Enabling the forgotten women of Scotland: Potential entrepreneurs for the future

Professor Norin Arshed
University of Strathclyde

Dr Stephen Knox
University of Stirling

Professor Graeme Martin
University of Dundee

Executive Summary

- The aim of this report is to understand whether entrepreneurship can help overcome economic and social barriers for vulnerable women (those leaving the criminal justice system and survivors of abuse) in Scotland.

- With the Scottish Government's pre-pathway fund, a successful pilot entrepreneurship programme was delivered to two groups of vulnerable women over an 8-week period.

- The programme was evaluated by collecting data at various stages of the pilot programme:
    - pre and post programme questionnaires,
    - pre and post programme focus groups,
    - observations and field notes during the delivery of the programme,
    - individual interviews with the women who participated in the programme, and
    - six case illustrations of 'promising practices' of local and grassroot support agencies.

- The key findings from our evaluation were:
    - the women quickly felt part of a community - building support groups, networking, and friendships;
    - feelings of empowerment, which led them to grow in confidence directly due to participation in the programme;
    - the women learned new transferable skills *and* re-learned existing skills, both of which could be used to develop their careers;
    - the possibility of starting their own business became a career they had never realistically explored; and
    - they became very focussed on 'communitising wealth', i.e. generating benefits and competences not only for themselves but also to transfer to their children, grandchildren and to the community, which otherwise might be forgotten or lost.

- We recommend that the Scottish Government undertake further work with vulnerable women to test out our findings and gain a more in depth understanding of the needs of these vulnerable women and how they can be met. Thus, we propose:

    - creating a unit under the Women's Business Centre that is focused on and directly addresses the needs of vulnerable women to explore an entrepreneurial career;
    - support agencies for vulnerable women to have a more holistic and joined up approach;
    - entrepreneurship programmes to be embedded in local communities;
    - appointing enterprise champions (with lived experiences) specifically for vulnerable women and;
    - long-term evaluation and more effective evaluations of entrepreneurship programmes.

Contents

1. Introduction

Not enough attention has been paid to gender inequalities and to improving the life chances and opportunities of women. This is especially so among the 'forgotten' and vulnerable[1] women in Scottish society, which include women with criminal convictions and those who have been subjected to domestic abuse[2]. In this report we focus on improving the life chance of these women in Scotland since they have been unable to access mainstream support because of their backgrounds. We did so by introducing them to 'entrepreneurship' as a means of securing a measure of financial independence and stability. Under the auspices of the Scottish Government's pre-pathway fund, which supported our project entitled: "Enabling the forgotten women of Scotland: potential entrepreneurs of the future", we were able to successfully deliver a programme to two cohorts of such forgotten women with the aim of understanding whether entrepreneurship could help them re-integrate back into society and the economy by starting up their own businesses.

We present the findings of an extensive evaluation of the programme and of the women's learning. Based on the findings we also make policy recommendations for future sustainable and scalable programmes for these women that not only meets their needs but also stakeholder's expectations and requirements. We do so by drawing on data from: (1) pre and post programme questionnaires, (2) pre and post programme focus groups, (3) observations and field notes of the programme, (4) individual interviews with the women who participated in the programme, and (5) a further 6 case illustrations of 'promising practices' of local and grassroot support agencies.

We found a number of key themes which emerged from the evaluation: (1) the women realised they were very much community-driven - building groups with each other for support, networking and friendships, (2) they were empowered and they saw their confidence grow by participating in the programme, (3) they learnt not only new skills but re-learned and built on existing skills, (4) the idea of starting their own business became a reality they had never explored previously, and (5) the women were very focussed on 'communitising wealth' which involved them passing on skills to their children, grandchildren and community which otherwise might be forgotten or lost.

Given the evaluation and the findings that emerged, we recommend that the Scottish Government undertake more work with vulnerable women to ensure the women's needs and how to meet them. Furthermore, works need to be done with the women to help them understand self-employment and starting up their own businesses as a potential avenue for financial stability and independence. These 'hard to reach groups' should no longer be 'easy to ignore' and there is potential to explore and understand the intersection between community engagement and inequality to build effective solutions.

We propose that our recommendations can be met by: (1) creating a unit under the Women's Business Centre which directly addresses the needs of vulnerable women for entrepreneurship; (2) support agencies for vulnerable women to incorporate or promote entrepreneurship

---

[1] In this report (and for the programme itself) 'vulnerable women' refers to women who have experienced imprisonment and/or abusive, coercive and violent relationships as encompassed by domestic abuse. This is reflective of understandings of potentially 'vulnerable individuals' as set out by the UK Research and Innovation Economic and Social Research Council (2024).

[2] Within Scotland, domestic abuse is legally defined as "Any form of physical, verbal, sexual, psychological or financial abuse which might amount to criminal conduct and which takes place within the context of a relationship." (Police Scotland and COPFS, 2023, p.3).

alongside their core services; (3) entrepreneurship programmes to be much more grassroots by embedding them in local communities; (4) appointing enterprise champions specifically for vulnerable women and; (5) long-term evaluation of the programme and the women participating in the programme which includes creating a baseline business skills survey in Scotland to effectively evaluate all training and advice programmes.

We begin the report by reviewing the relevant literature on vulnerable women and entrepreneurship. This review helped frame our report and substantiate our recommendations. Secondly, we introduce and justify our methods of data collection, in which we are confident achieved a high degree of rigour. We sought (a) to be transparent in how we collected the data to ensure our qualitative approach is consistent with the canons of good qualitative inquiry and, (b), ensure our methods of enquiry were based on verbatim transcriptions of participants' thoughts, feelings, and accounts of their experiences on the programme, which were based on rigorous standards of inductive analysis. Thirdly, we present our findings according to key themes identified in our data analysis. Fourthly, we present our recommendations which have been informed by the extensive data collected. Finally, we offer some conclusions and thoughts regarding future actions.

2. Setting the scene

2.1 Who are these forgotten women?

2.1.1 Abused women

Abused women are one such category of forgotten women. Data released by Scotland's Chief Statistician shows police recorded 65,251 incidents of domestic abuse in 2020-2021. This is an increase of 4% on the previous year. However, Police Scotland recorded 64,807 incidents of domestic abuse in 2021-22, a decrease of 1% from the previous year (Richards, 2021). Despite this decrease, the most recent results from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey estimated that fewer than one-in-five cases of domestic abuse are reported to the police (Victim Support Scotland, 2021). More recent figures for 2022/23 show a 1% increase in the number of crimes recorded under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act with 95% of those crimes involving a female victim (Scottish Government, 2023a). These statistics show no sign of changing for the better and as Keith Brown, who was the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans in 2022 argued, they are just the "tip of the iceberg."

The impact that domestic abuse has on the individual is often complex, with both tangible and intangible effects experienced by the individual, their families, communities, and the wider state. Short-term and long-term consequences include poor mental and physical health outcomes, detrimental impacts on education, employment, and the ensuring effects on their ability to improve economic well-being (Adams et al., 2013). The last of these is especially important when considering that low income is consistently found to be a significant sociodemographic predictor of domestic abuse (Ahmadabadi et al., 2020; Coll et al., 2020).

One route out of this vicious cycle, is financial security. It has been argued by that for victim/survivor's, financial security is a possible route out of socioeconomic deprivation as economic dependence on a perpetrator can be one reason women are tied into abusive relationships (Bell, 2003). Thus, access to resources and financial, social, and human capital are seen to be essential if they are to break free from their abusers.

2.1.2 Women leaving the criminal justice system

Women leaving the criminal just system are another important category. Between the periods of 2000 to 2012, the actual number of female prisoners in Scotland more than doubled from 207 to 469 (Scottish Prison Service, 2023a). Following this rise, a steady and continued decrease in the population has been reported since 2012/13 (albeit with a slight increase beginning for the period of 2017/18 which peaked in 2019/20 at 402 imprisoned women) (Scottish Prison Service, 2023a). The period covering the COVID19 pandemic 2019 to 2021 saw a significant drop (-25%) in population size - most likely attributed to the cumulative impact on the criminal justice system by the sweeping restrictions associated with COVID-19. Since the end of the pandemic, the number of female prisoners in Scotland has remained stable with an annual average daily population of 282 female prisoners for the most recently published period of 2022/23 (Scottish Government, 2023b).

An earlier study by Henderson (2001) including 179 female prisoners, reported that almost half stated financial need as the driver for their current and previous offending. This finding may be explained by the fact that women are disproportionately affected by poverty generally (Munoz Boudet et al., 2018) and so may turn to offending in attempts to manage socioeconomic stresses. This is possibly even more likely when women with previous convictions feel they are unable to break free from their criminal history because of the disclosure schemes in place for employment (Gurusami, 2019).

2.2 What can be done to support these forgotten women?

Studies have shown a positive relationship between entrepreneurship levels and job creation, productivity growth, and high-quality innovation that spills over to benefit the growth rates of the regions in which they operate (van Praag & Versloot, 2007; McDaniel et al., 2021). These more general findings also apply to our forgotten women: for example, entrepreneurial activity helps reduce crime and, thus, custodial sentences for the women, and allows abused women to break free from their violent familial relationships (Parker, 2015; McDaniel et al., 2021). Moreover, it has been argued that women leaving both the criminal justice system and abusive relationships believe that self-employment is often the only way they can become financially viable (The Centre for Entrepreneurship, 2016; Parker, 2015).

However, at present, there are no known entrepreneurial programmes in Scotland that specifically focus on training and empowering female victim/survivors of domestic abuse to start their own small business, nor are there any within the criminal justice system for female (ex-)offenders. Possible explanations for this lack of provision include supply constraints, including financial costs, security concerns and logistics associated with running programmes. Equally important are demand constraints. Thus, both populations are generally considered as 'hard to reach' groups with complex and varied needs. In respect of imprisoned females, there is also the question of the moral values the criminal justice system upholds; namely, is punishment more important than rehabilitation? If so, then the opportunity to participate in a programme which offers a chance of gaining upward social mobility might be deemed as inappropriate within correctional environments, despite burgeoning evidence which shows that entrepreneurial training can present a viable and reliable method for achieving penal and social justice objectives (Patzelt, Williams, & Shepherd, 2014; Hwang & Phillips, 2020).

To achieve this aim with these two target groups, we designed and ran a bespoke entrepreneurship programme over an 8-week period. The bespoke programme was grounded in local challenges and needs, facilitated the creation of small, powerful groups to empower Scottish women facing multiple disadvantages. This reflected policy-oriented calls to "move away from the previous high-growth elitist policies to…more collaborative approaches by working with specific interest groups and stakeholders to better fit the needs of the wider business base" (Arshed et al., 2022, p. 8).

3. Enabling the women with entrepreneurship

3.1 Introduction to WEvolution: the delivery partners

WEvolution were the delivery partners for the funded project. Their mission is to end cycles of disadvantage and adversity for women and their families and create a better future. Drawing inspiration from India's robust self-help groups movement, boasting over 10 million entrepreneurial women catalysing widespread socio-economic transformation, WEvolution have adapted this model in Scotland. WEvolution's bespoke inclusion programme, grounded in local challenges and needs, facilitates the creation of Small, Powerful Groups (SPGs) to empower Scottish women facing multiple disadvantages. Since WEvolution were founded in 2011, they have supported over 1,000 women across Scotland to build their emotional and financial resilience and to become "their better selves": happier, healthier and starting up over 50 thriving microenterprises.

3.2 Programme delivery

The programme was delivered over an 8-week period (weekly) with two cohorts in two different locations with space for 15 women in each cohort. The timeline of the programme was as follows:

- November-December 2023 - contacting support agencies and building relationships with them.
- December 2023-mid-January 2024 - recruitment of 30 women (15 in each cohort).
- Mid-January - two networking/information events (1 for each group) to introduce the delivery team/lead academic and to build trust with the cohorts given the sensitive issues/environments/backgrounds of the women.
- 16th January-6th March – delivery of programme over 8 weeks.
- Mid-March – individual interviews were undertaken with women participants.

A summary of the logistics is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Delivery logistics

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Who?	Women with abusive backgrounds. 20 signed up with 12-13 average attending on a weekly basis.	Women leaving the criminal justice system. 17 women signed up, 4 left the unit and 1 no longer wanted to attend. 12 attended on a weekly basis.
When?	Tuesdays 10-2pm	Wednesdays 10-2pm
Where?	The Studio, Partick	Lilias Centre, Maryhill
What?	8-week programme – offered reimbursement for travel, childcare and lunch.	8-week programme – offered lunch and snacks.

The Studio was a safe space for women to travel to – in an area where there are excellent transport links and parking available (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The Studio

The Lilias Centre is the UK's first community custodial unit for women and opened its doors in 2022. The women are supported in their reintegration back to communities and they live together in house units designed to promote independent living and there is trained staff on hand. The women who are housed in the Lilias Centre will be released within 1 month to 4 years of living there (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2: Lilas Centre (external)   **Figure 3: Lilias Centre (internal – communal hub)**

We have also added the summary of the delivery content of the programme in Appendix 1, but Table 2 outlines the aims of each week.

Table 2: Summary of programme delivery

Week	Aim
Week 1	To introduce participants to the programme, answer any questions, support them to tap into the possibility of starting something from "nothing" and lastly, to hear firsthand how Small Powerful Groups have impacted others.
Week 2	To introduce participants to a new type of "collective working environment"; excite them about their untapped potential and inspire them with local stories.
Week 3	To consider how a collective mindset around savings might have a positive impact on individuals and communities, provide them with a hands-on making experience where they could tangibly see making turn into a product and lastly to reimagine their possibilities.
Week 4	To afford participants the space to think about their unique skills and how those skills might impact them running a business.
Week 5	To create a space where participants could dive deeper into how to start a business. From concept to delivery, participants went through the start-up stages of starting something from scratch.
Week 6	To understand how critical mindset is to create an abundant future and business.
Week 7	To remind participants that their stories are unique and that within these imperfections are gifts. Additionally, to create a space where participants could reflect on the growth they have experienced since starting the course.
Week 8	To support a closing space where participants could recognise how far they came since starting the course and how entrepreneurial they really are at their core.

