

# COMMUNITY PAYBACK ORDER (CPO)

## ANNUAL RETURNS TEMPLATE

FINANCIAL YEAR: **2024/25**

LOCAL AUTHORITY: **Aberdeen City Council**

TEMPLATE RETURN DATE: **Friday 31 October 2025**

Please return all completed templates to  
CJS at [CJSImprovement@communityjustice.scot](mailto:CJSImprovement@communityjustice.scot) and copy  
the Scottish Government at [cpo@gov.scot](mailto:cpo@gov.scot)

## 1. Background

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Under the Community Justice (Scotland) Act (2016), local authorities have a statutory duty to report on the operations of Community Payback Orders (CPO) within their area on an annual basis to Community Justice Scotland (CJS). CJS will then collate these returns and summarise them in a report which is laid before Scottish Parliament.

To assist with this reporting duty, CJS, in collaboration with representatives from Justice Social Work, the Scottish Government, and Social Work Scotland, has developed a template of questions for local areas to complete. This template is designed to support the reporting requirement.

## 2. Completing the template

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Please answer the following questions contained in this year's CPO template. When answering the questions, please ensure that all case studies and feedback are anonymised. We understand that maintaining anonymity may be more challenging for some local authorities. If this applies to your area, you may provide a more general response to the questions.

Please ensure all answers are relevant to your local area within the 2024 to 2025 reporting year.

If you need any support in completing this template and or have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in contact with CJS. Contact details can be found on the title page of this form.

Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions in this template.

### 3. Questions to answer

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#### 1) Reducing risk of reoffending

Please provide a case study or examples of your work with people subject to a Community Payback Order (CPO), focusing on how you work to address their offending behaviours and reduce the risk of reoffending.

Individuals who completed an Exit Questionnaire at the end of CPO Supervision, and felt that their offending had reduced, cited the following as the main reasons:

- Personal growth and maturity.
- Desire to avoid further legal trouble or imprisonment.
- Support from family and social workers.
- Improved mental health and coping skills.
- Realisation of the consequences of offending.
- Engagement in employment and family responsibilities.

#### Case Study 1

Mr X previously spent over 10 years in custody for a serious violent offence. Mr X was assessed in terms of his suitability for the Caledonian programme due to a serious domestic assault. He expressed a motivation to change but also said that he had struggled to engage with programmatic work previously. (He advised that he previously threw chairs across the room in frustration while completing programmatic work.) Two years on, he is due to successfully complete the Caledonian programme.

The programme was taken at his pace and he slowly opened up and disclosed trauma he had experienced as a child. He progressed to the groupwork element and was open with the group about his experiences but also about the negative impact custody had had on him. He was recognised as a positive group member by group workers and was very supportive of the other men. It was felt some of the men progressed further due to this client's openness.

He also engaged with a personal development programme. Again, the feedback was very positive and demonstrated his ability to open up in group settings. He also completed a programme with an employability service.

When he committed the offence, he was binge drinking alcohol regularly. He has not reported any binge drinking which also demonstrates how much progress he has made.

Mr X's Justice Social Worker said: "*In terms of risk / need, I feel his risk has reduced significantly throughout his CPO and he has been supported with his needs, but more importantly, he now demonstrates an understanding of how he meets his needs.*"

#### Case Study 2

Y was made subject to a Community Payback Order with supervision and unpaid work. Y's offending is closely linked to their consumption of high quantities of alcohol. While on the CPO, Y has abstained from alcohol for approximately nine months and has undertaken the decider skills work in supervision sessions. Y works full time and was given an Individual Placement (Unpaid Work) at a local charity shop which they have completed. They continue to volunteer once a fortnight at the charity shop and enjoys this citing it is different from their full-time employment which can be stressful. It would also appear there has been no further offending since the imposition of the CPO.

## **2) Support for underlying needs**

Please provide a case study or example of your work with people subject to a CPO, which demonstrates how their underlying needs (e.g. mental health, substance use) are identified, and how you work to address those.

#### Case Study 3

Z was made subject to a Community Payback Order with 12 months Supervision and 80 hours of Unpaid Work to be completed in 9 months. Z completed the hours in less than 3 months and continues to volunteer at the charity shop where they had attended a weekly Individual Placement. Z has gained employment since starting their Order in a role they love. Z also began volunteering with another third sector organisation since the Order started, supporting people to access benefits and housing.

