Development of a Local Integrated Support Network for People in North Geelong Released from Prison

Part 1: Project Evaluation Report and

Part 2: The Geelong Integrated Network Model

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Project Background

This project has involved development of a local integrated support model to assist released prisoners and their families in the transition into the community. The rationale for the project is empirical in nature. It is based on statistical data and other evidence from the Australian and international literature. Recognised needs, demonstrated effectiveness of local networks or hubs in a range of community service contexts, and demonstrated effectiveness of a co-design methodology in community service contexts have all contributed to the rationale for developing the model.

The Victorian state and Australian national recidivism rate is currently around 45%; the five year rate is above 55% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). At June 2018, the average daily prison population in Australia was 43,000, up 4% in one year and 39% in five years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Recidivism has also risen significantly over the past 10 years (growing from 38% to 45%, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008 and 2018). Upon release, almost all former prisoners return to the communities from which they have come. In Victoria, Australia, currently 25% of prisoners come from 2% of the most disadvantaged post codes and 50% come from just 6% of those postcodes (Vinson, Rawsthorne, Beavis & Ericson, 2015).

Preparing people for post-release success and supporting that success through post-release transition is essential. Individual post-release support needs are typically multiple and complex. Co-morbidity is a recognised common characteristic and critical issue, but one that is largely untreated in preparing prisoners for release. Major well-recognised underlying pre-conditions of incarceration include mental illness, acquired brain injury (ABI) and other cognitive impairments, developmental disabilities such as intellectual disability, and alcohol and/or drug dependency. Approximately one-third of incarcerated people are receiving mental health treatment at time of arrest, and almost half have a history of psychiatric treatment (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015). The role of alcohol and other drugs as forms of self-medication is widely recognised.

Rates higher than the general population for anxiety, depression, personality disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and alcohol or drug induced psychosis have been reported (Butler, T., Andrews, G., Allnutt, S., Sakashita, C., Smith, N., & Basson, J. 2006). Intellectual disability has been reported as 5-10 times more prevalent among incarcerated people (Baldry, Clarence, Dowse & Trollor, 2013). Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is also widespread; some studies reporting rates of almost 90% among incarcerated people (Shiroma, Ferguson, & Pickelsimer, 2012; Schofield, 2006), with significant brain injury estimated to affect at least 25% of those incarcerated. A deeper pre-condition underlying these recognised pre-conditions is experience of psychological trauma during childhood and adulthood. Treatment of trauma is essential to recovery and reform.

There are also several common underlying conditions associated with general disadvantage/social inequality that are correlated with incarceration as well. Two-thirds of incarcerated Australians have completed Year 10 or less. One-third have at least one chronic health condition such as diabetes, hepatitis C, or history of drug and alcohol abuse (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015). Approximately two thirds of those returning to prison are unemployed at the time of their offence (Graffam, Giles, Ollerton, Newton, Baldry, Yeo, & Crosbie, 2017). Children of incarcerated people are 3-6 times more likely to become offenders themselves (Conway & Jones, 2015; Glanville, 2017). These are all conditions or indicators of general disadvantage and recognised common antecedents or concomitants associated with offending.
Given the lack of adequate preparation for release relative to recognised need, local communities need appropriate resourcing to ensure their readiness to support people released from prison in order for transformative change to occur. Community support service availability, receptivity, and access for former prisoners are common problems. It is important to understand where service gaps and lags exist and identify the barriers that lead to under-utilisation of existing services amongst people leaving prison. It is imperative to understand the service system operating in the local area and identify the barriers and enablers for people leaving prison utilising that system for support.

Well-recognised, prevalent support needs include housing, mental and general health services, alcohol and drug treatment, employment, and family services as the most common. Clearly, this is not a criminal justice system-specific ‘problem’. The multiple needs of former prisoners and the complexity associated with addressing those needs is recognised by all stakeholder groups including criminal justice/corrections staff, former offenders, community service providers, and researchers. Resourcing communities with what is needed, particularly the communities into which a high proportion of released prisoners relocate, has not been systematically addressed at present.

The logic underlying the proposed model is that providing the needed support within a local community and doing so through an integrated network of service providers with strong central coordination will enable successful integration and transition into community life. The concept of a community-located network or hub has been applied in other, more specific contexts in Australia and abroad including domestic violence and family services, as well as mental health and ancillary services. For a review of international literature (Casey, 2018).

The history of “co-design” goes back to the 1960s when in several countries interest in engaging ‘users’ in a development and delivery process emerged. In Norway in the 1970s, what was termed “participatory design” was applied to issues of workplace productivity within the ironworks industry. Over time, the concept evolved into what is currently referred to as “co-design” methodology. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) are credited with introducing co-design to the broader business community. Application of co-design methodology has spread to a wide range of contexts including community health, disability, mental health and social welfare services. The decision to employ co-design in the development of the model in this project is based on evidence of its effectiveness internationally and in Australia. Several of Australia’s state level Councils of Social Service have adopted co-design principles and practice as a recommended means of developing and operating community-located social services.

Co-design as a Development Methodology

Within the context of community services, co-design involves engaging consumers and service users in the design (and ultimately implementation) process, with the expectation that co-design leads to markedly better outcomes and innovations (Burkett, 2012). Evidence-based co-design includes service providers, users, and other stakeholders in co-design of service structures and practices in partnership with each other. This approach involves documenting experiences and insights from all participants through in-depth interviews, previous observations and experiences, and group discussions/workshops. Co-design involves creating interventions, services and programs which will work for both service providers and service users and embody shared values and goals. Succinctly put, “Co-design involves collaborating, including designing with people that will use or engage with a service or product. It is a
methodology for involving a broad range of people directly involved in an issue, place, process in its design and sometimes also in implementation” (Government of Western Australia (2018)).

There are several recognised characteristics associated with a co-design methodology. Co-design is collaborative, developmental, empowering and outcome-based:

- Co-design requires collaboration. Participants are instructed in the co-design methodology as well as existing evidence and current state of play regarding the co-design task. They are invited to full participation in the design process. This high level of active participation is valued as important and integral to achieving a service user-compatible outcome.
- Co-design is also developmental. It involves sharing of information, experience, and expertise that leads to learning for all those involved. Participants learn about the ‘target issue’, and about the co-design process.
- Co-design is empowering. There is equal legitimacy and value in the contributions of all participants. The sharing of power among all participating stakeholders generates a sense of collective ownership in the design process and the outcomes.
- Co-design is outcome-based. It is practical in nature, with clear vision and direction. The design process and subsequent implementation attempt to produce a shared creative intent among all participants (Bradwell and Marr, 2008).

Different authors have described co-design process features differently, but common elements include: active engagement of service users in the design process; direct involvement in design discussion and decision making; evidence of acting on the input of service users and other stakeholders; and equality among all participants in the design process. Burkett (2012) has identified five essential features of co-design, suggesting that co-design should:

- “Be person-centred, using ethnographic methods to understand the experience of a service from the clients’ point of view. Co-design asks service providers and service users to walk in the shoes of each other and to use these experiences as the basis of designing changes;
- Start with a desired end, rather than with what is wrong with the present service. In the process we look to build backwards from the outcomes we are seeking.
- Focus on developing practical real-world solutions to issues facing individuals, families and communities. In co-design, prototyping is a method of testing whether the ideas work in practice, and then refining ideas until solutions that work for service users and providers alike are developed;
- Make ideas, experiences and possibilities visible and tangible using a variety of media, graphic, kinesthetic and experiential methods. This helps to make solutions tangible and to make complex systems accessible across a range of people who may have different perspectives and knowledge about the system;
- Have processes that are inclusive and draw on many perspectives, people, experts, disciplines and sectors. The idea is to find real, workable solutions to complex issues, so it is important to draw on as many perspectives, to challenge orthodoxies, to question assumptions and to draw in other possibilities. Co-design processes thrive when boundaries are flexible, and silos are broken down, when real listening and dialogue can occur across unlikely alliances.”

In the project undertaken, the co-design methodology described in this section has been applied to the development of the local integrated support network model.
Mapping the Local Context

In addition to testing the rationale with international and Australian statistics, literature, and current state of play, a local mapping exercise was conducted to determine the extent of existing support service availability and preparedness to support people being released from prison. The purpose of this component of the project has been to identify the current ‘state of play’ in terms of the community supports available and accessible by former prisoners and offenders living in one of those highly disadvantaged post codes. To do so, a ‘service map’ of local community services was constructed, managers of a sample of those services were interviewed, and a sample of local prospective network users (former prisoners and offenders) were interviewed on their usage of local community services. In addition to describing the availability and accessibility of local services, this report also discusses the implications of the findings of the mapping exercise.

Method

A desk-top review of local services relevant to former prisoners and community-located offenders identified twenty-five such community service organisations of varying sizes and service types within the local area. An analysis of annual reports from the years 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 were conducted.

All twenty-five local community services organisations were included in the service mapping component of this investigation. In a more in-depth investigation, six managers of local community services relevant to former prisoners were included as interviewees. Likewise, eight local former prisoners having experience accessing and/or utilising those services and who had no existing obligations to the Department of Justice were interviewed. They ranged in age from 27 to 50 years, with five between 32 and 38 years. Seven of eight were male, five of eight were employed, and three of eight were in a relationship. Interviews with managers of six of those organisations were conducted. Interviews ranged from 30 – 45 minutes in duration. All of these interviews were conducted by telephone. Interviews with the eight local former prisoners who had used or had reason to use local services ranged between 20 – 45 minutes in duration. All of these interviews were conducted in person.

The annual reports of the twenty-five included community services organisations were examined in relation to six organisation characteristics: target group(s); provision of former prisoner-relevant services; number of former prisoner service users; number of staff, paid and volunteer; total income and whether operating in ‘profit’; any operating issues faced. Annual reports were all available via public access.

Interview questions for the community services managers included ten questions:

- What is your service’s capacity to deliver services (number in a month)?
- What is the full range of services provided?
- What, if any, services that you provide are unfunded?
- Does demand exceed your ability to supply services?
- Do you see any gaps in local service availability pertaining to offender-users?
- Would you rate your knowledge of offender-user service needs low, medium or high?
- Would you rate the ‘user friendliness’ of your service low, medium or high?
- How receptive to dealing with offender-users do you think your service is?
- Are there any services offered by your organisation that you see as relevant to offender-users?
• What else do you want to add?

Interview questions for the former prisoner service users included:
• What types of services did you need upon release?
• What types of services did you access or try to access?
• What did you need, but not access?
• What was your experience of those services?
• What else do you want to add relevant to your post-release community services experience?

Results of the Survey

Local Community Service Mapping of Availability and Capacity

The local community services mapping exercise demonstrates that there is a wide range of relevant local community services, varying greatly in terms of number of staff, use of volunteers, annual income, and ‘profit’/loss performance. However, the ‘profit’/loss analysis showed typically low level of profitability/viability. There is clearly little or no room for increasing or expanding their service provision. This is in the context, recognised by several of the organisations in their annual reports, of increased and increasing demand for their services, increased waiting times and waiting lists, and the need for more resources to meet the demand/need. Another identified need was for a peer workforce in both mental health and alcohol and drug treatment services. The issue of unmet demand and resource constraint was identified by several of the organisations. It is within this context that local services must operate and service users must navigate.

Community Services Organisations

Community services organisation manager interviews identified issues pertaining to their capacity to service former prisoners in terms of their focus, funding, scale, and also their preparedness in terms of knowledge, culture, and attitude. In terms of their capacity to deliver and the relevance of their services for former prisoners/offenders, the interviewed service managers raised several capacity issues; however, the range of services that are highly consistent with well-recognised and often-reported needs of former prisoners. Preparedness to provide services to former prisoners/offenders was questioned in terms of knowledge of the service user group needs, user-friendliness of the organisation, and relevance of the services provided. Responses of the managers indicate a high level of knowledge of the service user group’s needs and organisation receptiveness to providing them services.

Identified issues relate to the ‘system’ of local services and service models being poorly connected with duplications, gaps, and under-supply. The need for increased funding of local community services is apparent from both the analysis of annual reports and manager interviews. Increased and continually increasing demand, little or no existing available resources to increase or expand, and the need to accommodate a very diverse set of service users, including the currently ‘invisible’ former prisoner service users who typically have multiple needs which are complex, often immediate, and intensive in nature. Injection of additional resources into the community is warranted.

It would be an improvement to formalise community service organisation funding ‘expectations’ in relation to former prisoner service users by explicitly identifying them as a ‘target’ group. This would
reduce their ‘invisibility’ and provide a better understanding of their uptake and use of community services. It would also allow providers a better understanding of their clientele. The characteristics and needs of this service user group, as noted, tend to be quite unique, extensive, and intensive.

Enhanced cross-agency communication is also needed. The local community services organisations currently tend to operate in relative isolation although referrals do occur and knowledge of other providers is reportedly good. Former prisoners as service users typically have multiple needs. For several reasons, they are often reluctant to ‘tell their story’ to multiple providers, lack the assertiveness to approach and seek help, and lack awareness of the full range of services available to them. Enhanced cross-agency communication can address these issues.

Service user-led training of community services staff would be another improvement. Although service managers demonstrated good knowledge of the needs of former prisoners and the issues associated with them accessing needed services, enlisting former prisoners in the ‘how’, that is, effective processes for supporting this group would be another improvement. Insights into how to structure service delivery and how to interact with this service user group would be very helpful to providers and users.

An integrated combination of mainstream and specialist services is suggested. Most of the service needs of former prisoners are within the currently available range of local mainstream services and are the same as the needs of general community members. Issues such as learned ‘prison behaviour’, self-stigma, having a criminal record, eligibility criteria, public stigma, and other factors can make accessing those services more difficult. Therefore, either some specialist versions or priority/special service practices would be helpful. Mental health and disability services as well as housing and crisis accommodation services have been named by service managers and former prisoner interviewees.

Improved outreach into prisons by local community services organisations would also be helpful in terms of raising pre-release awareness of existing community services, eligibility criteria, and their availability. It would also enhance their ‘reputation’ among prisoners as helpful and useful to them upon their release.

**Prospective Service Users**

According to the prospective service users with prison experience, the implications pertain to their ‘readiness’ for release in terms of planning, knowledge, and health, as well as better use of parole conditions and communication skills. Implications point to a need for improved in-prison, pre-release preparation as well as a place-based, local integrated network of support that will facilitate use of needed community services by former prisoners and other disadvantaged people.

It is common for people to not know what they will need prior to release. Better pre-release preparation for life in the community is needed. Educating prisoners prior to release is important regarding the availability of needed services, eligibility criteria, current waiting time, and other aspects. Standardising existence of pre-release plans and provision of information-rich ‘exit packs’ with contact information pertinent to needed supports would be a clear improvement.

One identified issue is that existing services are difficult to locate, and that more information and direction as well as better publicity of those services would be helpful. Establishment of local ‘identification points’ where a former prisoner can get information about existing local services was suggested. ‘Training’ inmates to be more assertive/proactive in seeking needed support would also contribute to success post-release. Learned ‘prison behaviour’ includes not initiating, but being responsive to directions and reactive.
Lack of assertiveness together with not knowing what is available and anticipating rejection can lead to non-use of what are critical support services.

Greater attention to pre-conditions/co-morbidity issues while a person is incarcerated would probably significantly improve community reintegration post-release and reduce recidivism. This should include in-prison treatment of conditions including childhood and adolescent trauma, existing mental and general ill-health, disability, and alcohol and other drug dependency. It should also include pre-release plans for treatment post-release and pre-arranged, established connections with community service providers.

Parole officer support has been described as very helpful by the service user participants. Instituting an official focus that places more emphasis on ‘micro-gains’ in assessing success / progress post-release will provide more realistic expectations about rate and pattern of change. Other changes to parole that are suggested include extending CCS office hours for reporting and urine testing to better enable parolees compliance without interruption of daily activities.

Providing ‘peer’ mentors to support transition back into community would be another improvement. This should begin pre-release and be maintained post-release, possibly fairly long term in some cases. This would be especially helpful for people who have been on remand, those who have had a short sentence, and those exiting on straight release. As noted, these people exit prison without any real information or preparation. Of course, parolees will also benefit from peer support during the transition period. A need for mental health and drug and alcohol treatment workers with ‘lived experience’ themselves was also noted by service organisations.

**Conclusions Drawn from the Investigation**

The need for a place-based approach was identified by service manager interviewees. Although a fairly large number and wide range of relevant community services have been identified in this project, those services are, for the most part, not well-connected with each other and certainly not formally connected. Establishment of an integrated local community support network in offers a solution to chronic persistent disadvantage and entry into the criminal justice system by providing relevant personal and family supports that also build healthy communities. Ideally, such networked services should be available to all people in need within a community. Inherent in the model development that embodies this project is an intention that the model be transportable to other communities beyond North Geelong.

Offenders/former prisoners are not the only people in need of a range of community support services within the disadvantaged communities to which released prisoners return, and such support networks should be located within those communities because that is where there is the greatest need and the greatest concentrations of offenders are living. This would provide improved access to the array of community support services that so many former prisoners and ‘early career’ offenders need. Assisting individuals to reintegrate post-release and supporting others to avoid offending altogether through relevant local support services will benefit those individuals, their families, the entire local community, and society at large.

Strong partnerships comprising local communities and state/territory government in a whole-of-government approach to resolving the multiple, complex, often interactive needs in those communities is a critical element to place-based solutions. The need for combined whole-of-government and local community engagement in such local networks is suggested as well. Released prisoners’ support needs typically are multiple and cut across several government department programs. We need to create
environments within which former prisoners and individuals serving community orders can successfully break cycles of offending and achieve productive, satisfying, crime-free lives.