4. Evaluation

To provide greater insight into understanding the women and the programme delivery (and content), we collected evidence in numerous ways and from different sources. Our data were collected during the period of January to March 2024 through questionnaires, focus groups, observations, field notes, interviews, and case studies (promising practices).

4.1 Data collection

It should be noted that the University of Strathclyde's Code of Practice for Research Ethics was followed, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained of all individuals (and their support organisations) who participated in the data collection. Table 3 summarises the data collected.

Table 3: Data collected

Week	Data collection method	Participants
1	Pre-programme questionnaire	28
1	Pre-programme focus groups	25
1-8	Observations	
8	Post-programme questionnaire	16
8	Post-programme focus groups	18
8-9	Individual interviews	19
	Promising practices	6

Stage 1: Pre and post programme questionnaire

The women were asked to compete the questionnaires before the programme was delivered in Week 1 and again in Week 8 after the programme finished. A total of 28 participants completed in the pre-programme survey and 16 participants completed the post-programme survey.

The survey included five items[3] designed to capture participants intentions, motivations, attitudes, skills, and perceptions of business support. Four of these items – intentions, motivations, attitudes, and perceptions of business support – were aligned with existing items from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM). This enabled comparison between a general business population and the programme participants to give an indication of impact (Appendix 1).

---

[3] For the item business skills, unfortunately, there is no baseline data collected at either a Scottish or UK-wide level making any comparison for these items feasible. To understand how the programme impacting participant skills we relied on before and after survey data from programme participants only. Measure for this item were inspired by questions from the Entrepreneurial Competence Framework, available here: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/5e633083-27c8-11e6-914b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

Stage 2: Pre and post programme focus groups

Focus groups were also conducted before the programme started and followed up by further focus groups after the programme finished. WEvolution were not present for either focus group sessions to ensure confidentiality.

All focus groups were recorded and the format of the programme for both cohorts was the same to ensure consistency, rigour and validity. The focus groups were run as follows:

- The women were split into groups of 4-5 participants.
- They were then asked a series of questions about what they thought the programme would offer and what they expected to learn. The focus group at the end of the programme was centred around their learning and their future re. entrepreneurship.

Stage 3: Observations

Observations were an important element in the evaluation to provide context for the research. These were undertaken by two researchers from weeks 1 through to 8 (for 4 hours per session for both Cohorts 1 and 2). As the programme progressed, we found the observations played a crucial role in gathering data because they exposed the researchers to the nuances, dynamics and behaviours that cannot be captured by other methods of data collection.

Stage 4: Individual interviews

Semi-structured individual interviews were undertaken after the programme finished to allow the women participating to have more time to discuss and account for their experiences of the programme, and to offer constructive feedback for any future delivery of the programme.

Stage 5: 'Promising practices'

We use the term 'promising' practices because we believe there is no such thing as best practice that works in all contexts and timeframes. During the months of November 2023 to early January 2024, the project lead (Arshed) contacted 29 support agencies within the Greater Glasgow periphery who work with women in prison, women leaving the criminal justice system and women who are victims/survivors of abuse. Of those 29 agencies, 13 agencies responded, and meetings and discussions were had to explore whether the programme would be of interest to the women they are working with. From these 13 support agencies, 6 practises were selected as part of the 'promising practices' section of the report. These agencies are very much 'grassroots', embedded deep in local communities. The only reason that more support agencies are not included in the report is because of space and time restrictions.

Table 4 highlights a summary of those six promising practices and the cases are discussed in detail in Appendix 3.

Table 4: Snapshot of promising practices

Organisation	Location	Information
Apna Ghar	East Dunbartonshire	Enabling older ethnic minority women to have a voice and safe space to meet.
The DAISY Project	Glasgow	The DAISY (Domestic Abuse Integrated Support for You) offers support services to women and their families.
The Glendale Café	Glasgow	Offers a safe and welcoming space in which women can come together to learn, create, enjoy, and support each other.
Tomorrow's Women	Glasgow	Works with women who have very complex needs and who are involved in the criminal justice system. Their main aim is to enable women to reduce their offending and to address their needs and issues that prevent them from living positive healthy lives.
SHINE	Scotland-wide	Shine is a national mentoring service for women with experience of the criminal justice system.
Women's Support Project	Glasgow	Direct service provision, delivering training and public education, partnership and strategic work and engaging and consulting with women affected by male violence.

4.2 Data analysis

The questionnaires were analysed using excel since only descriptive analysis was possible. Analysis of the survey responses can be viewed as indicative and formative[4]. There were 28 questionnaires returned from the women at the first session from both Cohorts 1 and 2 was 100% return rate. For the post-programme from 18 women who attended the final session from both Cohorts 1 and 2, 16 returned the completed questionnaires with a response rate of 89%.

The observations, fieldnotes, focus groups and the interviews were analysed in a systematic manner. All interviews and focus groups were recorded with permission. We followed strict guidelines in analysing and reporting qualitative research (Gioia et al., 2013). The first was to 'clean' the transcripts – the real-time transcribing happened simultaneously when the focus groups and interviews were being audio recorded. The second step involved manually coding the data and identifying initial ideas in the data and grouping them into categories, known as open coding (first order codes) - key words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs from the transcripts, memos and field notes were highlighted. The final step involved coding and interpreting all codes to ensure verification of the data, re-coding where necessary and linking key concepts to build a narrative from the findings.
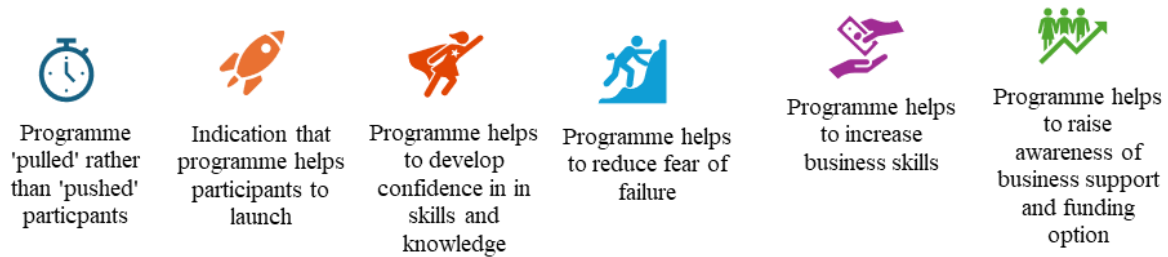
---

[4] Data to make these comparisons was drawn from the latest publications by GEM, including the UK 2022/2023 GEM report, the Scotland 2022/2023 GEM report, and the Scotland 2021/2022 GEM report, available here: https://www.gemconsortium.org/report

5. Findings

5.1 Questionnaires

A summary of the key findings from the questionnaires are highlighted below in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Summary of questionnaires**

Programme 'pulled' rather than 'pushed' particpants	Indication that programme helps participants to launch	Programme helps to develop confidence in in skills and knowledge	Programme helps to reduce fear of failure	Programme helps to increase business skills	Programme helps to raise awareness of business support and funding option

### 5.1.1 Start-up intentions

The programme participants had strong intentions to start a business, indicating the programme was timely in that it reached those that already considered entrepreneurship as a viable option for them (Figure 5). Approximately a third of participants were actively starting a business, a third were about to start a business within 3 months, and a third saw entrepreneurship as possibility in the future.

Figure 5: Start-up intentions pre-programme

- Currently starting a business
- About to start a business within 3 months
- Entrepreneurship as a possibility in the future
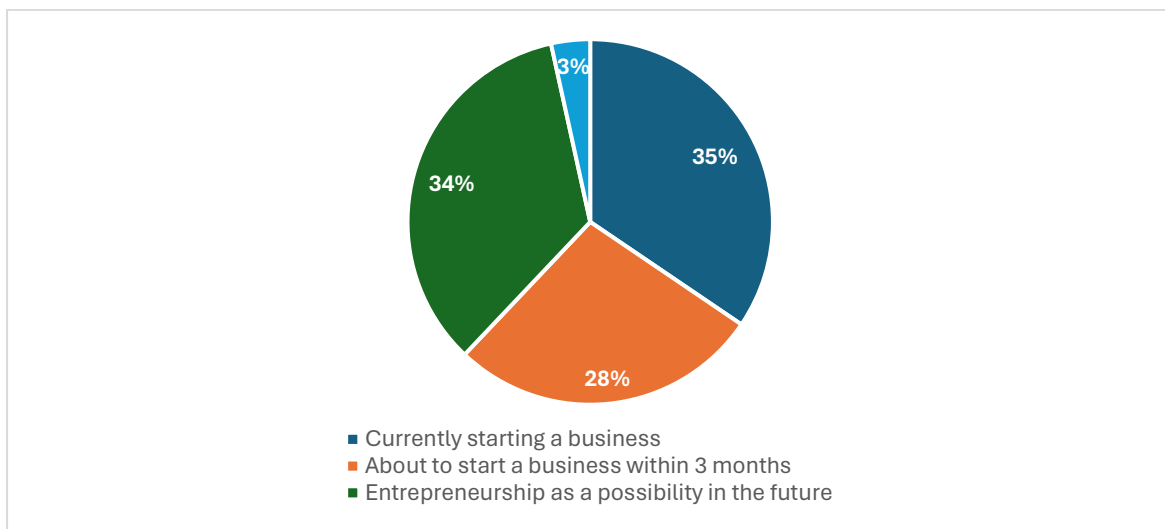
There was indication that the programme helped participants to start businesses (Figure 6) as just over 60% of post-programme participants were starting a business by the end of the programme.

Figure 6: Start-up intentions post-programme

■ Currently starting a business   ■ About to start a business within 3 months
■ Entrepreneurship as a possibility in the future   ■ Unsure about entrepreneurship as a possibility
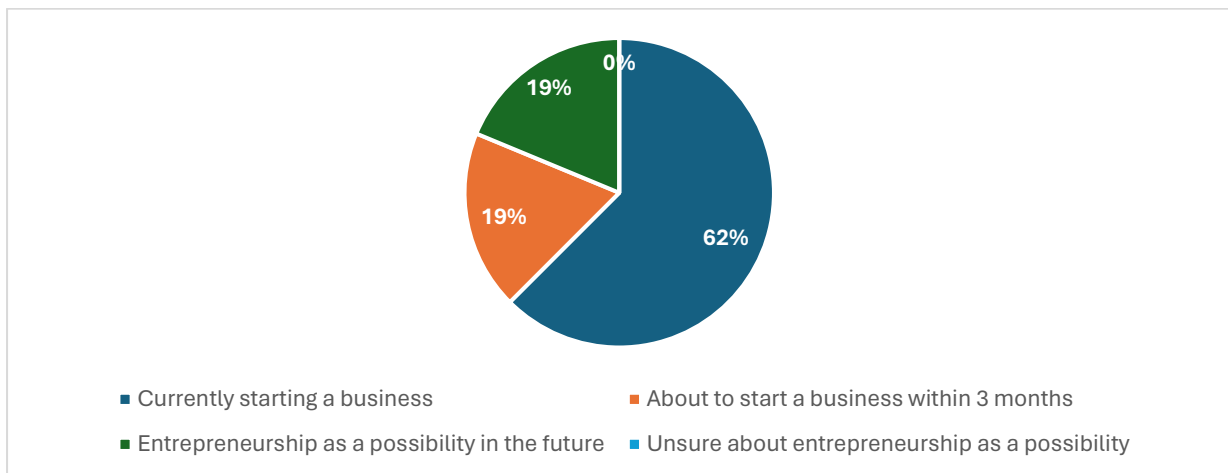
5.1.2 Motivations for start-up

Motivations for start-up captured the reasons why programme participants wanted to start a business. These include building income, earning a living, making positive contributions, continuing family tradition, and building a career. It is possible to compare the motivations of programme participants in comparison to Scottish GEM female early-stage business population for most of these categories (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Start-up motivation

■ Scotland Female   ■ Programme particpants
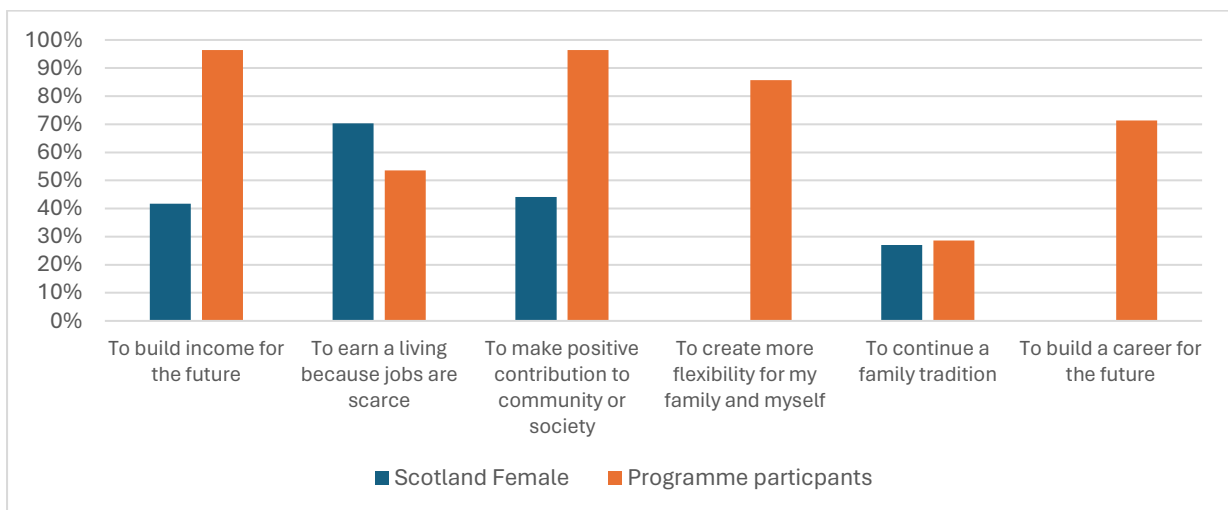
The key insights include:

- The motivation to build income and make a positive contribution to society among our forgotten women was more than twice that of the Scottish female early-stage business population.
- The motivation to earn a living because jobs are scarce was slightly less important than the Scottish female early-stage business population.

