

<b>Institution:</b> University of the West of Scotland		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 20: Social Work and Social Policy		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Positive Life Choices: Sidestepping Anti-Social, Violent & Addictive Behaviour in Scotland		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2014 - 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Prof Ross Deuchar	Professor	2010 - 2020
Dr Robert McLean	Associate Lecturer / Lecturer	2015 - 2020
Dr Maria Sapouna	Lecturer / Senior Lecturer	2013 - 2020
Dr Liz Frondigoun	Senior Lecturer	2014 - 2020
Dr Iain McPhee	Lecturer/ Senior Lecturer	2000 - 2020
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2015 - 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> <p>Anti-social, violent and criminal behaviour is a serious global problem, as is addiction. In Scotland alone, approximately 250,000 offences were committed between 2019 and 2020, with non-sexual crimes of violence accounting for 4% of all crimes (Scottish Government, <i>Recorded crime in Scotland: 2019-2020</i>), and in 2019 a record number of 1,264 drug-related deaths were recorded (National Records of Scotland, <i>Drug Related Deaths in Scotland in 2019</i>). Our ground-breaking research has been instrumental in bringing about the following impacts: increased awareness and adoption of spiritual interventions to support the rehabilitation of male offenders; increased awareness about how the phenomenon of County Lines drug supply networks can be addressed; improvements to the way youth violence/antisocial behaviour is policed to avoid stigmatisation and prevent reoffending; informing a national anti-bullying campaign to prevent antisocial behavior in schools; informing efforts to roll out a National Recovery Advocacy Network and improved training of rights-based advocacy workers to reduce stigma, discrimination and risk factors among problem substance users.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> <p>The underpinning research adopted a life-course perspective focused on how young people/adults can be supported to sidestep, or develop coping strategies to move away from, anti-social, violent and addictive behaviour. The research had five sub-themes, each one led by a key researcher:</p> <p><b>Sub-theme 1: Spirituality, Gangs &amp; Rehabilitation:</b> This highly innovative research was conducted by the team between 2014 and 2018 and it was partly funded by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland (GBP2,776) [3.1, 3.2]. It involved participant observation in four rehabilitation programmes within prisons/communities in key cities across <b>Europe</b>, the <b>USA</b> and <b>Asia</b>, as well as life history interviews with 54 male reforming/reformed gang members with an age span of 17-60. The research explored the extent to and ways in which eclectic spiritual interventions could help to support negativistic masculine identities based on violent criminality to become supplanted by more positivistic masculine identities, and the relationship between this and the men's commitment to criminal desistance. The findings suggested that engagement with the interventions gradually enabled the men to reject the dominant views of masculinity that had characterised their ascendancy to criminal lifestyles, to begin to retreat from the gang identity and gain a new sense of status from narratives of recovery, generativity and countercultural frames of masculinity as identity markers. Although still marginalised and in a state of flux and transition, the men began to draw upon spiritual capital to transition away from offending lifestyles. The insights from the research have (for instance) helped to inform the interest in, and practice vision for, meditation-based rehabilitation programmes among <b>Anglican Prison Chaplains in England</b>; to stimulate opportunities for reformed male offenders to become involved in the delivery of rehabilitation initiatives in <b>Denmark</b>; to effect peacemaking practitioners in England to progress to delivering spiritual-based education workshops in English schools, colleges and prisons; to benefit the rehabilitation of men in Scottish prisons; and to inspire a Parliamentary debate on, and strategic commitment to, finding alternative strategies for violence reduction in Scotland.</p>		

**Sub-theme 2: County Lines:** Between 2012 and 2018 the team conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 42 men and women aged between 16-35 years in the west of Scotland, all of whom had been involved in gang-related offending and organised crime [3.3]. The findings provided insights into gang activity, drug harms/supply, and the presence of child criminal exploitation (CCE) within County Lines drug supply networks. Insights benefited practitioner services and police by providing recommendations for identifying the presence of, and implementing safeguarding practices to address, CCE. This was initiated via McLean's media appearances and contributions to practitioner-based events.

