



Community Planning Aberdeen

Progress Report	Project End Report: 10.2 My Way to Employment
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Report Author	Nicola Graham, Skills Development Scotland
Date of Report	15 th December 2022
Governance Group	CPA Board – 15 February 2023

Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim to Increase to 30 in total, the no. who are on a custodial sentence, CPO with a Supervision Requirement, on Unpaid Work Orders, on Remand or who have been Diverted from Prosecution who are being supported to make progress on the Employability Pipeline by 22 and seeks approval to end the project as the aim has achieved and the changes embedded as business as usual.

Summary of Key Information

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Evidence shows that being employed can contribute to reducing the likelihood of someone reoffending. The stability and quality of the job are also important factors. [[What Works to Reduce Reoffending: A Summary of the Evidence](#) (Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services 2015)]. One in five job applicants have a conviction and being locked out of employment by a criminal record creates multi-faceted social and integration problems. [Recruit With Conviction 2017]. By addressing this issue, outcomes will be improved for individuals involved in the Justice System, their families and communities, and there is potential to address skills shortages.
- 1.2 In the main, the target cohort for this project will have been out of regular employment for at least the last 6 months (generally longer) (less if they are age 16-19 years). Since the project initiation, national changes in the employability landscape (No one Left Behind – NOLB) have seen employability funding move to Local Authorities (1st April 2022). NOLB has brought greater focus on those with an offending background.
- 1.3 No One Left Behind (NOLB), people can gain skills, confidence and access support to help achieve their employment goals. This support may include help to prepare for employment, training, education, and volunteering and to support career progression. Support is flexible, tailored and person-centred; and also connected with other key services including health, justice, housing provision and advice services ensuring people can get the right support at the right time. MWtE was created prior to NOLB and learning from MWtE has informed how NOLB can be best used to support those in the criminal justice system.
- 1.4 People who choose to participate via NOLB will:
 - receive support from an Employability Key Worker, and
 - work with the Key Worker on an individual plan to help them reach their goals

2 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

- 2.1 Against this background, in October 2021 the Community Justice Group approved the revised [project charter](#) for the continuation of an improvement project which aimed to increase to 30 in total, the number of individuals who are on a custodial sentence, on a Community Payback Order with a Supervision Requirement, on Unpaid Work Orders, on Remand or who have been Diverted from Prosecution who are being supported to make progress on the Employability Pipeline by 2022].
- 2.2 This project was focused on supporting individuals to make progress along the Employability Skills pipeline (see Section 4 for definitions) and **not** on positive destinations as some individuals need more support than others to progress and can take time to move between stages of the pipeline. Engagement with the project can be a positive step in itself. This project was also mindful of the work that Third Sector employability providers do in this arena, some of whom are contracted by Justice Social Work. This project was to test multi-partner approaches and not to duplicate the excellent work that single agencies do in this field.

3 WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?

- 3.1 In order to develop change ideas we formed a project team of those with experience of working directly with customers and service users. Key public and third sector organisations were brought together including HMP Grampian, ACC (Social Work CJ, Youth and Employability), Aberdeen Foyer, Apex, SHMU, NESCoL, Cyrenians and SDS. The project started prior to Covid but, following lockdowns, the project was re-set and relaunched.
- 3.2 The following was noted:
- Some individuals are not yet ready for employment so support needs to be available at the earlier stages of the employability skills pipeline (stages 1-3). Recent research from Dr Catriona Connell, University of Stirling, with a lived experience group encouraged policy makers to look beyond employment as an outcome and to see wider participation such as volunteering.
 - Building a positive relationship with the person they will be working with on release as early as possible is key for take-up of service
 - The need to have a lead professional to co-ordinate services for the individual
- 3.3 Taking the above points into consideration, the following change ideas were tested:
- A. We established a My Way to Employment (MWtE) Handbook for partner agencies to identify the supports available from other agencies as well as a flyer for customers. ACVO hosted this information on their website. ABZWorks website has now been created as the employability portal for the City. The purpose was to help partner agencies to understand what each support agency could offer.
- B. We created an information session to use with staff from partner agencies highlighting the employability support available in Aberdeen City – this was delivered to Social Work Unpaid work team and to the Youth Team at Westburn to provide clarity on the employability offer. This has supported referrals to the project.
- C. We created a Community and prison employability pathway for supporting people onto the employability pipeline -

For community this was initially through a MWtE application and referral process for individuals and partner agencies but moved to an ABZ Works process for community referrals as a result of feedback from Social Work referrers who reported that it was confusing having two separate processes and streamlining the process helped to increase referrals. It has also served to de-stigmatise asking for support as MWtE individuals are accessing the same process as anyone else looking for employability support. Individuals on this pathway are supported through the 5 employability stages.