- The motivation for flexibility and to build a career for the future was also high amongst participants, although there is no Scottish population to compare this to.
- It is important to note that the motivations for start-up barely changed pre- and post-programme, except for to earn a living because jobs are scarce which increased by a third as a key motivating factor.

5.1.3 Attitudes towards entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial attitude refers to how positively programme participants feel about entrepreneurship and business ownership. It is possible to compare programme participants with a Scottish average and a female UK average from GEM, summarised in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Entrepreneurial attitudes
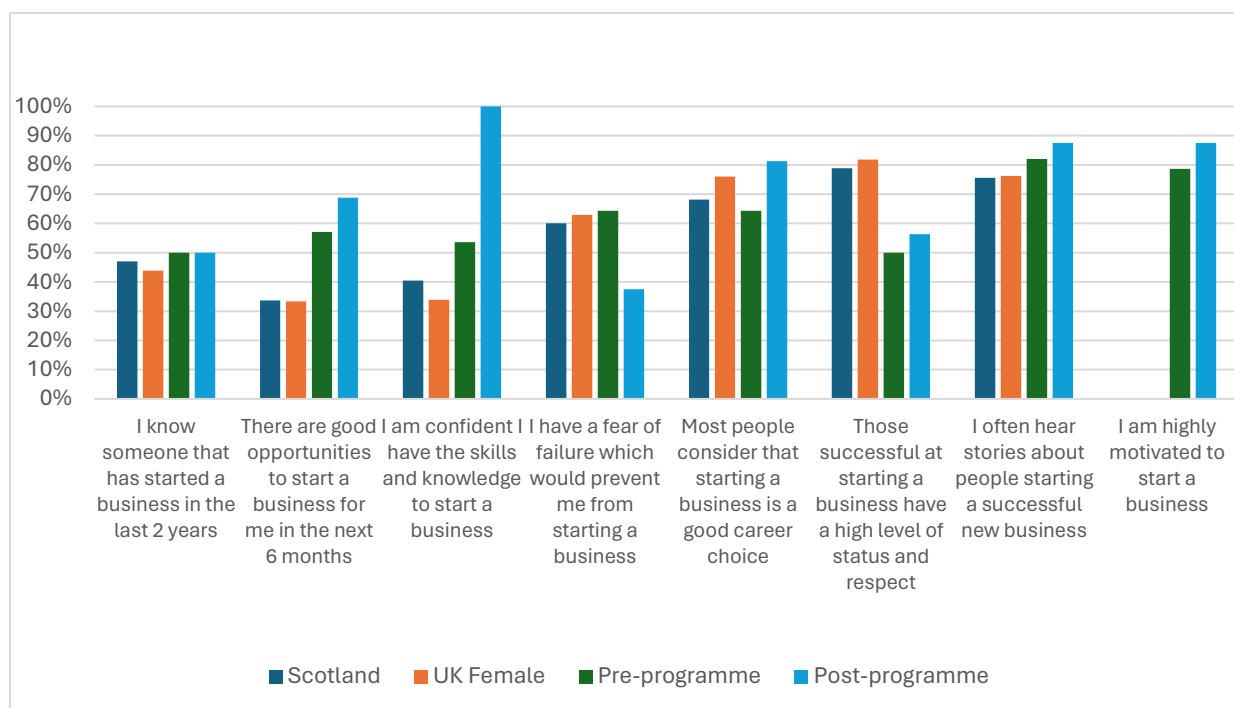

The key insights include:

- The percentage of programme participants who know someone that has started a business in the last two years was like Scottish population and UK female percentages. The percentage difference pre- and post-programme was unchanged. Programme participants are just as likely to know someone as non-programme participants, and the programme does little to change this.
- The percentage of programme participants who perceived good opportunities to start a business in the next 6 months was twice that of Scottish and UK female population percentages. The percentage of participants post-programme that viewed good opportunities increased by 11%.
- The percentage of programme participants that were confident in their business skills and knowledge at the beginning of the programme was slightly higher than the percentage of Scottish and UK female populations. However, this confidence level more than doubled by the end of the programme.

16

- The percentage of programme participants that had a fear of failure as a barrier to business start-up was on par with Scottish and UK female percentages. Post-programme, however, this reduced by a quarter to well below the percentage for Scottish and UK female populations.
- The percentage of programme participants that consider starting a business a good career option was slightly lower than the percentage of Scottish and UK female populations. However, the percentage of post-programme participants increased by 17%, above Scottish and UK female percentages.
- The percentage of programme participants who had heard success stories about people starting a business was largely on par with Scottish and UK female percentages with very little change post-programme.
- We also wanted to find out if motivation to start a business change pre- and post-programme, which GEM do not capture. The percentage of post-programme participants who were motivated to start a business slightly increased by just over 5%.

5.1.3 Business skills

Business skills refer to important start-up abilities and knowledge regarding teamwork, communication, digital technology, budgeting, business planning, and sales. Participants were asked to rank each out of 10, with post-programme results indicating an increase across all skills – albeit from seemingly high pre-programme baseline (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Business skills
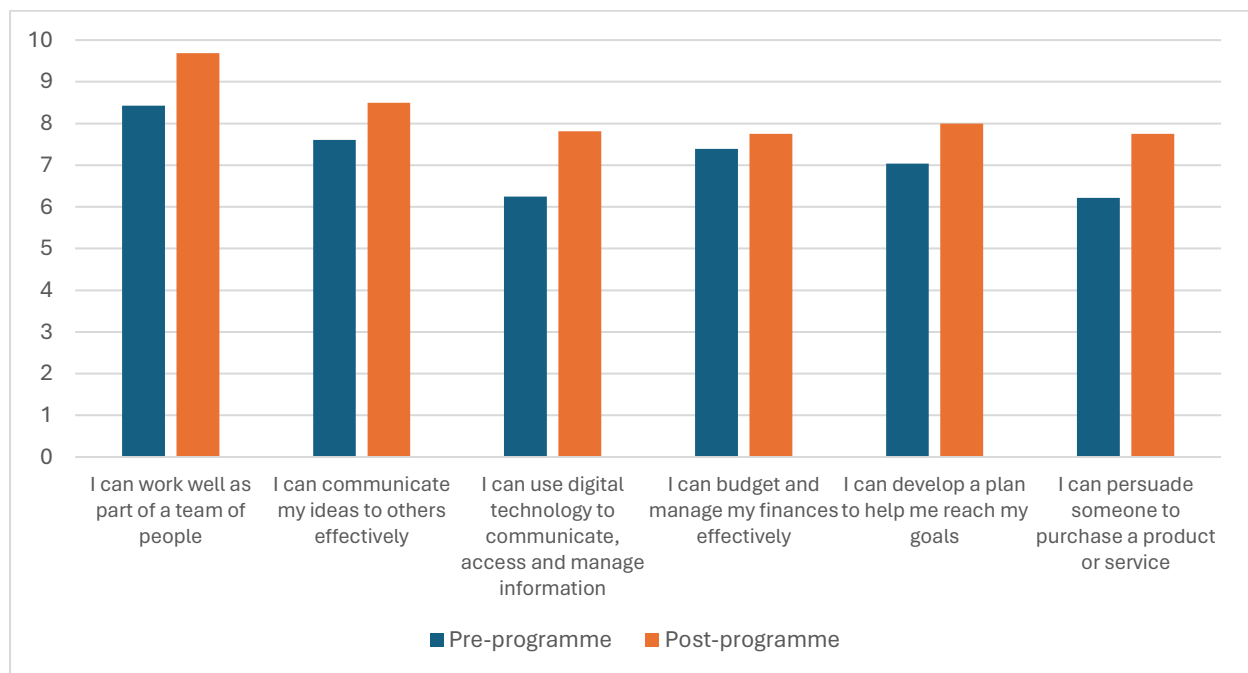
5.1.4 Perception of business support

Perception of business support refers to how positively participants viewed support programmes, funding options, and regulations in the Scottish ecosystem. It is possible to compare programme participants with a Scottish average and a female UK average from GEM, summarised in Figure 10. Key insights include:

- Generally, the perception of good quality programmes to support business start-ups is regarded as higher in Scotland than the rest of the UK. Pre-programme participants scored the availability of support programmes on a par with the UK. There was a substantial increase in this view post-programme.
- In terms of perception of accessible funds, participants pre-programme had a more negative perception of Scottish and UK averages. This increased substantially post-programme.
- The perception of burdens and regulations restricting business start-up were largely on par with Scottish and UK scores.

Figure 10: Perception of business support
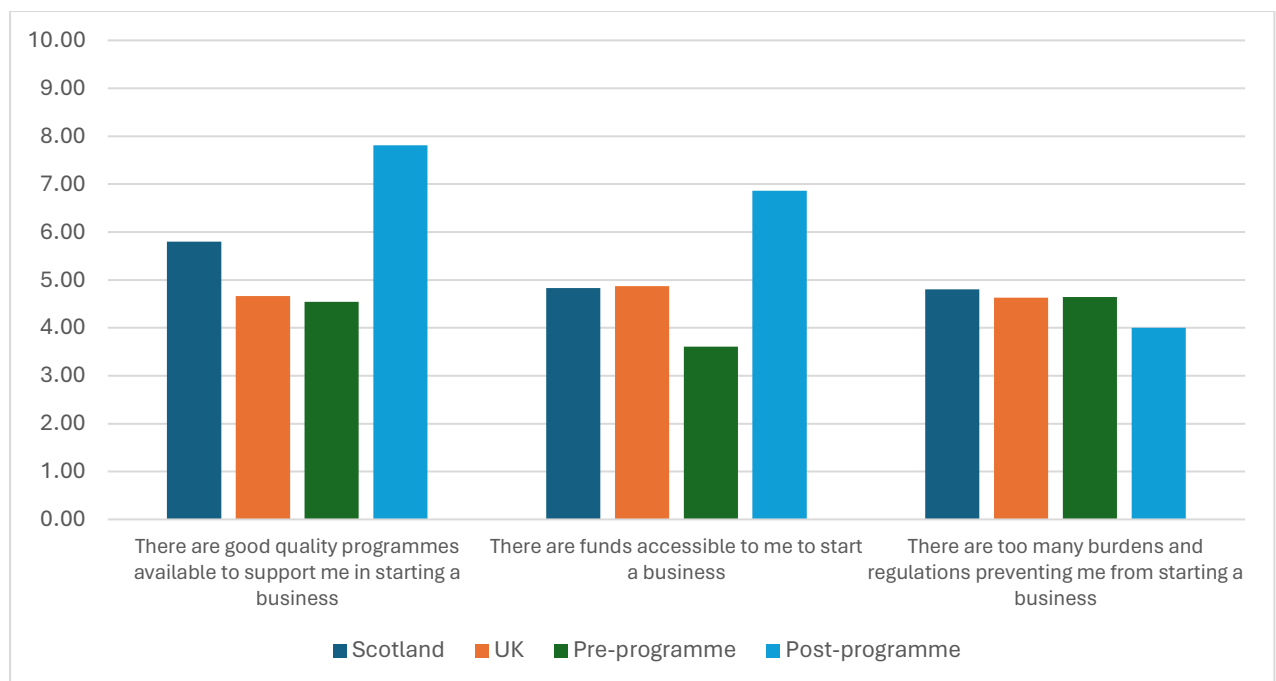
5.2 Observations

The observations and fieldnotes were undertaken during the 8-week programme. These overt observations highlighted many nuances, behaviours and interactions of the individuals and the delivery team. There were two main themes that emerged from the observations; firstly, the cohort dynamics and secondly, contextual restrictions.

5.2.1 Cohort dynamics

The dynamics of the two cohorts were very different. From the first week, Cohort 1 developed strong bonds. They knew that all the women participating in Cohort 1 had a similar background and although this was not openly discussed, the women were very open and genuinely interested in the well-being of each other. Cohort 1 began building friendships, networks, and 'swapping' stories about their families. They were also connecting in terms of encouraging each other and as weeks went by, championing each other to do well in tasks as well as their business ideas. Cohort 1 was very much community-driven and by the end of the programme the cohort had become firm friends and have since met up socially and have planned to go cold water swimming as well as help each other with their businesses that were discussed.

Cohort 2 were very different in their formation, influenced by their custodial space and circumstances. They took much longer to build a community, even though they were 'living together' in the custodial unit. There are 4 houses on site and 6 women can live in each, during the programme there were an average of 3-4 in each house. The women in this Cohort sat and only talked with the women who they shared a house with, making it very difficult to get them to discuss and share ideas, etc. This was resolved by asking them to sit together around a bigger table and sign an agreement with 'rules' only they could decide, such as having a safe space to discuss and talk during the programme. There was a change in Cohort 2 from week 4 onwards when trust with the wider group as well as with the delivery team.

5.2.2 Contextual restrictions

Contextual restrictions were only applicable to Cohort 2 because the women were in a custodial unit. Because of their situation, there was no technology permissible and security officers were always present during the programme. Furthermore, there was evidence of hierarchical friction. For example, there was several security officers who preferred to enforce the 'us and them' rule. The women on the programme also felt unease at some of the security officers being in the room while the programme was being delivered. However, most of the time, the security officers were friendly and participated alongside the women, which made it easier and more relaxed for everyone involved.

