

## Executive summary

Circle is a Scottish charity which provides community-based support to marginalised children and families using a whole-family approach. Circle has pioneered a range of early years and family support services that promote children's healthy development and potential. One of the programmes provided by Circle – the “Meet at the Gate” project - seeks to help mothers leaving prison, providing support and connecting them to additional services.

Circle’s “Meet at the Gate” programme is highly likely to be yielding social benefits worth considerably more than the programme costs. Our analysis shows that, given the 10-year societal costs per female reoffending are high; but the per-offender costs of Circle’s intervention (and any additional services offenders thereby access) are low; the programme only needs to have quite a small positive impact on female reoffending – of the order of 3-13 per cent - to generate net positive benefits to society. For every offender that Circle’s programme completely dissuades from reoffending, the benefits to society could be worth about 30 times more than the programme costs. This estimate includes only the benefits that other studies have been able to put monetary values on – mainly the costs to the criminal justice system. There are likely to be many other benefits to the wellbeing of the children and families that Circle supports and to wider society in the form of reducing fear of crime and reduced use of foster care that would greatly increase that ratio.

While data limitations prevent us from making a direct quantitative estimate of the impact of Circle’s programme, there is some support for Circle’s approach in previous research on reoffending programmes for women.

We recommend that Circle continues to monitor its programme by collecting further data on all participants of the programme and their outcomes. Circle may also consider undertaking or commissioning an alternative assessment as discussed in section 8.

Key findings in this paper are:

- Research suggests that female offenders will, on average, cost society £65,000<sup>1</sup> in the ten years following an index offence.
- Circle’s costs are low at an average of £2,200 per offender engaged with.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an estimate of the Net Present Value over ten years based on a total cost over ten years of £76,000 by the Scottish Government

- There will be other costs attributable to the programme from Circles' clients' consequential use of support services such as housing, benefits and drugs misuse services. We have not been able to estimate these, and they will vary greatly across individual offenders.
- Although data limitations mean that the total benefit to society cannot be determined quantitatively, and the value of benefits to the individual have not been quantified or include, the analysis suggests that, using a range of assumptions, if Circle can have a *marginal positive impact* on the reoffending rates of its clients of approximately **3 - 13 per cent or more**, then their programme would represent **a net benefit to society**. This value is particularly sensitive to the assumed costs of other services that Circle clients go on to use.
- **However, given the high estimated social costs of reoffending, even small reductions in reoffending could lead to large benefits to society.**
- Because of data limitations, it has only been possible to carry out a limited 'breakeven analysis' of Circle's impact. In other words, given the costs of the service and the potential benefit to society from preventing one female from reoffending, how big Circle's success rate would need to be to make the programme result in a net social benefit has been calculated. The main reason it has not been possible to go further than this is that, from the available data, it is not possible to estimate quantitatively the impact of Circle's work on reducing reoffending.
- However, as section 9 sets out, there is some support in the literature for Circle's approach.

The 3 - 13 per cent figure should be interpreted as: If Circle treats 100 individuals and 3 – 13 of these individuals, who would otherwise have continued to commit a typical number of offences without treatment, completely desisted from reoffending in the future, then the scheme would be just about worthwhile. Alternatively, for a number of individuals treated, if the social cost of offences committed in the future falls by 3 - 13 per cent, then this would also mean that the scheme was worthwhile. Given the analysis suggests that the programme is highly likely to offer benefits that are many times greater than the costs, it is also likely to offer good value for money.