For Prison –

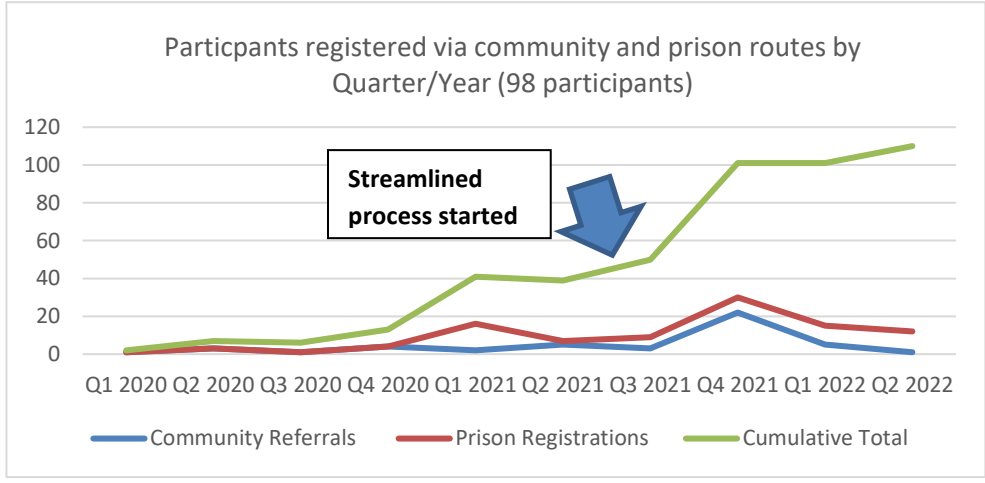
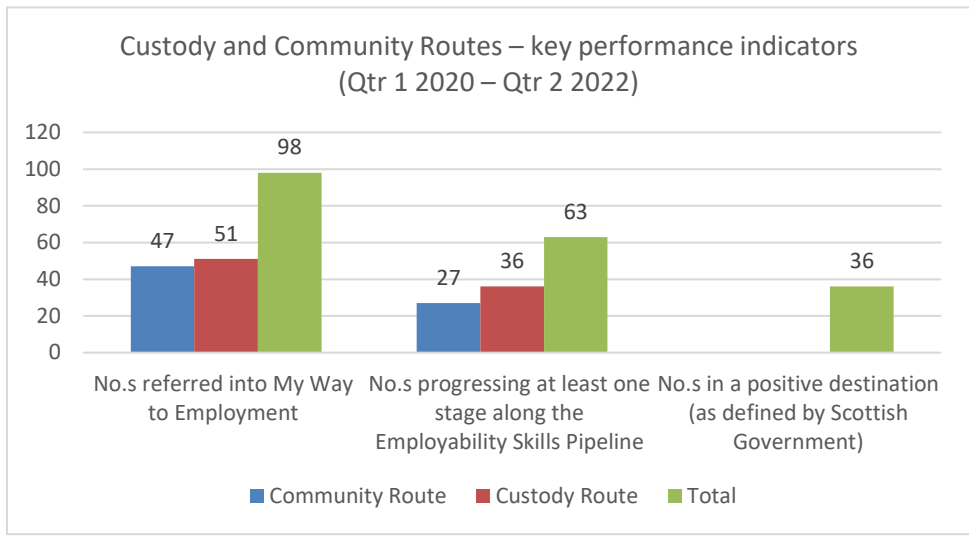
The process of Lead Professionals changed during Covid as external partner services were focused on their Covid response. A core group of partners now assume the lead professional employability role and are co-ordinated by the HMP Case Management Board. HMP Grampian moved the Case Management Boards to virtual which improved attendance and ensured that the most appropriate agency assumed a lead role. The Case Management Board will continue to review this approach/

A new employability sub-group comprising of HMP Grampian, DWP, Aberdeen City Council Employability Team, Aberdeenshire Council Employability Team and SDS was established focusing on employability pathways and support for individuals pre release. Specifically, the Group tested the impact of pre release support with specific employers offering pre-release job interviews so that individuals had secured employment in advance. This has been tested with CFine and Greene King with results in section 4. This change has shown that provision of in-work support for those being released from prison and moving into employment was an important element to be in place. The Aberdeen LEP will be procuring this which will give those leaving custody similar levels of support to individuals accessing employability support via the community route.