5.3 Themes

In this chapter, the results of the analysis are discussed[5]. The following five themes were identified in the data: (1) '*A Community of Practice*', (2) '*Empowerment and confidence*', (3) '*Learning new skills and re-learning old skills*', (4) '*Idea of a business becoming a possibility*', and (5) '*Communitising wealth*'.

5.3.1 Communities of Practice

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern of a passion or a passion something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Farnsworth, Kleanthous, & Wenger-Trayner, 2016):

---

[5] Key for quotes: L-P = Lilias cohort, S-P= Studio cohort

> "*although I went in quite selfishly thinking I would get something out of it from my own wee [furniture] flipping business. I've actually got so much more and that was just about that connectivity, community, sisterhood, trust, you know, building relationships with women in your own community*" (S-P8).

The use of the term '*community*' was used by several of the women, across both cohorts, to describe the groups they had made over the 8-week course. Despite being in their separate physical spaces (i.e., community-based studio and a custodial setting) it highlights how through the programme and its activities the women created an environment within both cohorts which was collectively described as '*safe*', '*comfortable*' and '*non-judgemental*' by those who took part.

The idea of 'community' was further evidenced by many women who described the creation of a '*bond*' occurring between the group members, as expressed by one woman within the Studio group:

> "*Actually, it's so weird saying this but actually in that group, I felt as if I was at home ... And then over the weeks, I think just building a bond with everybody was just so beautiful. And all of them have been on such different journeys, but I feel that I felt really connected with everybody there. It was such a lovely energy in the room*" (S-P8).

The notion of a '*bond*' having been created among the women was similarly echoed by one of the women in Cohort 2 in her explanation of why she had decided to continue coming to the programme week after week:

> "*It was learning a wee bit every week, different things that you can dae. Every activity we done in there. Yeah, that and the other thing was how these women aw bonded through something. An so that's what kept me going [to the programme]. That's what kept me going, an that's what ah enjoyed aboot it. It was then a community*" (L-P9).

It was clear that through the creation of bonds, the women in both groups had begun to create their own community of practice. Within Cohort 1 specifically, this sense of community was integral to feelings of inclusion and non-judgement for the Muslim women who were part of this specific cohort, as expressed by one Muslim woman within this group:

> "*The ladies were fantastic and they were so kind of, you know, open and keen to learn. And that was just really, really nice. And that was very, very kind of welcoming, as well, if that makes sense. I didn't feel, we [Muslim women] didn't feel for a second it was like us and them or anything, and we were almost that, that, was all kind of sidelined. We were all women, all working together and that was fantastic. Just that feeling was just lovely*" (S-P7).

Building on this, another Muslim woman describes how attending the programme gave her the opportunity to move from her own faith community and be part of the creation of a new community within her life; specifically, one made of women who were looking to champion other women:

> "*So this has been an opportunity for us [Muslim women] to actually mix. Because what has happened over the years, and what I've found within the Asian community is we stick to our own, or we're not growing, or we don't have these facilities or services in*

20

place. And a lot of the times where we would be shy of going to maybe a group that's around the corner from us, but because there's maybe not Asian's there, and we think, 'aw how are we going to be perceived? We're not going to connect. We're so different'…So this, for me has been a huge eye opener, and it's made me realise that we all came in here open minded and came here to grow as individuals. But at the same time, we've put our prejudices, or whatever experiences we might have had, behind us. Because you know, as women, we all want to grow and we all have our struggles. And I think focusing just on that has allowed us to bond" (S-P2).

Overall, the women expressed how their coming together over the course of the programme resulted in the formation of 'bonds.' Subsequently a female-orientated community has been created, one which is felt to be uplifting, safe, supportive and inclusive of the women within it. Peer support communities such as these are promising vehicles for women who may be unsure of starting a business. Evidence suggests that collectivism amongst family, friends and colleagues can be an important predictor of female entrepreneurial success (Bullough, Renko, & Abdelzaher, 2017). For example, an Indian-based peer-support business intervention with women reported that women were more likely to take new business loans, have increased business activity and higher household incomes when they attended the intervention with a peer (Field et al., 2016). Thus, the coming together of women can be a powerful starting point for those looking to start a business, providing a safe and supportive space to grow as a (prospective) business owner.

5.3.2 Empowerment and confidence

In the final two weeks of the programme the women undertook a writing task where they were asked to write a description of self *pre*-programme and *post*-programme. One common theme stood out among nearly all women's *pre*-descriptions of self - "*no/lack of confidence*" (Cohort 2 observations from session 7, Cohort 1 observations from session 8). Strikingly, the exact opposite was found in the women's *post*-descriptions, as noted below:

> *"motivated, confident, high aspirations"*
> *"self-belief, more positive & confident, elated"*
> *"feeling encouraged, more confident"*
> *"self belief, gained confidence, more knowledge"*
> *"motivated. Confident, high aspirations, I can do it"* (Cohort 1 observations session 8).

For many of the women in Cohort 1, the experience of imprisonment had played a central role in their loss of confidence. With this had come anxiety and apprehension over whether their convictions may limit their opportunities on leaving prison. However, as one woman shared, taking part in the programme provided the confidence to look past this issue:

> *"I've changed for the simple fact ah always, always, used to think ma previous convictions would stop me fae doing anything, but that's no the case and you've [the programme] taught me that"* (L-P10).

Likewise, feelings of empowerment where equally evident amongst Cohort 1. A clear example of this occurred during the women's discussion of their *pre* and *post-programme* self descriptions where one of the woman spoke about being able to identify that she had '*become lost*' (S-P6, observation session 8). She went on to say that she no longer felt that way thanks

to her engagement with the programme. She passionately expressed this to the group when she shared that she felt she could now say *"I am someone. I'm not just your mum, your wife. I am [me]"* (S-P6, observation session 8).

This empowerment was echoed by another woman when she expressed, she now felt empowered to start a business, something that she had never thought possible:

> *"It's [the programme] put a fire back in ma belly. A wee spark of something, that I've got something more to give. And it might just be for myself this time because I've never done that. [...] So, I actually believe I could do that [side hustle] now. I didnae believe it then before I started the course so that's brilliant"* (S-P1).

It was clear from the women's discussion that the facilitators of the course had played a central role in nurturing their newfound confidence and empowerment. This was largely down to their ability to make the women feel welcomed and supported:

> *"I felt as if there was such a good connection, friendship and a sisterhood in between them. And I really liked that and I just thought 'oh my god!', they've, they've just got me hook line and sinker. I'm in every week, so I actually felt really good and as the weeks went on, I feel as if my confidence my positivity of the group just grew and grew and grew"* (S-P8).

The facilitators lived experience of trauma had an impact on the women. Not only was it key for many of the women when it came to their enjoyment of the course it was also influential in their decision to stay with the programme to the end:

> *"I think being able to connect with the people that has taken the training course, it really probably helps everybody as well. Because they're [the facilitators] all relatable people, have all gone through trauma, and have come to the other side and now have so much to offer. So I think that sort of instilled the belief that actually yeah, if you can do it and like what you're doing, then we can all manage to do that"* (L-P7).

The importance of programme facilitators lived experience, specifically in prison programmes, has previously been reported by Cooney (2012). The latter two quotes from women in Cohort 2 further support the view that future prison based entrepreneurial programmes should greatly consider the inclusion of facilitators with similar lived experience. Specially, as this can help aid engagement and increase the likelihood of those participating in feeling empowered by those delivering the programme.

The findings provide further support to the view that entrepreneurial training has much to offer vulnerable women (e.g., Hlapa, 2017, Byrne, Shantz, & Bullough, 2023; Chalayonnavin, 2023). This includes increased levels of self-esteem, confidence and empowerment, as demonstrated by the above quotes. Crucially, the findings highlight how impactful programmes such as this can be in increasing people's human capital in a short space of time; in so far that their feelings of self-worth, and wellbeing are significantly increased. This is encapsulated by one woman who stated:

> *"So I've been here for 13 years. And I can honestly say, I can go oot with a good heid on ma shoulders because of this programme"* (L-P6).

5.3.3 Learning new skills and re-learning old skills

During the post-programme focus group, one woman described the programme as having been an opportunity for "*self-reflection and re-identification of skills*" (S-P2). This quote encapsulates what many, if not all, the women in both cohorts expressed. For example, self-reflection and its link with learning was an especially pivotal experience for one of the women, as shared below:

> "*I didn't think it [the programme] would impact me as a person. I didn't think it would help me like with my own skills. Because it said entrepreneurial, I was thinking it's all business thinking and like okay, I'll maybe go and I'll learn something. But I didn't think I would go and learn something about myself ... I didn't think it would help me as a person*" (S-P7).

For some of the women, the programme was a way for them to understand that they were skilful in areas of which they had never previously explored:

> "*I never know I had any creative side and now I actual see that ah huv. And it's so easily done. Like, I've never ever tapped into that side. Just thought nah, no for me. Ah cannae dae that*" (L-P1).

For others, the programme provided a means to develop social skills as evidenced by one woman who noted she had learned "*how to become friends with people*" (L-P8). Interestingly, the programme was also a chance for some to re-learn old skills and passions. For example, one woman (S-P4) described the programme as having "*rekindled [her] love of creativity*" (S-P4). Similarly, another described herself *pre*-programme as "*not confident in my creative abilities*", *post*-programme this had changed to her stating that she now "*believe[d] in [her] creative spark*" (S-P1, observation session 8).

For some of the women within Cohort 2, skills had been thought of as *'lost'* because of the experience of imprisonment. However, participation in the programme had been pivotal in helping them re-learn some of skills, as highlighted below:

> "*At the moment, having been through quite a tricky journey, and then meeting WEvolution I actually feel that, that's been a huge positive. Because some of the sort of skills and what have you, that I didn't think I had any more, or had gone missing during this custody thing, have actually been brought back. And actually, that kind of passion of like, actually, there is life after this custody. And so it's now honing in on all those skills and abilities to now be able to move forward*" (L-P7).

One of the most impactful ways and evidence that the women had learned new skills was witnessed through observations. Particularly, where the women were observed facilitating other members in making items and using equipment such as the heat press. This was despite one of the group members having first thought she was not going to be able to use the heat press saying:

> "*See when ah first seen it, Ah was like aw no, I'm no gonna be able to do this. Yeah, I mean, it's just like, I think I've got more like self belief in myself now*" (L-P4).

Some women even expressed using their newfound knowledge outside of the course in other areas of their life, as shared by one woman:

> *"I was standing at a meeting the other night and erm the holiday club rep was standing close to me and having a conversation. And I says, eh, and I just looked over his shoulder and ah interrupted their conversation and ah says 'Use the proper terminology, Douglas. It's marketing. It's marketing that property'. An he's like that 'oh, look at you!'. I wouldnae uh, I wouldn't have even known that was marketing if I hadn't been on that course. So it's already rubbed off you know?"* (S-P1).

Taken together, the above highlights the role of the programme in teaching women new skills and the confidence and self-belief gained from these learning new skills. Moreover, women were able to re-learn and 'find' old skills and passions which they have previously thought lost for various reasons. As has been previously discussed, succeeding as an entrepreneur requires the accessing and mobilisation of several forms of capital including human capital (Clough et al., 2019). Human capital is about more than employment experience and education it also incorporates skills. Studies report that the gaining of skills relevant to employment can help vulnerable women overcome socioeconomic inequalities (e.g. Jagow-France, 2009, Brunton-Smith and Hopkins, 2014; Alós et al., 2015; Ellison et al., 2017). These findings add to existing evidence and further highlight the role skills-based learning can have in not only boosting the confidence of vulnerable women but also setting them up for success in business.

5.3.4 Idea of a business becoming a possibility

> *"But my future definitely has changed since I've done the 'Ignite her'[programme]. My future path has changed, because I'm thinking more, can't believe I'm saying this, I'm thinking more like 'entrepreneur-y' now"* (S-P1).

This quote echoes what many of the women expressed over the course of the programme. Specifically, the starting of a business being something not previously considered or thought possible but over the course of the programme it now felt like it could be a reality. A clear example of this was witnessed with one woman from Cohort 1 who developed an idea for silk scrunchies over the latter part of the programme. This culminated in a finished prototype and packaging by Week 7. Crucially, this was the same woman who in Week 4 stated that she was "*constantly telling my kids to have a side hustle but not doing it myself.*" (S-P6, observation session 4). This demonstrates how influential the programme was in changing her mindset from encouraging others to start a 'side hustle' to actively planning and pursing her own in a short space of time (i.e. 2-3 weeks).

For others, business ideas were steadily coming together through planning and discussion with other members of the group:

> "*[S-P2] and I did say, 'oh we could start something', because we know that there is a market out there within our community. Even like [printing] sayings in Punjabi and Urdu that we could probably could do together. So we've had a chat about it. In fact, we're meeting today. Yeah later on, we're going to chat about it and see right what can we do about it? And where can we source things*" (S-P8).

Likewise, one woman shared that she had already recruited her granddaughter to start advertising online some of the cards she currently makes. This was with an aim to have created interest in her business for when she leaves prison (within the next year). When thinking of her card making business as her future she stated, *"I think the future will be a lot better and a wee bit richer!"* (L-P6). For some of the women, business ideas were placed further into the future due to circumstances in their current life or immediate future – *"time has to be found to allow me to do that"* (S-P4).

For a woman in Cohort 2, the programme had been crucial in helping her to make her scroll making business more of a reality. Primarily, helping her to think with a business mind regarding resources and costing:

> *"It's me getting the paper you know and ah've realised that fae WEvolution. That ma costs will be my paper, my pens, my chalks, my stencils. Obviously am gonna need to get a compuer because am gonna have to download some stuff to print to put on these scrolls. The laminating sheets, maybe frames. So they've made me think of ah lot mare than jist sitting daein the picture"* (L-P9).

