



# Transforming Local Systems TEC Pathfinder Programme Evaluation

**Final Report**

**Appendix 1: Aberdeen Pathfinder**

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**This is an excerpt from a larger report.  
The full report can be viewed [here](#).**

# Appendix 1: Aberdeen Transforming Local Systems Impact Report

**AIM: To understand how Technology Enabled Care (TEC) can play a role in supporting the delivery of multi-agency services for people, aged 18+ who experience domestic abuse.**

## Overview

**The Aberdeen Pathfinder is led by the third sector interface Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Organisations Third Sector Interface (ACVO TSI) and the Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership, and is focused on exploring how Technology Enabled Care (TEC) can play a role in supporting the delivery of multi-agency services for people aged 18+ who experience domestic abuse.**

Given the sensitivity of the subject, the Pathfinder recognised, at the outset, the need to ensure due consideration of risks to people with lived experience, and those to whom disclosures are made, when conducting research and when considering solutions. The Pathfinder is delivering one core solution, a domestic abuse directory of specialist organisations, in response to the challenges identified through user engagement during the Discover phase. These include, firstly, the challenges people face in recognising whether they are experiencing domestic abuse. Secondly, the challenges people experiencing domestic abuse face in accessing support and comprehensive information safely, securely, and quickly. Thirdly, the problem support agencies or providers have in knowing where to go for up-to-date information about different services and in sharing referrals to the right place at the right time.

**The Pathfinder is at a relatively early stage in delivering the solution and there is limited data to assess how the solutions per se are working.**

In this section we will assess how well the Pathfinder is making progress towards impact or is positioned for impact, by examining four key questions. Evidence is drawn from data collated by the Pathfinders in OutNav against three pathways (Discover/Define; Develop; Deliver - see Appendix 6).

- Which stakeholders did the Pathfinder engage across all four phases of the SATSD and how ('who with'), the value of the project to them ('how they feel')
- To what extent are there changes in (or progress made towards changes in) knowledge, skills, relationships, capacity to support the intended changes in the system ('what they learn and gain')
- To what extent is there evidence of the application and adoption of the solutions, or new ways of working ('what they do differently')
- To what extent is there evidence of the scalability and spread of the solutions or new approaches, and the impact on people ('what difference does this make').

## Stakeholder Engagement and the value of the project to them ('who with')

**The Pathfinder has engaged stakeholders in its research throughout the project.** Over the course of a year, until the end of 2020, the Pathfinder engaged with a wide range of specialist and allied service providers in Aberdeen City and wider Grampian, and from national service providers. Many of these providers were engaged in one-to-one interviews lasting more than an hour. Service providers and practitioners have also been engaged through online surveys as well in online sense-making workshops during the Discover phase. Many of the connections came through the Project's networks, especially ACVO TSI's. The Pathfinder also developed a stakeholder map, comprehensively mapping the domestic abuse services system in Aberdeen.

Despite good initial engagement, many organisations were unable to commit further time to the project. One stakeholder noted:

“ They were so strapped, already the waiting list was so huge [even] before the pandemic started. There was a real lack of infrastructure and funding and then we were asking them to input into this project on a regular basis.”

- Pathfinder team member

However, the Pathfinder did establish some important and strong working relations with two key organisations, SafeLives Scotland, and the Violence Against Women Partnership (VAWP) - the key player in bringing specialist domestic abuse sectors together. SafeLives were also already involved in the Whole Lives Scotland project focusing on domestic abuse in Aberdeen City, providing a channel for the Pathfinder to feed its learning and activities into. The Pathfinder aligned its project delivery to VAWP's action plan in a deliberate move to provide value to VAWP.<sup>28</sup>

**The Pathfinder faced challenges in engaging citizens with lived experience due to the nature of the topic and due to barriers presented by Covid-19.** The Pathfinder initially anticipated creating a 'Citizen Research Group' to support the design and implementation of research activities with a wider group of citizens. However, despite promoting the group and circulating among specialist service providers, there was limited uptake. The Pathfinder also sought to leverage connections it had made with domestic abuse service providers and key third sector partners to connect with citizens. Again, there was limited engagement with a small sample of only 8 people responding to an online consultation. The Pathfinder was able to engage more citizens when it brought in the service design organisation Snook as a formal partner during the Develop phase of the project. Snook conducted user interviews with individuals or with small groups to gauge their views and feelings around three concepts defined by the Pathfinder, which explored different ways of improving care pathways and experiences of people with lived experience and practitioners. The team from Snook also noted the challenges in engaging people with lived experience, particularly participants from under-represented groups. In total, Snook was able to engage seventeen people with lived experience as well as nineteen practitioners. The difficulties in engaging citizens led one stakeholder to question whether the Scottish Approach to Service Design (SAAtSD) was suitable in this context

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<sup>28</sup> Stakeholder interview

and whether it should be only used in cases where substantial citizen engagement could be achieved.

## Knowledge, skills, relationships and capacity ('what they learned and gained')

**Despite challenges in engaging stakeholders and citizens, and maintaining its project team, the Pathfinder has been well guided by a multi-agency steering group made up of some of the key organisations operating in the domestic abuse landscape, including Safe Lives and VAWP.**

The composition of the steering group did change over the period of the project, reflecting the evolution of the Pathfinder towards focusing its solution on supporting practitioners and people who receive disclosures to access information and effectively provide support to people with lived experience. One stakeholder noted:

“ Define told us we were not looking for a general public solution because many, many organisations have been delivering apps ... So we wanted to focus on everybody across health and social care because we were aware from research that people didn't feel confident about disclosure, and disclosure could happen at any time. That was the problem. There was no pathway.”