**Sub-theme 3: Anti-bullying:** The research on anti-bullying [3.4], funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission (GBP222,857) between September 2017 and February 2020, developed a first-of-its-kind whole-school programme to prevent bullying motivated by prejudice against minorities. Despite increasing reports of racist bullying after the Brexit vote, no tailored programme to prevent this type of bullying existed in the UK and internationally. The programme was evaluated in the UK, the Netherlands, Greece and Slovakia with 578 children and was found to change attitudes towards ethnic minorities in mixed schools.

**Sub-theme 4: Policing Youth:** Funded by Glasgow City Council and Police Scotland (GBP22,987), the research [3.5] was brokered through the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR). The work was concerned – although not exclusively – with developing a clearer understanding of how the police and their community partners can better address youth violence and antisocial behaviour in local communities, including schools. Research involved numerous observations, focus groups and interviews with youths and young adults, community representatives, the police and community partners. The research also drew on the work of campus officers, and early and effective interventions to support individuals in making positive life choices. The insights helped to inform and benefit Police Scotland to enable the strengthening of partnership working and community-oriented approaches to preventing youth violence.

**Sub-theme 5: Drugs Recovery:** This final element of the research underpinning the impact [3.6] built on a body of work on how stigma and discrimination increase risk factors for drug-related death, and how this negatively impacts on recovery from problem substance misuse, particularly among young, poor and disenfranchised groups. Utilising a critical multi-theoretical and multi-methodological *bricoleur* approach to inquiry, the authors documented how 'hidden' drug use differs from the use of 'known or captured offenders' visible to criminal justice bureaucracies and treatment agencies, with findings contributing to address and effect change in stigma and offending within the context of human rights and social justice.

### 3. References to the research

**3.1 Deuchar, R.** (2018) *Gangs & Spirituality: Global Perspectives*. Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan. (Output is listed in REF2)

**3.2 Deuchar, R.** (2020) 'I get more in contact with my soul': Gang disengagement, desistance & the role of spirituality, *Youth Justice* 20 (1-2): 113-127.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473225419889195>

**3.3 McLean, R.** (2019) *Gangs, Drugs & (Dis)organised Crime*. Bristol: Policy Press. (Output is listed in REF2)

**3.4 Sapouna, M.,** De Amicis, L., Willems, R., Vollink, T., Dehue, F., Rosinsky, R., Dimakos, I. and Nikolaou, G. (2020) *Determinants of Involvement in Prejudice-based Bullying Situations & Bystander Intervention*. Report to the European Commission. Available at:  
<https://www.ou.nl/en/web/gate-bull/publications>

**3.5 Smith, R., Frondigoun, L.,** Martin, D., Campbell, R. & Thomas, L., (2018) *An Independent Assessment of the 'Prevention First' Crime Prevention Strategy in Ayrshire*. Dundee: SIPR.  
<http://northayrshire.community/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Prevention-First.pdf>.

**3.6 McPhee, I., Holligan, C., McLean, R. & Deuchar, R. (2019)** Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde: The strange case of the two selves of clandestine drug users in Scotland, *Drugs & Alcohol Today*, 19(2): 133-146. <https://doi.org/10.1108/DAT-07-2018-0035>

#### 4. Details of the impact

This highly innovative research has had an impact on practice and people's lives; it has influenced policy; and it has generated public engagement – all of which has helped to improve the support available to vulnerable young people and adults to help them make positive life changes.

