

## How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

This document comprises the following sections (click hyperlink to skip to that section)

- [Initial Idea](#)
- [Early Development of the Project](#)
- [Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users](#)
- [Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty](#)
- [Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working](#)
- [Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements](#)
- [Funding](#)
- [Staffing and Resources](#)
- [Monitoring and Evaluation](#)
- [Reach and Impact](#)
- [Learning from Experience](#)

## Pathways



<b>Title</b>	Pathways
<b>Organisation</b>	The Wise Group
<b>Category</b>	Promising Practice
<b>Poverty Impact</b>	Prevention, Reduction
<b>Introduction to the Project</b>	
<p>The Wise Group's Pathways service is designed to support people facing hardships on their unique journeys, helping them utilise their skills and interests to move out of or avoid poverty and progress in life. After receiving initial support in the Wise Group's key areas - Energy Advice and Advocacy, Community Justice, and Employment Services - individuals are connected to the Pathways team for flexible and person-centred support. Rather than focusing on rigid outcomes, the Pathways team prioritises individual needs, offering emotional support, signposting to training or upskilling, and building confidence. When ready, customers are connected with employers through job and volunteering fairs, opening new long-term opportunities.</p>	

## Pathways



### Initial Idea

#### Who had the initial idea?

Pathways has technically existed since the foundation of the Wise Group, but in a different form. Jayne Anderson established the Employment Pathways team as a distinct entity under the Wise Group that works across the different work areas of the Wise Group. This has recently turned into the “Pathways” team.

#### How did the idea for the project come about?

Previously, each key area at the Wise Group had an employer engagement officer who supported individuals in accessing employment. The employer engagement team evolved into the Employment Pathways team as the Wise Group's work became more focused on relational development. This team aimed to support individuals across the Wise Group's various areas of work, including Energy Advice and Advocacy, Community Justice, and Employment Services, in their personal journeys towards employment. However, the team realised that not all customers were ready to enter employment, with some being far from the labour market. Some needed additional time to, for example, rebuild their confidence by first engaging in placements or volunteering. As the word "employment" caused anxiety for some, they decided two years ago to rename the service to reflect their more tailored approach. Employment pathways evolved into Pathways – a service offering generalist and holistic support for individuals on their unique journeys. Pathways is now a core service within the Wise Group, providing support to customers across all key areas of the social enterprise.

## Pathways

<b>Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?</b>			
		<b>No</b>	
		<b>Yes</b>	✓
<p>They did not draw on any particular reports or research evidence but developed the service based on customer needs and current political developments. They are constantly looking at statistics and the government situation, and the Wise Group's communication team is constantly monitoring what is happening globally and locally. They have continually developed their service according to these developments and what is in the best interest of the customers.</p>			
<b>Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?</b>			
		<b>No</b>	
		<b>Yes</b>	✓
Various staff within the Wise Group.			
<b>Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?</b>			
		<b>No</b>	
		<b>Yes</b>	✓
Some staff of the Wise Group has lived experience of poverty.			
<b>Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?</b>			
<b>No</b>			
		<b>Yes</b>	✓

## Pathways

Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the development of the initial idea of the project.

<b>Which organisation provided funding?</b>	Initially, when the project was part of the Wise Group's employment services with a specific focus on employment engagement, it was supported by UK Government and Scottish Government funding. (Since the service became a core service, funding has shifted, and it is now paid for by the social enterprise itself.)
<b>How much was required?</b>	Not specified
<b>What was the specific source of funding? (e.g., particular grant or policy)</b>	Not specified

Please provide details of the resources that were required when developing the initial idea of the project.

<b>Staff/Volunteer Time</b>	Not specified
<b>Facilities / Workspace</b>	Not specified
<b>Equipment</b>	Not specified
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	Not specified
<b>Food and Drink</b>	Not specified

## Pathways



<b>Did any barriers have to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	
No	✓
Yes	
<b>Did anything in particular enable development of the initial idea of the project?</b>	
No	
Yes	✓
They continuously reflected on the support provided and how it could be improved to gain maximum efficiency and quality for the customers. The Wise Group directors supported the development towards a service and any requests for improvement.	
<b>How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?</b>	
Not specified	
<b>Who made the decision to introduce the project?</b>	
Two years ago, the directors at the Wise Group decided to turn Pathways into a core service within the social enterprise.	