Local Integrated Support Network Model Development

Upon announcement of funding from Give Where You Live, a preliminary meeting was held to lay out a general plan for development of the model. It was held June 14, 2019. Attendees included researchers from Deakin University, the University of Melbourne and Swinburne University of Technology as well as two members of the soon-to-be established Project Team. In the preliminary meeting, the group discussed the evidence base for development of a model like this. On the grounds of the literature discussion, there was support for development of the model and agreement on a general health and wellbeing basis for the model rather than developing a justice-focused or rehabilitation-focused model.

In the ‘set up’ stage of the project, the project manager was employed, a project team was decided upon and established, a Governance Committee was decided and established, and a decision made to engage a co-design expert to assist with the managing the design process. The Project Team has included a senior manager from Bethany Community Support, a senior academic from Deakin University and the project manager. Erin O’Donohue of Hive Collective was engaged as the co-design consultant to assist with the design process.

Major components of the project have included:

- Conducting a mapping of the local context via a desk-top survey of existing services and interviews with a sample of local community services managers.
- Producing two international literature reviews: one a review of literature relevant to community reintegration of released prisoners and one a review of hub and network models within the broad field of community services.
- Engagement of the project Governance Committee in consultations and commitment to advance development of the model and, early on, conduct of an Engagement Workshop for the Governance Committee.
- Conduct of ‘Empathy Interviews’ with eight criminal justice involved people.
- Conduct of three Co-Design Workshops that included a wide range of stakeholders, many of whom are local service providers from relevant service types.
- Establishment of a Lived Experience Expert Panel of four local people with lived experience of prison and soliciting their views on design as the project proceeded.
- Development of the model based on the existing literature-based evidence, outcomes of the various interviews, consultations, workshops, and input from the Expert Panel and the Governance Committee.

The Process for Developing the Model

The project officially commenced on 7/10/2019. The original timeline called for completion by 31/03/2021; however, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on progress. A three-month extension to 30/6/21 was awarded on request, by Give Where You Live, the funding body. Over the 21 months, the Project Team has developed a community-based model with a health and wellbeing focus, comprising a local integrated support network (a virtual hub) of services for individuals exiting prison and their families. The development project has had extensive engagement with stakeholders including a Governance Committee comprised of local service provider partners, an expert ‘user group’ advising on design in
relation to support needs, and a range of local support services participating in co-design workshops and project governance. The network model has been designed to meet the wide-ranging, complex reintegration needs of individuals exiting prison. The co-design approach which draws on the local community and prospective service users, has enabled the Network to be developed to meet the specific needs of people living in North Geelong, in particular, within Corio-Norlane.

As part of the co-design approach, the model has been informed by existing research evidence. That evidence shows that an integrated local system of support that brings together housing, drug and alcohol treatment, mental and general health care, family violence, employment, education, vocational training, disability services, generic social services, and other relevant supports in a unified effort is what is needed for crime avoidance, resistance and successful reintegration. As well, the co-design approach has been informed by research indicating that hub or network models can be effective within community services contexts.

In addition to the research basis, co-design involves engaging knowledgeable stakeholders in the design process. The network will comprise services that provide supports as part of a coordinated response to individuals accessing the network. Network member services will enter into a formal service agreement that outlines the purpose, principles and protocols of the network. They will commit to participate in education / upskilling of staff and managers about the specific support needs of individuals exiting prison and how to interact with them, as well as how to effectively collaborate and share information with other services in the network. With these expected outcomes and characteristics in mind, extensive consultation through interviews, workshops, an Expert Panel and a Governance Committee have been used to create a collective view, then construct the model.

**Timeline of Major Milestones/Activities**

The timeline below contains a list of major milestones and activities that have demonstrated progress and completion of the model:

- **14/06/2019** Preliminary Meeting of Interested Experts
- **07/10/2019** Start date for the project
- **07/10/2019** Commencement of Project Manager
- **10/10/2019** Establishment of Project Team
- **31/12/2019** Conduct and Provision of background literature review
- **10/02/2020** Appointment of HIVE Collective
- **30/01/2020** Establishment of Governance Committee
- **26/02/2020** First meeting of Governance Committee
- **01/03/2020** Provision of Background Briefing for Establishing Co Located Service Delivery in the Non-Government Sector
- **26/03/2020** Engagement Workshop conducted and outputs analysed
- **20/06/2020** Second meeting of Governance Committee
- **23/07/2020** Co-design Workshop #1 conducted and outputs analysed
Components of the Co-Design Process

In order to produce the necessary ‘raw material’ for model development, the co-design process was employed with the assistance of Hive Collective. Erin O’Donohue, was engaged for this commencing in February, 2020. The design process comprised five components as depicted in the figure just below. The ‘arrow’ is meant to indicate the cumulative effect of inputs. In parallel to this set, there was input into the process from both the Governance Committee and the Expert Panel (the work of each described more fully below).
The process of model development is best described in terms of its progression through these six components of the co-design process and the work of the Governance Committee and Expert Panel Group.

**Engagement Workshop**

In March, 2020, the Engagement Workshop was held for members of the newly formed Governance Committee. The workshop was facilitated by Erin O’Donohue of Hive Collective. Three questions were addressed in workshop:

- What do we think we know through the lens of those with lived experience?
- What are the biggest challenges facing people leaving prison in the Corio-Norlane area?
- What are some of the things that are working well for those leaving prison in the Corio-Norlane area?

These questions were posed in relation to the lived experience with the criminal justice system.

An analysis of the content produced in the workshop and subsequent consultations with members who could not attend directly, identified four major themes:

- Personal Issues
- Family Conditions
- Community Conditions
- Support Services

Theme-specific outcomes of the workshop are presented below in terms of identified challenges and what participants view as working well. Within each theme, more challenges were identified than elements that are working well.

**Personal Issues**

A large number and wide range of personal issues were identified as challenges to successful reintegration within the community. Only two elements were identified as working well.

**Challenges**

- Low sense of self-worth as very common.
• Multiple and complex needs (mental health, general health, housing, employment, AoD, family, etc.)
• Low level of education as very common.
• Lack motivation to work or pursue any education.
• Lack of concern about involvement with police or going to prison.
• Distrust of societal systems including government departments, institutions and community services.
• Pronounced ‘fight or flight’ response which perpetuates disengagement.
• Isolation (loss of relationships and life patterns and structure resulting from incarceration).
• Institutionalised behaviour (learned patterns of prison-adaptive behaviour)
• Pressure to become a different person.
• Pre-existing trauma compounded by prison trauma and trauma triggering dysfunctional behaviour.
• Cycle of negative peer relationships that is difficult to break.
• Reluctance to seek help for mental health, general health, addiction other needs (especially men).
• Length of sentence (greater disruption and more complex support needs with long sentences).
• Highly disruptive impact of short sentences (job loss and housing loss are common, and there has been an increase of people on short sentences).
• First 3 months after release is a critical time requiring intensive assistance for many.

**Working well**

• Good survival skills are relatively common (learned from long term disadvantage).
• Connection to peers and community (many do have healthy relationships on which they can depend for support).

**Family Conditions**

Several family conditions were identified as challenges to successful reintegration within the community. On the other hand, only one element was identified as working well.

**Challenges**

• Lack of support from family when returning home is quite common.
• Change in family dynamics (family may not want the person to return to home).
• Managing time in terms of returning to family life and meeting parole conditions, appointment requirements and the need to engage with support services.
• Family pressure to get a job, resume parenting, re-engagement post-release, etc.
• Family violence (in particular, women experiencing family/domestic violence).
• Difficulty re-engaging with dependent children and in supporting them.
• The question of how to draw on family and friend supports without being negatively influenced by individuals in the social network.
• Intergenerational unemployment.

**Working well**

• In some/many cases, the person can draw on strong family influences.
Community Conditions

A total of five community conditions were identified as challenges to successful reintegration within the community. Only two elements were identified as working well.

Challenges

- Availability of industrial jobs has declined across the region.
- Employer and legal requirements for criminal record checks and Working with Children Checks associated with obtaining employment.
- Absence of spent convictions legislation in Victoria supports discrimination in employment and possibly other contexts.
- Lack of safe and secure housing on release - Housing and gentrification has affected housing security and affordability, leading to increased homelessness.
- Finding safe spaces for social engagement (many people are fearful of former associates and networks as well as police).

What works

- Peer mentors and leaders can have a very positive impact on reintegration within the community.
- A strong sense of connected community can be a positive, but not everyone experiences it.

Support Services

A large number and wide range of support services challenges to successful reintegration within the community were identified. In addition, several elements were identified as working well. The more positive view expressed regarding this theme may be associated with the composition of the group and their greater familiarity with support services.

Challenges

- Service fatigue over the requirement to retell one’s story repeatedly with different services.
- Service mistrust (feelings of anxiety and pessimism about dealing with community services).
- Sense of stigma when seeking support from mental health services which often are resistant to treating people in the cohort.
- Lack of GPs who will prescribe methadone.
- Support service staff turnover which impacts on relationships with clients (the need to frequently deal with new service provider staff).
- Disconnectedness of the service system elements (family, housing, health, justice, police, education services).
- Some service providers fear working with the cohort.
- Service evidence/outcomes reported are not always consistent with experience on the ground (reported vs actual willingness to ‘treat’/support the cohort).
- Negative interactions with service providers can contribute to negative behaviour by individuals in the cohort.
- Long (or short) waiting lists for various community services when the need is immediate.
- Reporting expectations
- Restricted eligibility for existing services (members of the cohort not meeting criteria).
• Falling between cracks – AOD service won’t take client due to MH issues and MH service won’t take clients due to AOD issues
• Short duration of program length (most programs are not funded to work long enough with people; many in the cohort need long-term, ongoing support).
• Transition programs are essential and much needed.
• Difficulty navigating through service system and coordinating multiple needs.
• Lack of ‘wrap around’ (throughcare) support to manage transition from prison into community.
• Dealing with institutions such as Centrelink and Child Protection is often confronting as well as complex.
• Short term funding of effective programs (this leaves clients without support, and disappointment breeds disengagement).
• Lack of a quality desistance framework to underpin service delivery.
• Limited mental health care in prison and delays in getting a mental health plan and referral post-release.
• Getting sufficient income support post-release.

Working well
• Outreach that is available within the community (people like to meet at home or in park or library; it is considered more personal than going to an office).
• Grassroots relational approaches that are employed by some community services.
• Some pre-release transition programs have worked well, in particular those that have kept prisoners well-connected to their families while in prison, where they got to spend time with their children doing activities etc.
• Some good professional connections amongst services (mostly these are individual and relationship based rather than formalised across services).
• The Cloverdale Community Centre is an existing, respected place within the community; a place to go for support within the community.
• Voluntary involvement in programs results in higher motivation to engage and continue.
• Pharmacotherapy post-release in Geelong (DAS prioritises support for former prisoners).
• Youth agencies have good networks.
• AOD and Mental Health services’ integrated assessment for the Barwon region.

As indicated by the international literature on post-release reintegration within communities and the views of people with lived experience expressed in the empathy interviews described below, members of the Governance Committee demonstrated good insights into the challenges faced by people exiting prison and re-entering their community. They also demonstrated good understanding of the local context in terms of challenges to successful reintegration and what is working well.

Empathy Interviews

Initial ‘empathy’ interviews were conducted with criminal justice involved people in the Geelong region to gain a first-hand understanding of their lived experience. Eight empathy interviews were conducted, five interviewees are males between 30 and 50 years of age, and three are females between 40 and 50 years of age. Seven have had experience in prison and the other had served a community-based order.

An analysis of the content provided by interviewees identified four major themes:
Theme-specific experiences are presented below. Interviewees commented both on their own experiences and what they have observed as common experiences of others.

**Prison and Corrections Experiences**
- Upon entry, they had no idea what to expect in prison, and then they had no idea what to expect when returning to the community.
- High-level anxiety/fear was experienced by almost all leading up to release, at the time of release and for some time post-release.
- Inadequate preparation for release was mentioned by a few interviewees.
- Early days of release were described as ‘hard’ due to unfamiliarity, lack of resources, need to meet numerous requirements and, in some cases, addressing outstanding orders.
- Parole experiences highly variable.

**Family Experiences**
- Most of the interviewees reported having received family support either while in prison and after release or after release (each of them, however, also acknowledged that they are ‘among the lucky ones’ to have intact families and family support).
- Feelings of being negatively judged and stigmatised by family, friends and members of the general community are seen as prevalent and ongoing for many people.
- Family support is considered by all interviewees to be critical to success, but there are often tensions and pressures regarding family associated with acceptance, re-engagement, need to contribute materially and give support as well as receive, reporting demands, etc.
- The need to provide families with information about prison to facilitate support inside and post-release was mentioned by a few interviewees.

**Community Experiences**
- A few interviewees stated that engaging in the community is an important element of successful reintegration (volunteering to work in community organisations, joining clubs, etc.) frightening as well.
- Enrolment in VET (need better advice).
- Finding work within the field (criminal justice, Alcohol and Other Drug, Mental Health).
- Employment discrimination need to educate (apprenticeships, programs don’t work).

**Support Services Experiences**
- Everyone reported not knowing where to go for support or services post-release; not having Geelong-specific information about what services are available, where they are located, eligibility criteria, friendliness, etc.
Most interviewees reported that they have not accessed many services or supports due to their own reluctance which stems from their perceived or experienced resistance of service providers to assist them.

Shifting ground ‘flavour of the month’.

System is intransigent – resistant to change.

Short-term nature of programs.

Self-care Experiences

All reported wanting trusted, caring, non-judgmental support; people who understand and can empathise with their experiences.

All reported finding that the ‘criminal’ label is permanent and impacts on employment, volunteering, social networks, service responses, and people in the community (it is something that one has to accept as fact and few anticipated this when entering prison).

Any record is a criminal record and it impacts on almost everything.

Need for interpersonal skills training.

One person stated that you need to recognise that you changed a lot in prison.

Need to cut ties.

Need to manage agoraphobia and other fears.

Several interviewees cited having a counsellor (mental health worker, GP, psychologist) who had assisted or continued to assist them with adjustment to life out of prison and other more serious issues.

Several interviewees cited the value of having a Mental Health Plan.

Continuing prior relationships with healthcare workers (GPs, others)

Several interviewees described having either a peer mentor or a non-peer mentor who was a very helpful if well-matched (most cases).

The experiences and observations reported in these ‘empathy’ interviews are highly consistent with what has been reported in the international literature on post-release reintegration in Australia and internationally. Further, because those comments are specific to local people and local conditions, they help provide an understanding of the local context in terms of conditions faced by individuals and their families and the current state of support availability.

Co-design Workshops

As part of the co-design methodology, a series of three two-hour workshops was conducted. Specifics of how the workshops were conducted had to be revised due to COVID-19 restrictions such that face-to-face workshops were replaced with Zoom-based workshops. The workshops were conducted in July and August, 2020. In general terms, the focus of the workshops was to inform participants of the purpose of the project (development of a model of local integrated support network for former prisoners and families) and to obtain their perspectives on the idea as a whole as well as obtain their insights regarding how this could be constructed and how it might work.

Outcomes of the co-design workshops have been analysed on two levels. First, we present major themes that have been extracted from the three workshops together and sub-themes within each theme. Next, we present summaries of each workshop and outcomes specific to that workshop considered on its own. Within the workshop sessions, the term “justice-involved people” was used rather than making specific
reference to prison experience or criminal history. In opening each workshop, the facilitator did ensure that participants understood that the model being developed was intended to meet the needs of people exiting prison, so clarity of purpose is assured.

**Major Themes Emerging from the Co-design Workshops**

Three high level themes emerged from the co-design workshops when the content is analysed together. Those themes include: Individual and Family Support Needs; Service Provision; and Community Conditions. Within each of the three major themes, several sub-themes have been identified:

**Individual and Family Support Needs**

- The transition from prison is incredibly difficult, anxiety provoking and overwhelming.
- Many justice-involved people do not access support services for a variety of different reasons including lack of trust, negative past experiences, being judged, sense of shame, not knowing where to get Geelong-specific help, and cost can be a barrier.
- There should be a focus on treating justice-involved people as humans, with human needs. Although their histories are often complex, their need for empathy, understanding, trust, respect and someone believing in them are actually quite simple and clear.
- Many justice-involved people are relying on family support when leaving prison, putting additional pressure on families. There are very few specific services for families available to support them in this.
- Family support is a critical factor to success for many people.

**Service Provision**

- A holistic approach is critical to supporting justice-involved people; focusing on what a person needs in order to be well, rather than what’s going to stop them from committing crime.
- This (the support network model) is a very different approach, but was consistent with feedback from justice-involved people and service providers (and is supported by newer research that suggests the “supervisory” approach is not as successful as a supportive/community approach.)
- There is a strong need for Geelong-specific supports. There is a definite need for the network, as it will allow people to access the supports they need to effectively/successfully integrate into the community.
- There are several valuable services and professionals in Geelong; however, organisations in relevant fields (AoD, mental health, etc.) are not always informed on how to work with justice-involved people.
- Skilled workers are essential in providing the support needed for individuals to successfully transition back into the community. Key attributes are knowledge and understanding of the issues justice-involved people face, knowing how best to engage with them, and working with their individual (human) needs.
- Collaboration is working in pockets and between individuals who build relationships; however, organisations could do more work to put systems in place to strengthen their collaboration for better outcomes for justice-involved people.
- Some services are judgemental and punitive, pushing justice involved people away.

**Community Conditions**
• It’s very difficult to integrate back into the community without strong community support. There’s a significant role for the community to play in this through positive engagement and a welcoming approach.
• It is very emotionally difficult to transition back into the community and the community stigma is still very powerful.
• There is a divided response to justice-involved people within the North Geelong / Corio/Norlane community; some community members hold very conservative and negative views.

Outcomes and Observations from Each Workshop

Co-design Workshop 1 was conducted online on July 23, 2020. Eleven people from a variety of relevant community services within the North Geelong region (some with headquarters in Melbourne, but operating locally) attended, contributing their thoughts and expertise. The number of participants was kept small to enable group discussion via the online platform.