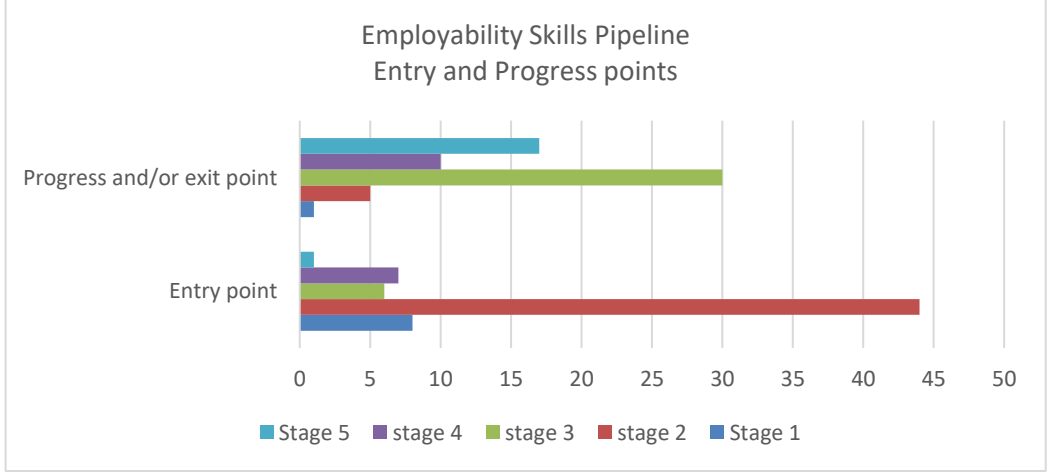
- D. We created a customer participation spreadsheet for community referrals as partners have different client databases that do not link to one another. We then moved to using ABZWorks database – Upshot – to record uptake of employability via ABZWorks.
- E. We incorporated learning from Improvement Project: 10.1 Increase by 10% those individuals, aged 21+ and not subject to statutory throughcare arrangements, who access support services upon release from HMP Grampian by 2022

4 HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

- 4.1 The project has achieved its aim of 30 with 63 individuals progressing at least one stage along the Employability skills pipeline. 63 supported onto the employability pipeline 36 (57%) are in a positive destination.
- 4.2 Referrals came via two routes 1. Custody and 2. Community and the data below is split into both. As evidenced in the chart below, of the total 98 referrals received, 64% (63) have progressed at least one stage on the employability pipeline, with 57% (36) in a positive destination as defined by the Scottish Government and 10% (10) interviewed and offered employment on leaving custody.



4.3 This chart shows the 63 individuals from both routes who have progressed at least one stage along the employability skills pipeline usually through participation in a training course. The bottom graph shows their starting point on the Employability Skills Pipeline and the top graph shows the stage they have moved to. Definitions of the different stages are below.



4.4 The Employability Skills Pipeline comprises of 5 stages.

Stage 1 – Engagement and referral - This stage is about reaching out to individuals, supporting people into regular activity and positive routines, and helping them to connect with others. Examples of activities include Outreach activities, assessment of needs, developing a personalised action plan. **Status: Not Job Ready**

Stage 2 – Needs assessment and barrier removal - this stage is about providing support and help to overcome barriers to employment or training. Examples of activities include confidence building, wellbeing support, coaching and mentoring. **Status: Not Job Ready**

Stage 3 – Vocational Activity - this stage includes work based activities including confidence building, employability skills development, work based training, Work Experience, Volunteering, Self-employment and Enterprise Support **Status: Job Ready**