[Return to Introduction](#)

## Pathways



### Early Development – Pilot Project or Feasibility Study

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study?	
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Yes, a pilot project	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, a feasibility study	<input type="checkbox"/>

[Return to Introduction](#)

## Pathways

### Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

<b>Is there a referral process?</b>		
	<b>No</b>	
	<b>Yes</b>	✓
<p>People can only be referred if they are already part of the Wise Group. They are either already a customer of the Wise Group services, such as the Community Justice, Energy Advice and Advocacy or the Employment Services programme, or are part of the Wise Group staff. Individuals are made aware of Pathways internally, for instance through their mentors.</p>		
<b>Is referral the only way that potential clients are made aware of the project?</b>		
	<b>Yes</b>	✓
	<b>No</b>	
<b>Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to service users?</b>		
	<b>No</b>	
	<b>Yes</b>	✓
<p>Contact is maintained via online and in-person delivery in the employment “hubs.” The Pathways team always encourage in-person delivery if the customer is within reasonable travelling distance; however, this is determined by the customer and what works best for them.</p>		

[Return to Introduction](#)



## Pathways

## Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

<b>Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?</b>		
	No	
	Yes	✓
The Wise Group employs “lived experience candidates.” These are people who lived in poverty or have been homeless, had alcohol or drug issues, or spent time in prison and then started working for the Wise Group.		
<b>Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or project governance?</b>		
	No	
	Yes	✓
They had former customers with lived experience of living in poverty who have gone through peer mentoring into mentor jobs and then became team leads within the organisation.		
<b>Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project? <i>If so, please describe below.</i></b>		
	No	
	Yes	✓
They have a project in which former customers become peer mentors for other customers.		

[Return to Introduction](#)

## Pathways

### Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

<b>Who is responsible for managing the project?</b>	
Jayne Anderson.	
<b>Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?</b>	
Yes	✓
No	
<b>Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?</b>	
No	✓
Yes	
<b>Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?</b>	
No	
Yes	✓
<p>Whilst there is no Project Steering or Advisory Group for Pathways as such, it is under the Wise Group's Operations and Delivery Director and Jayne manages the internal performance of the Pathways team. They have started implementing "mini-board meetings," which act as an advisory board for the service. In these meetings, every manager in the social enterprise is involved, and they discuss the Pathways services for their respective work areas and how these could be improved. Additionally, a strategy team continuously reviews the performance of the Wise Group which is also accountable to stakeholders, such as the Scottish Government.</p>	

## Pathways

[Return to Introduction](#)

### Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

<b>In your opinion, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?</b>	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓
<p>The Pathways service aligns with the Wise Group's overall aim of tackling poverty. As a leading social enterprise dedicated to transforming lives and lifting people out of poverty, the Wise Group's work connects to several national and local anti-poverty strategies in Scotland. These include the Scottish Government's Fuel Insecurity Fund, which helps alleviate fuel poverty, and the Relational Mentoring Programme, which supports vulnerable families in moving out of child poverty.</p>	
<b>Is the project part of any other strategy?</b>	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓
<p>The other programmes of the Wise Group, for instance, Energy Advice and Advocacy or Community Justice, had specific anti-poverty campaigns. With customers initially supported in these areas, Pathways is indirectly connected to these.</p>	

## Pathways



Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	
No	✓
Yes	

[Return to Introduction](#)