The workshop was facilitated by Erin O’Donohue of Hive Collective. After introductions, an overview of the project was provided, including description of the Human Centred Design approach, after which the Project Manager shared results of the Empathy Interviews that had been conducted. Following that, there was a group activity focused on “The justice experience: Identifying wants and needs, barriers and critical services for those going through the justice system.”

Outcomes and observations from Workshop 1 included:
• Hope vs false hope. Hope is an important element of surviving the justice system; however, experiences of others can colour expectations and, particularly where the hope is false, can do damage.
• Generally, the needs and desires of justice-involved people are not primary in the design of programs delivered by services.
• Although there are nuances in individual experiences, there are consistent frustrations being experienced by justice involved people across the system and from state to state.
• Even programs with positive outcomes often don’t seem to last and/or come up against funding challenges.
• Some of the proposed changes may need legislative change to support the sharing of information across services.

Co-design Workshop 2 was conducted on August 26, 2020. A total of seven people attended. The focus was again on the experience of service and support providers. The workshop was designed to understand how we might gain a better understanding of the current supports and services available to shape development of a leading practice/support network that provides positive outcomes for people involved in the criminal justice system. The group discussed the experience of providing support and services to justice-involved people. Participants were asked to put as many ideas as possible into Slido (an online data capture tool), answering the questions: What’s working well?; What’s not working?; and What’s getting in the way (barriers)?

Outcomes and observations from Workshop 2 included:
• Consent protocols will be needed to share information.
• Job/case vs relationships basis of ‘treating’ people is an issue. A relationship basis is needed.
• Collaboration among service provider members will be essential.
• Generational support, involvement of family is important.
• Adjusting expectations to fit abilities, capacity, and readiness (both ways).
• Assistance navigating the system is a common need.
• Limited support periods is problematic with many programs, providing short-term support.
• Need for more Geelong-based support services.
• Housing is critical; ensuring that the basic safety/security needs of individuals are met, would make a huge impact on their ability to integrate into the community.
• Geelong-specific funding would make possible collaboration, a collective response, support for both pre and post release, a handing of the baton between service providers, and a long-term focus.
• Funding in general is key to ensuring ongoing support and the success of interventions and programs.
• For young people in particular; intense family focus and support are needed, getting them engaged in education, addressing family trauma and breaking intergenerational patterns.

Co-design Workshop 3 was conducted the next day on August 27, 2020. Six people attended. The focus was again on the experience of service and support providers. As with the second workshop, Workshop 3 was intended to further our understanding of the current supports and services available in order to shape the network model development. The group discussed the experience of providing support and services to criminal justice-involved people. Participants were asked to put as many ideas as possible into Slido (the online data capture tool), answering the questions: What’s working well?; What’s not working?; and What’s getting in the way (barriers)?

Outcomes and observations from Workshop 3 included:

• Community stigma is a very common issue.
• Collaboration among service providers is not very common and very much needed.
• Need for change in both community and Department of Justice attitudes toward former offenders.
• Obligations associated with parole conditions and court orders can be overwhelming.
• Program funding restrictions can create ineligibility.
• There is great potential, possibilities and opportunities that could be realised in the development of this network by bringing people together to break the cycle of reoffending and recidivism. There is certainly a need, and there are many clients who would benefit from the type of support the network can provide.
• Listening to and treating each person as an individual and setting them up for success is important.
• The network should include information sharing between providers, wraparound services and connections and personal referrals that don’t leave an individual needing to find the way on their own.
• Transition points, providing pathways for those being supported is important. DHHS is currently doing some work in this space and are happy to share terms of reference and a support framework that has been developed and includes: 1. A health and wellbeing basis; 2. Housing; 3. Family, Culture & Community; 4. Employment; 5. Education. This could also be a great fit for the network.
• Involvement of government departments and decision makers should be early and ongoing.
Expert Panel Contribution

An Expert Panel Group was formed as the co-design workshops were being concluded. The group had four members; two male and two female, who are local to the area and have lived prison experience. The role of the Expert Panel has been to serve as representatives of prospective participants of the network once it is operational. By providing a participant perspective on all aspects of the development of the model, the Expert Panel has helped ensure that the model will effectively meet the needs of those for whom it is intended. The group has contributed by providing input into the work of the Project Team and the Governance Committee through including the Project Manager as an observer to their meeting discussions, providing feedback on the outcomes produced in each of the workshops, and by participating with the Governance Committee in a joint workshop, the outcomes of which are discussed further on in this report.

The First Meeting of the Expert Panel Group

The first meeting of the expert panel was conducted on November 10, 2020. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and an unreliable Internet connection on the day, the meeting was conducted via joint telephone with the two female members in the same venue. The male members were contacted separately by the Project Manager. In the first meeting, the Project Manager described the project, its purpose, funding, the co-design approach, the impact that COVID-19 was having and outlined the importance and value of the Expert Panel and how the group will be working with the Project Team and Governance Committee. After some clarification regarding which service providers were involved at this point, the group members confirmed their commitment to be involved.

Group discussion in the first ‘meeting’ was focused on issues related to life in prison as well as coming out of prison and post-release adjustment. Observations of life in prison included:

- Mentoring programs in prison are valuable. While many people benefit from the mentoring programs and have positive experiences there are occasions when the match isn’t a good fit. For example if the mentor is too young and inexperienced or has very different life experiences. Some mentors do not have lived experience, but they are still able to provide support where and when it is needed. After release, some mentors continue to see people in their community, in the park or a café.
- There are lots of programs in prison that are useful and beneficial. Some of these programs could be run on the outside. There are life skills type programs such as how to cook for children and budgeting and financial advice.
- The support groups and counselling in prison can be useful but for many it is difficult to be open and truth because other people in the support groups may use information against you or the staff may report disclosures to corrections.
- People who do short sentences usually don’t get access to programs inside. They don’t get much support to prepare for release because there’s really not time enough for them to get that as it takes the system a long time to provide that support.
- The whole family is affected when someone goes to prison.

Observations of coming out and post-release adjustment included:
- The stress/anxiety of returning home after prison can be overwhelming. There is pressure on families related to difficulty in re-establishing trust and relationships and the pressure on them within their families.
When meeting people for the first time or going to services there is always the issue of when to tell them about your criminal record. While it is good for services to have an understanding of the issues facing justice-involved people you don’t necessarily always want people to know. Or at least you want to have some control over when they find out and what they find out about you. As soon as some people find out they treat you differently.

There’s a need for an understanding and non-judgmental ear. In some services it’s impossible not to disclose your criminal record, for example, employment services. However, you definitely feel like you get treated different to the people that don’t have a criminal record. Of all of the services, it is corrections and parole officers that are the most punitive and make you feel like you’re a bad person.

There are counselling services for specific needs such as drug and alcohol and gambling, but it’s harder to find access to general counselling which is really needed. On the outside it’s hard to find access to general counsellors who have an understanding of prison issues and also that are affordable.

It would be good if there was access to support groups on the outside where 4-5 people could get together and just talk about their experiences, people who have been through similar things. This way they wouldn’t feel so isolated.

Low self-esteem and sense of shame stays with a person.

Family support was critical for group members. Family members don’t know what to expect from prison protocols and how to manage their family member’s experiences. It is hard on families having to support their returning family member when they get out. Families need supports such as counselling that is suited to their needs. Family members would benefit from counselling from people who understand what they are going through, issues for people in the justice system, and they would also benefit from support groups of other family members.

Observations of community-located service experience included:

- People don’t like to go to service centres and offices. Really, most people would like a drop-in centre – someplace comfortable, where you can go to have a cuppa and a biscuit and a chat.
- Housing is ‘okay’ if you have a supportive family, but many people don’t. You can’t get out on parole without housing. It’s hard to find housing without a job too.
- Employment services have not been very useful for finding jobs. They don’t seem to know how to assist people with a criminal record. It seems like they keep you on the books without providing any job opportunities.
- Programs that provide AoD and mental health support are making a difference. They get people out on adventures/day trips, and they take people out for walks, and they do group work. They don’t accept the principle that once an addict always an addict. They have a strength focus which is better.
- Some people don’t like group work though because of the shame. Some people prefer one on one. Some people prefer one-on-one and find psychologists helpful.
- A good GP can be a great support especially if relationship established prior to prison and resumes after.
- It’s also the case that some people don’t want support. Some people prefer doing things their own way.
- Parole problems included officer turnover, punitive rather than helpful approach, and poor communication. Positive parole experiences were also
- VACRO supports families such as helping families with paying bills.
- Smaller services are often better. They are less corporate. It is good to give people choices whether they want to go with a large service or a small service.
• It is better when support is provided by people with real life experiences. There are a lot of people with no experience and no idea.

The Second Meeting of the Expert Panel

The second meeting of the Expert Panel was held on December 2, 2020 at Cloverdale Community Centre. This was the first meeting with all group members together and in-person (between COVID-19 restrictions). The Project Manager provided an update on project development and talked about some of the ideas that the Governance Committee has suggested regarding the shape of the network. The group stated that they are interested and willing to meet with the Governance Committee.

The main discussion during the meeting related to issues pertaining to the network and the need for a prison-community connection to facilitate transition as well as what will be important elements of the network.

Points made by group members about a prison-community connection to facilitate transition included:
• People need to make connections prior to release.
• People need a peer mentor type connection prior to their release so that they can continue it after release.
• People need to see a good example of what life can be for them. Not just to hear about it but to see it more concretely.
• Emotions are overwhelming at release. It is hard to make decisions due to the impact of stress. Exiting prison is a traumatic experience in itself. You are used to every decision being made for you. It is difficult to hear people and take in information.
• Mentors involved in the network could go into prison and establish connection/relationship; they could promote the network to people inside the prison.
• People need a sense of community. There is a sense of community in prison, and some experience a sense of loss of that community when they leave prison. If new community connections are not formed people may revert to previous community connections.

Points made about what will be important elements of the network included:
• Being community based and located in the community.
• Housing is the most critical issue. Many people can’t get released on parole because they don’t have housing. People may have good intentions when they get out, but without housing it is too hard. Or you have to go back to living where you were when you went in which is may not be ideal for making changes to lifestyle.
• It would be good for the network to start with small community organisations, as they may be easier to work with and are less corporate.
• People need to feel confident the network is not part of Corrections or they will not engage/trust.
• People need continuity of workers, less turnover. It is hard to build relationships if workers keep changing. Constant turnover of parole officers is a big issue. Many are ill-prepared for their jobs. You end up retelling your story each time.
• Some people return to Geelong, but some come to get away from Melbourne or their old life. So they may be new to Geelong. This is an issue too.
• What you look for in a worker is someone who has some experience and understanding.
• Peer mentors are so important. Non-peer mentors can be good too.
• People need immediate support on release, and this should be a priority. Both straight release and those on parole. Both men and women.
• People need help with transport and with getting a licence.
• Job creation programs are important, but people need time to find their feet before working.
• Some people in prison are very talented artists. Access to art programs outside, and opportunities to show art would be good.

The Third Meeting of the Expert Panel

The third meeting of the Expert Panel was held on March 3, 2021 at Cloverdale Community Centre. The Project Manager again provided an update on the project as well as a funding submission that had been made to the Department of Justice and Community Safety to fund delivery of the network. Members provided updates on employment and unpaid volunteering work. There were four topics discussed during the meeting: the network model development framework document (see Appendix 2); the prospect of the network providing referrals beyond network service providers; whether network coordinators need to ask about criminal records; and how difficult it is to get access to services and support in Geelong.

Discussion on the network model framework document:
• The group all had positive feedback on the document. They reported having no issues or concerns with it.
• It is important to identify the ‘disadvantage’ part of transition (all the elements). It needs to be named because it is real.
• The group likes the focus on families in the document.
• They suggest provision of ‘care packs’ when someone starts with the network. Care packs are great. For example, a Myki card, bus timetable, voucher for meals, soap, toothpaste, etc., referral information for Geelong services and a map.
• What people want is genuine engagement, and they can tell if it is genuine straight up.
• It will be good to have a poster or pamphlet to put up in the visitor centre at the prisons. Family members can contact the network or let the person in prison know about it when they getting out.
• It will be great if the network could assist people to get access to transport to get to appointments or to assist with getting phone set up, etc.

The prospect of the network providing referrals beyond network service providers was also raised:
• A local support group is starting for family members of a person with AoD issues. The leader is happy to take referrals from the network.
• The app/website called Ask Izzy has referral information for homelessness support and does have some Geelong information if you change the location to Geelong.
• Al Anon, the support groups for families of person with alcohol addiction could get referrals from the network.

Discussion addressed about how difficult it is to get access to services and support in Geelong.
• Waiting lists for housing are very long, and there is not even any emergency housing for young people who are homeless and have AoD and mental health issues.
• There is currently no support for getting birth certificate etc. This is particularly difficult when the person doesn’t even have a phone. There are young people they know who they have tried to help get support and housing, but have not been able to find any.
• Psychiatrists are impossible to get to see. None locally are taking new clients. The local women’s emergency housing place has closed down.

Discussion of whether or not network coordinators need to ask about a person’s record in order to assess and assist them:
• Asking about someone’s record creates shame and the potential to feel judged. Is it really necessary?
• Criminal record can be useful information to determine supports, but may not be needed. Is it possible to focus on what supports people are looking for and their strengths without reference to records.
• Ideally, it would be good to not need to ask this question. Most people will offer it up anyway, but it would be better to have an assessment process that does not rely on asking the individual. Communication pre-release would be helpful.

The Fourth Meeting of the Expert Panel

Due to difficulty of getting everyone together in between COVID lockdowns, the meeting was held in two parts, those able to meet in person met at a café and the other person met with the Project Manager over the phone at another time.

The revised draft of the Network model was sent to everyone via email before meeting. The feedback from all the members was positive. It was felt that the model covered everything it needed to cover. It looks good because it is clearly set out, seems straightforward, is easy to read and understand. Sets out the reasons for the network, what it will do and what it seeks to achieve. The principles are good.

There was discussion about the involvement of people with lived experience of prison in the implementation and operation of the network. It was felt that it is important for people with lived experience to continue to be involved and in particular in the governance of the network. Ideally, you would have two people involved on the committee because not all people who have been in prison are the same and have the same views and experiences.

It was felt that people with lived experience would be able to participate in meetings with representatives from Corrections if they were supported to do so and if there were more than one person with lived experience present. It was felt that it is fine to have people with lived experience and corrections staff at the same meetings because they need to be at the table in order for change to be achieved. Having people with lived experience on the Governance Group is a way of educating the other members and increasing mutual respect and understanding.

Support and training is important for people with lived experience who might participate in governance committees and so on. It is also needed for other members who will be meeting with people with lived experience.

All members expressed willingness to be involved in the future of the project. The project manager thanked them for their valuable contribution and undertook to send them all a copy of the final version of the model.
Governance Committee Contributions

As described above, members of the Governance Committee included senior managers and senior clinicians from local community service organisations willing to contribute to the network model development as well as members of the project team. Service organisations included on the Governance Committee include Department of Family, Fairness and Housing, Barwon Health, Department of Justice and Community Safety, Cloverdale Community Centre, SalvoConnect, VACRO, Deakin University, and Bethany Community Support.

Eight meetings of the Governance Committee were conducted between November, 2019 and June, 2021. Project progress reports were provided in each meeting, followed by discussion and planning of next steps, as well as occasional special topic discussions.

The First Meeting of the Governance Committee

The first meeting of the Governance Committee was convened on 26th February, 2020 at Bethany Community Support. The meeting began with a welcome. Members then introduced themselves and described their role and relevance to the project. Each registered strong interest in the project and experience in providing services to criminal justice involved clients. Next, the project itself was described. The project will develop a model of an integrated network of community supports for criminal justice involved people who reside in Corio-Norlane (see Appendix 1). The network is expected to involve developing a support plan for each individual client who will then be linked to relevant local services. The 18 month project, funded by Give Where You Live, was initiated by Deakin University and Bethany Community Support. It commenced in October 2019 with a completion date of March 2021. The Project Manager has been appointed and is based at Bethany Community Support. An internal evaluation of the project will be undertaken by Deakin University and a report documenting the process and the model will be produced.

It was announced that a co-design process would be employed to develop the network model. The high level plan for the co-design was outlined. It was described as involving workshops with service providers and interviews with service users between March and July 2020. A co-design consultant, from Hive Collective, a human centred design specialist firm, has been engaged to facilitate the co-design process. There was some discussion about the questions to be explored such as target service user groups (men, women, both, youth, level of risk of re-offending, parole vs straight release). It was explained that the co-design process will engage stakeholders in the design of the model to determine its function, values and vision, governance and management, administration (network coordination), roles and relationships, operations, eligibility criteria, etc.

The membership and role of the Governance Committee was outlined. It was agreed to provide advice and direction to the Geelong Integrated Network Project and to provide input into, and oversight of, the design of the network model. There was discussion about having a member from the local Aboriginal community organisation on the Committee. Although invitations were extended over time, this did not eventuate. On completion of the consultations and workshops, a Network Development Group comprised of key stakeholders will form to finalise the development of the network and to seek funding and recruit a co-ordinator (subject to funding).
The Second Meeting of the Governance Committee

The second meeting of the Governance Committee was held on June 20, 2020 via MS Teams as a requirement of COVID-19 restrictions. The Project Manager provided an update of project progress. Face-to-face co-design workshops and interviews were planned for April – June, 2020. These could not proceed due to COVID-19 and social distancing restrictions. Zoom-based, online workshops and interviews would be scheduled for July and August as an alternative. Commitment was made to providing a brief issues paper about network models (see Appendix 3) for discussion at the next meeting.

The Project Manager and Bethany Community Support manager met with the funding body to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the project and the need to extend the timeline for the project. Bethany Community Support then applied for an additional 3 months of funding to continue the project work until the end of June 2021. This application was successful.