- Pathfinder team member

“ But I think what's been very helpful for us is that at the end of Define, we reviewed the whole of the steering group, got new people in that were more representative of what was happening in health and social care.”

- Pathfinder team member

“ It became apparent at the end of that phase that we needed far more specialist input.”

- Pathfinder team member

**This pivot was expressed by one stakeholder as being important because domestic abuse should not simply be pursued through criminal justice processes, but needs to be embedded in health and social care support provision for people who have experienced or are at risk of domestic abuse. Staff across the health and social care system also need to be trained in trauma-informed practice.** This need for a shift in the system was one that the Pathfinder was seen as needing to speak to. The Pathfinder successfully mobilised support across several key agencies and brought together a multi-agency consortium including the police, health and social care, domestic abuse specialists, and the third sector at a critical juncture. The multi-agency consortium was able to provide guidance and consider the concepts being developed and feed into the delivery of the Pathfinder's main solution. The solution is a dynamic database of support services that allows users to access a 'one true source' of guidance and information about support, service provision and referral pathways relating to domestic abuse in Aberdeen. However, it is less clear whether bringing these groups together has resulted in greater integration and cohesive working across agencies operating in the domestic abuse landscape.

Figure 1. Domestic abuse support pathway, Aberdeen TEC Pathfinder, Define stage report



**Over the course of the project, the Pathfinder has produced important research contributing understanding to the wider domestic abuse landscape over the course of the project.** It commissioned the Institute of Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss) to conduct two evidence pieces: ‘Service response to domestic abuse during Covid-19’ (May 2020), and ‘Language and service provision surrounding abuse in Scotland’ (March 2020). These evidence pieces have informed the Pathfinder’s secondary research and analysis and have also been published by Iriss on its website.<sup>29</sup>

**In March 2020, the Pathfinder built on the early stakeholder mapping activities it had conducted in Discover and developed a prototype service tracker for Aberdeen City.** The tracker was expanded to include wider Grampian as a result of a request made by the Specialist Midwife for Public Protection, NHS Grampian. The tracker was called the ‘Grampian abuse support services tracker’. The tracker outlines the current scope of service provision for organisations who offer support to people experiencing domestic abuse in Grampian. The information from the tracker will feed into the dynamic database solution being developed by the Pathfinder. However, it will need to be checked to ensure it contains the most up-to-date information about organisations and services.

<sup>29</sup> Iriss. (2020). Service response to domestic abuse during COVID-19. [online] Available at: [link](#) and Iriss (2020). Language and service provision surrounding abuse in Scotland. [online] Available at: [link](#) [Accessed 21 Apr. 2023].



Because ... the service designer in Aberdeen City's team had been doing a lot of the stakeholder mapping and trying to understand who did what and how it all connected ... when Covid happened, domestic abuse rates rose, [they were] able to pull together a directory, which was just a word document that explained who was where and doing what ... so people could look at it and say here's the support that we need to ... put in place for this person. That just didn't exist before, so there have been small wins along the way that have been really great."

- National Team Stakeholder

## Application or adoption of the solutions or new ways of working ('what they are doing differently')

**The Pathfinder was significantly impacted by Covid-19 at the critical mid-point, when the project was moving from Discover/Define to Develop/Deliver.** The service designer left, and key individuals from the Health and Social Care Partnership were pulled off the project to work on Covid-19 priorities. The partnership with Snook did bring greater direction to the Pathfinder as it commenced Develop and Deliver and filled in some gaps in the user research. However, it has taken a long time for that partnership to get off the ground, resulting in significant delays to the project. The Pathfinder did eventually benefit from two new individuals in the Health and Social Care partnership being appointed to the project, "who brought in new energy and new ways of looking at things and also cemented the work with health and social care as well."<sup>30</sup>

**While the Aberdeen Pathfinder has yet to implement its solution, namely a domestic abuse directory of specialist organisations, it has laid the groundwork to ensure it is well-utilised.** The Pathfinder effectively brought together several groups and organisations in the local area, all actively involved in providing specialist abuse services, who are all well-informed of the planned directory. There is the expectation that once the directory is operational, partners who have been involved in the project will direct their staff and other stakeholders towards it to create a critical mass of engagement with the service to ensure it is mainstreamed and engaged with effectively.

## Scalability and spread of the solutions or new approaches and the impact on people ('what difference is this is making')

**The decision was made to embed the domestic abuse directory within Aberdeen City Council's website 'Aberdeen Protects' to ensure the sustainability of the directory and to maintain a focal area for domestic abuse advice.** The Pathfinder chose to commission Snook to develop the functional directory that will be embedded into the site as opposed to getting it built by Aberdeen City Council's IT services, due to the latter's lack of time and resource to commit to the project within required time frames. However, Aberdeen City Council will be responsible for maintaining, updating, and troubleshooting the directory. There was some reflection within the Pathfinder that it would have been preferable to have involved Aberdeen City Council earlier in the process, and to have commissioned IT services to build the directory, to gain buy-in and ensure their future commitment to maintaining and troubleshooting the site.

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<sup>30</sup> Stakeholder interview