



January 2024

# Wise Community Mentoring: Interim Report



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## ABOUT THE WISE GROUP

The Wise Group is a leading social enterprise working to lift people out of poverty across Scotland and Northern England. Since 1983 we have delivered customer-led solutions to tackle inequality and societal challenges. Today, we continue to build bridges to opportunity for the most vulnerable in our society through Relational Mentoring.

Every day we support customers into jobs, out of fuel poverty, and help people coming out of prison to build a better future. Our work is wide ranging but underlying everything we do is a passion and commitment for social justice and a fairer society for all.

The Wise Group builds better lives, better communities and stronger businesses, and we don't do it alone. We work with a range of partners to make a real and lasting difference to the lives of thousands of people and families every year, from large businesses to national/local government and third sector organisations.

Our **Values** guide all our work:

- We go the distance, so our colleagues and customers reach a positive and sustainable future.
- We are ambitious to make a real difference every day with colleagues across the enterprise following our values: socially; financially and culturally.
- We hurdle boundaries and innovate.
- We thrive through collaboration, kindness and learning together.
- We celebrate and respect individual difference.

## RELATIONAL MENTORING

Wise Community Mentoring supports Places for People tenants via a Relational Mentoring approach. The aim is to drive behavioural change and enable individuals to sustain their tenancy. Our Mentors work alongside Housing Officers who submit referrals for support on behalf of tenants. This is available to new tenants at the beginning of their journey into a new home or for existing tenants who are struggling due to a change in circumstances.

Relational Mentoring helps people identify and overcome multiple challenges through the relationship built with a professional Mentor. Our Mentors have a belief in the potential and ability of the individual so that they may guide them towards sustainable change. The relationship is entirely voluntary and is built on compassion and trust.

Working one-to-one with the individual, the Mentor uses our Relational Mentoring framework to identify the customer's core needs. This person-centred approach is based on a 15 point Needs Assessment that covers areas of need which can prevent an individual achieving positive change in their life:

Support	Money	Self-efficacy	Employment	Health
1. Access to other support	4. Energy assistance	6. Wellbeing, self-esteem and confidence	8. Developing life skills	13. Mental wellbeing
2. Building & maintaining relationships	5. Financial support	7. Aspirations & motivation	9. Digital skills	14. Physical health
3. Stability			10. Basic skills	15. Addictions
			11. Social skills for work	
			12. Work skills & experience	

From there, an Action Plan is co-designed which takes into consideration needs and related goals. Progression is monitored and evidenced so that we can document individual distance travelled. We find this to be the most effective method in achieving sustainable outcomes and change, preventing the customer's need for repeated crisis support.

Mentors are entirely independent of Places for People or other statutory services. Feedback from our customers highlights how important this is as they feel confident to express the issues and challenges that may impact their lives and therefore their tenancy.

The Mentor acts as an intermediary that fully complements the role of the Housing Officer to improve the chances of sustained tenancies.

They work closely together to provide the best possible outcome for the individual.

With support from the Places Foundation, we initially set out to support 108 households across Midlothian, East Lothian, West Lothians and Edinburgh by April 2024 via intensive (min. weekly) Relational Mentoring.

The duration of mentoring ranges between Medium (2 months) to High (4 months) depending on the tenant's complexity of need. This can be followed by an optional 2 months of light aftercare as required.

Each tenant is unique and presents with different challenges. The most common challenges include isolation, mental health, disability, health concerns, finances, fuel poverty, support for children, addictions, criminality, victim of anti-social behaviour, lack of education, digital exclusion and unemployment.

## CUSTOMER DEMOGRAPHICS

To better serve and understand our customers, we have implemented a comprehensive system to gather and track key customer information. This system has enabled us to gain a deep understanding of who requires our services. Working closely with Places for People Housing officers, we have received **91 tenant referrals to Wise Community Mentoring** for support. Based

on current levels of referrals, we expect that by April 2024, we will reach our target of 108 customers supported. This also includes full household support and extends to single adults, parents, young people and children.

### Local Authority

Of the 91 referrals made so far to the service, over half have come from Edinburgh and Mid Lothian. This is likely related to the volume of Places for People housing stock in these areas.

Local Authority	Number of Customers
Edinburgh	40
East Lothian	13
West Lothian	13
Mid Lothian	26
Total	92

### Gender

More than half of all referrals are for female customers, many of whom have complex needs and are lone parents with young children.