The Project Manager also reported having interviewed eight people with lived prison experience. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. She summarised the key findings emerging from the interviews:

- Many people returning to the community after prison are not accessing support services at all. There are a variety of reasons including lack of trust in support providers, negative past experiences, fear of judgement, the triggering of a sense of shame. Not knowing where to access supports in Geelong is also a big issue. Many people leave prison with Melbourne specific service information only.
- People are reluctant to access services outside of their local area.
- The transition from prison back to the community is difficult, anxiety provoking and overwhelming. Did not feel adequately prepared for release.
- Some case managers are judgmental and punitive. People seek non-judgmental and non-punitive support - the need for empathy, understanding, trust, respect and someone genuine are consistently reported.
- Challenges obtaining suitable housing on release. Criminal record checks make it very difficult to find employment.
- When surveillance/monitoring is involved it is hard for people to be open, to trust and engage.
- Family is a key support. Many people rely on family support when leaving prison, putting additional pressure on families. There is a significant lack of services available to support families in this role.
- Skilled workers are essential - with knowledge and understanding of the issues people exiting prison have experienced – prior to prison, during prison and after prison – as well as how best to engage them and work effectively with their individual needs, and their families.
- It is very difficult to integrate back into the community without community support. Having supports located in community can help create a sense of belonging and inclusion.
- Large corporate office environments are intimidating. People seek flexibility in service delivery such as meeting in parks and cafes in their community.
- Information sharing across services is necessary to reduce the need for people to tell and retell different workers about their experiences.
Following that, there was discussion among the Governance Committee of features of effective service provision for justice-involved people. The following points were highlighted:

- There is a need to address service gaps.
- Services must apply an individualised approach.
- There should be no ‘closed doors’. If someone doesn’t meet criteria of one service, bring them over to another service in the network.
- A trauma-informed approach is needed. This should be a foundation/basis of service provision. Trauma is endemic in people in prison, so it is a core aspect of service response.
- Central co-ordination is an essential element. It strengthens relationships among providers and reduces the need for people to retell their stories over and over. It also allows centralised assessment and information sharing.
- We will need to ensure an ‘on the ground response’ and not be burdened with bureaucratic processes. If it is local, the network will be more accessible.

The Third Meeting of the Governance Committee

The third meeting of the Governance Committee was held on August 13, 2020 via MS Teams as a requirement of COVID-19 restrictions. The meeting began with a project update from the Project Manager. She reported that the initial online co-design workshop in July with 11 service providers with experience working with justice-involved people from a range of relevant local organisations.

The workshop explored the journey through the justice system and support needs at various points from arrest to 12 months post-release. Some of the key points raised in the workshop were:

- Justice-involved people need support from point of arrest.
- Justice-involved people often rely on support from family, however, this places pressure on families. Families need support to be able to provide support. Justice-involved people also need support with reestablishing/repairing relationships and in maintaining/strengthening relationships ie with children, parents, partner, siblings.
- They need non-judgmental support at all points of the journey, especially workers/support people who have an understanding of the issues they are facing/experiencing.
- Post-release, people need practical support such as getting to appointments and navigating services, assistance with basic needs, getting phone set up, etc.
- Frustration with meeting criteria for services or when good programs get de-funded is common.
- Lack of trust in services is common. The service may have not followed through in the past. People often feel like government services/systems have imprisoned them, removed them from families as children or removed their children from them.
- Retelling one’s story compounds shame.

The co-design consultant and the Project Manager had been working to reshape the co-design plan in light of COVID-19. It has become clear that it is not going to be possible to hold face-to-face workshops or interviews. Two more online service provider workshops are now planned for August to explore service provision, what challenges services face, what works and what could help to improve supports for justice-involved people. There are concerns about attempting to run online workshops with justice-involved people. It is harder to build rapport and to support people in an online forum.

Some of the people consulted for the project could be contacted to participate in an advisory panel. The Project Manager agreed to explore this further. It was also suggested that people with lived experience
from other parts of the country could be engaged who may already be experienced with this kind of advisory work because the issues faced are often similar. It was noted that it would be good to have a workshop facilitated by a person with lived prison experience. It was also suggested that post-workshop debriefing options be included. The Project Manager agreed to explore whether Bethany could offer this debriefing through its Gamblers Help team.

The Committee then heard that the Project Team were working with User Voice and Deakin to produce a lived experience webinar for service providers that would include three speakers with lived experience to be chaired by User Voice.

Following from this, there was discussion about cross-agency collaboration and network models. A summary document had been provided to committee members to guide discussion (drawing from a review of literature on cross-agency collaboration by the Project Manager, a literature review of network and hub model effectiveness produced by Deakin, and a ‘work in progress’ by Deakin which was extending the review of network models and virtual hubs). The discussion included these points:

- There are existing networks and collaborations in which organisations are involved; however, they are not specifically focused on working with justice involved people.
- The fact that they are not working well is why people are keen to be involved in this project.
- There are some fundamental differences in approaches between services that make collaboration difficult.
- There is a need to establish shared core values, overriding principles and purpose.
- Everyone needs a unique individualized response (an engagement encounter approach is used at the community centre).
- CEOs of organisations will need to support the network; a ‘sign on’ with formal agreements between participating organisations will be needed.
- A conflict/dispute resolution process will be needed.
- A virtual hub can operate as effectively as a co-located service model if they have close working relationships and data linkages.
- There is a great deal of interest within the Committee in further exploring the ‘virtual hub’ concept.
- The COVID-19 period has made virtual relationships and work seem more achievable. There are now more virtual workplaces and shifts in this direction.
- We will need data linkages to share information. Client permission to share data (client profile) between partner organisations will be needed. Privacy legislation impacts on what is possible.
- Further work is needed to establish guiding principles for the collaboration once network participation by organisations is determined.

It was agreed that the Project Team would prepare a discussion paper for next Governance Committee meeting on the topic of best practice in community re-entry programs.

The Fourth Meeting of the Governance Committee

The fourth meeting of the Governance Committee was held on October 1, 2020 via MS Teams. Material from the recent co-design workshops was discussed. The involvement of Hive Collective had concluded; however, the consultant and the Project Manager agreed to create a plan for continuing the co-design process throughout the project. This would involve establishment of a small expert panel of local people with lived prison experience to advise on continuing development of the model. The Project Manager
described the workshops, then presented a summary of outcomes. Representatives from approximately 20 agencies participated in the workshops.

The workshops focused on the experience of service providers and addressed the core question: **How might we gain a better understanding of the current supports and services available to shape the development of a leading practice network that provides positive outcomes for justice involved people?** Participants were asked to put as many ideas as possible into Slido (an online capture tool), answering the following questions: **What’s working well? What’s not working? What’s getting in the way (barriers)? What are the opportunities?** Prominent points related to those questions included:

- **What works?:** Family support, collaboration, peer and non-peer mentors, worker commitment, worker knowledge.
- **What’s not working?/What’s getting in the way (barriers)?** Community stigma, fear of engagement by both service providers and clients, lack of housing, limited support periods, siloed approaches, lack understanding, lack Geelong-based support, pressure on clients from obligations and monitoring. Barriers are criteria for programs, silos in government departments, lack unity, lack funding, organizational limitations that impact on relationship development with clients, Information sharing.
- **What are the opportunities?:** More housing, Geelong-specific funding and services, collaboration and communication between services, long-term support, engaging families and addressing family trauma, assistance navigating system, wraparound services with personal referrals, treat each person as an individual.

An overarching observation was that, “Great potential, possibilities and opportunities could be realised with such a network”.

The Governance Committee discussed the importance of the network having an advocacy role, and this was what was initially envisaged when the funding application was submitted. It was mentioned that there is a project in Albany, WA, that has been operating for 20 months that is a good example of such a Network. The Project Manager agreed to follow up with PIVOT to learn more about their model.

Next, the Project Manager presented a summary of key findings from the co-design process to date:

- Many justice-involved people are not accessing support services, for a variety of different reasons; lack of trust, negative past experiences, judgement, a sense of shame, they don’t know where to get Geelong specific help and cost can be a barrier.
- The transition from prison is incredibly difficult, anxiety provoking and overwhelming.
- A holistic approach in critical in supporting justice-involved people. Focusing on what that person needs to be well, rather than what’s going to stop them from committing crime.
- There should be a focus on treating justice-involved people as humans, with individual needs that is non-judgemental. Although their histories are often complex, their need for empathy, understanding, trust, respect and someone believing in them are actually quite simple and were consistently reported.
- Many justice-involved people are relying on family support when leaving prison, putting additional pressure on families. There are very few specific services for families available to support them in this.
- There is a strong need for Geelong-specific supports to be accessible. There is a definite need for the network, as it will allow people to access the supports they need to effectively/successfully integrate into the community.
• There are a lot of valuable services and professionals in Geelong; however, some organisations are not always informed about how to work with justice-involved people.
• Skilled workers are essential in providing the support needed to successfully transition individuals back into the community. Key attributes are a knowledge and understanding of the issues justice-involved people face, knowing how best to engage with them and working with their individual needs.
• Collaboration is working in pockets and between individuals who build relationships; however, organisations could do more work to put systems in place to strengthen their collaboration for better outcomes for justice-involved people.
• Long term support is needed by many people.
• When surveillance/monitoring is involved, it is hard for justice-involved people to be open and honest and to trust the worker.
• It’s very difficult to integrate back into the community without strong community support. There’s a strong role for the community to play in this through positive engagement and a welcoming approach.

After this presentation, the role and operation of the Expert Panel of people with lived prison experience was discussed. Four local people with lived experience agreed to participate in the group. The Project Manager reported developing a process for meetings and would hold the first meeting in November. Committee members discussed the value of integrating experts into broader governance. This will be discussed with the Expert Panel at their first meeting.

Committee members then discussed the paper, ‘What works in community based support programs’ which had been distributed with the agenda. They viewed the points in the paper as well-established and a good foundation for the development of the network. The assumptions outlined in the paper could be discussed with the Expert Panel to see if they agree. It was also pointed out that pre-existing trauma of justice-involved people has only really been acknowledged in past decade or so. This needs specific attention. The Committee also discussed issues of information sharing, and that it can’t always be assumed that this is in the best interests of the client. Information sharing processes need to be carefully considered and made very clear to all service providers and clients.

Next steps in determining directions for network development were discussed. It was suggested that it may be good to bring in some of the critical friends of the project such as Andrew Day and Stuart Kinner in discussions about the shape of the Network. They would be invited to a workshop. This did not eventuate due to COVID restrictions. The Project Manager provided updates to the Critical Friends group about the project and sought their input via email.

Finally, the Project Manager held a consultation with members of a metropolitan Melbourne women’s group focused on transforming post-prison experience. Five women who have been in prison participated. Key points raised included:
• Negative experiences with services are very common. Treating women differently if they have a criminal record is standard practice. Providing information without their consent to Corrections, police and DHHS/Child protection is common.
• It is difficult to trust workers and, therefore, difficult to be open and honest about experiences.
• There are concerns about a network taking referrals from the prison. They said that they would need information about what information sharing will take place.
• It will be important for the support network to provide advocacy for justice involved people with respect to the system. Advocating for clients with services and with the system is critical to ensure they receive fair and effective support.

The next meeting of the Governance Committee will be key for making some decisions about the shape of the Network model.

**The Fifth Meeting of the Governance Committee**

The fifth meeting of the Governance Committee was held on November 26, 2020 via MS Teams. The Committee welcomed a guest as well from a housing program. The guest described how the program provides prison housing services to the Melbourne Assessment Prison, the Judy Lazarus Transition Centre, the Melbourne Remand Centre, Port Philip Prison, Thomas Embling Hospital as well as Barwon Prison, Marngoneet and Karreenga.

The Project Manager provided a project update:

• An annual progress report and meeting was held with the funding body.
• Co-design work of the consultant has been wrapped up as the Hive Collective contract now ended. In finishing up, the consultant and the Project Manager developed a plan for continuing the co-design approach through the remainder of the project.
• The Expert Panel of people with lived prison experience had been established and a meeting was held in November.
• The Project Manager prepared a brief paper outlining key findings from consultations, workshops and interviews (see Appendix 4).

A brainstorming discussion was then held focused on key questions for network design. The **Who, What, Why, Where, When and How** of the network model.

The general points were made by Governance Committee members during this discussion included:

• Not many services specifically target justice involved people. For instance, mental health services may not have justice related issues as the focus on their work with people.
• People need to know that service providers understand their issues and are able to respond to them accordingly.
• The Productivity Commission just released a report on mental health which makes recommendations regarding people exiting prison. These should be incorporated into network conditions.

**Who should be eligible for support through the network?**

• The project originally was intended to address disadvantage and therefore a broad range of people could benefit from the Network not necessarily only those with justice involvement.
• We need to consider how to identify who to support without creating stigma for them or others who access the network.
• People exiting prison is an obvious target group. It could also include people with justice matters pending, those who have been out of prison for some time and those who are at risk of justice involvement.
• Interventions with young people have been shown to be most effective. However, there are some youth specific programs/networks in Geelong already.
• Most people don’t have a mental health plan when they leave prison.
• Ideally, the network could have an holistic approach and work with the justice-involved person and their family members. However, this is potentially a very large pool and it can be complex to work with a whole family.

What support services should be included in the network?
• We should bring existing services together, we are not recreating services.
• There should be multiple pathways in. We want to streamline processes at entry and referral.
• Critical supports are housing, GPs, mental health, AOD, financial management.
• A new service has been established in the north through Barwon Health North, Head to Help. They triage mental health. It is a walk-in, front door for mental health support providing immediate brief intervention and service system navigation. It could be a good partnership for the network.

How should the network and its members organise and deliver services?
• ‘Front door service’; welcome at the point of entry.
• A place-based approach to design and delivery is a strength.
• The Coordination Team doing needs assessment and makings referrals, advocating for clients in the system.
• The receptivity of the service is important. Having the right attitude and understanding the needs of people accessing the service. Justice-involved people can have a low frustration threshold and, therefore, need an immediate response. They need high receptivity, a therapeutic community, connection with others with the same experiences.
• The network could be promoted by existing services in prisons, but word-of-mouth with clients is a very effective way of promotion. If the network provides useful support, people will promote it to their networks.
• We need a cultural shift across the sector.
• How will the information be provided to clients? It needs to be easy to use/understand.
• Organisations need to sign up to a formal agreement. We could have core services and non-core services.
• Need clear information about what client information will be shared and with whom it will be shared. Consent needs to be given for any information sharing.
• It is not intended that the network coordination will do case management.
• The NDIS model is a useful approach in that it involves the client in an active agent role. There is shared responsibility between the client and the services.
• The network can establish a good referral list of suitable professionals and provide workforce development. Could provide training packages to GPs and psychologists.
• There could be a component of the network that responds to people on immediate release on the day of release or soon after. It would be great to have somewhere to send people on release.

Where will it be located?
• The network needs to be a place that people can go in their local community, such as Cloverdale Community Centre. It is in a great location and is already doing great work in this area.
• People are looking for connection and to feel welcome.
- A key role of the network is the coordination of the service delivery. Services need to be located close by (i.e. in the northern suburbs); there needs to be ease of access.
- Provisional psychologists could potentially access office space at the community centre to support clients of the network.

Next steps – The Project Team agreed to prepare a draft Network Model including co-ordination role and service provider membership for discussion/input at next meeting. Deb will send out prior to the next meeting.

The Sixth Meeting of the Governance Committee

The sixth meeting of the Governance Committee was held on February 18, 2021 via MS Teams. The meeting began with a project update from the Project Manager. The Expert Panel met face-to-face in December at Cloverdale Community Centre. Another meeting was scheduled for early next year (2021). Group members stated their continuing support of the project and in particular, the focus on community-based supports located in the Corio-Norlane community. Specific points highlighted by the group were:

- It will be good to start with a small number of services and some preference for involvement of small organisations. They are less corporate, but have knowledge of issues, and commitment to the work is most important. Need workers who understand client experiences and to have continuity of worker (less turnover than they often experience).
- It will be good to have an access point in the community somewhere like Cloverdale Community Centre where people feel comfortable to come. Access to peer mentors is important, and if they can connect with people in prison prior to release it is a good way to connect them with the network on release.
- Key supports needed are housing, mental health and AOD, gambling support, support for families, ‘real’ assistance with getting employment.
- Many people need immediate support on release, as the transition back into the community is most difficult at that time. Help is needed with transport, managing day-to-day activities like setting up a phone and dealing with Centrelink.

Next, the Project Manager reported that Deakin University had received a small grant from the Geelong City Council to run a webinar on justice-involved people’s access to community-based supports. The Reintegration Puzzle and User Voice developed and facilitated the webinar with presenters with lived experience including one from Geelong. The project promoted the webinar to stakeholders in the Geelong Integrated Network Project and over 30 local organisations attended the webinar amongst others from across Australia. This was seen as evidence of support from local organisations in engaging with the issues facing justice-involved people in the community. It was reported that a plan for holding a workshop bringing together a range of stakeholders has not proceeded due to COVID-19 restrictions.

After this, the Governance Committee discussed and provided feedback on the draft framework document describing the model of the network that was distributed prior to meeting. Comments by Committee members included:

- Principles and key features capture the work undertaken so far.
- There was discussion regarding how the co-ordination role would operate. Is it separate from the member services and what funding would be required for it?
• The original application for the project was to have this co-ordination role funded to support the collaboration of the member services. We need to start seeking funding for this.

• One of the organisations involved is likely to need to hold and administer the funding for the co-ordination role. It was suggested that Bethany would be well-placed to do this given they have held the funding for the current project. Bethany has a person who can assist with preparing funding applications.

• There are some possible options to explore for funding. For instance, the Victorian Government’s, Building Safer Communities Program, Crime Prevention Innovation Fund awards grants of up to $300,000 to not-for-profit organisations for projects that test, deliver or evaluate innovative community safety and crime prevention initiatives. Applications close 4pm, 15th March. The Project Team had applied for funding through this scheme already.