At the same time, she acknowledged that her ability to start her business would depend on how quickly she resettled into the community on release – *"ah need to go oot' an' restart again. So it's gonna be, take ah lot eh' time"* (L-P9). The uncertainty associated with resettlement on release was shared by many in Cohort 2. With many acknowledging there will be hardships for them to first address because of having been imprisoned. This included concerns over the possible impact their criminal history could have on their ability to start and maintain a business. For example, one woman raised concerns over being able to open bank accounts due to her conviction being of a financial nature:

> *"At the moment, I'm not allowed to have a bank account…I think that's going to be a bit of a challenge…So it's just tough, it's a little bit daunting, but it's just trying to overcome those obstacles, I guess now and yeah, and how does that look? Yeah, moving forward"* (L-P7).

Another woman expressed similar concerns regarding the impact her financial crime may have on her entrepreneur aspirations saying, *"my biggest challenge, because am gonna be doing bookkeeping, is finding the clients that are gonna be okay with ma charge"* (S-P11). Despite this, some of the women from Cohort 2 could also see the potential entrepreneurship offered as an alternative route to employment. For example, one shared that she was less anxious over the impact of a criminal record disclosure, saying: *"naebody can compare it [the disclouse] tae anythin' because it's me that's daein' it [self-employment] and the PVG disnae really matter then"* (L-P10). Anxiety over criminal disclosure has been reported as a key concern of offenders in relation to gaining employment, whether self-employed or as an employee (Gurusami, 2019).

Taken together, the findings highlight how many of the women had changed their perspective of entrepreneurship as a reality over the course of the programme. By the latter stages of the programme many had begun to think creatively about how they could make extra-income and/or promote their newly identified skills. At the same time, the findings highlight the need for future programmes - which included offenders - to be aware of prisoner resettlement issues and the impact of criminal history. In doing so they can develop and plan programme delivery and/or support in a manner which acknowledges and aims to address these issues.

5.3.5 Communitising wealth

The theme of *communitising wealth* is used to refer to the participants sharing and passing on of knowledge and skills gained from the programme to their families and/or communities. As one of the women expressed, "*I want to be able to use everything I learn [during the programme] to better me and the community*" (S-P5, observation session 2).

Some of the knowledge shared included an activity which aimed to instil self-belief and an abundance mindset; specifically, asking the question "What have you failed at today?". Through asking this question, the women learned that failure could be reframed and from the small successes could be celebrated. As a result of what the women learned about reframing failure in the previous week, two of the women (S-P5 and S-P6) shared in the week following how they had started using this same activity with their children because of the long-term benefits they felt it would have on their children's mindset around failure and success (S and L observations session 6). Moreover, one of these women shared that she had also shared this technique with members of the teenage girl-group that she facilitated:

> "*I think I mentioned on the last day that I like run a little girls group for teenage girls, and I kind of mentioned it [reframing your failures] to them and, and, I've done some of the tasks that we had done during the sessions. And it was just so delightful to see the impact*" (S-P7).

In addition, she had started to use the entrepreneurial and craft-making skills she had gained from the programme to facilitate the teenage girls in thinking about starting their own small income-generating business, as shared below:

> "*So I proposed it to the girls. I was like, oh right, I said like have you girls ever, what would you girls think about maybe, because one of the girls actually does a lot of the business herself on Etsy. And then I was like okay, I said 'But would you girls like to do something as a group together?'. And I said because we've done things like make badges and things like that. So you know you could make badges and things like that and that's were they came up with the mobile charms. [...] And they were like 'well we'd be quite interested in that'. And, I was like, 'okay, so if I gave you the resources and the space to do it, would this be something you girls, do you think you could come together and do this?' And I think we just kind of, I just left it at that, but then it was just to get the whole, you know, just get their cogs turning, if that makes sense. And they were, 'oh?!', they seem to be quite intrigued by it and quite interested*" (S-P7).

For other group members, the skills and knowledge they had learned in the group were something they believed could help them as a parent. As one woman expressed when talking about what she had gained from participating in the programme and how this related to supporting her daughter:

> "*It's [the programme] reminded me that my period of, or chapter, of creativity isn't shut, it's not over. It's just maybe been buried so it's kind of reignited that. And I think that will also help me be a better parent to [my daughter] because she is creative. She struggles in some areas of her life in the last couple of years. So this [activities from the programme] has been something that we've been able to, I've taken some of those things that we've been doing at group and used it with her and I want to continue doing that. So it's been really beneficial*" (S-P4).

26

Supporting children through the knowledge and skills gained via the programme was further expressed by another woman (S observation session 4. She spoke about the importance of making new goals and new aspirations because "*we [mothers/parents] break the cycle*" (S-P1), the cycle being, one of harmful, abusive and disempowering relationships that the women do not wish their children to experience.

For other women, such as S-P8, the sharing of communitising wealth was something that she wished to undertake within her wider community. Specifically, the Muslim community and its many communitising migrants:

> "*Even me interacting now with second generation women and third generation girls, you know, I just want to give something back and I want to be able to be that person who lifts them up and we're all in this kind of journey together. And it's all about bolstering one another, that's what I want. That's what my vision is. So it's not about making money. It's not about legacy. I think it's just more about, I think I connect with people really well. And I have realised, even in this course, actually that's a strength of mine, of which I've not really ever really focused on. And I just think, now ok you know if I've got that, I see it as my wee superpower. Then do you know what, I'm gonna go and share that with others and make them feel good and just lift them on the way.*"

For many of the women it is important to share what they have learned with those around them. This creates the idea of 'communitising wealth'. For these women, 'wealth' is in not seen in having money, their wealth is instead in the form of knowledge and skills with which family and/or wider community can use as tools to increase their own social, human and/or financial capital. Studies which have examined the impact of intergenerational learning on social capital specifically, have shown that through intergenerational learning younger members of our societies can learn skills and knowledge around crucial social features including communication, security, trust, norms and structure (Boström, 2014). Thus, engagement in programmes like the pilot which the women undertook has potential to address socioeconomic issues at both a micro and macro level using intergenerational learning.

Figures 11 and 12 highlight some of the key quotes from the women and what they made on display at the end of the programme.

Figure 11: Illustrative quotes on the programme

Figure 12: Pictures of the programme
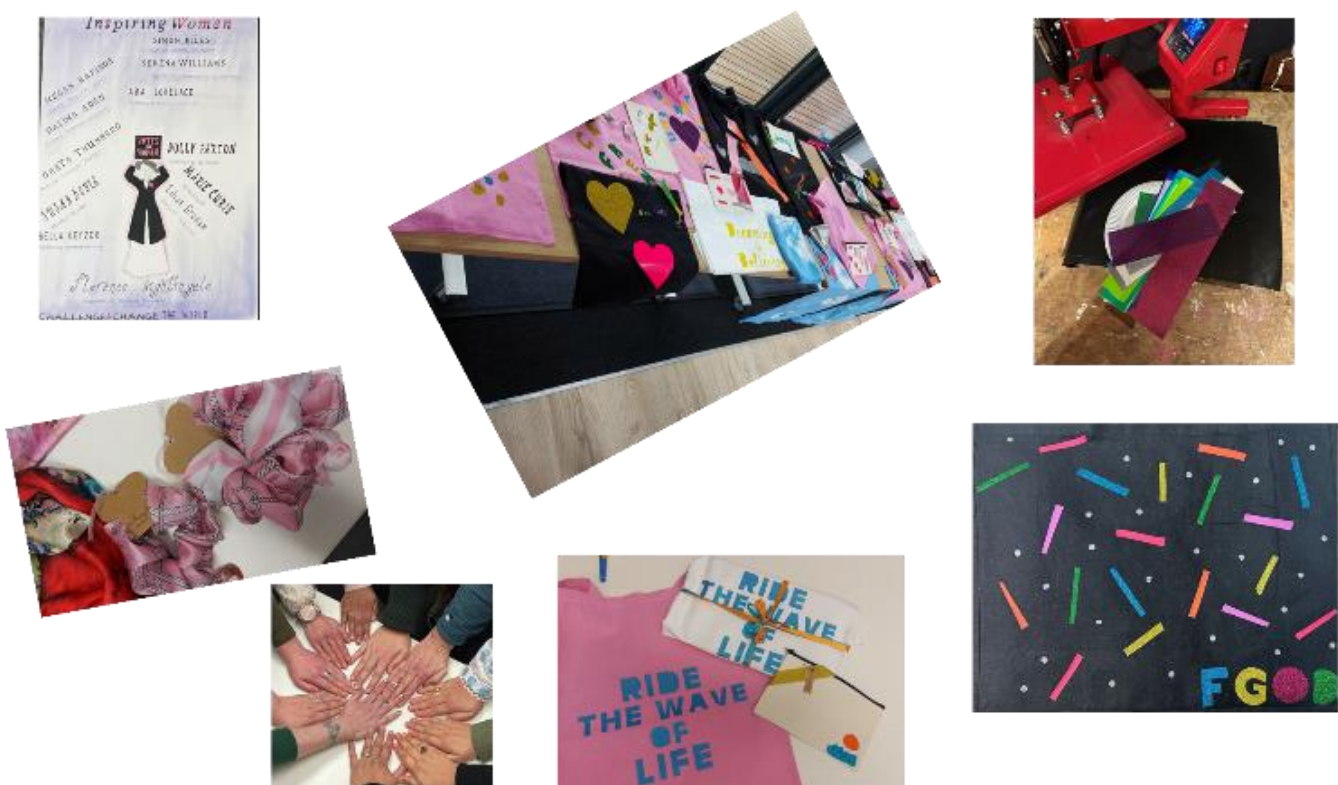
5.4 Challenges

5.4.1 Safeguarding

The safeguarding of the women participants (who are classed as vulnerable), the research team, and the delivery team was fundamental to the project. There were issues other than the ethics and confidentiality which were of concern. This included understanding the support being provided after the programme came to an end. For example, the women leaving the custodial unit - to discuss with the relevant people that they would not be breaking any restrictions or supervision orders if they were to continue with the support.

5.4.2 Dynamics of relationships

Cohort 1 forged friendships and trust in the first week but Cohort 2 took several weeks for trust and friendship to be developed. There was also a matter of adding more activities to Cohort 2 as there was much more time spent on undertaking the tasks than discussions, chatting and engaging in group work – this did change over time, but it did create weekly changes to the programme.

5.4.3. Inconsistent communication

For Cohort 1, communications with the support agencies where the women were recruited was simple and very much collaborative. The communication with Cohort 2 was slightly different, with the unit manager it was simple and collaborative, but the communication did not filter down to other unit managers and security officers within the unit which created some tensions. For example, security officers not respecting the programme delivery team and talking over them, people coming and going in the hub where the programme was delivered (this was eventually stopped after speaking with the unit manager with respect to upholding the ethics of the programme re. confidentiality, and security officers not knowing why the delivery team and researchers were there etc. However, the custodial unit manager was exemplar in terms of communicating with the delivery team and the research lead despite the minor issues that were experienced.

5.4.4 Building relationships with support agencies

It must be acknowledged the time that it takes to build relationships with the support agencies – these support agencies are often under resourced and are dealing with women who are from turbulent backgrounds. The agencies all had a common theme of being overwhelmed with the number of women they are supporting. Time and trust are required to build relationships with the agencies for them to act as the 'brokers to the women they support. Also, they must commit time and resources to speak with the women about the programme that we offered, decide which women were ready to attend the programme, support them during the programme and also ensure that support mechanisms were in place after the programme finished.

6. Policy recommendations

We propose that Scottish Government undertake further investigation with vulnerable women to understand their needs and how to meet them. Furthermore, works need to be done with the women to help them understand self-employment and entrepreneurship as potential avenues for financial stability and independence. These 'hard to reach groups' should no longer be 'easy to ignore' because there is potential to explore the intersection between community and entrepreneurship to build effective solutions to poverty, inequality, education, and business.

Based on the evidence from data collected for the evaluation of the programme, there are several ways for Scottish Government to address the needs of forgotten women. The policy recommendations can be met by aligning the Women's Business Centre which was announced by the previous First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon (Sturgeon, 2021), and with the Pathways Report (Stewart & Logan, 2023) to undertake the following:

1. Creating a unit under the Women's Business Centre that directly addresses the needs of vulnerable women regarding entrepreneurship. This unit, under the umbrella of the Centre, would operationalise the different needs of the women for space, place and delivery mechanisms.

2. Ensuring support agencies take a more holistic and joined up approach in offering entrepreneurship/self-employment as a lens to educate advise, guide and mentor the women alongside their core support services. This would not be an "add-on" to the services, rather a funded support package as part of their services.

3. Embedding the entrepreneurship programme in local communities of practice. Grassroots movements composed of committed individuals and collective actors, can respond to unmet local interests or values such as sustainable development, and provide protected spaces for local knowledge to drive novel, bottom-up solutions.

4. Creating enterprise champions with lived experiences (similar to those vulnerable women) for vulnerable women, who can act as role models. These champions would be trained to support and educate vulnerable women in understanding and exploring entrepreneurship as an avenue for financial stability and independence.

5. Educating vulnerable women in entrepreneurship with leaflets, website, and blogs (as well as the enterprise champions) to explain how they could have a 'side hustle' which would not impact or effect their benefits or any other payments they receive. Taking away the stigma of losing their benefits and having convictions/abuse if they were to start a small business or become self-employed.

6. Long-term evaluation is required to ensure the understanding and learning of the delivery. Although this would be very difficult given the turbulent lives of the women coupled with more pressing challenges they face like accommodation, accessing their children, etc. but working with the local support agencies would be beneficial to engage in a much-loner term relationship which would allow more information to be passed (with the permission of the individuals involved). Furthermore, creating a baseline business skills survey in Scotland to effectively evaluate all training and advice programmes would also address some of the evaluation challenges.