Many of our female customers are victims of domestic abuse who are now living independently. To provide the right support for these very vulnerable customers, we work closely with their Social Worker, women's support charities such as Women's Aid and with their Places for People Housing Officer to offer emotional support and help build self-esteem and confidence.

Gender	Number of Customers
Male	39
Female	53

### Age

The age range of customers is relatively varied, suggesting a diverse customer base. This may be due to the person centred, needs based approach which allows customers of all ages to feel valued and understood. The needs of each customer can vary significantly depending on their age.

Younger customers, many of whom are care leavers living on their own for the first time, typically require guidance in life-skills, such as budgeting, positive relationships, decision-making, and employability. On the other hand, older customers often grapple with issues like bereavement, isolation, and loneliness. For older customers, our mentors adopt a befriending role, assisting them with identifying social groups and dealing with issues related to the home (such as hoarding).

Age Range	Number of Customers
16-24	7
25-34	19
35-49	31
50+	31
U/K	4

### Length of Tenancy

The initial target group for this service was new tenants, however, by working closely with Places for People Housing Officers, we have found that there is an equal need for Relational Mentoring for both longer term tenants (2 years +) as well as new tenants (Under 2 years). This is related to changing circumstances within the home such as bereavement, physical and mental illness, addiction, disability, unemployment, poverty and isolation.

Tenancy Length	Number of Customers
Under 2 Years	49
Above 2 Years	43

### Level of Support

Most customers require high level support (4 months). Both customers and Places for People Housing Officers have suggested that extending this support to 6 months would benefit the most vulnerable customers further. Should we continue delivery from April 24 onwards, we would like to factor this into our delivery model and case-load management.

Mentoring Duration	Number of Customers
Medium - 2 Month	30
High - 4 Month	62

### Ethnicity:

Most customers are white Scottish/English/Irish. This could be due to various reasons such as geographical location, cultural preferences, or historical factors. However, it also highlights the potential opportunity to attract and engage customers from different ethnic backgrounds and create a more inclusive customer base.

Ethnicity	Number of Customers
White Scottish/English/Irish	83
Black African/Caribbean	3
Arabic	1
Asian	1
Romanian	1
Unknown	3

### Underlying Issues Impacting Tenancy

We have observed common characteristics, personal challenges or issues that have significantly impacted the ability of customers across the service to manage their tenancy:

Challenge or Issue	Number of Customers
High number of dependencies (children under 15)	19
Mental Health Condition	65
Physical Health Condition	43
Disability	38
Involved in Anti-Social Behaviour	18
Addiction (alcohol or drugs)	25

## OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Since the launch of Wise Community Mentoring, we have monitored key indicators to track the impact of the service:

### Number of Engagements (to date) with a Wise Group Mentor

For each customer, we record how many engagements they have with their Mentor, the number of Actions Plans created and how many actions/activities have been completed to help progress towards outcomes. On average, we have engaged with each customer at **least 34** times to date.

	Total
Customer Engagements	3135
Action Plans Created	90
Activities Completed	1654

### Sustained Tenancy

The overall aim of Wise Community Mentoring is to support customers who are at risk of eviction due to a variety of reasons. To date, **we have successfully supported all customers referred to the service to sustain their tenancy:**

Tenancy Status	Number of Customers
Sustained	89
Manged Transfer	1
Chose to Leave	2
Evicted	0

### Engagement with wider Places for People / The Wise Group services

Both the Wise Group and Places for People provide a range of additional support services. Our Mentors ensure that customers know about this support and can access it when required.

Services	Number of Customer Referrals
Places For People Services – including financial advice & HEAT	55
Wise Group Services – including Home Energy & Employability	56



### Areas of Need:

41 customers have so far exited the service. Exit from the service is planned via an agreement between the Mentor and the customer. Based on their individual Action Plans, we track improvements against each Area of Need. The table below indicates the percentage of customers who have recorded positive progress against each area of need:

Area of Need	% of Customers (planned exit) who have shown progression
Access to Other Services	56%
Aspiration & Motivation	46%
Addiction	13%
Basic Skills	23%
Building & Maintaining Relationships	30%
Developing Life Skills	40%
Digital Skills	33%
Energy Assistance	50%
Financial Support	60%
Mental Wellbeing	46%
Physical Health	20%
Social Skills for Work	16%
Stability	50%
Wellbeing, Self Esteem & Confidence	33%
Work Skills & Experience	20%

### Achieved Outcomes:

For each customer, we record the number of times they achieve each outcome. As they work towards their individual action plans and goals, each customer may record the same outcome multiple times.