##### Impact on Practice & People's Lives

The research under sub-theme 1 has had a strong influence on helping to reshape practitioners' rehabilitation vision and on influencing reformed offenders' lives. The practice vision of HM Prison and Probation Service (Chaplaincy and Faith Services) became strongly influenced by Deuchar's contribution from his international research insights on the impact of meditation as a rehabilitation tool (Sub-theme 1) [3.1], delivered at the Anglican Prison Chaplains' conference in Derby, England, in 2018. The Chaplaincy HQ Advisor stated that **Deuchar's** contribution had a real *'resonance with the Chaplains'* and that *'the practical engagement with aspects of meditation was a revelation and ... generated real interest about how such an intervention might be established [in prisons]'* [5.1]. Reaching out to a practitioner audience at an International Association for Human Values (IAHV) conference in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, in 2018, included one of Deuchar's former research participants, a reformed gang member who had engaged in the Danish spiritual intervention he had researched ('Breathe Smart/Prison Smart'). The latter demonstrated the way in which he had benefited from the partnership between Deuchar and members of the 'Breathe Smart' organisation and now *'facilitate[d] the exit of those wishing to leave gang life'* across **Denmark** [5.1]. During a public seminar held at the Scottish Parliament (also in 2018), sponsored by the MSP for Strathkelvin and Bearsden & Depute Convenor of Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee and hosted by Deuchar and his two invited speakers from the 'Breathe Smart' organisation in Denmark, another former offender from Denmark (and former research participant of Deuchar's) spoke passionately about the way in which his life had been turned around as a result of dynamic breathing and meditation [5.3]. The opportunity to transition from research participant to public speaker in a different country later provided him with the impetus to train to become a 'Breathe Smart' teacher and he now helps to lead rehabilitation programmes in Danish prisons and communities [5.3]. Public 'lightening talks' on international spiritual innovations, delivered by Deuchar to a collective audience of over 500 practitioners and members of the public as part of International Peace Day celebrations held at Kidderminster College and Darlington Street Methodist Church, England, in 2019, had an effect on the practice of **Midlands Peacemakers** (overall coordinators of the celebrations). According to Midlands Peacemakers, Deuchar's *'input and inspiration at [the] events were strongly felt and instrumental in helping us to progress'*. As a result, the organisation has gone on to deliver *'innovative workshops in schools and colleges as well as in prisons'* [focused on spirituality] [5.2]. Further, Deuchar's research (sub-theme 1) has also helped to inform the design and delivery of spiritual-oriented support sessions for both men in prison and disadvantaged youth. In the winter of 2019-20, a series of meditation and dynamic, three-stage 'pranayama' breathing workshops, were implemented by Deuchar in two Scottish prisons, attended by men within the context of drug recovery cafés coordinated by Sustainable Interventions Supporting Change Outside (SISCO). These workshops were informed by Deuchar's research, particularly his fieldwork conducted in Denmark. The Director of SISCO commented these sessions *'made substantial impacts on prisoners' ability to deal with the many stresses of prison life, and have proven beneficial to café members who are reducing on Opioid Replacement Therapy (ORT) medications. As a result, this has had a direct impact on prison rehabilitation enabling many of the men to become more ready to transition back into the community'* [5.4]. Similar sessions were delivered for young people in Mirren Park School in Paisley, where the Head of Education highlighted that the *'programmes delivered by Prof Deuchar have had a positive impact on the pupils and have added value to our curriculum offer'*. The latter comment refers to the way in which the school subsequently adopted mindfulness and breathing workshops into the curriculum to benefit the pupils, all of whom are socially disadvantaged and many of whom have suffered from childhood trauma [5.4]. Deuchar also drew upon the insights from his participant observation of spiritually-based intervention programmes, insights from his

work in Scottish prisons and subsequent practitioner training he completed with **Mindfulness Scotland** to deliver a series of meditation and breathing-focused support webinars for Scottish public sector practitioners during Mental Health Awareness Week (May 2020), Stress Awareness week (November 2020) and for UWS business partners throughout the Covid-19 lockdown period during 2020.