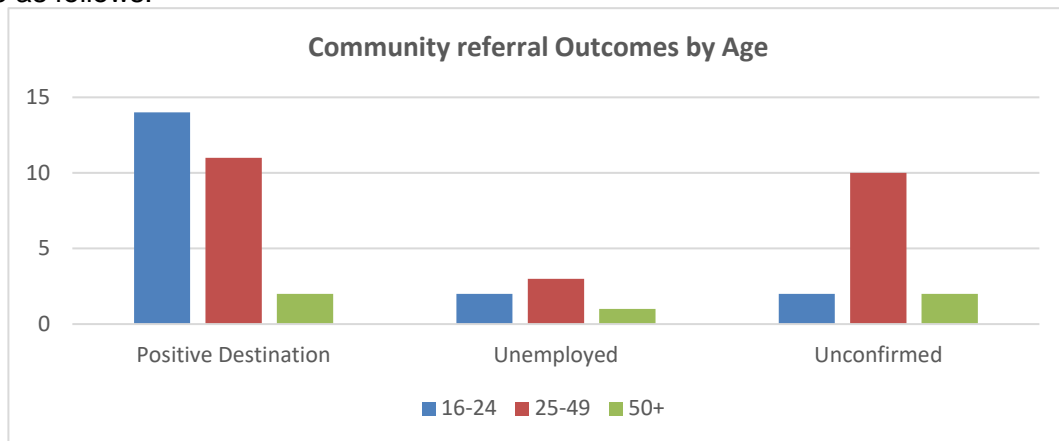
Stage 4 – Employer Engagement and Job Matching - this stage includes activities such as arranging work or volunteer placements with employer, assisting individuals to secure job vacancies and matching job-ready individuals to jobs. **Status: Job Ready**

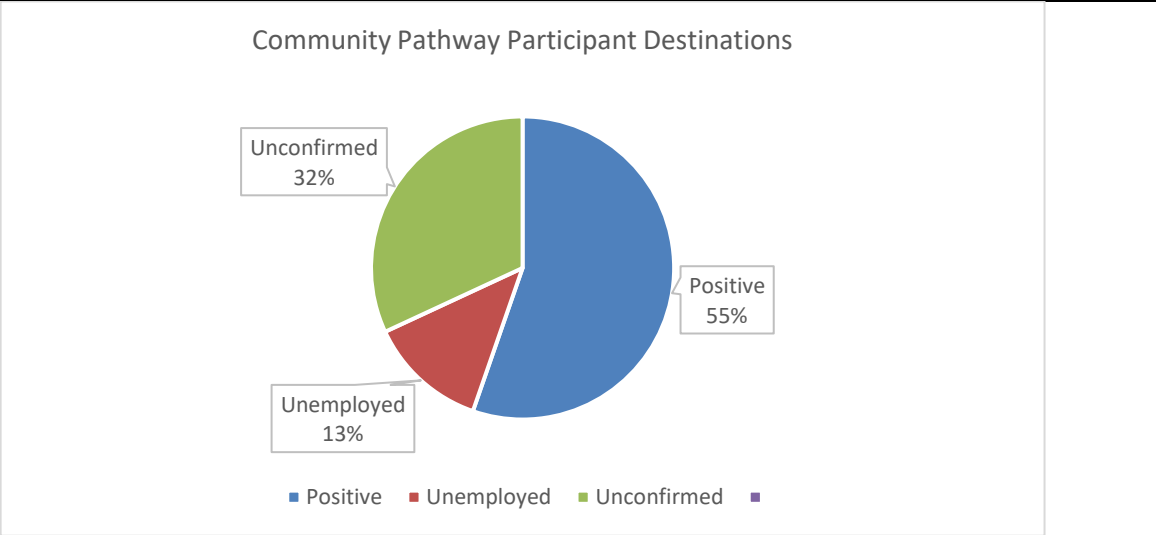
Stage 5 – In work support and aftercare - this stage includes In work support and aftercare to support individuals to maintain and progress within the workplace. **Status: In Work**

4.5 From the above we can see the benefits of having a lead professional, support being ongoing and the in-opportunity support that can help an individual to sustain that destination. A breakdown of the outcomes for both pathways is below:

Community Pathway

4.6 From the change of the single referral system and employability support via ABZ Works we have seen 47 Community referrals 40 males, 7 females. The outcomes of the 47 referrals are as follows:





4.7 The above shows those who have moved into a positive outcome of “Participation” as agreed by Scottish Government. Partners (SDS, DWP, Education, LA employability teams, College, Universities) have well established data sharing processes in place to share information for those in the 16-24 year age group but no equivalent arrangements are in place for 25+ (hence the larger number of “unconfirmed” statuses).