To show the collective achievement of each outcome across **the whole customer group**, we have reported below the number of times each outcome has been recorded since the service launched in March 2023.

We expect this to increase significantly by the end of the funding period as we continue to work with our customer group and welcome new individuals to the service. We will provide a deeper analysis of outcomes achieved as part of our final report.

### Increased Mental Health

- Improved attitude/ outlook on life and emotional wellbeing – recorded 48 times

### Improved physical health

- Improved ability to manage physical health – recorded 32 times.
- Increased awareness and understanding of activities to support physical health – recorded 26 times.

### Improved financial capability

- Increased household income – recorded 58 times.
- Improved financial situation – recorded 50 times.
- Improved financial decision making – recorded 56 times.

### Improved Digital Skills

- Improved confidence in digital skills – recorded 38 times.
- Increased ability to apply digital skills in day-to-day life - recorded 38 times.
- Increased safe access to internet and online services - recorded 38 times.
- Improved basic digital skills - recorded 38 times.
- Improved awareness and understanding of the benefits of digital skills - recorded 38 times.

### Increased Employability Skills

- Improved confidence to find work – recorded 21 times.
- Improved motivation to work - recorded 21 times.
- Improved social skills required for work - recorded 33 times.
- Improved access to housing - recorded 36 times.
- Improved awareness and understanding how to meet housing and basic needs - recorded 36 times.

### Reduced Social Isolation

- Improved engagement with services – recorded 45 times.
- Improved participation in day to day life – recorded 48 times.

### Increased Confidence

- Improved attitude/ outlook on life and emotional wellbeing – recorded 48 time
- Improved ability to manage wellbeing self-esteem and confidence – recorded 38 times

### Increased understanding what anti-social behaviour is and how to be a good tenant/neighbour

- Prevent Crisis/ worsening of a situation – recorded 44 times
- Improved positive lifestyle choices – recorded 11 times
- Improved attitude towards criminal/ antisocial activity – recorded 6 times

### Increased tenancy skills - how to clean, maintain and furnish a property

- Improved access to housing – recorded 36 times
- Improved awareness and understanding of how to meet housing and basic – recorded 36 time

## ADDED VALUE

To better cater to the needs of our customers, we have introduced additional elements to Wise Community Mentoring. While the core focus remains on providing personalised Relational Mentoring, we have expanded our offering beyond what was initially proposed to address specific requirements and enhance the overall customer experience. We believe this has created added value for the service.

### Volunteer Days and Social Events

We have organised several volunteering days for customers to work with Mentors, other Wise Group colleagues and Places for People Housing Officers. These events are aimed at fostering a greater sense of community and connectedness. We have included a variety of activities that not only serve the community but also provide a unique opportunity for our customers to engage in meaningful and rewarding experiences.

Among the activities we have organised are cleaning up tenant's gardens. This has provided valuable support to very vulnerable customers while also offering a chance to socialise and meet other people in the community.

We have also arranged painting sessions to support customers improve their living conditions and create a sense of 'home'. In January 2024, customers, Mentors and other colleagues from across the Wise Group came together to paint the living room of Lorna, a customer with long-term health conditions. The team cleared the room, sourced the materials and re-decorated the space to a high standard, creating a clean and bright living space for the customer. Everyone worked well together as a team and there was support and good humour throughout the day. It was especially restorative for Lorna who enjoyed engaging with new people. Lorna said:

*"This has been amazing. I cannot believe it as has all been done in one day, Brian and Chris especially were just brilliant. Thank you all so much, I am so happy and over the moon."*

These volunteering days have not only made a significant impact on our community but have also brought our customers closer, fostering a sense of unity and shared responsibility.



### Employability Support

We have recently introduced monthly sessions with our Employment Pathways Team to offer comprehensive employment support to our customers. These sessions run from Hay Avenue Community Hub, providing a convenient location for individuals in need of assistance. Our Employment Pathways Team provide offer an array of individualised services, including interview preparation, assistance with clothing for interviews, CV creation and review, help with job applications, and strategies for effective job searching. The sessions are aimed at empowering individuals with the necessary skills and resources to secure suitable employment.



