationships and social connections to and with communities and should be supported by a concomitant commitment to social integration. In other words, efforts to encourage *work* integration should be accompanied by a concomitant commitment to supporting *social* integration.

We have an ambitious and long term social enterprise strategy, with a focus on ensuring fair work for all; new devolved powers for employment support and welfare; a service reform agenda that emphasises the importance of putting people at the centre of reforming public services – an agenda that encourages partnerships and co-production, prevention and early intervention – but new approaches require new investment.

At an organisational and sectoral level, there are many examples of social enterprises supporting people with convictions in Scotland and further afield - but taken together, a progressive national policy sphere, a persuasive evidence base and a willingness to test new approaches should be able to advance our collective efforts in this area - but that will only work if policy areas are far better aligned - with better alignment of budgets and more innovative, bolder collaborative commissioning strategies, alongside a cross departmental approach to spending.

➤ **Mapping of existing approaches in Scotland**

Over the course of bringing together stakeholders with the best overview of what is happening in Scotland of work at the community justice/social enterprise interface, we recognised that there may in fact be pockets of excellent activity that we simply do not know about. Scottish Government have conducted a similar exercise in relation to Community Justice and Employability and Community Justice Scotland has commissioned a survey of current employability projects and delivery. While important exercises providing useful information and intelligence for our work, these mapping exercises are not specific to Social Enterprise and may miss many of the critical nuances and opportunities. As a first step, we recommend that a mapping exercise should be commissioned to establish the scale and effectiveness of existing provision.

➤ **Elements of a Preferred Model**

Notwithstanding the point above, our learning suggests the following outline of a preferred model for work integration social enterprises in Justice contexts:

- Governance model: e.g. multi-stakeholder
- Hybrid model: e.g. not just people with convictions – those distant from labour market; e.g. 70% non-marginalised workforce / 30% marginalised workforce.
- Progressive model: both retention of some employees, but also work integration to ‘mainstream’ labour market; 2-3 year employment opportunities

- Holistic model: e.g. provision of support for a variety of social needs and issues – focus on social integration.
- Funding model: e.g. wage subsidies, employment programme, tapered approach.
- Criteria for inclusion that reflects the needs of the specific enterprise and diverse pathways to social and work integration
- Approach: Diversification of existing enterprises and the development of new ones.

We will need to ensure that whatever shape our next steps take, that we continue to engage the people that we aim to support, listen and be informed by what they tell us regarding

- the stigma and barriers associated with [declaring a criminal record](#);
- the impact of limited education experiences and low skills levels;
- willingness of employers to provide those with criminal convictions with job opportunities;
- a mismatch between job needs and skills levels.

We need to help employers to understand their legal rights and responsibilities, support them to implement safe and fair recruitment policies and procedures and ensure they can confidently and effectively manage and mitigate any potential risks.

We need to encourage leadership and build capacity; we need to increase access to markets; develop social enterprise business partnerships; and measure impact – both economic and social.

Our learning suggests that taking the development of WISE in justice contexts forward will require the establishment of two steering committees: a national group with a strategic remit, and a local group with an operational, each comprising a range of partners.

Key avenues for further exploration include commissioning lines and funding sources but the employment of a Development Manager with a national remit is essential.

Outcomes and Impact

The global economic crisis has provided new impetus to policy debates about public sector reform in general and penal reform in particular, not least in terms of reducing the rapid prison growth and tackling the high rates of post-release offending, estimated to cost Scotland £3Bn per year (Audit Scotland, 2012), and the UK between £9.5Bn and £13Bn per year (MoJ 2010). In an era of economic uncertainty and rapid penal reform, this programme - the first of its kind - is, thus, both economically and socially expedient. This programme has been instrumental in establishing the foundations on which the network seeks to build, by bringing people together to share learning and establish a nascent network.

What we have achieved through this programme to date is:

- A library of resources from leading academic and industry experts in this field;
- A bespoke website providing a repository for these resources and on which we will continue to build;
- An online presence via social media;
- An outline of a strategic approach for policy and action plan for furthering the development of social enterprise in justice contexts in Scotland;
- A preferred model of social enterprise for supporting work generation and integration for and with people who have convictions;

- Further consultations with Scottish Government, the Scottish Prison Service and national third sector organisations;
- The establishment of an international network of academic experts and industry leaders.

The short and medium term impacts we are seeking include increased employment opportunities for people with convictions; the development of the cooperative/enterprise sector in an under-utilised field in Scotland, contributing thus to 'inclusive growth' and incentivising innovation in approaches to employment that are flexible and scalable.

The longer term impacts on organisational and operational policies and practices in community justice could contribute to significant economic savings and a reduction in the human and social costs of crime, repeat imprisonment, and in particular, could contribute to the more effective use of scarce public resources, and constructively impact on the lives of people with convictions, their families and the wellbeing of their communities. Indeed, systems including Health, Justice – Police, Prisons and Community Justice – would benefit through reductions in re-offending which has a financial saving but because of budget disaggregation, these savings are not released or reinvested in the service that enabled them. This would imply the need to develop a cross departmental approach to spend.

Our collective aspiration is to encourage and realise the development and embedment of social cooperative/enterprise structures of employment in community justice in Scotland to achieve the aforementioned policy and practice impacts. As noted previously, while a pressing issue for policy makers, in practice it remains an under-explored area and a rarity in the UK.

Next Steps and Follow Up Activities

This programme has acted as a starting point, a springboard, rather than end point and will assist this network of international, multi-disciplinary academic and industry leaders to inform the development and implementation of social enterprise and cooperative structures of employment in work generation and integration for people with convictions.

- Raise awareness of the contribution of social enterprises in Scotland's Community Justice Strategy through the publication of **briefing papers** and **case studies** of SEs working in this area, alongside **academic papers**, ensuring the voices and experiences of SE employees are captured.
- Utilise the experience of social enterprise in community justice, sharing best practice and increasing learning across the sectors;
- Identify opportunities for the sector to deliver more and better outcomes for people with convictions and those in the care of the Scottish Prison Service;
- Engage with Scottish Government, Community Justice Scotland, SPS nationally, individual prisons and local community justice partners (including CJVSF), creating an effective forum for SE to engage with SPS/Scotland's prisons and community justice planning partnerships;
- Organise events in partnership with local community justice partners to increase their understanding of and engagement with SEs, where there is an appetite to do so;
- Work in partnership with local Social Enterprise Networks (SENs) to support their SE members to engage with local CJ partners/prisons in their area;
- Act as an effective voice for SE in Criminal Justice and promote collaboration with SE in the development of CJ services and vice versa.

- Utilise expertise across the programme team in the field of commissioning to engage with CJS on their strategic commissioning agenda and use the learning from the justice PSPs to inform our work
- Preparation of a larger international and comparative research proposal to be coproduced by members of the network developed from the programme.

The Programme Team

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2	Professor Stephen Osborne	University of Edinburgh	Chair of International Public Management
3	Professor Michael Roy	Glasgow Caledonian University	Professor of Economic Sociology and Social Policy
4	Sarah Soppitt	University of Northumbria	Associate Professor in Criminology
5	Elizabeth Docherty	Glasgow Social Enterprise Network	Director, Glasgow Social Enterprise Network
6	Paul Morris	Glasgow City Council	Development Officer and Operations Manager for the Glasgow Region City Deal Employability project
7	Tom Jackson	Community Justice Glasgow, Glasgow City Council	Head of Community Justice
8	Pauline Graham	Social Firms Scotland	CEO
9	Jayne Chappell	Social Firms Scotland	Finance and Development Manager