Custody Pathway - HMP Grampian

4.8 In HMP Grampian a multi-disciplinary sub group focusing on employment was established to test whether pre release employability support and having a job offer prior to release would better support those being released from custody. The project tested this with two employers in the first instance (CFine and Greene King) and the outcomes are below. Whilst the outcomes are positive the test also provided great learning in terms of further developing the model in advance of rolling it out to other employers.

Through this route a total of 51 were referred for the pre-release employability support. 88% (36) completed the CFine course and another 10 were interviewed by Greene King and offered employment. The results are below.

CFine Hope course

4.9 The trainer establishes and develops the relationships with those being supported during a pre-release course delivered in custody. The course is continued post release at CFine’s base in Poynerook Road providing support to find stability with housing, benefits, medications and family relationships. Those on the course volunteer in the food parcel outlet during this time to help them get used to working again. When stable and ready, CFine’s trainer and the SAFE team support individuals to complete job applications, attend interviews and find employment. The support carries on for the individual whilst they are working until they decide it is no longer required, but the door is left open for them to return should they begin to struggle with anything.

- 4.10 The results have been very positive:
- Of the 26 completions of the pre-release course in custody in 2021, 7 went on to volunteer at the food parcel outlet in 2021
 - 10 completions of the pre-release course in custody 2022, 3 went on to volunteer at the food parcel outlet in 2022
 - then moved on to full time employment and 1 started their own business in 2021.

4.11 36 completions of the CFine Hope Pre-release course in custody with 10 moving into volunteering on release; 5 then moved into employment. A number also continue to engage with CFine in the community, accessing them for food and other support.

4.12 An example of this success is someone who has gone on to leave custody, overcome initial difficulties in employment through substance misuse challenges and is now sustaining employment in a major Sea Food Company. Not only is employment fulfilling the needs of the individual but by working in this sector, the individual is supporting one of the identified growth sectors in the NE (Food and Drink).

Direct employment:

4.13 Colleagues at HMP Grampian have worked to attract a range of employers into the prison. Testing with a small number of employers in the first instance to ensure the model met the needs of, the offer to interview with employers is now part of the pre release process with employers making job offers so that individuals have a job lined up on release. One example is Greene King, a hospitality based company:

- 10 have been interviewed by Greene King prior to release and offered jobs
- 2 started work but did not sustain
- 3 did not contact Greene King on release
- The others are waiting liberation but have the offer of employment on release. Greene King maintain regular contact meetings with their candidates prior to liberation

4.14 Of the two tests of change within HMPG described above to support people into volunteering//employment on release from prison, it was clear that as well as there being a requirement for pre employment support, there was also a need for ongoing support during employment as per the employability pipeline. As a result of this, the employer/employability model has been developed further in HMP Grampian: an in-work support arrangement has been agreed with both Aberdeen City's ABZWorks and Aberdeenshire Council's Employability Team who will support individuals being released from custody sustain these opportunities.

5 HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

5.1 All of the changes tested have now been embedded as business as usual via ABZ Works (funded by No One Left Behind) and HMP Grampian and partners supporting the Case Management Board.

5.2 Our learning shows the importance of a twin approach of employer and employability support. Warm handovers (whether this is from referrers in the community or via the Case management board) are important to support take-up of service and reduce disengagement with employability services.

5.3 These improvements will be sustained via the Aberdeen City Local Employability Partnership, formalised in May 2021 as a direct response to the development of the Scottish Government's Framework for Local Employability Partnerships. LEPS are seen as crucial to the successful delivery of No One Left Behind. The LEP has identified people in the criminal justice system or with convictions as a priority group as can be seen in the LEP Delivery Plan and Action Plan, now approved by Council Committee <https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=132910> This gives information on the purpose, membership and governance of the LEP. It reports to Community Planning via the Aberdeen Prospers Group.