### Court Attendance

For various reasons, many of our customers are engaged in the Justice System, including appearances at the local Sherriff Court. We understand that attending court can stir up a range of emotions such as fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. Our Mentors have provided a reassuring voice, offering a compassionate ear to alleviate any distress our customers may experience during this challenging time. We have also referred them to expert support services such as Victim Support and Women's Aid.



In addition to emotional support, we also assist our customers with practical matters related to their court case. This may include helping them gather necessary documents, connect with legal professionals, or navigate any administrative processes. We have also provided supporting statements, detailing the personal progress they have made in their life via Relational Mentoring such as getting a job, accessing addiction services or working on their mental health.

Our commitment to emotional support extends beyond the courtroom. We understand that the impact of attending court can linger long after the case has been resolved. Therefore, we continue to be available for our customers, providing ongoing emotional support and resources to help them navigate any post-court challenges or transitions they may face.

By offering a holistic approach, we aim to alleviate the burden our customers may feel during this challenging period.

### Neurodiversity

Our Mentors have provided support for a significant number of customers to find and access appropriate support for their neurodiversity needs. This includes navigating through the process of getting tested and diagnosed with Autism, Dyslexia, and ADHD. We understand that these conditions can often be accompanied by various mental health challenges. Therefore, we have facilitated their access to expert services, including counsellors, and medical professionals specialising in these areas.

Our primary goal is to ensure they receive the necessary care, guidance, and treatment. We have also assisted them in managing related mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and stress that may arise during this process. We believe in fostering an environment of understanding and empathy to help our customers navigate these potentially life-altering diagnoses.

### Anti-Social Behaviour

We have taken steps to address the issue of antisocial behaviour in the community, including cases of racial abuse. We have collaborated closely with Places for People Housing Officers to tackle these situations. This cooperation includes supporting customers to submit detailed complaints and providing emotional support when required.

In response to incidents of anti-social behaviour from some of our customers, we have implemented a series of initiatives aimed at educating them about the importance of community respect and social responsibility. We've also encouraged them to take part in volunteering activities, such as garden clean ups to foster a sense of belonging and to underline the value of contributing positively to society. Our goal is to help them understand that their actions can make a significant difference and to cultivate a more community-centric mindset.

### Specialist support for Young People

We have provided specialist support to young people, many of whom are navigating their first independent tenancy after leaving care or a period of homelessness.

A common challenge faced by young people is a lack of understanding regarding the management of a household. This struggle was expressed by a young person in their first meeting with Richard, a Wise Community Mentor, when they confessed: *"I'm considering giving up the house because it would be easier to live in homeless accommodation where I can receive support."*

This young person had just turned 18 and had recently transitioned from a homeless support unit to their first unfurnished tenancy. They had been denied support from the Scottish Welfare Fund due to a lack of supporting evidence. In addition, they were in rent arrears, relying on benefits and in the progress of trying to find sustainable employment.

Within the first 30 minutes of meeting the young person, Richard had helped them set up a direct debit to manage their rent payments. Richard then worked with them to reapply for the Scottish Welfare Fund which ultimately proved successful. Following this, Richard worked alongside the young person to apply for energy grants and food vouchers. He also referred the young person to our Employment Pathways Team who provided guidance and support to write a CV, job search and develop their interview skills. As a result, they ultimately found employment.



This is just one example of the range of support offered to young people across the service. We have also provided social opportunities for young people to meet others in their community, including a surprise day out for two young people who turned 18 within 2 days of each other. Our Wise Community Mentoring team treated them to a surprise day out to The World of Bowling which included lunch and gift cards.

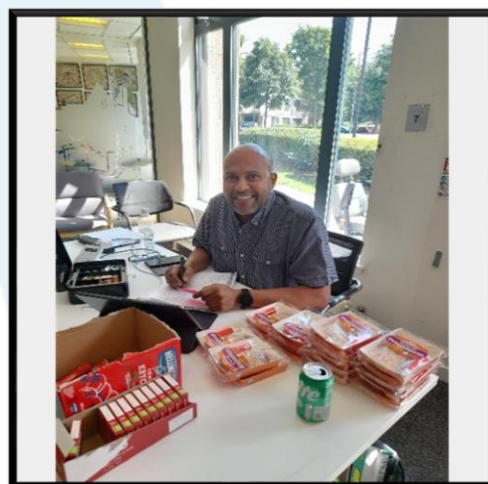
### Physical & Mental Health Activities

Our Mentors understand the importance of maintaining good physical health and overall well-being. We have partnered with local Bike Charity called MAED. This charity aims to promote physical activity and overall well-being by providing bicycles to individuals who are unable to afford them. By partnering with MAED, we have not only supported a meaningful cause but also witnessed numerous positive outcomes for our customers.