## Pathways



## Funding

<b>Has external funding been secured to support the work?</b>	
No	✓
Yes	
<b>Has a specific sum been secured from the host organisation to support this work?</b>	
No	✓
Yes	
<b>What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?</b>	
<p>Pathways is now a core service. Funding is, however, dependent on the overall ability of funds in the Wise Group.</p> <p>As of February 2025, the Pathways team has faced significant challenges due to the lack of government funding for the Wise Group. As a result, the team's salaries could not be sustained, and the majority were made redundant. Currently, the Pathways service continues on an ad-hoc basis, with some work in England, where there is more demand, but the capacity to deliver consistently across the UK is limited.</p> <p>While there is optimism that new business opportunities may arise in the coming months, it remains difficult to predict whether these will materialise in a way that can support the service in the longer term. Consequently, the immediate future of the work remains uncertain.</p>	

[Return to Introduction](#)

## Pathways

## Staffing and Resources

<b>Do existing staff from the host organisation contribute toward the work of this project as part of their broader work for the organisation?</b>			
		<b>No</b>	
		<b>Yes</b>	✓
Everyone within the Pathways team is a paid member of staff at the Wise Group. They have two people in the team covering England and four people who work in Scotland. They have hubs in England (Newcastle, Durham, Darlington, and Preston), and Scotland (Paisley, Glasgow, and Edinburgh).			
<b>Are volunteers involved in delivering the project?</b>			
		<b>No</b>	
		<b>Yes</b>	✓
Volunteers are not involved in Pathways generally, but there is one team member who is involved in a peer mentor project. These peer mentors join the team and support their work. They are trained to become fully-fledged staff mentors in the Wise Group.			
<b>Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?</b>			
	<b>No</b>		
		<b>Yes</b>	✓

## Pathways

Please provide details of the resources that are required to deliver the project?		
<b>Facilities / Workspace</b>	They have one main hub office in Glasgow where they collaborate and go for meetings. All staff are homebased and travel to appointments when and if they need to.	
<b>Equipment</b>	Laptops, phones, desks, and chairs for working at home (if needed), safety and tracking devices (every Wise Group staff working from home and in the community has one to call for help and to be located when needed).	
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	Knowledge of employability (usually staff have an employability or recruitment background), networks to employers.	
<b>Food and Drink</b>	Coffee and teas are provided in the local hubs.	
<b>Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?</b>		
		<b>No</b>
		<b>Yes</b>
		✓
All the resources outlined above are provided in-kind by the Wise Group.		

## Pathways



**Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?**

No	✓
Yes	

**Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?**

No	
Yes	✓

They are developing training for their staff who have come from the private sector and may be used to a different way of working and a different culture. The customers and culture at the Wise Group are vastly different from other recruitment agencies, which can be more target-based rather than person- and needs-centred.

[Return to Introduction](#)



## Pathways



## Monitoring and Evaluation

<b>Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?</b>	
No	
Yes	
Not specified	
<b>Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?</b>	
Yes	✓
No	
<b>Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project?</b>	
Not specified	
<b>How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation?</b>	
They are currently implementing a new system to collect feedback and evaluate the service more systematically.	
<b>What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to impact of the project?</b>	
Feedback is collected via a feedback form sent automatically to each customer when they finish using the service. The same process will apply to employers and partners.	

## Pathways

What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?				
Number of users	Yes		No	✓
Experience of users	Yes	✓	No	
Outcomes for users	Yes	✓	No	
Anything else	Yes	✓	No	
They are implementing a process to also collect feedback from employers and partners.				
Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?				
No				
Yes				✓
They have already used informal feedback from customers and partners to adopt the service and evolve as a team. The new feedback system will further help to shape their service so that it meets the needs and requirements of customers and other partners in the best way. They are eager to learn how they can improve their work.				
Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?				
No				✓
Yes				

## Pathways



Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?

Don't know / no current plans	✓
No	
Yes	

[Return to Introduction](#)