Z's offence was for driving while under the influence of alcohol. Z had previously engaged with AA and continues to do so. They have been abstinent from alcohol for nearly a year and have spoken about feeling stronger in their sobriety than previous years and more confident in accessing support when required.

### 3) Unpaid work

Please describe a case study or provide examples of unpaid work activity.

In Aberdeen those undertaking unpaid work are involved in a range of initiatives such as:

- community garden assistance,
- park maintenance,
- painting of community centres, and supported accommodation units etc,
- rubbish collection/fly tip removal,
- assisted shopping runs for the Elderly community,
- snow clearing and gritting, and
- indoor unpaid work craft.

These projects have been instrumental in fostering a sense of togetherness, benefiting both service users, community groups and individuals in need of support.



*Park maintenance*



*Assisted shopping*



*Snow clearing*



*Indoor unpaid work craft*

We also currently have 18 Unpaid Work 'Individual Placements' in the city. These include large second hand furniture stores, smaller high street second hand clothing stores, food banks, community centres, a community café, churches and mosques, a community golf course, and a local football and boxing club.

58 clients were placed in Individual Placements during the year, undertaking a total of 7084 hours of Unpaid Work.

Most clients on Individual Placements say they enjoyed the experience, and some have continued volunteering after the Placement has completed.

#### **4) Other activity**

Please describe the main types of "other activity" carried out as part of unpaid work or other activity requirement.

The Service commissions the provision of an Employability service for adults (16+) who are subject to a Community Payback Order with an unpaid work and other activity requirement' and other individuals receiving a service from justice social work, which is provided by Aberdeen Foyer. Individuals engaging with the service gained 45 qualifications during 2024-25, with 12 clients moving into employment.

Aberdeen Foyer offer: CSCS, Forklift, Banksman Slinger, Asbestos Awareness and City and Guilds Training; job application and interview training; links to work placements (30 hours of work-related activity with employer; additional support, mentoring and much more).

**Case Study:** X, 26, was referred to Foyer in September 2023. He began his journey with a strong start, making progress towards his CSCS card and engaging positively with his Development Coach. After a setback linked to alcohol dependency, X

temporarily disengaged. However, he returned with renewed motivation, having started attending support groups for recovery. X reconnected with Foyer and began attending weekly appointments again. He showed real commitment – completing mock tests and eventually passing his CSCS exam with full marks. X now has his green card and continues to work with Foyer to find employment in the construction sector. His journey highlights the importance of second chances and the power of perseverance.

In addition, the below are offered as ‘Other Activity’:

- Learning/Training offered: Blended Learning and Woodwork Design Packs; Adult Learning (English, Maths, Computer Studies, certificated work courses); First Aider Course, Driving Theory Test; Colin’s Historical Walks; Tool-Box Talks
- Volunteering: Wildlife Trust, Churches, community centres, cancer research, 4x4 support for emergency services, football coaching, teaching guitar, charity shops
- Drug/ Alcohol Counselling, Drug Awareness and Women’s Learning Pack is also offered.

## 5) Feedback

Please provide a summary of quotes or feedback on the impact of supervision requirements and or unpaid work or other activity requirements from the following perspectives:

- People subject to a supervision requirement
- People undertaking unpaid work or other activity requirement
- The community and beneficiaries of unpaid work

### Overview

Clients completing CPO Supervision and Unpaid Work are asked to complete an Exit Questionnaire. Numbers of questionnaire completed continue to increase year on year:

<b>Questionnaires Completed</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>TOTAL 24-25</b>	<b>TOTAL 23-24</b>
Supervision*	108	13	121	93
Unpaid Work	160	17	177	131
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>247</b>

*\*Includes a small number of questionnaires completed by individuals on licences*

Feedback comments for 2024-25 was overwhelmingly positive, including the below areas:

- **Supervision** - improvements in various life issues, relationships with Justice Social Work workers, useful aspects of supervision, behavioural changes, reasons for changes in offending behaviour, and community supports linked;
- **Unpaid Work** - peoples' experiences, achievements, skills developed, and opinions about staff and community impact.