7. Conclusion

This report provides evidence of how entrepreneurship can be used as a lens to mentor, educate and support vulnerable women in Scotland. The project was a pre-pathway funded pilot programme titled: "Enabling the forgotten women of Scotland: Potential entrepreneurs for the future" with the aim to demonstrate that entrepreneurship can help overcome economic and social barriers and introduce and equip these women to re-integrate back into society and the economy.

We used mixed methods of data collection to ensure a rigorous, transparent and objective evaluation of the funded project. The evidence shows that the programme was a success in that it highlighted: (1) community of practice, (2) empowerment and confidence (3) new skills and re-learning existing skills, (4) the idea of starting a business became a reality, and (5) focus on 'communitising wealth' involving 'passing' down skills to their future generations. Given the evidence, we recommended several ways to move forward with supporting vulnerable women in Scotland with entrepreneurship. In particular, a movement embedded in local communities at the grassroots which provides holistic support to vulnerable women with the avenue of exploring entrepreneurship (self-employment) without compromising their current financial status.

On a final note, the project, "Enabling the forgotten women of Scotland: Potential entrepreneurs for the future" was fully aligned with the pre-pathways given that:

- Women on the programme were the **primary carers and home managers – all women in the cohorts had children. Childcare was provided for Cohort 1,** the women who used the childcare facilities would have been unable to attend otherwise.
- Women entrepreneurs often cite **confidence** as a key source of them not setting up their own businesses, after the programme all women agreed that their confidence had been restored and they felt empowered.
- **Building informal networks** by introducing women with similar backgrounds (often under-represented and vulnerable) and building trust and relationships – they built their own communities within the cohorts.
- **Supporting and educating** the women by using entrepreneurship as a lens to educate, mentor and support the women and not be classroom-based type teaching/learning. A holistic approach was taken.
- Addressing **Sustainable Development Goals** (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Aligned Sustainable Development Goals with the Pathways

8. Acknowledgements

References

Adams, A. E., Greeson, M. R., Kennedy, A. C., & Tolman, R. M. (2013). The effects of adolescent intimate partner violence on women's educational attainment and earnings, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 28(17), 3283-3300.

Ahmadabadi, Z., Najman, J. M., Williams, G. M., & Clavarino, A. M. (2020). Income, gender, and forms of intimate partner violence, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 35*(23-24), 5500-5525.

Alós, R., Esteban, F., Jódar, P., & Miguélez, F. (2015). Effects of prison work programmes on the employability of ex-prisoners, *European Journal of Criminology*, *12*(1), 35-50.

Arshed, N., Martin, G., & Knox, S. (2022). Ties That Bind or Blind? The Role of Identity and Place in Understanding Women Entrepreneurs' Support Needs. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *47*(6), 2205-2232.

Bell, H. (2003). Cycles within cycles: Domestic violence, welfare, and low-wage work, *Violence Against Women*, *9*(10), 1245-1262.

Boström, A. K. (2014). "Intergenerational learning and social capital" in Schmidt-Hertha, B., KraŠovec, S. J., & Formosa, M. (eds.), *Learning across generations in Europe: Contemporary issues in older adult education*. Sense Publisher: Rotterdamn, The Netherlands. (pp. 191-201).

Brunton-Smith, I., & Hopkins, K. (2014). *The Impact of Experience in Prison on the Employment Status of Longer-Sentenced Prisoners after Release: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction Longitudinal Cohort Study of Prisoners*. London: Ministry of Justice. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7cd9f3ed915d71e1e4e068/impact-of-experience-in-prison-on-employment-status-of-longer-sentenced-prisoners.pdf

Bullough, A., Renko, M., & Abdelzaher, D. (2017). Women's business ownership: Operating within the context of institutional and in-group collectivism, *Journal of Management*, *43*(7), 2037-2064.

Byrne, J., Shantz, A., & Bullough, A. (2023). What about us? Fostering authenticity in entrepreneurship education, *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *22*(1), 4-31.

The Centre for Entrepreneurship (2016). *From inmates to entrepreneurship: How prison entrepreneurship can break the cycle of re-offending*. Available at: https://centreforentrepreneurs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Prison- Entrepreneurs-Report-WEB-1.pdf

Chalayonnavin, A. (2023). Increasing self-esteem for vulnerable young women: A case study of entrepreneurship training for vulnerable young women in Thailand. *British Journal of Special Education*. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12486

Clough, D. R., Fang, T. P., Vissa, B., & Wu, A. (2019). Turning lead into gold: How do entrepreneurs mobilize resources to exploit opportunities?, *Academy of Management Annals, 13*(1), 240-271.

Coll, C. V., Ewerling, F., García-Moreno, C., Hellwig, F., & Barros, A. J. (2020). Intimate partner violence in 46 low-income and middle-income countries: an appraisal of the most vulnerable groups of women using national health surveys, *BMJ Global Health*, *5*(1), e002208.

Cooney, T. M. (2012). Reducing recidivism through entrepreneurship programmes in prisons, *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, *13*(2), 125-133.

Council of Europe (2023). *Prison stock on 1st January 2023*. Available at: https://wp.unil.ch/space/space-i/prison-stock-on-1-january/prison-stock-on-1st-january-2023

Ellison, M., Szifris, K., Horan, R., & Fox, C. (2017). A rapid evidence assessment of the effectiveness of prison education in reducing recidivism and increasing employment, *Probation Journal*, 64(2), 108-128.

Farnsworth, V., Kleanthous, I., & Wenger-Trayner, E. (2016). Communities of practice as a social theory of learning: A conversation with Etienne Wenger. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *64*(2), 139-160.

Field, E., Jayachandran, S., Pande, R., & Rigol, N. (2016). Friendship at work: Can peer effects catalyze female entrepreneurship?, *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, *8*(2), 125-153.

Gurusami, S. (2019). The Carceral Web we weave: Carceral citizens' experiences of digital punishment and solidarity, *Punishment & Society, 21*(4), 435–453.

Henderson, S. (2001). *Women Offenders: Effective Management and Intervention*. Scottish Prison Service Occasional Papers 2001. Edinburgh: Scottish Prison Service.

Hlapa, P. M. (2017). *Exploring the experiences of abused woman and their participation in entrepreneurial skills training programmes as a tool for empowerment of the self and their families in the Western Cape.* Master's thesis. University of Western Cape. Available at: https://etd.uwc.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11394/5964/Hlapa%20comh.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=n

Houchin, R. (2005). *Social exclusion and imprisonment in Scotland*. Glasgow: Glasgow Caledonian University. Available at: https://www.scotpho.org.uk/media/1847/social-exclusion-and-imprisonment-in-scotland-2005.pdf

Hwang, J., & Phillips, D. J. (2020). Entrepreneurship as a response to labor market discrimination for formerly incarcerated people. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2020, No. 1, p. 18636). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research (2023). *Word Prison Brief Data - United Kingdom: Scotland*. Available at: https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/united-kingdom-scotland

Jagow-France, D. A. (2009). *Domestic Violence Survivors Experience of a Psycho-Educational Career Group: A Qualitative Study*. PhD Thesis. The University of North Dakota. Available at: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED526652

Laskey, P., Bates, E. A., & Taylor, J. C. (2019). A systematic literature review of intimate partner violence victimisation: An inclusive review across gender and sexuality, *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *47*, 1–11.

McDaniel, M., Sutter, C., Webb, J. W., Elgar, F. J., Parker, K. F., & Nwachu, J. (2021). Breaking the cycle of crime: Promoting the positive social spillover potential of entrepreneurship. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, *16*, e00249.

Mental Welfare for Scotland Commission (2021). *Concerns about the care of women with mental ill health in prison in Scotland*. Available at: https://www.mwcscot.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-07/ConcernsAboutTheCareOfWomenWithMentalIllHealthInPrisonInScotland_July2021.pdf

Munoz Boudet, A. M., et al. (2018). *Gender differences in poverty and household composition through the life-cycle: a global perspective*, Policy Research working paper; no. WPS 8360. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

Parker, K. F. (2015). The African-American entrepreneur–crime drop relationship: Growing African-American business ownership and declining youth violence. *Urban Affairs Review*, *51*(6), 751-780.

Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (2023). *Joint protocol between Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service*. Available at https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media/xjtd4i4p/joint-domestic-abuse-protocol.pdf

Richards, X. (2021). *Scotland's domestic violence rates rise for the fifth year running*. The National. Available at: https://www.thenational.scot/news/19751304.scotlands-domestic-violence-rates-rise-fifth-year-running/

SafeLives (2020). *Whole Lives Scotland - National Survivor Survey*. Available at: https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Whole%20Lives%20Survivor%20Survey.pdf. (Accessed: 15 January 2024).

Scottish Government (2023a). *Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2022-23*. Available at https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2022-23/documents/

Scottish Government (2023b). *Scottish Prison Population Statistics 2022-23*. Available at https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-prison-population-statistics-2022-23/pages/women-in-custody/

Scottish Prison Service (2023a). *Annual Population*. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2022/06/scottish-prison-population-statistics-2020-21/documents/spps-2020-21-supplementary-tables/spps-2020-21-supplementary-tables/govscot%3Adocument/spps-2020-21-supplement

Scottish Prison Service (2023b). *SPS Quarterly Public Information Page. Prison by Numbers Quarter 1 (April - June 2023)*. Available at: https://www.sps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/Public%20Information%20Page%20%28PIP%29%20Quarter%201%2020239421_4063.pdf

Stewart, A., & Logan, M. (2023). Pathways: A New Approach for Women in Entrepreneurship An independent review commissioned by the Scottish Government. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/pathways-new-approach-women-entrepreneurship/documents/

Sturgeon, N, (2021). *Priorities of Government statement – 26 May 2021.* https://www.gov.scot/publications/priorities-government-statement-26-2021/
UK Research and Innovation Economic and Social Research Council (2024). *Research with potentially vulnerable people.* Available at: https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics-guidance/research-with-potentially-vulnerable-people/

Van Praag, C. M., & Versloot, P. H. (2007). What is the value of entrepreneurship? A review of recent research. *Small Business Economics*, *29*(4), 351-382.

Victim Support Scotland (2021). Available at: https://victimsupport.scot/about-us/news-list/official-domestic-abuse-statistics-released-for-2021-22/

Appendices

Appendix 1: Programme content

Week 1

The aim of this workshop was to introduce participants to the programme, answer any questions, support them to tap into the possibility of starting something from "nothing" and lastly, to hear firsthand how Small Powerful Groups have impacted others.

This session opened with researchers conducting questionnaires and focus groups. Then Small Powerful Groups team took over and delivered the following:

Coke Can Game: Participants played a game where they were given an empty coke can as a team and asked to come up with as many products or items they could create from this coke can. Participants were energised by their creative, working together and the surprisingly long list of products they came up with. This exercise began introducing them to their own entrepreneurial capacity and how working together could enhance it.

Overview of Programme: Participants received a comprehensive overview of the upcoming 6-week programme, including its objectives, structure, and key topics to be covered. This provided clarity and context for the session.

Sharing of Personal Stories: Two of the facilitators that belong to Small Powerful Groups were asked to share their personal stories and why they believe being part of a group has changed their lives. This exercise fostered a sense of community and highlighted the transformative impact of group participation.

Addressing Concerns and Questions: Facilitators encouraged open dialogue by inviting participants to voice any questions or concerns they might have about the programme. This allowed for proactive resolution of potential issues and ensured participants felt heard and supported.

Exploring Emotions: We closed the workshop by prompting participants to reflect on their feelings about the programme, identifying what excited them and what aspects might cause apprehension or fear. This exercise encouraged self-awareness and enabled facilitators to address individual needs and expectations.

Week 2

The aim of this session was to introduce participants to a new type of "collective working environment"; excite them about their untapped potential and inspire them with local stories.

Group Agreement: Through discussions and journaling, participants collaboratively established group agreements, defining how they could make the workshop space work best for everyone. This process encouraged ownership, active participation, and respect for one another's needs and perspectives. It also has enabled them to have a working structure if they continue as a group.

Income Generation thru Vinyl: Participants explored creativity and teamwork through a hands-on activity personalising bags with heat press and vinyl. They reflected on how boundaries and collaboration helped in the creative process, emphasising the importance of shared leadership and reflection. For many it was their first time actually making a product they could sell. One participant went on to secure 4 orders for the bag she created on day one.

Women Taking Control in Glasgow: The group watched a video about the Provanmil Small Powerful Group, highlighting themes of agency, self-belief, and overcoming societal labels. Participants engaged in reflective exercises, identifying ways society had held them back and reframing negative labels with positive affirmations.

Reflection and Debrief: Participants engaged in reflection activities, both individually and in pairs, to identify personal learnings and insights from the workshop. A collective debrief session allowed for sharing of feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Week 3

The aim of this session was to consider how a collective mindset around savings might have a positive impact on individuals and communities; provide them with a hands-on making experience where they could tangibly see making turn into a product and lastly to reimagine their possibilities.

Exploration of Financial Concepts: Participants delved into financial topics such as savings and spending habits after watching Maryhill Small Powerful Group share their experience with savings. This enabled the group to reflect on personal experiences and identify strategies for improving their financial well-being whether that be saving more or spending less.

Income-Generation Activity: Participants engaged in two making activities, designing and manufacturing coin purses and cable tidies. This allowed participants to apply their creativity while also recognising how something could be created through

Introduction to Screen Printing: The session introduced participants to the art of screen printing, encouraging them to think creatively about product design and marketability. Through group discussions and hands-on exercises, participants developed slogans and product pitches for tea towels, fostering entrepreneurial thinking and innovation.

Visualisation and Goal Setting: Participants engaged in a visualisation exercise, imagining their perfect day and identifying actionable steps to bring this day closer to fruition. Part of the wider process is for them to reimagine their future and what it could look like- this was just one opportunity for them to begin to carve that future into reality.

Week 4

The aim of this session was to afford participants the space to think about their unique skills and how those skills might impact them running a business.