By providing bicycles to those who cannot afford them, we have enabled our customers to engage in regular exercise, address social isolation and reap the rewards of an active lifestyle.

As part of our commitment to our customers' health, we have also organised health-promoting group and individual walks. These walks are designed to encourage our customers to stay active and engage with their local community. They provide an opportunity for individuals to come together and enjoy the benefits of physical exercise in a supportive and motivating environment.

During these walks, our Mentors encourage customers to open up and share their thoughts and experiences. Being in nature and away from the usual distractions of daily life creates a relaxed and peaceful atmosphere, making it easier for individuals to speak indirectly about their challenges. Our Mentors are trained to listen actively and provide a supportive and non-judgmental space for customers to express themselves.



## CONNECTING CUSTOMERS TO THE SUPPORT THEY NEED

To help customers achieve their individual Action Plans, we have identified a range of additional services and support across the community and made onward referrals:

Area of Need	Service
Finance, Benefits & Debt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Street Works</li> <li>▪ Edinburgh Food Project</li> <li>▪ Fresh Start</li> <li>▪ Salvation Army.</li> </ul> <p>Our Mentors have directly assisted customers to apply for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community Care Grants</li> <li>▪ Crisis Loans</li> <li>▪ Disability Living Allowance</li> <li>▪ Scottish Welfare Fund</li> <li>▪ Open bank accounts and manage council tax payments/arrears</li> </ul> <p>Wise Community Mentoring also works collaboratively with Places for Peoples internal services such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Financial Inclusion Team</li> <li>▪ HEAT service</li> <li>▪ Furniture Allowance</li> <li>▪ Hay Avenue Hub.</li> </ul>
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Places For Peoples HEAT service</li> <li>▪ Home Energy Scotland</li> <li>▪ Direct support from a Mentor to apply for Hardship Funds, Warm Home Discount and fuel vouchers.</li> </ul>
Mental Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Places for People Wellbeing Services</li> <li>▪ Wise Group CONNECT</li> <li>▪ Registering for local GP</li> <li>▪ Victim Support</li> <li>▪ SAMH</li> <li>▪ Anxiety UK</li> <li>▪ Health in Mind</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I Thrive</li> <li>▪ Samaritans</li> <li>▪ Women's Aid</li> <li>▪ Andy's Man Club</li> <li>▪ Childrens Charity</li> </ul> <p>Our mentors have assisted customers to identify and register with their local GP services and dentists. They have provided comprehensive guidance, patiently walking customers through each step of the process, resolving any queries, and ensuring all necessary paperwork is completed accurately. This has enabled them to access essential healthcare services promptly, and most importantly, has empowered them to take control of their health and wellbeing. Their confidence in navigating these systems has noticeably increased, leading to greater independence and self-advocacy.</p>
<b>Physical Health &amp; Outdoor Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dr Bells Mindfulness Dips</li> <li>▪ Health in Mind-Wellbeing Walks</li> <li>▪ Out &amp; About Ambling Adventures Walking Group</li> <li>▪ Port Seaton &amp; Long Niddry Community Centre</li> <li>▪ Street Soccer</li> <li>▪ Newtongrange Development Trust</li> <li>▪ Midlothian-Health walks for over 50's.</li> </ul>
<b>Disabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Signposting to NHS services</li> <li>▪ Social Work Services</li> <li>▪ ELCAP</li> <li>▪ Scottish Autism.</li> </ul>
<b>Addiction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mid and East Lothian Drug Services,</li> <li>▪ Number 11 Dalkeith</li> <li>▪ Narcotics Anonymous.</li> </ul>
<b>Behavioural Change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Turning Point Scotland</li> <li>▪ Criminal Defence Lawyers</li> <li>▪ Simon Community</li> <li>▪ Change Grow Live.</li> </ul>
<b>Digital, Training &amp; Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wise Group CONNECT</li> <li>▪ Wise Group Skills Training programmes</li> <li>▪ Wise Group Employment Pathways Team</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Volunteer days to support local community and other PFP tenants</li> <li>▪ Midlothian CLLE</li> <li>▪ Port Seaton &amp; Long Niddry Community Centre</li> <li>▪ Cyrenians-Cookery School.</li> </ul>
Community Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Places for People Hay Avenue Community Hub</li> <li>▪ Glmerton Community Centre</li> <li>▪ Good Trees Community Centre</li> <li>▪ Inch Community Centre</li> <li>▪ Local Toy Library</li> <li>▪ Bonnyrigg Community Club</li> <li>▪ Newbattle Community Centre</li> <li>▪ Rosewell Development Trust</li> <li>▪ Edindex - Edinburgh Council</li> <li>▪ Newtongrange Library</li> <li>▪ The Ridge</li> <li>▪ Play Midlothian</li> <li>▪ Keep the Heid Mental Health Café</li> <li>▪ Newtongrange Development Trust.</li> </ul>