Feedback collected is collated and reviewed on a quarterly and annual basis, and considered via our service governance arrangements, including in terms of any feedback which might inform service improvement. Summary highlights are shared with the wider staff group, with more detailed or specific feedback being shared with individual staff members via Supervision arrangements.

### **People subject to a Supervision Requirement**

80% of those who completed Supervision Exit Questionnaires (the majority of these being individuals who have successfully completed Community Payback Orders with Supervision), felt that their Supervision had helped them stop or reduce their offending.

*My CJW was extremely easy to get on with and I felt able to discuss anything with them. I trust them which was very important to make progress*

*I started to believe in myself and that there was a path forward*

*Definitely won't be back!*

There were many very positive individual comments about the value of an individual's relationship with their worker/s, and the role played by the worker/s, with many respondents expressing gratitude for the support received, noting positive life changes and improved outlooks. They appreciated the professionalism and kindness of workers and highlighted the value of the supervision experience.

The below table sets out more detail about feedback received:

	<b>Number / %</b>
No of responses re CPOs	110 (91%)
No of responses re Licences	5 (4%)
Blank	6
Found information provided at induction useful	118 (98%)
Felt was treated with respect	45 (37%)

Very good relationship with JSW workers	58 (48%)
Good relationship with JSW workers	6 (5%)
Felt progress / achievement was recognised	89 (74%)
Felt thinking / behaviour changed during Supervision	89 (74%)
Felt offending behaviour changed during Supervision	92 (76%)
How has level of offending changed?	
- No further offending	85 (70%)
- Same rate of offending & less serious	1 (1%)
- Offending less often & less serious	3 (2%)
- Offending less often & more serious	1 (1%)
- Offending less often & same level of seriousness	2 (2%)
<i>No-one indicated offending more often</i>	
Felt Supervision helped stop / reduce offending	97 (80%)
Linked into other supports or services in the community	51 (42%)

As can be seen from the table below, all 93 respondents who reported issues at the start of Supervision felt improvement in at least one area by the end of their Supervision:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>No / % who identified this as an issue at start of Supervision</b>	<b>No / % of these who felt issue improved during Supervision</b>
People reporting issues (improvement in at least one area)	93 (100%)	93 (100%)
Alcohol	33 (35%)	32 (97%)
Coping Skills	52 (56%)	44 (85%)
Drugs	35 (38%)	30 (86%)
Employability / Education	18 (19%)	15 (83%)
Housing	36 (39%)	27 (90%)
Mental Health	64 (69%)	52 (81%)
Money Issues	34 (37%)	21 (62%)
Personal Relationships	49 (53%)	43 (88%)
Physical Health	32 (34%)	20 (63%)
Self Esteem	41 (44%)	31 (76%)

### **People undertaking unpaid work or other activity requirement**

91% of those who completed an Exit Questionnaire at the end of an Unpaid Work Requirement indicated that they had found the work worthwhile, with 86% recognising the benefit of this to the community.

The below table sets out more detail about feedback received:

	<b>Number (%)</b> <b>Total = 177</b>
Found information provided at induction useful	169 (95%)
Found work worthwhile	161 (91%)
Had good support from Order Supervisor	171 (97%)
Had any personal achievements during unpaid work	79 (45%)
Learned about team work	144 (81%)
Developed new skills	88 (50%)
Developed existing skills	95 (54%)
Thought the unpaid work benefitted the community	153 (86%)

Many Unpaid Work clients expressed gratitude in their Exit Questionnaire, noting positive life changes, and appreciated the opportunity to contribute positively rather than face incarceration. Nearly half (45%) noted personal achievements, including improved social skills, timekeeping, community contribution, and new hobbies such as painting and woodworking. Feedback highlighted Task Supervisors as kind, supportive, approachable, and instrumental in helping participants complete their hours and overcome personal challenges.



### **The community and beneficiaries of unpaid work**

We have good relationships with our Individual Placement providers – they trust our judgement. Clients placed show good levels of reliability and commitment to completing their hours with the charity involved. Most say they enjoyed the experience and some continue volunteering.