## Pathways

## Impact

<b>To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?</b>	
<b>Fully met</b>	✓
<b>Making progress toward meeting Aims</b>	
<b>Not making progress</b>	
As the individual journey progresses based on the individual's needs and wishes, Pathways aims have been achieved.	
<b>What difference has the project made?</b>	
<p>The project has made a massive difference not only by helping people to gain employment but also by developing their skills, their level of confidence and capability to progress in life. Having someone who listens, encourages one's thoughts, and dreams and sees strength and opportunities has enabled customers to step out of their comfort zone and follow their ambitions. Offering the service to internal staff, particularly when contracts came to an end, instilled a sense of hope and a feeling of not being alone but receiving support when needed. Supported individuals reported that having someone to talk to about where they really are in life and where they want to go and then having someone encouraging and supporting them has made an extensive difference in their lives and enabled them to progress on their individual paths.</p> <p>They follow people's journeys and have received continuous positive feedback from both former customers and management. The progression of people's journeys shows that the support is working. Additionally, the Scottish Government has asked them for advice on programs they are running to help people gain employment, which further demonstrates the service's value. The Pathways team are implementing a new system to collect feedback and evaluate the service more systematically.</p>	

## Pathways

<b>Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?</b>		
	No	
	Yes	✓
The project is in higher demand both among new customers (due to the increased levels of poverty) and internally among staff and their family members (due to contracts ending).		
<b>Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?</b>		
	Yes	✓
	No	
Pathways is now a core service and had the funds to support the increased demand. However, as of now (February 2025), Pathways staff had to be made redundant due to a lack of funding in the Wise Group.		
<b>Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?</b>		
	No	
	Yes	✓
There have been many unexpected positive outcomes in the form of spin-offs from the project. For example, one of the Pathways team members developed a service component called "Mission Mindset," which focuses on shifting customers' mindsets and building their confidence to take the necessary steps out of poverty.		

## Pathways



In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?	
No	
Yes	✓

The service helps customers to continue their journey with someone holding their hand and supporting them in their next steps. This can be immensely important for people who have faced hardships to continue progressing in life and to gain and sustain employment. With its individual-focused service, Pathways plays an important role in ensuring people stay out of poverty or find the right steps for themselves to move out of poverty.

[Return to Introduction](#)

## Pathways



### Learning from Experience

#### **What is working well?**

The Wise Group fosters a culture where new ideas are appreciated and supported, which enables them to improve their services continuously. Supporting the individuals on their specific journey and collaborating with various stakeholders to find the best opportunities is working well. Also working well is the continuous evolvement of the service based on the customer needs, with the Wise Group board supporting the person-centred and strengthbased approach of the Pathways team.

Also working well is the internal support they have started to provide for staff. They are able to have well-rounded conversations with the respective people, sharing jobs and opportunities with them and supporting their colleagues on their next paths.

#### **What, if anything, is working less well?**

One issue is that currently many contracts at the Wise Group are ending, meaning that some of their colleagues need to find new jobs. Whilst the Pathways team now supports them on their journey, it is emotionally more challenging for the team members to work with their colleagues. Given their relationships, sharing their struggles and hearing that they do not want to leave the enterprise and now face particular hardships takes a toll on the Pathways Team. Keeping the respective colleagues in a good space and mindset whilst at the same time ensuring the health and well-being of the Pathways team can be a challenge. Ensuring the team stays within their work hours and takes their annual leave is one way to mitigate potential exhaustion.

#### **What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?**

You have to enjoy what you do and like to work with people. Keeping the passion to help a person to fulfil their potential will make it more enjoyable and successful both for the staff member and the customer.

It is also important to rest and recuperate whenever you need. It is essential not to be afraid to say something when you are struggling or having a hard day. Days can be different, and the job can be varied, which is both a joy and sometimes a challenge.

## Pathways



<b>Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?</b>		
	<b>No</b>	
	<b>Yes</b>	✓
<p>They envision creating impact reports for Pathways to share the success stories and receive more feedback; it is also envisioned to have the Pathways team spend time with mentors within other areas of the Wise Group so that they can get more customers involved in the mentoring process.</p> <p>However, with the Pathways team currently undergoing significant changes due to a lack of funding, the future of the service remains uncertain.</p>		
<b>How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?</b>		
<p>Pathways' approach could easily be replicated in other organisations or locations. The key to success lies in having the right mindset and a strong commitment to supporting people. Pathways is already delivering the service across different geographical locations to customers throughout the UK, demonstrating its potential for replicability.</p>		

[Return to Introduction](#)