• We could also explore the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, which has a focus on rural and regional Victoria, the Ian Potter Foundation and Pip Wisdom Community Corrections Grants.

• Governance Committee members expressed interest in assisting in exploring funding options for the implementation of the network.

• We can seek in-principle agreement from organisations to be in the network subject to funding. We need to provide them with more information about what involvement in the network means for them including how it will benefit clients and their organisations (i.e. how it enhances reputation and fits with their mission and values etc). What will be the outcomes, how the model will differ to what currently happens (i.e. provides a different way of organising), how much it will cost them etc. A key outcome is collaboration. We need to outline how the collaboration will work.

• The key supports provided by the Network should include transition support such as provided by VACRO. This will be one of the core supports provided by the network. Other services will also be important such as Community Corrections. They may not be a core support service of the Network, but would be a key relationship and important in referral pathways.

• The knowledge/understandings outlined in the draft framework could include some understanding of the differences in roles, expectations and limitations between forensic justice and community services.

• Professional development and training will need to be delivered with the involvement of people with lived experience and tailored to the specific needs to the various organisations involved. Some will have better knowledge of the issues than others will. Currently this training does not exist, so it would need to be developed.

• The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing is streamlining processes. There is work commencing this year in Geelong in relation to Common Clients (health and justice clients overlap). This has been delayed due to COVID-19. This program will focus on young people and reducing their criminalisation, but also has a focus on the whole family unit. There are potential synergies between this project and the Geelong Integrated Network Project.

• The Power in You in Geelong are starting a program for newly released prisoners with similar approach/principles as the network. It focuses on developing life skills.

• Key services that could be invited to be involved as core members of the network for the establishment phase include TSA, Barwon Health, Bethany Community Support, VACRO, Cloverdale Community Centre, BCYF and Wathaurong Co-operative.
Finally, next steps were agreed. The Project Team agreed to meet to discuss funding options and prepare material for the funding application. The Project Manager agreed to develop material describing the project to give potential member services a document which outlines the benefits for clients and services and how the model differs from what is already being delivered. She also agreed to circulate the document to Governance Committee members for feedback/input. An additional next step will be to obtain in-principle support from interested organisations to be a formal part of the network (subject to funding).

The Seventh Meeting of the Governance Committee

The seventh meeting of the Governance Committee was held on March 29, 2021 via MS Teams. The meeting began with a discussion of Governance Committee members’ commitment to continue their involvement in network development and subsequent implementation. A clear intention to continue was communicated by members. A few cases of extended leave and re-deployment were reported with the assurance that those conditions would not impact on continuing commitment to the network.

The Project Manager reported on the recent meeting of the Expert Panel. The group met again in mid-March at Cloverdale Community Centre. They provided feedback on the draft framework document and were very supportive of it.

The Project Manager reported that the Project Team made a funding application to the Building Safer Communities Program in the Department of Justice and Community Safety. Thanks were conveyed to everyone who provided a letter of support. The application was for $300,000 over 2 years to implement the network. Notification of the outcome is expected in June.

Next, there was discussion in the form of feedback on the network overview for prospective service member organisations which was contained in a document distributed with the agenda prior to meeting (see Appendix 5). The document covered how the Network will operate, the role of member services, and benefits for network members, clients and community. A suggestion was made to add a point about the benefits of collaboration and reputational enhancement. There was also a proposal to conduct a workshop for stakeholders on network operation.

It was agreed that the Project Manager would send a copy of the funding application to senior managers within the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Department of Family, Fairness, and Housing for their respective interest in supporting implementation of the network and to meet with the Project Team to advance this prospect.

In a broad-ranging discussion, the Cloverdale Centre member confirmed a commitment to implementing the network as soon as possible. They have connections with many networks and organisations currently. The Centre is already working with Community Corrections to learn local outcomes. It was agreed that referral pathways need to take into consideration that AOD programs have one entry system that can’t be stepped around. Members of the Project Team were about to present a webinar on the network project for the Reintegration Puzzle webinar series on March 30. One member pointed out that statistics were showing that 70% of perpetrators involved with one of the local family violence services in Geelong are from 3214.

The Committee then discussed the need for a training package for service provider members of the network. It was agreed that it is necessary to develop training materials to provide professional development to relevant staff and managers in services that become members of the network. Ideally, this
would include a video with insights from people with lived prison experience about support needs and how best to support justice involved people. It was agreed that the Committee would explore possible funding avenues for this.

Finally, it was agreed that given the COVID-19 restrictions were easing, it would be good to get the Governance Committee and Expert Panel together face-to-face along with other key stakeholders to discuss operational aspects of the Network such as referral pathways, service agreements, information sharing protocols, needs assessment and support plans, etc. The Project Manager agreed to organise a half day workshop in May, 2021.

**The Eighth Meeting of the Governance Committee**

The eighth meeting of the Governance Committee was held on the 23rd June, 2021. The Project Manager gave an update on the final stages of the project. The application the Project Team made for funding to the Building Safer Communities Program in the Department of Justice and Community Safety was unsuccessful.

Due to additional delays related to COVID lockdowns and restrictions, the project was extended for another 2 months (to the end of August) using some unspent funds and some additional support from Deakin University. The time will be used to finalise the Network Model with input from the final Expert Panel meeting which has had to be rescheduled to July, and to explore other avenues for funding for the implementation of the Network.

Joe Graffam had drafted a comprehensive evaluation report which outlines the process of developing the model and all the steps taken in the project.

The meeting focussed on feedback on the draft model framework. A draft of the Network Model was sent to the Committee for review the week before. Key points from the discussion included the following:

It would be good for the document to specifically refer to the organisations that have been involved in the Governance Committee throughout the duration of the project. This recognises their contributions and the commitment of those organisations to the project. It highlights the strength of the partnership that would be involved in the implementation going forward.

There was discussion about the criteria for referrals into the Network. There needs to be a small number of participants for the trial to ensure there is the level of support that is needed. This does unfortunately mean we may need to turn some people away in the trial phase.

One way to determine who participates in the trial could be to work with people who are not in the Reconnect program. People who are not in the Reconnect program will have less access to supports and therefore more likely to benefit from the Network. While they are often very similar to people who do meet the Reconnect criteria, overall they may have slightly lower support needs or be less likely to have been involved in serious violence offences or sex offences. They are more likely to be classified as ‘general offenders’.

There was discussion about the most effective ways to ensure people with lived experience have input into the implementation of the Network. It was suggested that ideally they would be involved in both the Governance Committee and the Operation/Practice Group. It was felt that the Operations/Practice group was particularly important. There was some discussion about the need to ensure that people with lived
experience are remunerated and also adequately supported in their role. Having a group or panel such as in the family violence sector which has a caucus of people with lived experience who can be drawn on.

It was agreed that this was necessary and reasonable to ask service members to commit to being involved in both the Governance and Operation/Practice Groups.

Important for service member MOU to outline agreement about shared language, for example, avoiding terms such as ‘offender’. Protocols need to outline how services will relate to one another. In order for people with lived experience to participate in the committees other members of the committees need to be informed about how to support them to have a voice.

There could also be a role statement for people with lived experience to participate. Participation should benefit people with lived experience, for instance they could be provided with references and receive professional development. VACRO is currently developing a lived experience framework report.

The Project Manager asked if anyone had examples that we could draw on for documents such as the needs assessment, information sharing consent form, support plans and the service member agreement/MOU to please pass them on via email.

There are currently pilots being developed at a number of places in Victoria including Geelong to fund projects that work with Common Clients – clients of both Justice and DFFH. It may be useful to construct a service user profile to demonstrate how Network participants could fit this approach.

The new mental health service that will be established in Corio as a result of the Royal Commission into Mental Health in Victoria is an important development that may provide some opportunities for the Network.

The model will be revised based on the feedback from this meeting and the upcoming meeting of the lived experience expert panel. The final draft will be sent by email to committee members for approval.

Date for a launch will depend on COVID restrictions.

The Project Manager thanked everyone for their involvement in the Governance Committee and their commitment and support of the project.

Joint Workshop of Governance Committee and Expert Panel

The Project Manager convened a joint workshop comprising members of the Governance Committee, members of the Expert Panel, and participants from a range of relevant local service provider organisations. In her opening remarks, she drew attention to, “What is important is getting individual personal support and championing. It’s not just about getting access to services.” The cohort was divided into three ‘mixed’ groups, and each group was given a question to explore. After discussion and documenting of key points, the groups came together for a whole cohort discussion of the points collected earlier. The small group points included:

Group 1: How should we deal with shared information?
Different services will collect/want different information, and it will depend on whether the information is collected pre or post-release.

We need to determine what is essential (will it include CRN, release date, etc.?).

In-prison housing workers can recommend the network and refer people to it as part of their housing work.

We need to confirm of what can be shared with consent. That has to be determined.

A person’s living situation on release should be shared to assist with ensuring stability in housing.

What would service providers like to have (addresses, someone’s goals, necessary connections, etc.) and what do Corrections Victoria staff need/want to know?

In-prison information sources should be shared (Re-link, ATCs, Reconnect, etc.).

Exchanging information between workers and between agencies will avoid the need to retell histories and allow providers to become acquainted.

Sharing info with other services (with informed consent) will streamline processes.

Avoid retelling known information; that is very important to prospective network participants.

Engage whoever can help. Maybe involve in-prison peer listeners. Confidentiality issues have to be considered as well, though.

Prison chaplains, independent prison visitors are other possible sources of referrals and advocates for the network.

Informed consent vs really informed consent; we need to ensure that people really have some say over what information they agreeing to have shared and understand any implications.

**Group 2: Who will access the network?**

- Engage with people pre-release as well as post; throughcare is very important.
- Also involve family members in the transition and process and network services.
- Correctional facilities should engage with the network.
- The network co-ordinator will need to engage with community (e.g. pharmacists, real estate agents, etc.).
- People who will be able to support the success of the network will need to know and be aware of its presence and its work.
- It should be open to all, whenever they need it, not just for as long as they need it. There is risk in it being open to all, but this can be managed.
- The network needs to be person-centred rather than system-centred.

**Group 3: How do we ensure strong partnerships in the Network?**

- Keeping everyone informed and involved of network activity now and once implemented.
- Stay away from dynamics of them/us. Aspire to a collective identity.
- We all need to be aware that we are not here to fix people, but here to fix the system post-prison.
- With a shared values approach; we are equally invested, and that must be sustained.
- Shared accountability of all involved formalized with agreements.
- By ensuring that services are not stressing people out.
- By ensuring that the network is actually co-ordinated.
- By ensuring that services know their role in the network.
• By ensuring that the local service system does not prioritize compliance over the voice of the client/service user. This will be achieved through better listening.
• Good communication and a bit of compassion will lead to strong partnerships.
• To be involved in the network, members will need to be more than compliant with network ‘rules’; it will need to be elite at collaboration.
• This will require some upskilling of Corrections staff to provide some flexibility in dealing with people who still have orders to serve.
• Undertake professional development to assist services to know each others’ roles.
• Clear position descriptions for each of the roles will help hold it together.

In the whole cohort session to close the workshop, several general observations were made, and from those, four themes have been identified. Those relate to people’s ‘comfort’ with their support, engaging people with lived experience in the work, the management and performance of the network, and outcomes associated with the network.

Feeling comfortable with one’s support:
• Give people some space post-release, don’t overload them.
• A safe (everyone knows a bit and accepts me) inclusive place that will follow up on my needs. That will work to make sure I get the same treatment elsewhere. People feel respected, heard and increase in sense of wellbeing.
• Helping a client meet their needs. No longer require the service.

Engaging people with lived experience in the work:
• Ensuring lived experience involvement is embedded within network operation; in its evaluation/monitoring, feedback from service users, etc.
• Employing people with lived experience would make it more effective.
• Include lived experience of family members too.
• Training people with lived experience to be service providers.
• Scholarships to coach people into work.

Management and performance of the network:
• Holding forums for partnerships will help hold it together.
• Royal Commission on Mental Health recommendations, especially those relevant to AOD and community mental health, are important.
• Governance should remain a strong feature of the network. That will be critical.
• Mentoring should be a component of the services.
• How to manage child safe standards and working with children checks?
• Knowing what we want to achieve and how we will know we have achieved it.
• Improved access to mental health care – organized prior to release and appointment made ASAP. Will be achieved when there is a state-wide system that cover community and prison reavailable mental health appointments with change for pre-release meeting.
• Working together – coordinated effectively. The people coming through will tell us.
• Professional development of mainstream service to be able to support people leaving prison in a safe and empathetic way. People are reporting positive experiences engaging with mainstream services and there is less stigma around people with criminal histories.
Outcomes associated with the network:
- Reading a positive headline in the newspaper about the network or about justice-involved people.
- To move from talk to action; to see the network in operation. To hear stories from community about network impact.
- Members collaborating and supporting the network helping it flourish and be as best as can be. The same organisations engaged and together after a period of time reflecting and celebrating and evaluating.
- To access funding and put this program into play. When we are successfully helping people stay out of prison and helping them achieve their goals.
- Reputation and performance of the network will lead to it being accessed by local people in need of its services. Achieve longevity measured by generational improvement in local statistics and conditions and community engagement.

This component of the evaluation report has documented the various processes and the activities of the various stakeholder groups who were engaged in the co-design process and the generation of raw material contributing to articulation of the network model. From this point in the project effort shifted significantly to production of a stakeholder-agreed, co-designed model by the Project Team.

Work of the Project Team

The work of the Project Team is embodied in all that has been reported above. This has included conducting relevant research, recruiting prospective participants into the network model development process, coordinating all activities, recording all proceedings of workshops, meetings, and consultations, as well as participating directly in all aspects of the model development process. In the process of this activity, several outputs were produced which are listed below. In order to provide clarity on the ‘end point’ of the project in terms of where in an overall process does “development” end and “implementation” begin, a short section is included here which specifies activities NOT conducted by the Project Team because they are understood to be the initial steps of “implementation” of the network model.

Project Team Outputs

A good deal of the work of the Project Team has been described in the co-design component of this report. The outputs of the Project Team during that phase of model development included:
- Appendix 1. Geelong Integrated Network Project Governance Committee Meeting Discussion – Cross-agency collaboration and networks
- Appendix 4. Geelong Integrated Network Project: Key points raised in consultations, interviews and workshops with implications for Network design.
- Appendix 5. Network overview for prospective service organisations
Activities Not Part of Model Development, Part of Implementation

There are also several activities that were not included in the network model development process. These are each rightfully part of implementation of the model and bringing the network from development into practice. These activities are all expected to be part of the initial stage of implementation and include:

- Governance Committee recruit and appoint Network Coordinator and Team.
- Project Team and Network Coordinator complete the set-up of the Network office.
- Governance Committee, Project Team and appointed Network Coordinator together plan, promote, and present an official Network launch.

At present, funding is still being sought for implementation.

Program Logic and Model Coherence

The Network Model and its development have been reviewed in terms of adherence to co-design philosophy and methodology as articulated in the opening section of this report as well as coherence with the program logic that underpins the development of the local integrated support network model. An examination of the entire development process as described above and *The Geelong Integrated Network Model* document has been produced from that process.

It is important to note the impact that the COVID 19 pandemic has had on this project. Implementing a co-design methodology which ideally involves face-to-face meetings and workshops when these were only possible infrequently and intermittently throughout the course of developing the model that has been articulated and the concurrent process of bringing together interested prospective contributors to the network itself. That all members of the Governance Committee and those of the Expert Reference Panel have maintained their active, committed involvement is testimony to the value that they all continue to place on the principles of a place-based, co-designed approach as reflected in the model and to the implementation of the resultant network within North Geelong (post code 3214).

Adherence to Co-design Philosophy and Methodology

Analysis of *The Geelong Integrated Network Model* document demonstrates strong adherence to co-design principles and methodology. The process of model development included the use of an expert with specialist training in the use of co-design methodologies. It employed the use of both face-to-face and online workshops consistent with the principles and methodology. It engaged all key stakeholder groups throughout the development process. Prospective participating support/service provider organisations have been represented on the Governance Committee and together with the members of the Expert Panel, all being people with lived prison experience, they drove the decision making in model development. This is evident from the notes and minutes of meetings conducted that comprise the bulk of this report.

Coherence with the Program Logic
At the outset of the project, a desk top analysis plus survey of existing relevant local services indicated that currently, although there are a large number of existing services in the region, those services are to a large extent:

- disconnected from each other;
- unsure of the extent to which they are currently dealing with released prisoners who have returned to the community;
- not well-prepared to address the needs or respond appropriately to this group of prospective service users of their service; and
- often not receptive to engagement with this group.

The Geelong Integrated Network Model document and the model development process outlined in this report show that the Project Team, Governance Committee and Expert Panel recognized the need to address the issues identified in the earlier analysis and survey had revealed. The two documents demonstrate that the model will prepare participating providers to effectively assist people returning from prison and their families. It is also clear that the model and, more specifically the resultant network, does contain all of the elements identified in international and Australian literature as well as in the consultations conducted with people who have lived prison experience, as critical to success in reintegration within one’s community post-release. Of course, part of the program logic includes the need for a place-based, co-designed methodology and, as demonstrated in both documents and described above, the project has demonstrated that it has embodied these elements all along.