Several other impacts on practice have been achieved. As a result of **McLean's** (Sub-theme 2) involvement in BBC radio interviews, his invited keynotes at Barnardo's annual conference, and an annual policing event at Cumberland Lodge with related reports on organised crime and CCE, recommendations for implementing 'wrap around services' have been taken forward by several different **police departments in England and Wales**. Notable changes to police practice now include the involvement of external organisations alongside police at times of carrying out warranted arrests on identified County Lines operations, as opposed to involvement afterwards. Reports for the **Youth Offending Team (YOT)** in Newcastle and the charity Cumberland Lodge by McLean have led to the implantation of wider theme-based programmes being run by the YOT aimed at individual experiences. Likewise, the use of 'hotlines' for the most persistent offenders was also implanted whereby they can access 'mentors' in times of crisis. Other improvements to YOT practices include greater distribution of administrative roles away from frontline workers to backroom staff [5.5, 5.6]. Under Sub-theme 3, the national anti-bullying campaign, 'Choose Respect', which was rolled out across Scottish schools and youth organisations from November 2018 to June 2019, was developed as a result of **Sapouna's** activity-based campaign resources. As stated by Scotland's national anti-bullying service: *'The resources have been viewed over 1,600 times since published in March 2019. In total, 93% of the campaign evaluation survey respondents said they felt the building empathy resources were either extremely or very helpful in supporting improved understanding of empathy among young people'* [5.7]. The research Sub-theme 4 led by **Fronidigoun** has had a positive effect on policing approaches in Ayrshire, strengthening the focus on partnership working, and on early intervention and prevention as opposed to punitive enforcement. According to Police Scotland: *Fronidigoun's work has been 'influential in ... helping to develop and improve longer-term policing practice in Ayrshire ... [and] been referenced in ongoing discussions within Police Scotland's "Safer Communities", which has the strategic lead for developing partnership working and prevention for the Service nationally'* [5.8]. Additionally, following the release of the evaluation report on Campus Officers' work, she was invited to join a Police Scotland working group on campus officers by the then ACC Mr McCormack. The Sub-theme 5 research by **McPhee**, which has been pioneering in terms of helping to shape drug and alcohol policy and rights-based approaches in recovery work in Scotland [5.9, 5.10], has altered police practices, evidenced by the decrease in numbers of successful prosecutions for possession with intent to supply from 5,423 to 3,973 between 2010 and 2018 (Scottish Government, *Recorded crime in Scotland: 2018-2019*) (see further detail under 'Policy Impact'). McPhee, as the UWS lead with **Elevate**, attracted funding (GBP10,417) to Glasgow Council on Alcohol (GCA) and Elevate, to allow individuals in recovery find work placement experiences and international travel via the Erasmus programme, of which UWS is a partner organisation. McPhee's approach to reducing stigma led to him working with the Scottish Recovery Consortium (SRC). McPhee's report, funded by GCA, evaluating the impact of rights-based advocacy in the context of recovery, led to the commissioning of training for rights-based advocacy workers, to be rolled out to Local Authorities and Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADP).

### Policy impact

The Scottish Parliament initiated a debate and continued strategy changes as a result of the pioneering work on the impact of spiritual-based rehabilitation programmes (Sub-theme 1). As above, in the autumn of 2018 Deuchar held a public seminar at the Parliament in collaboration with the **'Breathe Smart' organisation in Denmark**, where research insights were shared into the impact of meditation programs on Danish offenders [3.1, 3.2] (see also earlier sub-section on 'Impact on Practice & People's Lives'). The event was sponsored by the MSP for Strathkelvin and Bearsden & Depute Convenor of **Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee** and was attended by over 40 practitioners, policy-makers and MSPs. The MSP commented that the event was *'one of the most inspiring and intensive events I have held in Parliament and gave a whole new perspective into prison reform and offenders' rehabilitation, which I personally would like to see*