Below are examples of feedback received from beneficiaries of unpaid work in the community:

- The job that would have taken myself and two others at least a couple of hours, was achieved in less than an hour. The young men you sent were brilliant, and so very helpful, I am impressed.
- I want to express a huge thank you to the task supervisors & the UPVW'S for their help yesterday it was fantastic and actually I don't know what I would have done without them.
- Thanks once again and your team for all your help with our young people. We would be lost without it and couldn't do our job.

Feedback to a Task Supervisor about the Assisted Shopping Service:

[\*NB name of Unpaid Worker changed to avoid identification]

*“Thanks for letting us know how the Service Operates and thanks to Aberdeen City Council for providing this free of charge. \*Bob is a lovely REAL gentleman. I know that I speak for us all in saying, we are very appreciative users, especially the disabled, and those of us without family. Before the Service was laid on it was a great hardship, eg we had the expense of taxi's etc. This is an excellent Service that is provided. We are going to miss \*Bob, and all his work mates, when they move forward in their careers. God Bless them all, but they have all benefited from your excellent patient and responsible example, I admire your work, and I see how the lads, of all nationalities, under your guidance, have come on. AND WE love YOUR Sunday morning, always pleasant, welcoming smile, and help. See you next Sun if I haven't “snuffed it” while watching the Soaps 🙌 🙌 🙌”*

## 6) Benefits and challenges of other CPO requirements

Please mark with a cross the requirements that were imposed by courts in 2024 to 2025.

- Compensation requirement
- Programme requirement

- Residence requirement
- Restricted movement requirement
- Conduct requirement
- Alcohol treatment requirement
- Drug treatment requirement
- Mental health treatment requirement

For each of the requirements that were imposed (up to a maximum of 300 words) please describe innovative and practice examples, challenges, and impact associated with each.

**Compensation.** There are no issues for us in relation to this requirement.

**Programme.** Generally imposed following assessment of suitability. Some issues where court imposes a programme requirement without an assessment having been completed or when we have assessed them as unsuitable.

Overall, the Caledonian Programme works well, both Men's Programme and Women's/ Children's service. There is undoubtedly an information sharing benefit in having all elements of the system together. Feedback from the women's service is that they feel that their voices are heard, they are well-supported and safety plans are in place. Children also receive individualised support and safety planning suitable to age and stage. Work is to be undertaken to understand conversion rates, given the high number of assessments undertaken compared to numbers who are assessed as suitable for the programme.

The groupwork element of Moving Forward Making Changes is delivered by the Aberdeenshire Joint Sex Offenders Project team and, for lower-level sexual offending, Aberdeen City social workers deliver the Aberdeenshire Sex Offender Programme (ASOP). Aberdeenshire are withdrawing their service from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, and so we are in the process of establishing a new team within our Service, to enable us to continue offering this programme.

**Conduct.** Primarily used for: RSOs who require police to check mobile devices; to attend drug/ alcohol/ mental health/ counselling/other services as directed by supervising officer.

**Alcohol Treatment.** This is not a commonly used Requirement. Generally, the requirement to engage with Alcohol Services is imposed as part of a Conduct Requirement.

The Court sometimes imposes unmanageable requirements e.g. to undertake “elements of the Caledonian Programme” and “Requires the offender, for a period of 1 year from the date of this requirement, to refrain from consuming alcohol and admit to being breathalysed by Police or Social Work”, the latter being impossible as the individual was alcohol dependent and to withdraw all alcohol immediately was likely to be life threatening. Such orders are returned to the court for amendment.

## 7) Organisational improvements and ongoing challenges

Looking back at last year (2023-24), have there been any improvements to the challenges you noted? Are there any challenges you are still facing this year (2024-25)?

### Demands on the Service

- Numbers of both Justice Social Work Reports and Community Payback Orders continue to show an increasing trend year on year, with CPOs equalling, and JSWRs now well-surpassing, pre-Covid levels. This has resulted in workers feeling stretched to meet the demands, with the additional challenge of a reduction in ‘full time’ hours to a 35 hour week from July 2025. In the last report we identified that discussions were taking place with Sheriffs in Aberdeen Sheriff Court to pilot shorter and more succinct JSW Reports, and efforts are being made to encourage social workers to produce proportionate reports (eg shorter Sheriff Summary reports than Solemn / High Court reports) with oversight via ongoing quality assurance.