Exploring a Service Business: Participants watched Agne's video, which expanded their understanding of entrepreneurship beyond traditional crafts to include food and service industries. This laid the groundwork for them to meet her later in the programme.

Skills Identification Exercise: A business coach then supported participants in identifying and articulating their skills and gifts, emphasising the importance of self-awareness and confidence in entrepreneurship. This was one of their first steps into understanding who they could be as an entrepreneur.

Creating Power Socks: Participants engaged in a hands-on making activity, creating and personalising their own "Power Socks" that helped them own the skills they identified in the previous exercise.

Digital Skills Building: A Canva workshop was offered to provide participants with the basics to create their own posters that promoted either their imaginary "product" or "service".

Week 5

The aim of this session was to create a space where participants could dive deeper into how to start a business. From concept to delivery participants went through the start-up stages of starting something from scratch.

Community As A Starting Point: Participants watched a video featuring "5 Mummies Small Powerful Group, "which started by asking the question: "how can we help the community?" From there, they launched a community uniform swap for kids who couldn't afford school uniforms. This was their starting point for running other community events which eventually also led to individual launches of their own businesses.

Business: Where to Start?" A dedicated session allowed participants to adopt a business and develop a business plan, emphasising the distinction between product benefits and features for effective marketing. Participants also designed posters and practised pitching their product ideas.

Screen Printing as a Potential Product Business: Participants engaged in hands-on activity where we screen printed tea towels with our own personal slogans. Participants enjoyed seeing how quickly they could translate an idea into a tangible product. From there we looked at the 4Ps of marketing and how this could relate to their tea towels.

Reflective Exercise: The workshop concluded with a reflection session, prompting participants to consider three questions posed by FedEx founder Fred Smith regarding personal satisfaction and growth. Participants were encouraged to share their reflections and insights.

Week 6

The aim of this session was to confront how critical mindset is to creating an abundant future and business.

SPG Member Story with Q&A: In the studio, Agne from A Pastry joined us and shared her entrepreneurial journey, highlighting lessons learned and insights gained, including reframing failure and the importance of mindset in business success. For participants in the Lilias Centre, we virtually met Trishy who runs a business in the north of Scotland to hear about her experience. The primary outcome was to help them see the reality of starting a business & the mental fortitude required.

Exploration of Mindset: Participants engaged in discussions exploring the concepts of scarcity versus abundance mindset, fostering introspection and self-awareness. This included film from Sara Blakely, founder of Spanx, and the Gulabi Gang in India that fights domestic abuse perpetrators as a collective.

Gratitude Notebooks and Vision Boards: To help translate the abundance mindset into practice, participants were provided with tools for self-reflection and goal-setting, including gratitude notebooks and materials for creating vision boards. These activities encouraged participants to visualise their aspirations and set actionable goals.

Reflection and Challenge: The workshop concluded with a reflection session, prompting participants to contemplate their learnings and insights and to share one way they would commit to practising an abundant mindset in the upcoming week.

Week 7

The aim of this session was to remind participants that their stories are unique and that within these imperfections are gifts. Additionally, we wanted to create a space where participants could reflect on the growth they have experienced since starting the course.

Understand the Global Movement: We watched a film on the Self-Help Group movement in India. It showcases the practical ways these groups support one another, bring positive economic change to their communities, and provide financial stability for one another.

Shibori: The last activity was centred around the concept of wabi sabi-making something beautiful out of our imperfections. Participants learned various techniques for Shibori, the art of fabric dyeing through intricate band designs and dye dipping techniques. This practical activity empowered participants to explore their creativity and express themselves artistically.

Last Product Making: Using the business roadmapping template covered in session 4 participants created their own product from start to finish. From concept to packaging to a marketing roadmap, participants showed what a full circle moment this was compared to week one when many participants didn't even believe they could create a product.

Reflective Paper Dolls: Participants used one side of a paper doll to write down words that described where they were seven weeks ago when they started this course. Then on the flip side of their doll- they wrote words sharing where they are now. The comparison between both sides was really quite eye opening for all involved.

Week 8

The aim of this session was to support a closing space where participants could recognise how far they came since starting the course and how entrepreneurial they really are at their core.

Message to Future Self: Participants wrote a message to future self so that they could remember how they felt in the present moment when hard days come in the future.

Showcasing Final Product: Participants shared their final products with their peers. It was a time to see how far the women had progressed a concept from just an idea and turned into something they could feasibly make money from.

Researchers from Strathclyde University concluded the programme by hosting private focus groups with the participants.

Appendix 2: Pre and post questionnaires

Business programme short survey (and also the same survey for end of programme)

Now the programme has come to an end, please respond to the questions given what the programme has offered (or not offered).

1. Please state whether you agree or not with the following statements (please tick all that apply).

	Yes	No	Don't know
Alone or with others, you currently trying to start a new business or are selling any goods or services to others	☐	☐	☐
Alone or with others, you are going to attempt to start a new business or sell goods or services to others within the next three months	☐	☐	☐
Attempting to start a new business or selling goods or services to others could be a good career option for me to follow in the future	☐	☐	☐

2. How important are following reasons why you have (or might want to have) started a business (please tick all that apply).

	Important	Somewhat important	Neither important nor unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Unimportant	Don't know
To build income for the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To earn a living because jobs are scare	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To make a positive contribution to the community of society	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To create more flexibility for my family and myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To continue a family tradition	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To build a career for the future						

3. Please tell us the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
I know someone who has started a business in the last 2 years	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

There are good opportunities to start a business for me in the next 6 months	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am confident I have the skills and knowledge to start a business	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have a fear of failure which would prevent me from starting a business	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most people consider that starting a business is a good career choice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Those successful at starting a business have a high level of status and respect	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am highly motivated to start a business						
I often hear stories about people starting a successful new business that makes me think "I can do that"	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Please score yourself out of ten on each of the following statements.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I can work well as part of team of people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can communicate my ideas to others effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can use digital technology to communicate, access and manage information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can budget and manage my finances effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can develop a plan to help me reach my goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can persuade someone to purchase a product or service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. Please score the following statements out of ten.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
There are good quality programs available to support me in starting a business.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are funds accessible to me to start a business	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are too many burdens and regulations preventing me from starting a business	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix 3: Promising practices

Promising practice 1: Apna Ghar

Who are we?

Apna Ghar was founded by Shogufta Haq in Oct 2022 because of isolation and loneliness in the BME community in East Dunbartonshire, mainly as a result of Covid 19 but also due to the unproportionate deaths within the BME community due to pandemic of which some of these women suffered the loss of a loved one.

Apna Ghar women project is a grass roots community group, enabling older BME women to have a voice and safe space to meet. Apna Ghar means Our Home, our initial study showed that in the East Dunbartonshire, many older women were lonely and isolated despite being part of their community for the past 40 years. Sadly, many of these older women felt invisible as they could not speak English and could not articulate their thoughts and feelings. The aim is to build local connections and friendships with other BME women from similar cultural backgrounds. Some women have and do experience poverty and have caring responsibilities. Some of the women also have disabilities.

Apna Ghar has a wonderful group of local volunteers wanting to help and build their community.

What do we do?

Some of the services and support that Apna Ghar offers include:

- Practical and emotional support
- A wealth of community-based experience and knowledge of local service provision
- Peer support groups
- Personal Development opportunities to promote health and wellbeing
- Socialising and building a strong connected community with lasting friendships
- Support to challenges facing the individuals and network of agencies to collaborate with to ensure the support is provided
- Develop the needs of local volunteers
- To reduce isolation and loneliness in the BME older community
- To bring BME families together and connect socially
- Support women's mental health and physical health to make the best informed choices for a happier and healthier life
- To provide opportunities to BME women to boost mental health and confidence. experiences they have never experienced due to cultural or family pressures e.g. walking in national parks, cycling, arts and experiencing the outdoors
- To help older people live more happy fulfilling lives and independent lives

What have we done so far?

Apna Ghar has organised many events, outings and learning opportunities for the women including:

- The Lifestory Project - an 8-week programme to record the life history of the women in Apna Ghar. This allowed women the safe space to collate thoughts, words and memories both positive and challenging in their very own life book. Specific themes of the partition between India and Pakistan as well as racism, discrimination and its effects on mental health explored.
- Day trips to Culzean Castle, Museum of Rural Life, Edinburgh Zoo, Loch Lomond and Luss.
- Exploring walks around East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow and beyond.
- Building resilience workshops focussing on mental health and how to look after your body and mind.
- Pebble art classes - exploring different forms of Art.
- Partition of India and Pakistan session - The Lost voices of Partition workshop at Glasgow Women's Library and screening of 'Khamosh Pani' with discussion afterwards.
- Pottery classes.
- Poetry and spoken word workshops around mental health.
- Health eating and looking after your body workshops and information sessions.

We are currently understanding intergenerationality. The older women in the group want to share their skills with younger generations. Skills like cooking which they think is being lost and they would like to pass their skills that they have been passed in the kitchen to the next generation.

Apna Ghar women's project has been involved in several consultations with East Dunbartonshire Council specifically BSL, Gaelic and Mental Health hubs. All women gave insights and understandings from a minority perspective. The Scottish Government allowed an opportunity for Apna Ghar women to be involved in their consultation for NHS Inform 'Mind to mind' website and resources dealing with anxiety, stress and grief.

Contact details

Shogufta Haq
Chair
Tel: 07711830800
Email: apnagharwomensproject@gmail.com
Website: https://apnagharwomensproject.co.uk/

Promising practice 2: The DAISY Project

Who are we?

The DAISY Project was formed in 2000 and was originally called Castlemilk Domestic Violence Project. The Daisy (Domestic Abuse Integrated Support for You) project has evolved over the years and currently offer services to families across the South of Glasgow.

Their staff are all qualified IDAA's (Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates) with some of them being among the first in Scotland to qualify. They are members of the Glasgow Standing Group on Violence Against Women and represent the voices of the women they support at the Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership.

Their IDAA's have extensive experience of supporting women to court during criminal proceedings. Their project is unique in that they support their client's longer term. This has also allowed them to build up extensive experience of supporting women through civil court proceedings, particularly around contact with children.

What do we do?

DAISY offer the following support services but are not limited to:

- One to one advocacy and information
- One to one practical and emotional support
- Risk assessment and safety planning
- Culturally appropriate BME service (Urdu and Punjabi and Arabic spoken by our staff members)
- IDAA (Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate) qualified staff
- Tailored solutions unique to your needs
- Barrier free service provision
- Flexibility of service provision
- A wealth of community based experience and knowledge of local service provision
- Court support – especially round civil court matters
- Support to go to meetings, i.e. with Social Work or your lawyer
- Peer support groups
- Personal Development opportunities to promote health and wellbeing

What have we done so far?

DAISY supports around 150-200 women per year in a variety of settings. They work mainly from 3 office bases in Castlemilk, Pollokshields and Pollok.

Digital Inclusion & Safety as well as Health, Wellbeing and Recovery from Trauma, are current pieces of work being developed. A holistic approach to recovery and group activities is taken with regular sessions on Yoga-Breathing and Moving for Recovery, Glass Art, Digital Learning and Group Outings being facilitated.

In partnership with 'Glass Walls' we aim to build a social enterprise strand of work with volunteer survivors designing and creating items to sell for corporate gifting. The aim is for the creative activities to self-fund in the long-term.

"Like a scaffolding holding up a decrepit old building. You gave me back my inner beauty, strength and my confidence grows. I was a timid mouse who had lived in her bedroom for 2 years to someone who can go out into her garden, enjoying time with her kids and grandkids and wear shorts!! I could never, ever, ever have done that in the past"
(Testimonial from a service user).

Contact details

Castlemilk Community Centre
121 Castlemilk Drive
Castlemilk
Glasgow
G45 9UG
Tel: 0141 634 4053
Email: office@thedaisyproject.org.uk
Website: https://thedaisyproject.org.uk/

Promising practice 3: The Glendale Cafe

The Glendale Women's Cafe

Who are we?

The Glendale Women's Café began in 2012 as a small group of mothers in the playground of Glendale Primary School. Their first social evening was attended by over a hundred local women in the hall of the old school (which has since been demolished). In the early years the mothers who began the group used to meet once a month in Darnley Street Early Years Centre and then in a Portakabin in McCulloch Street in the summer of 2012. In 2013 Southside Housing Associated offered them space at 123 Shields Road and they became the Glendale Women's Café.

The Café is a pioneering women's organisation built from hard work and commitment of volunteers. There is a shared vision to be together as a group and community and learn from one another. As the Café has evolved and grown over the years, they now employ a café manager, project co-ordinator and sessional workers. They also have a Board of Trustees.

What do we offer?

The Glendale Women's Cafe Project is about creating a cohesive neighbourhood in Pollokshields by empowering local women. They offer a safe and welcoming space in which women can come together to learn, create, enjoy and support each other.

All their services and activities are free to join, and they serve a hot free lunch every Tuesday and Wednesday to women so they can stay at the Café at no cost. They have an adaptable shop front space that means they can offer a quiet space for prayer or private time, can deliver health and wellbeing massage and therapies, and schedule morning and afternoon rotational workshops in the drop in space which include discussion, crafts and arts, training and employability, sewing and social activities.

What have we done so far?

Set up over 12 years ago in 2012 as a community group by a handful of mothers from the local primary school, the reach has spread so that all ages of women attend Glendale Women's Cafe weekly in an intergenerational, welcoming, multicultural group. They became a SCIO in 2017.

In 2023 the cafe trialled a second day of opening and is now open Tuesdays and Wednesdays 10am to 3pm. The Cafe is countering loneliness and isolation, especially for members of the BME community (who make up the majority of our current visitors). These women frequently have little other opportunity to socialise outside their family and home.