## COLLABORATION WITH PLACES FOR PEOPLE COLLEAGUES

Our Wise Community Mentoring service has played a crucial role in connecting customers with Places for People's own services. Mentors bridge the gap between customers and the wide range of support available to them. In many cases, customers were unaware of the assistance they could receive and may not have sought help without the guidance of their Mentor. By linking customers with these services, we have empowered individuals to access the support they need. This specifically includes:

- **Home Energy Team** – We work closely with the Places for People Home Energy Team who have provided customers with vital energy efficiency advice. This includes advice on how to lower energy costs around the home, changing tariffs, energy vouchers and energy debt management.
- **Financial Inclusion Officers** – Our Mentors work regularly with Places for People's Financial Inclusion Officers. This support has proved invaluable to customers with various financial challenges such as those dealing with benefit sanctions. They also provide income maximisation reviews and support with applications and budgeting advice.

We have developed a strong working relationship with Places for People Housing/Letting Officers. Housing/Letting Officers identify those who may benefit from Relational Mentoring and facilitate referrals. This active participation has led to enhanced customer outcomes, evident in improved living conditions, better financial management, and increased social interaction among residents. Wise Community Mentoring can step in to provide additional support to vulnerable individuals who may require more intensive care and attention than a Housing Officer can provide. This includes individuals who may be dealing with mental health issues, addiction, homelessness, or other challenges. This evidenced by the following testimonials provided by two Places for People Housing Officers:

*Housing Officer 1 -*

“I’ve engaged with Wise Community Mentoring for approximately 4-5 months now. From the start I found Christina Brown very helpful and positive to deal with when making initial enquiries. My main contact has been with Linsay who I’ve found to be very helpful and good to work with. My contact with Richard has been more limited to date, I think he has just dealt with one customer I referred but he achieved some positive outcomes in that case.

I would say that Wise Community Mentoring has enhanced my role as a Housing Officer. Whereas previously I would refer customers to Social Work and often get no response or hunt around for some other Support Agency to help customers, sometimes without success, I know I can now refer to Wise and always get a prompt response. I have mainly liaised with Linsay and have found her really great to work with. I know I can rely on her to give customers the best possible advice and support and to keep me updated on how things are going with them. I believe she really cares about the people she works with and brings out the best in them. It brightens up my day to hear about all the positive things that she’s doing with customers.

I believe the service has made a massive difference to the individuals I have referred. I know the customers I’ve referred have been given all the financial advice and support they need in terms of food vouchers, referrals to the Welfare Fund, Financial Inclusion etc. which is helping them to sustain their tenancies. I know customers have been given information on lots of local resources and support groups available to them and some have enrolled in classes or engaged with other agencies that they would have never done previously. I believe they have someone friendly, caring and honest they can talk to and have responded really positively to this. We probably don’t even know what a hugely beneficial impact it may have had on some customers.

In terms of improvements to the service, the only thing I can think of just now is that it would be beneficial for some customers to have longer with the service, 4 months is quite short, though it has certainly been long enough to see some really positive changes.”

*Housing Officer 2 -*

“I have referred several of my customers for a variety of issues (lonely and elderly, hoarding, became the tenant after the death of the original tenant). Having access to this service for my customers has been great. I have felt that they are able to look after the needs and aspirations of

each customer allowing me to get on with helping other customers and completing other aspects of my job (and doing more referrals to The Wise Group).

The feedback that I have received has been that they feel included, supported and encouraged.

To improve the service, I would suggest that the length of support should be increased. 4 months is far too short to rectify and change long standing mistrust of large organisations and learned behaviour/coping mechanisms.”