### Unpaid Work

- Following the move to different premises in January 2023, (due to notice being given on previous premises), the Unpaid Work service lost the use of a joinery workshop. The service had to move again in May 2024. The current premises can

accommodate two workshop areas which has raised our placement numbers again and serves as a resource in poor weather, however the building is unsuitable from which to operate a fully functional joinery workshop – a loss to the clients and a reduction in the type of work skill offered. The service recently managed to secure additional space within the current building for a third workshop, and we are looking at how best to make use of this. Over time, the need of the service to move twice has caused some disruption for clients, in relation to delayed completion of orders to allow for the site moves and new project set up arrangements.

- Issues previously identified in relation to fleet services / aging vehicles have now been resolved and most of our vehicles have now been replaced. This has addressed the difficulties previously experienced with LEZ Restrictions in the City.

#### Use of ASBOs

- Concerns continue to be experienced regarding the use of ASBOs, particularly for people with mental health problems, learning difficulties etc. who will be unable to comply and therefore will be criminalised. The Community Justice Improvement Plan project to review ASBO guidance and implement change ideas to how we respond and manage anti-social behaviour, which was referenced in last year's report, has made some progress, including in terms of refreshing local guidance and related awareness-raising about the use of ASBOs.

#### No Recourse to Public Funds

- Increasing numbers of people with no recourse to public funds is putting additional strain on resources and we have increasingly seen this year that bail and community orders and are being imposed which results in social work securing housing and providing living expenses. Having reached out to the justice network across Scotland to determine how other areas are dealing with this challenge it transpires that areas are approaching this differently across the country.
- From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 a new Home Office case management tool - NRPF Connect – was implemented within the local authority. This enables the recording of details of households with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) that are being provided with accommodation and/or financial support by councils when social care duties are engaged. The system is accessible by services across the

council including social work and housing and enables immigration status information to be obtained from the Home Office to help identify a person's support options and whether the exclusion to social services' support applies. The ongoing benefits of this system will be evaluated over time.

- Some staff have now completed Human Rights Assessment training. Work is in progress to create a cross-service panel to enable consistent and auditable decision-making regarding resource allocation.

#### Young People

- Although numbers of 16- and 17-year-olds in contact with the service are low (seven Justice Social Work Reports and three CPOs in 2024-25), the service provided JSWRs for 89 young people aged 18 – 20 years, and oversaw the same number of CPOs, in the same period. Getting it right for these young people is critical, and with a lack of dedicated resourcing, there is scope for improvement in terms of pathways and collaborative working between Justice and Children's Social Work Services, particularly in light of current and future changes relating to the Children's Care & Justice (Scotland) Act 2024. We are currently liaising with Children's / Youth Services to plan and prepare in relation to this.

#### Unplanned Releases from Court

- Release from custody via virtual Courts, and 'unplanned' liberations from other Courts, continue to present challenges in respect of providing multi agency 'throughcare' support (for housing, medication, benefits, etc) and engaging and inducting individuals being released from establishments across the country who have CPOs to progress in the community. Justice Social Work is represented on a multi-agency short life working group which is looking at ways services and agencies can work together to improve our collective response and pathways, particularly considering increasing drug related deaths.

## **8) Collaborative working across justice partnerships**

Please provide any examples of work with community justice partners, including the third sector, to effectively deliver CPOs.

Individuals who completed Exit Questionnaires at the end of CPOs with a Supervision Requirement fed back that they had been linked into a variety of community services including:

- Drug and alcohol support.

- Housing support services.
- Mental health services.
- Money advice supports.
- Volunteering and church groups.
- Rehabilitation and therapy programmes.

During the year we undertook re-commissioning of our service for the provision of an Employability service for adults (16+) who are subject to a Community Payback Order with an unpaid work and other activity requirement and other individuals receiving a service from justice social work, which is provided by Aberdeen Foyer.

The Aberdeen Foyer contract was continued from the previous year, and individuals engaging with the service gained 45 qualifications during 2024-25, with 12 clients moving into employment.