- 5.4 There is also a well-established and active Aberdeen City Employability Training Provider Forum. A Forum Representative sits on the Local Employability Partnership.
- 5.5 ABZWorks are creating a mini-employability project based in Northfield with the aim of delivering sessions to individuals on Disclosure and Employment. Further sessions will stem from this.
- 5.6 The new sub-group comprising of HMP Grampian, DWP, Aberdeen City Council Employability Team, Aberdeenshire Council Employability Team and SDS are now focusing on building on the tests with CFine and Greene King and securing employer input and aligning skills gaps in the labour market with in-house training opportunities. HMPG have also established a community employability officer to co-ordinate employability services.
- 5.7 Colleagues at HMP Grampian are having success with securing Employer input with interviews and job offers prior to release. The offer of a work placement from the North Locality at Auchmill Golf Course will be taken forward, with other work placements that have been secured, for those engaging with the parole process. A further focus will be to offer in-work support to those being released from prison and taking up employment opportunities.
- 5.8 Apex, one of the MWtE group members, is in discussions to bring a Social Enterprise to Aberdeen. All Cleaned Up (Scotland) Ltd is Apex Scotland's social enterprise which aims to create real jobs for the people that Apex supports who are often deemed disadvantaged in the employment market. As well as offering real jobs to the technicians All Cleaned Up (ACU) employs, work placements are also provided to those who are long-term unemployed. Those on work placement and technicians are directly supervised by ACU's skilled tradespeople who act as supervisors and mentors.

6 HOW WILL WE MONITOR THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

- 6.1 Should it be agreed that the project is ended, the data recorded will continue to be monitored and reported to the CJG, as well as added to the Outcomes Framework/Improvement programme Dashboard to ensure that performance continues.
- 6.2 The Local Employability Partnership will be the group tasked with monitoring No One Left Behind funded employability provision in Aberdeen City. There is an active Training Provider Forum in Aberdeen with partners with a track-record in securing additional funds in response to emerging needs. The LEP is connected into Community Planning via Aberdeen Prospers and there is also a framework for reporting on employability outcomes to Scottish Government.

7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD

- 7.1 The Employability Sub Group have successfully developed a model for engaging with employers and are actively working to scale this up and test this with other employers. We have also seen the benefit of providing in-work support to those being released to help them to take up and sustain the offer of employment and this support will be in place following procurement of service via the Aberdeen City LEP.
- 7.2 There is potential to share learning with Project Charter 12.9 and specifically the change idea to "Develop an employability/education support resource/website for people in recovery to help secure future employment/education opportunities (potential for a page on ABZ website). The learning can also support engaging with employers to

support opportunities for people in recovery and at that stage of the employability pipeline.

Recommendations for Action

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

- i) Agree that testing is concluded and that this Improvement Project is brought to an end on the basis that the project aim has been achieved and the changes tested will continue with business as usual and the Community Justice Group will continue to monitor data.
- ii) Note that the dataset for the overall aim will continue to be reported via the Improvement Programme/Outcomes Framework dashboard to ensure progress is monitored.
- i) Note the opportunities for scale up and spread as detailed at section 7 and how the employability support model will be expanded to other employers.

Opportunities and Risks

Community based employability support (mainstreamed via No One Left Behind (NOLB) is dependent on current levels of Government funding.

Employability Data systems are generally focused on outputs and outcomes e.g. qualifications gained, destination achieved so scaling up to measure progress on the employability skills pipeline is not straightforward when this data is not routinely collected. The data collected on No One Left Behind and reported to Scottish Government does provide opportunity to report on this user group.

There is an opportunity to gather lived experience views from participants in MWtE to inform future Local Employability Partnership work and commissioning.

Consultation

Community Justice Outcome Improvement Group
HMP Grampian – Paul Smith, Eilidh Smith
ABZ Works – Angela Taylor
My Way to Employment Project Group
CPA Management Group

Background Papers

The following papers were used in the preparation of this report.

LOIP – <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/>
Charter - <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Project-Charter-10.2-My-Way-to-Employment-Revised.pdf>
Research – “Citizenship on probation: Understanding the labour market exclusion of criminalized people in Scotland.” Beth Weaver and Cara Jardine, University of Strathclyde, 2022

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