The Model Articulation Document (Part 2 below)

The document which articulates the network model, The Geelong Integrated Network Model, is structured to effectively describe and explain all aspects of the model including:

- Purpose and Rationale
- Identified Benefits
- Description of the Development Process
- Description of the Model, Its Features and Functions
- Underpinning Principles
- Model Structure
- Network Coordination and Its Functions
- Measuring Effectiveness

It is the view of the evaluator that the document does so to a very high standard. It is well organised, well written, and true to the development process and decision making described in this report. What is articulated is a relatively low-cost solution that can bring together and hold together local resources that are important to people returning to their community upon release from prison and their families. It articulates a solution with the potential of minimising stress and impediments for participants and providers of support services by improving preparedness of providers and by assisting participants in accessing those services through development of an individualised support plan and a coordinated introduction into the network.
Final Comment

In closing, it is important to point out that from the outset, an explicit intention has been to produce a project report that will serve, in complement with the articulated model, as a means of implementing a network like the one described herein. This report lays out the process for developing a network, not just the model. *The Geelong Integrated Network Model* document lays out the elements of such a network. The focus on North Geelong, more specifically, Corio-Norlane, has been based on that post code being one of Victoria’s 2% of post codes which together contribute 25% of the state’s prison population. We strongly encourage people from other communities likewise contributing substantially to incarcerations to begin the process of developing and implementing a local integrated support network like this for people returning from prison. Nobody knows better and nobody cares more than the people who live in the local community.
References


Western Australian Council of Social Services, 2016. “Co-design Principles to deliver community services in partnership in WA.” WA Council of Social Services.

Appendix 1

Geelong Integrated Network Project Governance Committee Meeting
Discussion – Cross-agency collaboration and networks
August 2020

The primary purpose of the Geelong Integrated Network Project is to design a model for a network of supports for justice-involved people residing in the Norlane-Corio area. The aim is to enhance community integration of justice-involved people to improve their wellbeing and reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Without effective support, approximately 50% of people leaving prison return to prison within 2 years.

What community supports are currently available for justice-involved people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Cultural services</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>Cultural services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>Disability services</td>
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<tr>
<td>General health</td>
<td>Family violence (perpetrators &amp; victims)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment services</td>
<td>Financial support and material aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family support</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer mentoring</td>
<td>Gamblers help</td>
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<td>Legal services</td>
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Cross-agency collaboration

People involved in the justice system have multiple, and often complex, interconnecting support needs. Addressing these needs requires accessing a range of supports and services across the health and social services sectors. Cross-agency collaboration can assist clients with multiple and complex needs to receive adequate and effective support.

Barriers to cross-agency collaboration

- Inadequate resources - lack of funding for collaborative structures, such as employing a key person in each organisation or joint-funded activities between organisations.
• Different conceptual frameworks - different sectors employ different conceptual frameworks for understanding the nature of client issues and how best to address them.
• Different policies and practices
• Lack of organisational support - a lack of shared objectives and planning to unite efforts between organisations. A lack of organisational guidance or training for practitioners.
• Lack of knowledge/understanding about how other services operate.

Features of effective cross-agency collaboration

• Shared vision and commitment – Cross agency collaboration is enhanced by establishing shared understanding of how it makes a difference to the lives of those receiving support, their families and the broader community. Values alignment for addressing social problem.
• Shared knowledge of how other services operate
• Information sharing
• Leadership and an authorising environment
• Formalisation – clarity regarding operation of roles and responsibilities
• Involvement of users – users voice/input
• Relationship and trust-building
• Co-ordination
• Sustainability
• Overcoming bureaucratic competition
• Benefits for both the target group and the individual organisations

Features of effective cross-agency collaboration specific to justice-involved clients

Throughcare – flow/integration between pre-release and post-release support

• Long-term/ongoing support/case management
• Non-judgmental practice
• Trauma informed practice
• Capacity building service providers about experiences and needs of this client group
• Importance of peer mentoring
• Improved responses to complex and inter-related needs of clients

What is a Network?

A network is a broad term that can imply a loose affiliation or more formal structure. It generally refers to a group of services or organisations that agree to work collaboratively with one another to achieve common goals. In some cases, networks have formal frameworks with MoUs, agreed procedures and protocols.

Co-located service delivery vs virtual hubs

Co-located service models or hubs involve cross-agency collaboration to provide a one-stop-shop for clients. Traditionally, they involve the physical co-location of services such as the Youth Junction,
Sunshine. However, hubs can also exist virtually. Developments in technology make virtual hubs more achievable. A virtual hub can provide an access point to a range of support service and programs in different locations.

Hubs can promote service collaboration through central coordination and resource sharing; generate local identity and connection; capitalise on local community assets that promote health and well-being, and enhance relationships between community stakeholders to strengthen common values and promote shared goals (Casey, 2018). The key features of hubs may not be dependent on physical co-location of organisations, but the integration of diverse services and sharing of resources to meet the needs of the clients and the community.

There are existing examples of hubs that involve inter-agency coordination without co-location such as the East Kimberley Family Violence Hub.
Appendix 2
Draft Framework - Geelong Integrated Network:

A Model of Local Integrated Systems of Support

Geelong Integrated Network

A coordinated system of community supports provided by cross-sector partner services working together in a virtual hub.

Purpose of the Network:

The purpose of the Network is to coordinate and integrate community based supports to improve the health and wellbeing of justice-involved people, and facilitate their successful integration within the community. The Corio-Norlane postcode (3214) is one of the 6% of postcodes contributing 25% of Victoria’s prison population. Demonstration of effectiveness of this model can also serve to promote system change across the state jurisdiction.

Who is the Network for?

Primarily, the Network supports Corio-Norlane residents who have been, or are at risk of being, involved in the criminal justice system. Secondarily, the Network supports the families of primary Network-users.

The Network provides support for people of all ages and genders, including those with multiple and complex needs. Priority is given to those who have recently been released from prison (both straight release and parole).

What support does the Network provide?

The Network facilitates access to a range of supports across the health and social service sectors. The Network will start with core member services from housing, mental and general health care, drug and alcohol treatment, family services, disability services and peer mentors program. It will seek to broaden the Network over time to include services such as employment, material aid, education, gamblers help, financial management, vocational training, and support groups.

Key features of the Network:

- centrally located - place-based point of entry in Norlane-Corio
- a (virtual) hub of coordinated supports and services
- formalised cross-agency collaboration of existing services
• central co-ordination provided by a Network Co-ordination Team
• benefits for both the target group and the organisations providing support
• provides intensive and sustained wraparound supports that address multiple, complex and interrelated support needs
• provides individualized, holistic, flexible and long term (when needed) supports
• people with lived experience are involved in the design and implementation of the Network
• builds the capacity of member services to provide effective and sustainable support to justice involved people
• considers the support needs of family members who are also providing support
• overseen by a strategic group of senior managers and individuals – this includes representatives from the support services involved in the Network, people with lived experience and other stakeholders. There will also be an operational group of service managers and practitioners to facilitate case conferencing and practice issues.

Principles underpinning the Network:

➢ The needs, experiences and views of justice-involved people are central to informing decision-making and practice.

➢ The model and its implementation are co-designed.

➢ There is shared ownership of the Network between the services providing support.

➢ There is a shared vision/values alignment of services in the Network. This includes a shared valuing of the ‘target group’ as people who have been disadvantaged and are entitled to support in the process of integration within the community. This also involves a shared understanding of how the collaboration is making a difference to the lives of those receiving support, their families and the broader community, as well as a shared commitment to improving responses to justice-involved people by providing non-judgmental, appropriate, informed, integrated and responsive support.

Members share a knowledge/understanding of:

• the impact of multiple disadvantage on justice-involved people and their lived experience
• the traumatic impact of imprisonment
• the problems/challenges with accessing the service system
• effective ways to engage and support people that takes into account the ways that gender and diversity affect access to support
• how member services operate and how to work collaboratively.

➢ Knowledge is obtained through professional development for staff and management across the participating support services, which draws on the lived experience of justice-involved people.

➢ Sharing of relevant information across services with informed consent.
Commitment to provide support in people’s community such as in their homes, cafes and even parks as well as in an office setting.

Recognition of the value of throughcare (flow/integration between pre-release and post-release support) and commitment to ensuring throughcare processes are operating effectively with the Network.

Recognition of the importance of the involvement of peer mentors in the operation of the Network. Ideally peer mentors establish connections in the prison with people who they can refer to the Network for post-release support.

The Network Co-ordination Team

At the core of the Network is a Network Coordination Team (NCT) responsible for the coordination of the Network, general case management of individual support plans and relationship management with Network support providers.

The role of the co-ordination team is to provide:

- a single, consistent and trusted point of contact for the person being supported (MEAM 2019)
- a non-judgmental, welcoming and informed response - hands-on support that can assist people engage with, and navigate, systems and services
- an individualized needs assessment and support plan - identifying individual resources and support needs in consultation with each person to develop a support plan and pathways for implementation. Assessment and plan focus on individuals’ strengths and aspirations as well as their problems (MEAM 2019)
- family support plans where suitable
- reliable and appropriate referrals, and advocate for client with support services
- an immediate response for people on release and for those with multiple and complex needs;
- monitoring and review of progress with support plans and their effectiveness
- communication and exchange of information with Network members (with consent)
- training for service providers and other professionals such as GPs and psychologists to ensure that staff in all services working with Network clients have an understanding of trauma and strengths-based approaches.

Network Coordination Team members will (adapted from MEAM, 2019):

- have the skills and values needed to understand the whole system, be valued by clients and services, and be able to operate at the individual and strategic level
- be ‘service neutral’ and work outside single organisational boundaries
- have the time and flexibility to build trust and positive relationships with individuals
- work in a trauma-informed way, with a good understanding of how trauma and abuse may have impacted on people’s lives and how it affects their current behaviours
- capacity to engage clients with multiple and complex needs and to work with cultural integrity
understand that the work is about changing systems and not just providing support
have the skills to provide general case management involving individual needs assessment, assistance in connecting with providers, and assistance with crisis-related needs.

The co-ordination team will establish a good referral list of suitable professionals and develop collaborative relationships with those service providers. They will report directly to the Network partnership and are not associated with any existing service.

The Network Coordinator will convene/facilitate the governance group (strategic board of senior individuals and managers to oversee the Network coordination) and the operational group (of service managers and practitioners to facilitate case conferencing and practice issues).

Ideally, co-ordination team members will have a small caseload to ensure effective responses to people with multiple support needs.

They will have the seniority and confidence to request flexible responses from local agencies, with clear lines to managers.

Service membership:

Member services take part in the Network through a service agreement.

The service agreement will outline general case management involving individual needs assessment, assistance in connecting with providers, and assistance with crisis-related needs the:

- logic underlying the program
- operating principles
- practice protocols
- program eligibility
- roles and responsibilities of participating service providers, including what supports the service will provide, how many people they will provide services to, and over what period of time.
- roles and responsibilities of the NCT
- information sharing protocols and procedures
- benefits of being a member such as - improving service delivery to clients with multiple and complex needs, reducing recidivism for justice-involved people, reducing crime in the community, creating a more cohesive and safe community, improving collaboration and integration of the local service system, obtaining information about clients gathered from the assessment made by NCT (reducing need for retelling of story), access to secondary consultations with NCT and assistance with engaging clients; assistance for clients with transport to appointments; minimizing duplication and thereby lowering operating cost. The collective nature of the Network will allow service members to collectively seek resources for each other and for additional services that may be needed, but absent locally.

Services involved in the Network will commit to being a member of the leadership team and operations team, and to ensure workers participate in relevant professional development.
Resources required to support the NCT and the operation of the Network:

- referral pathways
- information sharing protocols and processes
- a needs assessment process and template for support plans
- referral agreements with non-core organisations outside of the Network
- throughcare processes
- service agreements
Appendix 3
Geelong Integrated Network Project Issues Paper
September 2020

‘What works’ in community-based supports for justice-involved people?

In Victoria, 50% of people in prison come from 6% of the state’s postcodes (Vinson et al, 2015). Norlane-Corio is one of the 2% of postcodes in which 25% of Victoria’s prison population previously resided. On release, most people return to the community they came from. There is limited recent Australian research on the experiences of people who leave prison and the challenges they experience returning to the community (Doyle et al 2020). However, we do know that some of the key barriers to integration include often interrelated issues such as housing, health, employment, education and social networks. A review of community-based programs in the US found interventions must address these risk factors in order to have the most significant impact (Price-Tucker et al 2019).

Almost 50% of people exiting prison will be re-incarcerated within two years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Reductions in re-offending can be achieved through evidence-based, community-led approaches to providing support (Qld Productivity Commission 2019). Enhancing support programs is an important strategy to improve the quality of life and reduce the risk of people returning to prison (Johnson & Cullen 2015). The presence of nearby service providers such as those providing housing and transportation can significantly reduce the likelihood of reoffending (Hipp, Petersilia, and Turner 2010). However, there are limitations in terms of availability, receptivity and accessibility of community-based support services for people leaving prison (Graffam et al 2019).

**Key support domains**

Corrections Victoria (2017) outlines seven critical domains for maximizing successful outcomes from programs assisting people to reintegrate into the community: housing, employment, education and training, independent living skills, alcohol and drugs, mental health, and family and community connectedness. These key domains emerge consistently in the national and international literature as being key areas for prioritizing support. Programs that focus on singular needs may be less effective than comprehensive programs that are multi-faceted and target more than one area of support need (Green et al 2019).

**Housing**

Access to suitable and stable housing has long been recognised as a key factor for successful re-entry programs (Willis 2018; Doyle 2020). Housing is a priority because a stable environment is necessary for health and wellbeing, connecting with family and kin, and for pursuing employment or education (Elkadi; Kanoa, Harrison, (2017). Difficulties obtaining housing compound other barriers to community integration.
such as obtaining employment, drug and alcohol issues, and other health and social needs. A 'housing first' approach has been recognised internationally as critical for addressing the needs of vulnerable people (Schwartz et al 2020). Many successful programs provide housing in combination with other services, such as employment services, health services and socio-emotional skill development (Price-Tucker et al 2019). ‘Supportive housing’, a model that includes case management, mental health treatment, substance use treatment, and vocational training, can enhance stability for those with mental illness, substance use disorders, and those who are chronically homeless (Green, 2019).

**Employment**

Employment is linked to successful reintegration (Baldry et al, 2018). However, there are many barriers to people obtaining and sustaining employment after involvement in the justice system. Effective employment programs do more than provide jobs. They provide additional services such as case management and mentorship (Green 2019). Community-based programs that focus on providing both training and job placement services using a holistic approach are the most effective (Price-Tucker et al 2019).

**Education, training and skill development**

Many justice involved people experience a lack of education and work-related skills (Baldry et al 2018). Less than 14% of prisoners have completed secondary schooling and many have low literacy and numeracy (Victorian Ombudsman 2015). Community-based organizations can provide skill development programs. Interpersonal skills programs such as anger management, time management, goal setting and parenting are most important (Price-Tucker et al 2019). Cognitive Behaviour Therapy has been shown to be effective (Khodayarifard et al 2010; Justice Action 2012) as it can assist with developing problem-solving skills and coping strategies.

**Health**

Prioritizing the provision of quality health care that addresses mental health, physical health, and substance use is critical for achieving health and wellbeing after justice involvement (Price-Tucker et al 2019). On the whole, incarcerated people have a range of health issues such as diabetes, acquired brain injury and mental health issues. Forty per cent of the Victorian prison population has been assessed as having a mental health condition, ranging from psychotic disorders to depression and anxiety (Victorian Ombudsman 2015). There are strong links between substance misuse and involvement in the criminal justice system. Over 75% of men and 83% of women in prisons report previous illicit drug use (Victorian Ombudsman 2015). The provision of effective alcohol and other drug (AOD) programs is key to improving outcomes.

**Social Support**

Supports that specifically focus on the role of family connection and cohesiveness are important for justice-involved people. Organizations that combine services such as transitional living assistance with long-term family support have been found to be successful (Price-Tucker et al 2019). Assisting people to maintain connections with family and friends while in prison aids their transition back into the community. Successful justice reforms in Singapore have had a strong emphasis on family and societal support through educating and engaging the community to improve the public’s acceptance of justice-involved people (Leong 2011).
Key features of effective support programs

There are several features of community-based supports that have been found to be effective in achieving successful outcomes for justice-involved people.

Wraparound support

Holistic approaches with comprehensive wraparound services that address multiple support needs such as drug and alcohol issues together with assistance with housing, education, employment, community engagement and mental health are vital to reintegration (NSW Legislative Council 2018; Semenza and Link 2019). Comprehensive programs often provide case management services. Families often play an integral role in assisting people to reintegrate into the community after incarceration. Therefore, it is important for wraparound services to include support for families (Semenza and Link 2019).

Flexible and long-term support

The evidence highlights the need for a case management approach that provides flexible individualised responses (Schwartz 2020). Having a flexible outreach model that provides support in people’s community such as in their homes, cafes and parks rather than in an office setting has been found to be effective for engaging formerly incarcerated people (CRC 2019). Extended case management of recently released prisoners is also beneficial. Long-term support is necessary to build trust and rapport, and it is preferably provided by one worker throughout. Continuity of care from a support person who will be there for the long haul can have a profound impact on willingness to engage, trust in the service, and ultimately successful case work (CRC 2019). Complex long-term problems often require long-term solutions (Borzycki 2005).

Specialist support

Given the many barriers that people leaving prison face in accessing support and integrating into the community, it is important that workers have appropriate skills for providing support (Leong, 2011). This includes a comprehensive understanding of their experiences and needs such as past traumas, AOD and mental health issues as well as having skills in providing practical support with matters such as negotiating requirements of parole, Centrelink, housing, child access, and employment (Bruns 2010; Nisbett 2020). Incarceration itself is a highly stressful experience that can result in stress and trauma (Semenza and Link 2019). Workers need to have capacity to engage clients with multiple and complex needs and to provide support in a non-judgmental way. Current thinking about principles to guide work with justice-involved people includes ensuring that program providers are trauma informed, gender informed and have cultural integrity (ACT Govt).

1 The Community Restorative Centre (CRC) in NSW provides specialist support to people affected by the criminal justice system. They focus on post-release programs for people with multiple and complex needs (CRC 2019).

2 The ACT’s Extended Throughcare pilot program which provided person-centred case management and support over 12 months reduced recidivism rates by 20 per cent (Queensland Productivity Commission 2018).
• A trauma informed approach involves understanding justice involvement in the context of experiences of intergenerational trauma, family and sexual violence, child removal, mental illness, disability, and socio-economic disadvantage.