## CELEBRATING SUCCESS TO-DATE

To celebrate the end of the year and in recognition that the festive season can be challenging for some, we organised a festive event for our customers.

Our lively Christmas party welcomed more than 20 families and a total of 70 attendees. The primary purpose of this gathering was to bring the community together, allowing them to socialise while enjoying party food, non-alcoholic mulled wine, and engaging games suitable for all family members. We ensured that every person left the event with a gift and a smile on their face.

Our festivities took place at the Places for People Hay Avenue Community Hub. To ensure that transportation was not a barrier, we arranged for a coach service, enabling everyone to attend. Each guest received a complimentary raffle ticket upon arrival and was presented with one or more gifts. Moreover, all children received additional presents. We also supported a family expecting a new child by providing them with a pram and other essential new born items.

Following the event, we partnered with the Salvation Army to secure gifts and donations specifically for families with children. We also made referrals to local food banks, assisting our customers in accessing vital resources for the festive season.





## CASE-STUDIES

### Jenna

**Background:** Jenna, a young adult with ADHD and severe anxiety, was referred to Wise Community Mentoring as she required support to transition into her first home. Her anxiety makes it challenging for her to interact with unfamiliar people, which initially led all communication to be conducted through her sister, Lisa.

**Support Areas/Action Plan:** Jenna's move into her first home brought about a new set of challenges. As a first-time tenant, she needed guidance on how to manage her tenancy. For this, she was referred to Home Energy Scotland for energy advice. The aim was to ensure that she could easily navigate this crucial aspect of independent living.



To address her mental health concerns, an action plan was created with Jenna. This included her application for a college course in agriculture, support for her anxiety, resolving neighbour disputes, and referrals for mental health support. The goal was to arm her with the skills and resources necessary to manage her anxiety and ADHD, while also pursuing her academic interests.

**Outcomes:** Jenna was accepted into her desired college course, which began in September 2023. Throughout the application process, we ensured that Jenna had all the necessary documents for her bursary.

In addition to her academic progress, her Mentor worked with Jenna to develop skills to help manage her anxiety. This includes delivering books to her house that can help her cope with anxiety and liaising with the local mental health team for professional support for her ADHD.

Jenna's feedback on the support she received was positive. She expressed her gratitude, saying, *"It was good to see you, thank you for helping"*. She also shared her excitement about her upcoming college course, stating, *"I'm looking forward to going to college now"*.

This case study underlines the importance of a holistic and personalised approach in supporting young adults like Jenna in their transition to independent living.

## Owen

**Background:** Owen, a 17-year-old care leaver, recently moved into his first Places for People tenancy. His Housing Officer, Clare Ross, referred him to Wise Community Mentoring in August 2023. Owen expressed his interest in mentoring support to increase his wellbeing, manage finances, develop life skills, and pursue education and employment opportunities.

**Mentor-Mentee Relationship Development:** Owen was paired with his mentor Richard, and they started their journey together by engaging in wellbeing walks. These walks provided Owen with a safe space to express his feelings and be heard. Over time, his trust in Richard grew, and they began working on an action plan to support Owen in achieving his goals.

**Volunteering & Securing Employment:** Richard, aware of Owen's interest in painting and decorating, involved him in volunteering opportunities within the service. Owen shared his skills with others and contributed to the community. Recognising Owen's potential, Richard also provided support to create a CV, interview preparation, and interview attire. This assistance paid off when Owen successfully secured full-time employment as a painter & decorator.



### Outcomes:

- **Health & Wellbeing:** Through regular walks and talks in nature, Owen found solace in the local views and experienced a reduction in anxiety. Additionally, Richard assisted Owen in registering with a new GP, ensuring his healthcare needs were addressed.
- **Supporting Statement:** A supporting statement highlighting the positive behaviour changes in Owen was provided to his solicitor. This statement was taken into consideration in a Court Hearing involving Owen.
- **Advocacy:** Richard actively engaged with Owen's Social Worker and Housing Officer, fostering collaboration to address Owen's needs holistically.
- **Volunteer & Employment:** Richard supported Owen in developing his CV, searching for job opportunities, and preparing for interviews. Owen's successful employment as a painter & decorator is a testament to the effectiveness of this support.
- **Digital Skills:** Owen received basic training in using Microsoft packages to enhance his employability.
- **Finances:** Richard provided assistance in obtaining a SIM card, shopping vouchers, and advice on managing finances effectively.
- **HEAT & Energy:** Owen was referred to Home Energy Scotland and the PFP HEAT team to ensure he received support in managing his energy needs.