*See also Case Study under section 4 ‘Other Activity’ above.*

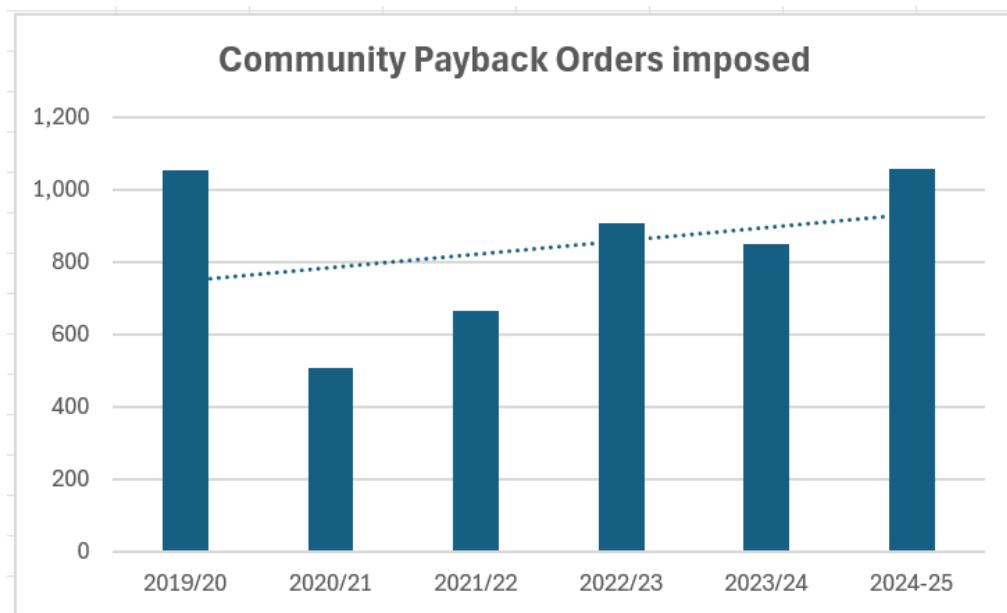
## **9) Additional information**

Is there any other relevant information you wish to highlight? This may include:

- Any new and/or notable trends in the CPO cohort (e.g. changing needs, offence types, demographics)
- Areas for improvement and planned next steps.
- New ways of working and benefits achieved from these.

### Service Demands

As can be seen from the chart below, the number of Community Payback Orders imposed has increased significantly from 2023-24 to 2024-25, up by 24% and returning to pre-pandemic levels. The trend over time also shows a steady increase.



As of 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025, there were 701 CPO Unpaid Work and Other Activity Requirements in place (up from 524 as of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024), and 52,468 hours of Unpaid Work outstanding (up from 42,471). This is an increase in Requirements of 34% on the same date the previous year, and an increase in hours outstanding of 24%. In addition, the Service has seen an increasing trend in the numbers of report requests for Sheriff Solemn business.

#### Unpaid Work

The ‘workshop’ element of the Unpaid Work service, which provides lighter, seated unpaid work placement opportunities, remains in a temporary location. Further focus is to be given to increasing availability of individual placements, and to providing further appropriate and meaningful placements for the increasing number of clients (around 50%) who can only undertake indoor or seated tasks.

Fewer clients have been assessed as suitable for Individual Placements, as the post covid court backlog produced more orders for more serious matters. Placement providers have also increasingly set their own restrictions in relation to volunteers’ convictions.

In addition, we have fewer females in Individual Placements than previously. Whilst an Individual Placement was usually our first option for female Unpaid Work clients, we increasingly find that more of our females have presented with chaotic substance use issues and for more serious offences which can preclude them from an Individual Placement. As an alternative for some, we now have quite an established ‘Women-only Wednesdays’ at our indoor project where we offer light seated craft sessions. Anything made there then goes to charity shops for sale.

#### Alcohol and Drugs Intervention

The Service has recognised a need to upskill staff in being able to respond to clients presenting with alcohol and drugs issues and is addressing this via training with Scottish Drugs Forum, in-house awareness raising, a staff focus group, and updates via our monthly staff forum. We have a dedicated Development Officer in relation to this.

The Service is part of multi agency arrangements which reviews every drug related death. This is to support shared learning and to identify any early interventions and potential preventative measures.