• Gender informed practice involves understanding the specific issues and challenges for formerly incarcerated women including high levels of family and sexual violence victimization and specific issues as carers of children.

• Cultural integrity includes taking into account the unique systemic and historical factors affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Supports must be underpinned by culturally informed understandings of healing (Schwartz 2020).

Throughcare

Throughcare refers to support that starts when a person is in prison and continues after release into the community. Throughcare has been recognised as a best practice principle in supporting people in this transition (Borzycki and Baldry, 2003; Schwartz, 2020). Maintaining a continuity of care can reduce recidivism and improve health outcomes (Dyer and Biddle, 2013; Semenza and Link 2019). Strong interagency collaboration between key organisations is necessary for facilitating the interagency communications needed for effective throughcare (Willis 2018; Schwartz 2020).

Mentorship

Linking justice-involved people with mentors who share similar backgrounds and experiences has been shown to significantly reduce recidivism (Price-Tucker et al 2019). People with lived experience may provide a deeper level of understanding and empathy, and can act as role models. People with lived experience can be encouraged and supported to act as volunteers and peer mentors, but can also be embedded in senior management and leadership positions (Schwartz 2020).

User voice/input

It is crucial that people impacted by the justice system have a voice and be kept central to the development of interventions designed to improve their integration (Larson et al 2019). People with lived experience of the issues such as addiction, recovery, mental health and incarceration have expertise that can be drawn on across all aspects of service development and delivery.

Conclusion

It is well established that preventing reoffending requires a coordinated whole-of-government approach across justice, community and welfare services, housing and health (Schwartz et al 2020). When people who leave prison are welcomed by the community without stigma and discrimination, they are more likely achieve successful outcomes (Jasni et al 2019). A sense of community belonging and human connection are crucial (Schwartz et al 2020). In addition to assistance with meeting basic needs such as food, housing, employment and health services, many people also require support to assist them to repair harm and restore relationships with family. Providing support for the families of justice-involved people is an important aspect of a comprehensive wraparound program.
Appendix 4

Geelong Integrated Network Project

Key points raised in consultations, interviews and workshops with implications for Network design.

What works:
- Family support is primary support for those who have it
- When services collaborate
- Mentors - peer and non-peer
- Workers with commitment, knowledge and non-judgmental approach

What’s not working:
- Community stigma
- Fear of engaging with justice involved people by service providers
- Lack of trust of service providers from justice involved people
- Lack of safe, affordable and secure housing
- Limited support periods
- Siloed approaches – lack communication/information sharing
- Workers who lack understanding about experiences of justice involved people
- Judgmental and punitive workers and organisations
- Lack of access to information about Geelong based supports
- Fear of surveillance/monitoring
- Getting support from employment services
- Criteria for programs often too limited
- Organisational constraints that impact on relationship development with service users
- Turnover of workers

Opportunities:
- More housing
- Collaboration and communication between services
- Provision of long-term support
- Building rapport and trust with worker
- Exploring different ways of working such as meeting in cafes and parks
- Engaging and supporting families and addressing family trauma
- Wraparound services with personal referrals - assistance with navigating system
- Individualized and non-judgemental approach
- Engaging people with lived experience in governance and operations
- Advocating for clients with services and with the system
- Building capacity of orgs and their workers to engage and support justice involved people
- Drop-in centre where you can have a cup of tea, biscuit, access computers and printers etc
- Support groups
• Provide empathy, understanding, trust and respect
• A welcoming community that enables sense of belonging
• Not having to retell story

• Other issues raised by justice-involved people:
  • Concerns about referrals that may involve tracking and monitoring/surveillance. This makes it hard to be open and honest, and to trust the worker. Wary of networks that involve police and child protection. They want clear communication about what information is confidential, what may be shared, and with whom it may be shared.
  • Want access to support that is located in their community
  • Uncomfortable in corporate office environments and one on one in a confined space
  • Want focus on wellbeing rather than offending
  • Skilled, non-judgemental workers. Key attributes are a knowledge and understanding of the issues justice involved people face, knowing how best to engage them and working with their individual needs.
  • Participation to be voluntary
  • Family support is the primary effective support for many people. Are there ways we can support families in their support role?

Supports identified as useful or needed:

• Housing
• Family support
• GPs
• Mental health
• AOD
• Employment
• VACRO
• Family violence
• Mentor programs
• Education programs
• Gambling support
• Financial counselling and debt management
• Practical and material support – transport to appointments, setting up phone, dealing with Centrelink, furniture, clothes and food.
Appendix 5

Network overview for prospective service organisations

Geelong Integrated Network Project

Purpose

The purpose of the Geelong Integrated Network is to coordinate and integrate existing community-based supports to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals who return to Corio-Norlane after exiting prison.

Background

The Geelong Integrated Network project developed from a partnership between Deakin University and Bethany Community Support. The aim of the project is to design a model for a co-ordinated and integrated network of community supports for individuals exiting prison. The project commenced in October 2019 with funding from Give Where You Live. The project has been funded solely to design the Network model which is due for completion in June 2021. Additional funds are currently being sought to implement the Network model. Funding would provide for the appointment of a Network Coordinator, training of service provider members and the ongoing involvement of people with lived experience in the implementation of the Network.

The project has used a co-design approach which draws on a broad range of stakeholders including local service providers and people with lived experience of the justice system, to develop the Network model to meet the specific needs of people living in the Corio-Norlane area.

In Victoria, 50% of prisoners come from 6% of the state’s most disadvantaged postcodes. Corio-Norlane (3214) is one of those postcodes. When released from prison, most individuals return to their community. This project will address the need to support individuals exiting prison with their reintegration trajectory within the local community.

The model development has been informed by research evidence that suggests that an integrated local system of support that brings together key services such as housing, drug and alcohol treatment, mental and general health care, employment, disability services, family violence, education and vocational training, and other relevant supports is necessary for crime avoidance, desistance and successful reintegration.

A Governance Group comprised of members from Barwon Health, The Salvation Army, DFFH, Community Corrections, VACRO, Cloverdale Community Centre, Bethany Community Support and Deakin University are overseeing the project. An Expert Panel comprising local men and women with lived experience of prison have also been involved in the development of the model.

The Network Model
The Network model has been designed to meet the wide-ranging, complex support needs of individuals exiting prison. The project harnesses existing supports in the community, building the capacity of local services to engage and effectively support individuals exiting prison, and assist services to collaborate effectively to enable their (re)integration into the community.

The Network will be comprised of relevant services that provide supports as part of a coordinated response to individuals accessing the Network. The core service members of the Network will include: health services; housing services; employment services; drug and alcohol treatment; personal and family counselling; transitional services, and vocational training and education. The number of service members is expected to grow over time as the Network develops further in operation.

There is an access point in the local community through a Neighbourhood House that provides a welcoming environment and the potential for inclusion in community activities.

The Network will seek to support individuals exiting prison and their families. It will be available to both men and women who have been in prison and priority will be given to those who have recently been released. The implementation of the model is subject to funding and the number of clients that can access the Network will also depend on the amount of funding obtained.

Network member services will enter into an agreement that outlines the purpose, principles and protocols of the Network and commit to participating in training for relevant staff and managers about the specific support needs of justice-involved people.

**Network Coordination**

A Network Coordinator will be employed to coordinate the operations of the Network, undertake individual needs assessments, develop support plans, make referrals and manage relationships with service providers. Ideally, the coordinator will be located part of each week at Cloverdale Community Centre, in Corio.

**Benefits of the Network**

The project will have inter-related benefits for individuals accessing the Network, member services and the broader community.

Benefits for clients: Access to a network of joined-up services that provide wrap-around support for themselves and their families to obtain greater stability, social inclusion, and reduces the likelihood of re-incarceration. Not having to retell their ‘story’ to multiple service providers. Non-judgemental, holistic and strengths focused support.

Benefit for service providers – increased capacity to provide support to individuals exiting prison who often have multiple and complex needs. Central co-ordination to enable cross sector integration. Enhanced cooperation, collaboration and information sharing among service providers. Access to professional development and training. Being part of an innovative project that addresses disadvantage and crime prevention. Cross referrals may reduce administration costs and enhance client engagement.

Benefits for the community - reduced rates of crime and incarceration for local residents, creates a more cohesive and safer community. Reduced levels of family violence and other forms of offending, drug and...
alcohol dependence and untreated ill-health in the community. - improved capacity of community to understand and address the causes of crime.

Costs

There are no membership costs for services joining the Network. The Network model provides coordination and information sharing across services without the costs associated with co-locating. Participation would require commitment to participate in the Governance Group and to enable relevant managers and staff to attend training. Services will be expected to provide support services to a small number of Network clients each year, to liaise with the Network Co-ordinator and to adhere to the principles and protocols of the Network.
Part 2: The Geelong Integrated Network Model

*Coordinating community supports for justice-involved people in Geelong*

**Purpose of the Network**

The Geelong Integrated Network provides central coordination and integration of community-based supports for people returning to Corio-Norlane after prison. The purpose of the Network is to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and their families, and to facilitate their social inclusion in the community.

The model harnesses existing supports in the community, building the capacity of local services to engage and support individuals exiting prison, and assists services to collaborate effectively.

It provides people transitioning from prison with an access point in their local community to a holistic response based on their individual support needs and strengths.

*Innovative... local...community led...informed by lived experience*

**Why do we need a Network?**

Disadvantage is a key determinant of incarceration. In Victoria, 50% of people in prison come from 6% of the state’s most disadvantaged postcodes (Vinson et al 2015). Corio-Norlane (3214) is one of those postcodes. When released from prison, most people return to their community. Without access to effective supports, approximately 45% of those people will be re-incarcerated within 2 years.

People who have been in prison have disproportionally high rates of mental illness, alcohol and other drug (AOD) dependence, acquired brain injury and other disabilities. First Nations people are significantly over represented. Many people in prison are also victims of crime themselves. The experience of imprisonment can compound trauma and have detrimental impacts on mental health, family relationships, housing, employment and community connections. Consequently, people transitioning back to the community after prison have multiple and often complex, interconnecting support needs. Addressing these needs requires accessing a range of supports and services across the health and social services sectors. Cross-agency collaboration can assist clients with multiple and complex needs to receive effective support.

Evidence-based, community-led approaches to providing support are an important strategy to improve quality of life and reduce the risk of people returning to prison (Qld Productivity Commission 2019; Johnson & Cullen 2015). Research shows that there are key support domains for assisting individuals to integrate into the community including housing, employment, education and training, alcohol and drugs, mental health, and family and community connectedness (Elkadi et al 2017). Comprehensive programs that target multiple areas of support are most effective (Green et al 2019; Price-Tucker et al 2019).
An integrated local system that brings together key support services in a unified effort is necessary for successful integration into the community. The Geelong Integrated Network has been specifically designed to meet the wide-ranging, multiple and complex support needs of individuals exiting prison.

For further information, see the report prepared by Deakin University (Graffam, 2021).

Benefits of the Network

The Network will have inter-related benefits for individuals participating in the Network, member services and the broader community.

Benefits for participants

- Local access to a network of integrated supports including housing, mental health, AOD, employment, vocational education, and family services.
- Supports individuals and their families to obtain greater stability and social inclusion.
- Reduces the likelihood of re-incarceration.
- Reduces the need to retell multiple support providers about their circumstances.
- Participation is voluntary and supports can be accessed ongoing and when the need arises.
- Specialised non-judgemental support that focuses on health and wellbeing.

Benefits for service providers

- Provides central coordination to enable cross sector integration.
- Fosters collaboration across services to facilitate information sharing, reduce duplication of effort and promote effective engagement.
- Increases capacity to respond to individuals with multiple and complex needs.
- Access to professional development, training and secondary consultations.
- Co-ownership of an innovative project that addresses disadvantage and crime prevention.
- Avenue for lived experience informed service delivery.

Benefits for the community

- Builds the capability of the community to understand and address the causes of crime in their local community.
- Enhances community safety through reduced rates of crime and incarceration of residents.
• Reduces levels of family violence and other forms of offending, drug and alcohol dependence and untreated ill-health in the community.

• Creates a more cohesive community.

How was the Network developed?

The Network Model was developed through a co-design project implemented by Bethany Community Support, with funding from Give Where You Live. The design process involved interviews, workshops and consultations with a broad range of stakeholders including service providers and local residents with lived experience of the criminal justice system. A Governance Committee with representatives from Barwon Health, VACRO, The Salvation Army, Cloverdale Community Centre, Bethany Community Support, Community Corrections, the Department of Fairness, Families and Housing and Deakin University oversaw the development of the model. An Expert Panel of local men and women with lived experience of prison were also involved in the Model design.

The key themes identified from the co-design process highlighted the importance of:

➢ the role of the local community in facilitating social integration (community support)

➢ trusted relationships and interpersonal connection with support providers (relational support)

➢ support services and practitioners who understand the issues impacting on justice-involved people and effective ways to engage them (specialist support)

➢ a coordinated approach to collaboration and integration of support services (integrated support).

Community support

• The transition from prison to the community is difficult, anxiety provoking and often overwhelming.

• People leave prison with Melbourne specific service information and do not know where to access supports in Geelong.

• There is reluctance to access services outside of the area where people reside.

• When transitioning back into community life, practical and personal support is needed such as assistance with transport to attend appointments, set up mobile phones and bank accounts, liaise with services such as Centrelink and to re-establish family and community connections.

• Having support available in the local community creates a sense of belonging and inclusion.
• There is an important role for the community to play through positive engagement and a welcoming approach.

Relational support
• Relationships are key to effective support. The most valuable support post-release is a supportive person whether that is a family member, friend or support worker.
• People seek understanding and connection to others.
• Negative experiences and judgemental responses from support providers result in a lack of trust and willingness to engage.
• Qualities sought from support providers include being non-judgemental, non-punitive, respectful, and validating.
• Many people rely on family support when leaving prison. However, there are limited services available to support families in this role.
• Suitably matched peer mentors are highly valued as an effective support.

Specialist support
• Housing is a critical support, particularly for those who do not have pre-existing housing or a family able to accommodate them. Other key support needs are mental and general health, employment, AOD, family and relationship services, and education and training.
• There is a need for access to culturally appropriate supports.
• Many support services have limited capacity to effectively engage and support justice-involved people.
• Knowledge of the issues affecting justice-involved people is a specialised knowledge that many services need to develop in order to provide effective support.
• Support needs change over time and intermittent and/or long-term support may be required.
• Corporate office environments are intimidating. People seek flexibility in service delivery such as meeting in parks and cafes.
• When surveillance/monitoring is involved, it is difficult to trust and engage.

Integrated support
• Information sharing across services reduces the necessity of people repeatedly explaining their circumstances, and the shame and trauma this creates.
• People with lived experience must be involved in service planning and implementation.
- Holistic, wrap-around support is only possible with strong sustained collaboration between services.
- Collaboration and effective service provision is often dependent on individual workers. Coordination and organisational support is necessary to sustain effective workers and relationships across services.
- People involved in the justice system often have multiple and complex needs that require case coordination.
- Central coordination is needed to support integrated responses.

The Network Model

The Network is comprised of health and social services that provide supports, as part of a coordinated and integrated response, to individuals who have been involved in the justice system.

The Network will commence with core member services from housing, mental health care, drug and alcohol treatment, employment and education, family services and transition services. The Network will broaden over time to include a range of other key support services such as Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations, disability services, general health, gamblers help, financial management, vocational training, support groups and peer mentors.

*Diagram: Key support domains in the Network*
Who can access the Network?

Primarily, the Network supports Corio-Norlane residents who have been involved in the criminal justice system. Secondarily, the Network supports the families of primary participants. The Network provides support for participants of all ages and genders, including those with multiple and complex needs. Priority will be given to those who have recently been released from prison.

What will the Network do?

The Network will support individuals exiting prison and their families. There is an access point in the local community that provides a welcoming environment. The Network will coordinate and integrate supports provided by member services. Services enter into a formal agreement that outlines the purpose, principles and protocols of the Network.

Key features of the Network

- Place-based - centrally located access point.
- Integrates key supports needed by people returning to the community after prison.
- Formalised cross-agency collaboration and information sharing.
- Central coordination provided by a Network Coordination Team.
- Provides intensive, as needed and long-term supports that address multiple, complex and interrelated support needs.
- Engages community support providers together with people with lived experience of the justice system in the governance and operation of the Network.
- Builds the capacity of member services to provide effective and sustainable support to justice-involved people.
- Supports families in their support role.
- Flexibility to provide support in people’s community such as in their homes, cafes and parks in addition to an office setting.
- Throughcare (flow/integration between pre-release and post-release support).
- Raises awareness of the support needs of justice-involved people, and how to respond effectively with member services, ancillary services and community organisations.
- Informs practice through training and secondary consultations.
Principles underpinning the Network

- Community inclusion and a sense of belonging are key for justice-involved people achieving successful outcomes.
- Engaging the local community in the provision of supports for justice-involved people benefits the whole community.
- The needs, experiences and views of justice-involved people are central to informing decision-making and practice.
- There is a shared commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of justice-involved people by providing non-judgemental, trauma informed, integrated and responsive support.
- There is shared ownership of the Network between the services providing support.
- There is a shared vision and values alignment of services in the Network.
- Specialised knowledge is obtained through professional development for staff and management which draws on the lived experience of justice-involved people.
- Information sharing (with informed consent) reduces the need for Network participants to repeatedly describe their circumstances.
- Trauma informed practice includes an understanding of the traumatic impact of the justice system.
- Commitment to ensuring throughcare (integration) of supports from prison to the community.
- Leadership involvement by each member service enables the establishment of an authorising environment for integrated support.