Owen's journey with Wise Community Mentoring demonstrates the positive impact mentoring can have on young individuals transitioning to independent living. Through the support of his Mentor, Owen was able to secure employment, enhance his wellbeing, develop essential life skills, and receive guidance in various areas of his life.

### Kieran

**Background:** Kieran was referred to our services in June 2023, by his housing officer, Alison Smith. Kieran needed assistance with various issues and was extremely distressed due to a lack of mental health support and an ongoing Autism diagnosis. His first meeting with his Mentor, Linsay, took place in a local café where they discussed his goals and the support required to help him achieve them. Kieran was eager to be part of Wise Community Mentoring and was committed to his personal development journey.

**Support Areas and Action Plan:** Kieran completed a needs assessment and identified several areas where he desired assistance. Linsay worked closely with Kieran to create an Action Plan which included access to Home Energy Scotland, Places for People Financial Inclusion Team (FIT), digital skills, mental health services, counselling, therapy groups, and activity groups to promote well-being. They



established a strong bond, built on trust and rapport, through regular face-to-face meetings. Additionally, referrals were made to Health in Mind, Scottish Autism, SAMH (Football Team), Andy Man, First Hand Lothian Support Group, The Yard, Get-Set-4-Autism Post Diagnostic Support Service, Salvesen Mindroom and Vocal Carer Support.

Outcomes:

- Through a FIT referral, Kieran received a Discretionary Housing Payment to help address his rent arrears.
- Kieran was referred to Home Energy Scotland for advice on energy support and is now claiming the Warm Home Discount.
- He was referred to Health in Mind and is now engaged in group therapy and one-to-one counselling.
- Support was provided during his Autism diagnosis, and he is now being directly assisted by specialist service Number Six.
- Kieran is now engaged with Shared Parenting Scotland to help with the shared care of his son.

Kieran expressed his gratitude for the support provided, stating, *'Thanks for helping someone like me, it's helped a lot.'* This case study highlights the significant impact that personalised support and development tools can have on an individual's mental health and overall well-being.

### Hadjer

**Background:** At first, Hadjer was uncertain about what kind of assistance she wanted. However, after her first meeting with her Mentor Richard, it became clear that her primary goal was to improve her English language skills and increase her engagement in the local community. She had a strong interest in helping others in her area but didn't know how to go about this.

**Support Areas/Action Plan:** Together, Richard and Hadjer created an Action Plan, outlining areas where we could provide assistance. Hadjer expressed interest in an ESOL course, finding local children's clubs, obtaining energy advice, exploring volunteering opportunities, applying for beauty courses, and seeking employment opportunities.

Outcomes:

- We have assisted Hadjer to find local clubs and activities for her children which they are now attending on a regular basis.





- She has been referred to Home Energy Scotland and Places for People's HEAT service. Through these services she is receiving home energy advice, guidance and financial support.
- We have helped Hadjer identify and apply for a college course in Beauty Therapy. Our Employment Pathways Team is currently working with her to develop her CV and find suitable work opportunities related to her course.
- Hadjer has been supported with a volunteer application and is due to start volunteering with the Places for People food pantry next week.

Expressing her gratitude, Hadjer said, *"Thank you so much, Richard"*, and added, *"This has been really beneficial and thank you for the support."* Her words reaffirm the positive impact of the support provided, indicating the successful progression towards her goals.

## NEXT STEPS

Throughout this interim report, we have shared the positive impact of Wise Community Mentoring to-date. Our Mentors have aided customers in overcoming obstacles, setting objectives, and implementing positive life changes. As a result, customers have consistently reported improvements in key areas such as mental health, confidence, financial wellbeing, employability, relationships, and life-skills. These significant life improvements have led to more stable tenancies and avoided potential evictions. This, combined with a growing number of referrals, signifies a clear need for the continuation and expansion of this service into other areas.

To effectively extend our reach and help even more people in need, we are keen to explore additional funding opportunities with Places for People. We firmly believe that such an expansion would have a profound and positive impact on the lives of those most in need. By providing our support to more people, we can help reduce further evictions, break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage, and empower better futures.

We welcome further discussion on next steps and how we can collaborate to secure funding from April 2024 onwards.

January 24

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