*introduced into the Scottish Prison Service' [5.3]. The event led to the MSP initiating a Scottish Parliamentary briefing and debate on violence reduction strategies in November 2018 and to declare the need for finding 'alternatives to reducing violent behaviour and reoffending'. The final report on developments in organised crime and CCE in drug dealing practices by McLean (Sub-theme 2) was commended by **Cumberland Lodge**, who stated that the 'report was ... excellent ... and shared widely with senior police officers, charity leaders, policymakers and students across the UK' [5.6]. This laid the foundation for policy change by the **UK Government** in relation to safeguarding practices (as above) where social work, and public and third sector organisations are now involved in the dismantling of County Lines drug dealing operations throughout England and Wales. The research in Sub-theme 5 led by McPhee has challenged dominant crime and pathology discourses underpinning drug prohibition in Scotland. McPhee's critique of the disparity in prosecutions for drug dealing in Scotland [3.6] was used in 'Op Ed' pieces in 'Resident Advisor', 'Vice' magazine and dissemination in 'The National', the 'Daily Record' and at conferences. As an expert witness, MPhee's work challenged the police perspective on using prosecutions for drug dealing as a performance indicator; as a result, Police Scotland became less focused on this policy, leading to fewer prosecutions (as above). McPhee's membership in various committees led to the 2018 drug and alcohol strategy 'Rights, Respect and Recovery' being underpinned by a human rights approach to treatment and recovery [5.9, 5.10].*

### **Public engagement impact**

Sub-theme 1 within the collective research (key researcher: Deuchar) has spawned a number of 'Op Eds' in national newspapers such as 'The Herald', 'The Scotsman' and 'TES Scotland' [2016-19], and a TV appearance on the **Channel 5 documentary 'Britain's Crime Capitals'** [during the data collection phase, 2015]. The latter was subsequently uploaded onto Deuchar's YouTube channel and to date has attracted 191,000 views. The release of Deuchar's 2018 book [3.1] led to a live appearance on the **BBC R4 programme 'Thinking Allowed'** [2018]. The latter subsequently became part of an official Podcast uploaded on BBC Radio 4's website, which attracts regular public views. Combined with wider dissemination on social media (particularly Twitter, where Deuchar has over 2,700 followers), this collectively has led to vociferous public debate around issues of gangs/violence and spirituality as a tool for desistance. Research sub-theme 2 (key researcher: McLean) has also resulted in over 20 media appearances, including data being directly used by other reports and authors in the media; opinion pieces in 'The Herald', the 'Independent' and 'Glasgow Live'; live discussions on the radio, including the BBC; and a TV appearance for a **BBC documentary on 'The Tinder Generation'**. Further, research sub-theme 5 (key researcher: McPhee) has generated several requests for expert commentary in news media, both nationally and internationally, in 'Op Ed' expert opinion pieces in press and on BBC Radio Scotland. It also led to a film for **Il Giorno**, and a letter to the 'Lancet'. McPhee recently evaluated survey data capturing over 4,500 young people, documenting the needs of young people not in contact with formal treatment services, linking with a national treatment provider 'We Are With You' (WAWY). As a result, WAWY is adapting online services to address this unmet need.

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

**5.1** Impact on Rehabilitation Vision and Reformed Offenders' Lives

**5.2** Testimonial from Midlands Peacemakers

**5.3** Testimonial from the MSP for Strathkelvin and Bearsden & YouTube channel clip:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2-35Eg\\_ZGk&list=PLU-KScUhZr\\_uyNG8H6liVAuEUXbRH2NT](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2-35Eg_ZGk&list=PLU-KScUhZr_uyNG8H6liVAuEUXbRH2NT)

**5.4** Impact on Spiritual-oriented Support Sessions for Men in Prison and Disadvantaged Youth

**5.5** Testimonial from Barnardo's

**5.6** Testimonial from Cumberland Lodge

**5.7** Testimonial from Respectme

**5.8** Testimonial from Prevention First

**5.9** Testimonial from Reach Advocacy Scotland

**5.10** Testimonial from Scottish Recovery Consortium