Member agencies will develop a shared understanding of:

- the impact of multiple disadvantages on justice-involved people and their lived experience
- the difficulties with accessing the service system
- effective ways to engage and support people that considers the ways that gender and diversity affect access to support
- non-discriminatory and inclusive language and practice
- roles and responsibilities of member services and the Network Coordination team
- how to work collaboratively with other services and people with lived experience.
Network Structure

Service providers who offer relevant supports to local residents will be invited to be a member of the Network. They will enter an agreement with each other to operate in accordance with the Network principles. A Governance Group comprised of management representatives from each member service, and individuals with lived experience, will oversee the Network. The Governance Group will establish a Chair as well as endorse a fundholder agency to employ the Network Coordination Team.

The second layer of the structure involves an Operations/Practice Group with a practitioner from each member service and individuals with lived experience. The member service representative will hold a portfolio position within their organisation. The role and purpose of the Governance Group and Operations/Practice Group is outlined in Appendix 2.3 and 2.4.

A Network Coordination Team will be employed to:

- act as an access point for participants
- assess needs and develop individual support plans
- provide support for participants and revise support plans when circumstances change
- coordinate and integrate service responses
- provide secondary consultations to member services and other support providers
- facilitate network committee meetings and professional development of support providers
- report to the Governance Group.

Diagram: Network Structure
Protocols for implementing the Network model

Operationalising the Network Model requires funding to support the Network Coordination Team role. The Network Coordination Team will formalise the partnerships with support services who become members of the Network. Member services will participate in the Governance Group which oversees the implementation and the development of operational protocols. The protocols will be determined in accordance with the purpose and principles of the Network and the specific policies and procedures of the individual organisations involved. The process for finalising the protocols is outlined in the Implementation Plan (Appendix 1).

Measuring effectiveness

The Network seeks to demonstrate that engaging the community in the development and implementation of supports for individuals transitioning from prison, is effective in improving outcomes for those individuals, as well as greater social cohesion and safety for the local community. The implementation and operation of the Network will be evaluated by Deakin University. Demonstration of the effectiveness of the model could lead to replication in other communities with high prisoner re-entry populations and serve to promote system change across the state.

References

MEAM (2019) The MEAM Approach, Make Every Adult Matter (MEAM), UK.
### Appendices

#### Appendix 1 Implementation plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1 - Establishment</strong></td>
<td>To establish a structure that supports the model</td>
<td>Formalise agreements (MOUs) with service members from key support domains</td>
<td>6 months</td>
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<td>Establish Governance and Operations/Practice Groups</td>
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<td>Finalise protocols and policies to support Network operation*</td>
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<td>Formalise throughcare channels with existing service providers and Corrections</td>
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<td>Provide training for service members</td>
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<td>Establish evaluation plan and process</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 2 - Trial</strong></td>
<td>Service model trial</td>
<td>Accept referrals and coordinate supports for participants</td>
<td>12 months</td>
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<td>Evaluate participant outcomes</td>
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<td>Evaluate service provider expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 3 - Roll out</strong></td>
<td>Establish the service model widely</td>
<td>Review and revise Network model</td>
<td>3 months</td>
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<td>Increase service membership</td>
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<td>Expand participant base</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 4 - Expansion</strong></td>
<td>Enhancement</td>
<td>Establish the roles of peer mentors</td>
<td>3 months</td>
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<td>Establish peer connections within prison prior to release</td>
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</table>

*Process for developing protocols to support the Network’s operation*

At the commencement of Phase 1 (Establishment Phase) the funds holder/auspice agency will employ a Network Coordinator to formalise the Network membership with relevant support services from the key support areas of housing, mental health, AOD, employment and education, family services and transition services. MOUs with members will outline the principles underpinning the Network and their role in participating in the Governance Group and Operations/Practice Group. The Governance Group will work collaboratively with the Network Coordination Team to develop the protocols for the Network’s operation. The purpose and intention of the protocols have been shaped through the co-design process and some examples are outlined in Appendix 4 (Needs assessment and support plans) and Appendix 5 (Information sharing). Additional protocols to be developed include:
- Referral of participants to Network Member Service providers and non-network member providers
- Throughcare processes
- Network Coordination Team engagement with Dept of Justice and Community Safety personnel
- Responding to critical and non-critical incidents
- Responding to complaints about service/support received

All protocol documents developed for the Network seek to be clear, succinct and accessible for service providers and Network participants.
Appendix 2. Network Roles

Appendix 2.1  Role Statement Network Coordination Team

The Network Coordination Team welcomes participants into the Network. They build a supportive relationship with each participant (and relevant family members), undertake needs assessments and develop individualised support plans. The Network Coordination Team and member services work collaboratively to implement the support plan. The Network Coordination Team monitors progress with the support plan and revise the plan as required.

The Network Coordination Team maintains involvement with Network participants for as long as required. Ongoing support will be provided to meet the participants changing needs and circumstances.

The Network Coordination Team is located (at least part of their time) in the local community. This enables them to develop expert knowledge of local supports and establish effective relationships with support providers.

Activities undertaken by the Network Coordination Team

- Provide a single point of contact for participants that is trusted (non-judgemental).
- Provide support-needs assessment for participants.
- Develop support plans that focus on individual strengths and goals as well as needs and pathways for implementation.
- Assist participants to navigate, access and engage with systems and support services.
- Provide supports such as transport to appointments and liaising with Centrelink, banks and telecommunications companies.
- Share relevant information (with consent) with Network service members.
- Provide secondary consultations to members and non-members who provide support to Network participants.
- Convene meetings of the Governance Group, and Operation/Practice Group.
- Develop family engagement and support plans where suitable.
- Communicate and exchange information with Network members (with participants consent).
- Advocate for the participant with services.
- Provide an immediate response for people on release and for those with multiple and complex needs.
- Monitor and review progress with support plans.
- Facilitate training/professional development for service providers.

Network Coordination Team members will:

- have the skills and values needed to understand the issues facing justice-involved people
- be valued by clients and services
• be able to work across services and sectors
• represent the Network partnership rather than individual organisations
• have the time and flexibility to build trust and positive relationships
• work in a trauma informed way
• have capacity to engage clients with multiple and complex needs and to work with cultural integrity
• advocate for change to the systems that impact on justice-involved people
• have the skills to provide general case management, needs assessment, assistance in connecting with support providers, and assistance with crisis-related needs (MEAM 2019).

The Network Coordination Team will be responsible for the coordination of the Network, general case management of individual support plans and relationship management with Network support providers. Coordination team members will have a small caseload to ensure effective responses to people with multiple support needs. They will have the seniority and confidence to request flexible responses from local agencies, with clear lines to managers.

This is a complex and varied function requiring a number of skill sets. If there is sufficient funding for more than one worker, the roles could be differentiated to enable a Network Coordinator role and a Network Support Advisor role. The Network Coordinator could focus on relationships with service members including negotiating service agreements, practice protocols, throughcare processes, convening Governance Group meetings, supporting the lived experience panel and professional development for service members. The Network Support Advisor could focus on relationships with participants, needs assessments and support plans, secondary consultations with members and convene the Operations/Practice Group.
Appendix 2.2  Role statement Network Member Service

Member services take part in the Network through a formal service agreement (MOU). The MOU outlines the purpose and principles of the Network and the core functions of member services (see Appendix 3).

Member services provide supports that meet the needs of justice-involved people such as housing, mental and general health, AOD, employment, disability services, culturally specific services, family services, transition services and education and training.

Member services are collaborative partners in the Network. Member services work with one another and the Network Coordination Team to develop the practice protocols for the operation of the Network.

Member services will:

- provide support services to Network participants according to the agreed protocols
- nominate a manager to participate in the Governance Group (see Appendix 2.3)
- nominate a practitioner to participate in the Operations/Practice Group (see Appendix 2.4)
- ensure relevant managers and practitioners participate in professional development regarding the lived experience and support needs of justice-involved people.
Appendix 2.3  Role of Governance Group

The purpose of the Governance Group is to:

• provide oversight and strategic direction to the implementation of the Geelong Integrated Network
• work collaboratively with the Network Coordination Team to develop the protocols for the Network operation
• ensure the Geelong Integrated Network operates in accordance with the guiding principles outlined in the Network framework
• receive reports from the Network Coordination Team in relation to progress of the Network implementation.

Membership

The membership of the Governance Group will comprise of the auspice agency/funds holder, a member of the Network Coordination Team, Deakin University and managers of support services that are members of the Network. Member services provide supports that meet the needs of justice-involved people with a particular focus on housing, mental health, AOD, employment, disability services, culturally specific services, family services, transition services and education and training.

The following organisations have been involved in the co-design development phase of the Network model and expressed interest in being involved in the Network operations:

• Barwon Health
• Bethany Community Support
• The Salvation Army
• Cloverdale Community Centre
• VACRO
• Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Barwon Region)
• Community Corrections (Barwon Region).

Roles and responsibilities include:

• participating in meetings and provide advice and direction in relation to the project’s implementation
• providing input into and oversight of, the implementation and operation of the Network
• promoting the activities of the Network
• nominating a chair
• meeting every 6 weeks or as determined by the committee.
Appendix 2.4  Role of the Operations/Practice Group

The purpose of the Operations/Practice Group is to:

- discuss the operation of the Network and practice issues that arise
- work collaboratively to achieve effective and integrated responses
- facilitate relationship building and information sharing
- ensure practice across the Network is guided by the principles of the Network
- case conference where enhanced wrap around support is needed.

Membership includes:

- a practitioner from each member service
- a Network Coordination Team member who undertakes needs assessment and support plans
- one or more people with lived experience of the justice system.

Roles and responsibilities of members include:

- participating in meetings by sharing relevant information about participant’s support needs and most effective ways to address them
- discussing options for enhancing Network practices and integration across services
- nominating a chair
- meeting monthly or as determined by the committee.
Appendix 2.5  Role Statement Lived Experience Expert Panel

Purpose

A panel of people with lived experience of the justice system will be supported to provide advice, contribute to professional development and training of Network members, and to be members of the Governance and Operations/Practice Groups.

Considerations

An Expert Panel consisting of two women and two men from Geelong with lived experience of prison participated in the co-design of the Network model. The group met over a 12-month period at Cloverdale Community House when COVID restrictions allowed, and via phone and zoom at other times. Members of the panel also attended a workshop with members of the Governance Committee and other stakeholders. Expert Panel members were remunerated to acknowledge their expertise and time.

In considering the ongoing involvement of people with lived experience in the implementation and operation of the Network, the following suggestions were made by the Expert Panel and other people with lived experience who were consulted during the development of the model.

- People with lived experience of the justice system have important contributions to make to the development, implementation and operation of support services.
- People with lived experience can contribute at all levels of the development and operation of the Network including the Governance Group, the Operations/Practice Group, provision of professional development and training to support providers. People with lived experience could also be employed by the Network.
- The circumstances that contribute to justice-involvement and the situation people face when exiting prison vary. Not everyone will have the same experience and perspective. Therefore, it is useful to engage multiple people with lived experience on Network committees.
- People with lived experience should be adequately remunerated for their expertise and time.
- When needed, people with lived experience should be provided with professional development and support to participate in committees and other roles.
- Peer mentors are a highly valued support because there is less fear of judgement and greater likelihood of understanding and connection.
- Ideally, a peer mentoring program will form part of the Network and be key to establishing relationships with Geelong residents prior to their release from prison and maintain this connection post-release. The peers could build relationships and assist mentees to participate in the Network.
Appendix 3  Service Member Agreement

Purpose

The Service Member Agreement is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between support services and the Network Coordination Team. It outlines the principles and procedures for implementing the Geelong Integrated Network.

Network members work collaboratively with other member services and the Network Coordination Team to implement the Network and to determine the most effective protocols for the operation of the Network.

Network members agree to operate in accordance with the purpose and principles of the Network set out in the Network framework and as follows.

Geelong Integrated Network

The Geelong Integrated Network provides central coordination and integration of community-based supports for people returning to Corio-Norlane after prison. The purpose of the Network is to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and their families, and to facilitate their social inclusion in the community.

The model harnesses existing supports in the community, building the capacity of local services to engage and support individuals exiting prison, and assists services to collaborate effectively.

It provides people transitioning from prison with an access point in their local community to a holistic response based on their individual support needs and strengths.

Principles underpinning the Network

• Community inclusion and a sense of belonging are key for justice-involved people achieving successful outcomes.

• Engaging the local community in the provision of supports for justice-involved people benefits the whole community.

• The needs, experiences and views of justice-involved people are central to informing decision-making and practice.

• There is a shared commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of justice-involved people by providing non-judgemental, trauma informed, culturally appropriate, integrated and responsive support.

• There is shared ownership of the Network between the services providing support.

• There is a shared vision and values alignment of services in the Network.

• Specialised knowledge is obtained through professional development for staff and management which draws on the lived experience of justice-involved people.
• Information sharing (with informed consent) reduces the need for Network participants to repeatedly describe their circumstances.
• Trauma informed practice includes an understanding of the traumatic impact of the justice system.
• Commitment to ensuring throughcare (integration) of supports from prison to the community are operating effectively.
• Leadership involvement by each member service enables the establishment of an authorising environment for effective support provision.

Service members agree to:
• allocate a Manager to participate in the Governance Group (see role statement for Governance Group) which will work collaboratively to determine and ensure the practice protocols for the Network Operation
• allocate a practitioner to participate in the Operations/Practice Group (see role statement for Operations/Practice Group)
• ensure all Managers and practitioners involved in support provision to Network participants attend professional development regarding working with justice-involved people
• work with the Network Coordination Team and member services to develop an integrated and responsive Network of supports for justice-involved people
• be familiar with the roles and responsibilities of other member services and the Network Coordination Team
• foster a positive working relationship and effective collaboration between the Network Coordination Team and members to achieve effective outcomes for participants and their families
• communicate and work in a collaborative, cooperative and transparent way, sharing information, research, opinions and ideas
• recognise and respect differing skills, expertise, opinions and values
• support Network participants input into service development, delivery and evaluation.
Appendix 4  Needs assessment and support plan protocols

Purpose

The needs assessment process determines what the participant’s individual needs, aspirations and goals are. The information obtained is used to develop the support plan in collaboration with the participant and relevant member services. A needs assessment template and support plan template will guide the individual assessment and plan process.

The support plan will outline what supports will be provided by the Network Coordination Team and by the Network member services. The Network Coordination Team and member services work collaboratively to implement the support plan. The Network Coordination Team monitors progress with the support plan to review and revise the plan as required.

Considerations

- Needs assessment and support plan templates are developed by the Network Coordination Team in collaboration with the Operations/Practice Group and approved by the Governance Group.

- Needs assessment and support plan templates are produced to guide the process of establishing an understanding of the participant’s circumstances and the provision of integrated support.

- Identify individual resources and support needs in consultation with each person to develop an individualised support plan and pathways for implementation.

- The assessment and plan focus on each individual’s strengths and aspirations as well as any support and development needs.

- This is not an assessment of risk of reoffending but rather an exploration of supports that will promote health, wellbeing, and strengthen family and community connections. Participants should only provide information they feel comfortable to provide (see Appendix 5 Information Sharing and Consent Protocols).

- Explore needs in relation to the key domains of:
  - Housing
  - Mental Health
  - Alcohol and Other Drugs
  - Employment and Education
  - Family and community connections
  - Disability

Sample questions for the needs assessment and support plan templates*

- What are you wanting support for at this current time?
- What does good support look like to you?
• Are there any services you have found helpful and enjoyed working with?
• Are there any services you would prefer not to work with?
• Do you have any current key workers who you would like us to collaborate with?

Housing:
• Current housing situation: length of tenure, housing provider involved, safety planning if sleeping rough
• Safe and preferred areas
• Unsafe areas
• Ideal housing: Public housing, community housing, private rental, shared accommodation, supported accommodation

Mental health:
• Do have any mental health information you would like to share with us?
• What are some signs if your mental health is not great?
• What would you like your worker to do if they notice these signs?

AOD:
• Is there any drug or alcohol information you want to let us know about?
• Do you have any concerns with your use that you would like to speak to us or another service about?
• Are you aware of Harm Reduction Victoria – a peer led organisation for people using drugs and alcohol run by people who use or have a history of using?
• What would you like your worker to do if they notice anything out of the ordinary with your use or are concerned about your safety?

Family violence:
• Is there anyone who is causing you harm or making you feel unsafe?
• Do you have a current safety plan in place? If not, would you like to create one with your worker?
• What would you like your worker to do if they are concerned about your safety?

(* Sample questions are drawn, with thanks, from the Needs Assessment Templates produced by Flat Out Inc.)
Appendix 5  Information sharing and consent protocols

Purpose

The information sharing and consent protocols are intended to enable Network member services and the Network Coordination Team to share relevant information about participants with one another to improve and integrate supports for participants.

Key information is gathered by the Network Coordination Team during the needs assessment and support plan development process. Additional information that may be required by support services may also be gathered by those services.

Considerations

Information sharing is undertaken in order to:

- reduce the need for the participants to describe their circumstances to each service
- enhance collaboration between support services and promote integration of service provision
- enable the Network Coordination Team and member services to advocate for participants rights and entitlements
- ensure services are equipped to respond to changes in participants circumstances.

Consent

All information is provided voluntarily and it is important to ensure participants are comfortable with providing information. In most instances, it will not be necessary to collect information about criminal convictions. The purpose of information collection and sharing is to determine effective supports to meet the needs of the participant and to promote their health and wellbeing.

Informed consent must be provided for the collection and sharing of information with other services. This will involve discussing with participants how, when and why certain information may need to be shared. Participants can provide direction about which information and under what circumstances they consent to it being shared and who it can be shared with. The information gathering and sharing process should be clearly explained in an accessible way to all participants.

Privacy

Protecting the privacy of participants is important for reducing discrimination and stigma. Information sharing must also comply with Victorian privacy laws, including the Information Privacy Act 2000, Health Records Act 2001, Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, Australian privacy law including Privacy Act 1988, regulating how information is collected, used, disclosed, protected and maintained.