Women meet other women and learn about the local community. Glendale Cafe encourages social and cultural cohesion across the generations. Their users have a range of restrictions and needs, some of which are publicly acknowledged and some that are harder to note, such as financial status, wellbeing, mental health, language, and low confidence. They offer relief and respite from isolation and do not ask the women probing questions when they join the café. For some women this is their only opportunity to leave a busy intergenerational household and have time to themselves on a weekly basis. For some women this is a safe and comfortable space to speak their first language with people outside their home. For other women this is a safe and comfortable place to grow their confidence by practising speaking English.

During 2023 The Glendale Women's Cafe welcomed over 100 women to their space - almost all women are repeat visitors rather than one off.

Sessions and activities GWC have delivered over the years:

- ESOL conversation classes
- Jewellery making
- Massage and self-soothing therapies
- Sewing
- Trips to local museums
- Arts and crafts sessions - painting, lino printing, card making, upcycling
- Yoga
- Herbal remedies
- Cooking
- Local history and heritage investigations
- Photography sessions
- Film nights
- Election hustings
- Cancer screening information sessions
- Financial and Employability workshops

Contact details

423 Shields Road
Pollokshields
Glasgow
G41 1NY
Email: theglendalewomenscafe@gmail.com
Tel/join via Whatsapp group: 07871350149
Website: https://glendalewomenscafe.org.uk

Promising practice 4: Tomorrow's Women

Who are we?

Tomorrow's Women Glasgow (TWG) are an innovative and unique Criminal Justice centre based in the Gorbals area of Glasgow. They work with women who have very complex needs and who are involved in the Criminal Justice system. Their main aim is to enable women to reduce their offending and to address their needs and issues that prevent them from living positive healthy lives.

TWG are a multi-agency team comprising of Social Care, NHS mental health and the Wheatley Group. They are trauma informed and adhere to the principles of trauma informed approach - safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment and choice. They provide wrap-around support for women and work with partner agencies to address issues such as housing, mental health, addictions. Women have individual TWG case workers who are allocated based on that woman's needs. In collaboration with the woman and other services an action plan is created and regular reviews are held with all services involved in their care.

> *"We are the scaffolding that help women reduce the chaos in their lives, build their confidence and self-esteem and enable them to have a better quality of life and ultimately cease offending."*

What do we do?

The women that TWG work with have multiple and complex needs. They tend to have a mistrust of services or have previously been excluded from services. They may have already lost custody of their children and have problems with drugs and or alcohol. They often have experienced trauma in childhood and this trauma continues into adulthood. They have often been victim to physical and sexual abuse including all aspects of domestic violence. They tend to have poor physical and mental health that impacts on their daily function, hhave previous convictions and pending matters waiting to come to court. Many of TWG women have financial problems and do not have safe secure accommodation and many women are isolated with little support from family or friends.

TWG support around 100 at any given time and there is no time limit to their stay with the the agency. Once significant progress has been made, TWG encourage the women to graduate from their service with a certificate and they are then signposted to local resources in their areas.

What have we done so far?

Between 1st April 2022 and March 2023 TWG have received 109 referrals. There is no time limit to how long they work with service users as it can take time to build trust and confidence to enable women to overcome their problems.

> *"We are the scaffolding that help women reduce the chaos in their lives, build their confidence and self-esteem and enable them to have a better quality of life and ultimately cease offending."*

Contact details

Tel: 0141 274 6052
Website: https://glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=26881

Promising practice 5: SHINE

Who are we?

Shine is a national mentoring service for women with experience of the justice system. Established as a Public Social Partnership, Shine is funded by the Scottish Government. The national provision of mentoring is provided by eight third-sector organisations (Access to Industry, Apex, Barnardo's Scotland, Circle Scotland, Sacro, The Wise Group, Turning Point Scotland, Venture Trust), which work in partnership with Scottish Prison Service and Criminal Justice Social Work departments. In this model, mentors establish relationships with women at different stages of involvement in the justice system.

What do we offer?

The service is available to all adult females who are:

- currently serving a custodial sentence in Scotland of less than four years and not subject to a statutory order or;
- on remand or;
- subject to a Community Payback Order (CPO) or Drug Treatment and Testing Order.
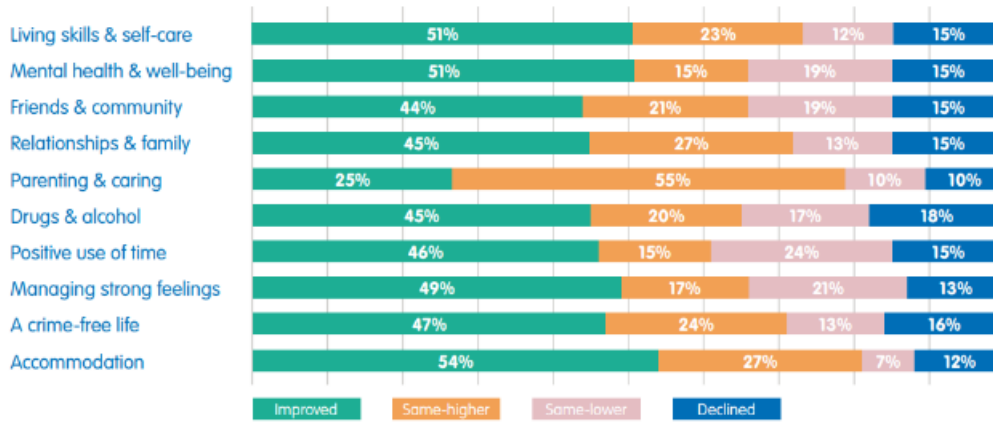
Mentoring is a way of helping and supporting people in achieving their goals. The Shine Women's Mentoring service provides women with a mentor who will provide support on a one-to-one basis with many of the issues they might face in the community. A Shine mentor will discuss any issues the woman may have before participation with the programme and will support them to develop an action plan to address their needs. This will be done in prison, prior to release or in the community if serving a CPO.
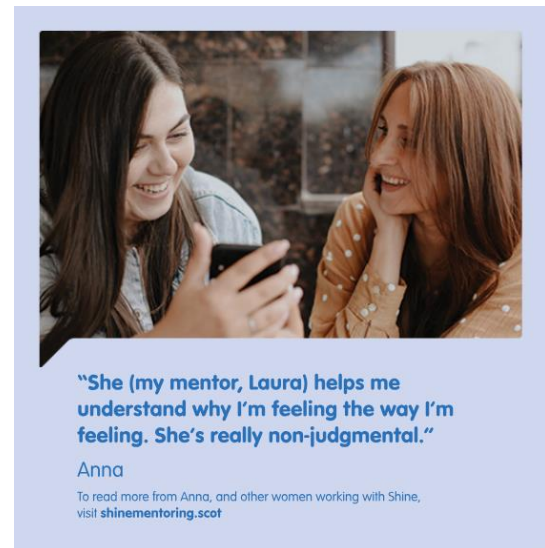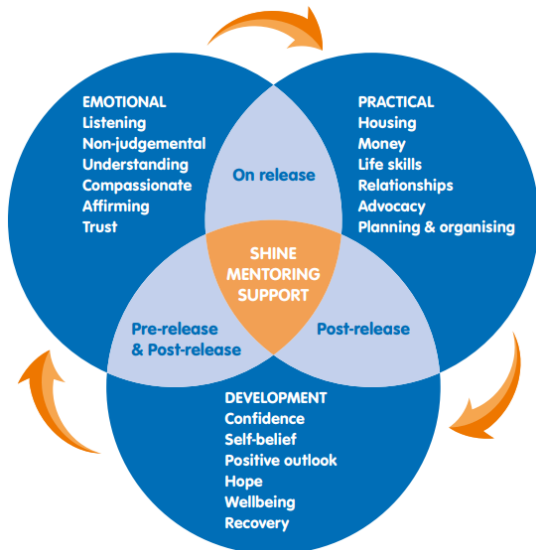
What have we done so far?

Over a decade of service, Shine has provided support to over 7,000 referrals, working with women in prisons and communities across Scotland. Shine has supported women with experience of a wide array of challenges, including a background of trauma, domestic violence, addiction, and mental health problems. Support provided is a blend of emotional, practical, and developmental, to meet needs including access to housing, addiction support, financial literacy, digital inclusion, positive goal setting and building self-belief.

The impact of mentoring is captured internally by Shine using the Justice Star version of the Outcomes Star™ tool, which it began using in 2017. Mentors work collaboratively with the women they support to rate different domains, including living skills and self-care, relationships and family, drugs and alcohol and positive use of time. From this baseline, an individual's journey of change can be captured when the exercise is repeated. Results collated by Shine from 2017-22 show that domains for accommodation, living skills and self-care, mental health and well-being and managing strong feelings are where improvement is seen most often.

Outcome Star Heatmap for all Shine Case Studies Since 2017

	Improved	Same-higher	Same-lower	Declined
Living skills & self-care	51%	23%	12%	15%
Mental health & well-being	51%	15%	19%	15%
Friends & community	44%	21%	19%	15%
Relationships & family	45%	27%	13%	15%
Parenting & caring	25%	55%	10%	10%
Drugs & alcohol	45%	20%	17%	18%
Positive use of time	46%	15%	24%	15%
Managing strong feelings	49%	17%	21%	13%
A crime-free life	47%	24%	13%	16%
Accommodation	54%	27%	7%	12%

A significant aspect of Shine's service is multiagency working with community partners. Shine mentors have established positive working relationships with community justice social workers, legal professionals and third sector agencies, the groundwork for which stems from PSP partnership agreements and governance arrangements. Mentors regularly advocate on behalf of the women they are supporting to successfully navigate the complex justice and social care systems. For example, mentors have been requested on behalf of Procurator Fiscals to contribute to court reports to demonstrate the commitment and voluntary engagement of women, showing positive changes and leading to better outcomes and preventing return to prison. In response to women's disclosure as victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, mentors have supported women to access vital services, including rape crisis, mental health services and emergency care.

"She (my mentor, Laura) helps me understand why I'm feeling the way I'm feeling. She's really non-judgmental."

Anna

To read more from Anna, and other women working with Shine, visit **shinementoring.scot**

Contact details

Shine Women's Mentoring Service (Sacro)
Thorn House, 5 Rose Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2PR
Email: Infoshine@sacro.org.uk
Tel: 0131 624 7270
Fax: 0131 624 7269
Website: https://www.shinementoring.org/
Podcast:https://open.spotify.com/show/2SE3B9PeS0agEmaEa79aGz?si=8c54d031dd244247

Promising practice 6: Women's Support Project

Who are we?

Established in 1983, the Women's Support Project (WSP) has been in the forefront of raising awareness of the cause, extent and impacts of male violence against women, and of the links between different forms of male violence. We work in partnership with a wide range of individuals and organisations to build capacity for responding.

Key themes are addressing unmet needs and emerging issues, making links between different forms of violence and abuse, and supporting multiagency and partnership approaches. Our work is informed by an understanding of links and overlaps between different forms of violence, discrimination and oppression.

What do we do?

Based in Glasgow and working across Scotland, WSP has experience of direct service provision, delivering training and public education, partnership and strategic work and engaging and consulting with women affected by male violence. Our methodology is one with regular contact with women through individual support, and engagement work, and strong relationships with other agencies, is drawn upon as the basis of training, public education programmes, and policy development at national and local level.

What have we done so far?

Right & Choices: Support for migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women in Glasgow who are socially isolated and / or have experienced violence or abuse. Short courses and community-based events.

Training and public education: Provide training for practitioners and community organisations on a range of issues around violence against women, and resources to support training and public education.

FGM Aware: Resources and information to help tackle FGM in Scotland. (FGMaware.org)

WSP also leads on work in Scotland to reduce harm caused by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, offering a diverse programme of awareness raising, public education, capacity building and training. WSP engage with women with current or past involvement in the sex industry, working alongside women to develop safe and innovative ways for their views to be heard.

Examples of work: CSEaware.org - Recourses for Practitioners

Encompass Network: WSP co-ordinates Encompass, a Scottish network of agencies working with people affected by commercial sexual exploitation.

Inside Outside Scotland: Coordinated and supported by WSP, 'Inside Outside' amplifies the voices of women who are, or have been, involved in the sex industry in Scotland. These are voices not often heard in the mainstream press, and often drowned out on social media. The individual stories are accompanied by photographs taken by the women on camera phones. The

photographs are their ideas and their work, focusing on images which represent both negative and positive memories and experiences, and often highlighting the women's strengths.

Money and Power: Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Scotland. The Money and Power resources comprise of a short DVD film, an awareness raising pack, supporting materials pack and a training pack. WSP worked with Zero Tolerance and the media co-op to develop new resources to challenge commercial sexual exploitation in Scotland.

Pleasure vs Profit: Growing Up in a Pornified Scotland. Pleasure vs. Profit is one of the first resources to make the connections between sexualisation and the creep of pornographic images and values into mainstream culture, and to focus on the situation in Scotland. Developed by the Women`s Support Project with support from Zero Tolerance.

CSE Timeline: We have developed a visual timeline to capture the history and development of work on commercial sexual exploitation in Scotland. We wanted to note the key milestones, meetings, reports, events, resources, and services as well as memories and recollections. Scoping exercises took place to track developments and key people were invited to contribute through workshops and online tools. A huge amount of material has been gathered and local artist Jenny Capon was commissioned to develop a graphic recording to highlight key aspects of the journey.

The piece was exhibited in the Scottish Parliament in November 2023, and there will be other opportunities to see it in the coming year.

An Oral History of the Women's Support Project: We are currently working on a project to capture key aspects and impacts of our work, by collecting short audio-recordings from key individuals and colleagues. WSP are particularly interested in whether and how WSP has improved people's understanding of, and response to, male violence, and their views on the main impact/s of WSP work more broadly.

Contact details

Telephone: 0141 418 0748
Email: enquiries@womenssupportproject.org.uk
Website: www.womenssupportproject.org.uk/