

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2026

Redefining the boundaries between the justice system and the wider community.



Introduction

This document sets out the Turnaround Project's strategic direction for the three years 2024-2026.

The Turnaround Project is a charity, registered in Northern Ireland, that provides hope and opportunity to enable people who have served sentences in the criminal justice system to turn around their futures. The Turnaround Project also advocates for wider society to respond constructively to this challenge.

Too many people who receive criminal justice sentences face barriers long after completing those sentences, impacting on their mental and physical health, their relationships with others, their ability to secure housing and other needs, and their prospects of securing and sustaining employment. These barriers increase the likelihood of people serving more time in custody or under supervision in the community. In simple terms, the system that is supposed to reduce re-offending consistently records an overall re-offending rate of around 60%¹. There must be a better way.

In our view, this better way will not be found by the criminal justice system alone. That's because many of the issues that lead people into the justice system, and hinder them from getting out of it, are social issues. Some of those require change in other public services; others require different parts of the system to work better together, particularly as people transition out of the justice system.

But others require a different approach within society as a whole. We believe that too often, society turns its face away from the justice system, 'outsourcing' the issues around offending to justice agencies and assuming that the passing of a sentence is the end of the story. But the story continues, and the passing of a sentence often deepens the rupture between

the person who has been sentenced and society; and the deeper that rupture, the harder it becomes for that person to turn around their future.

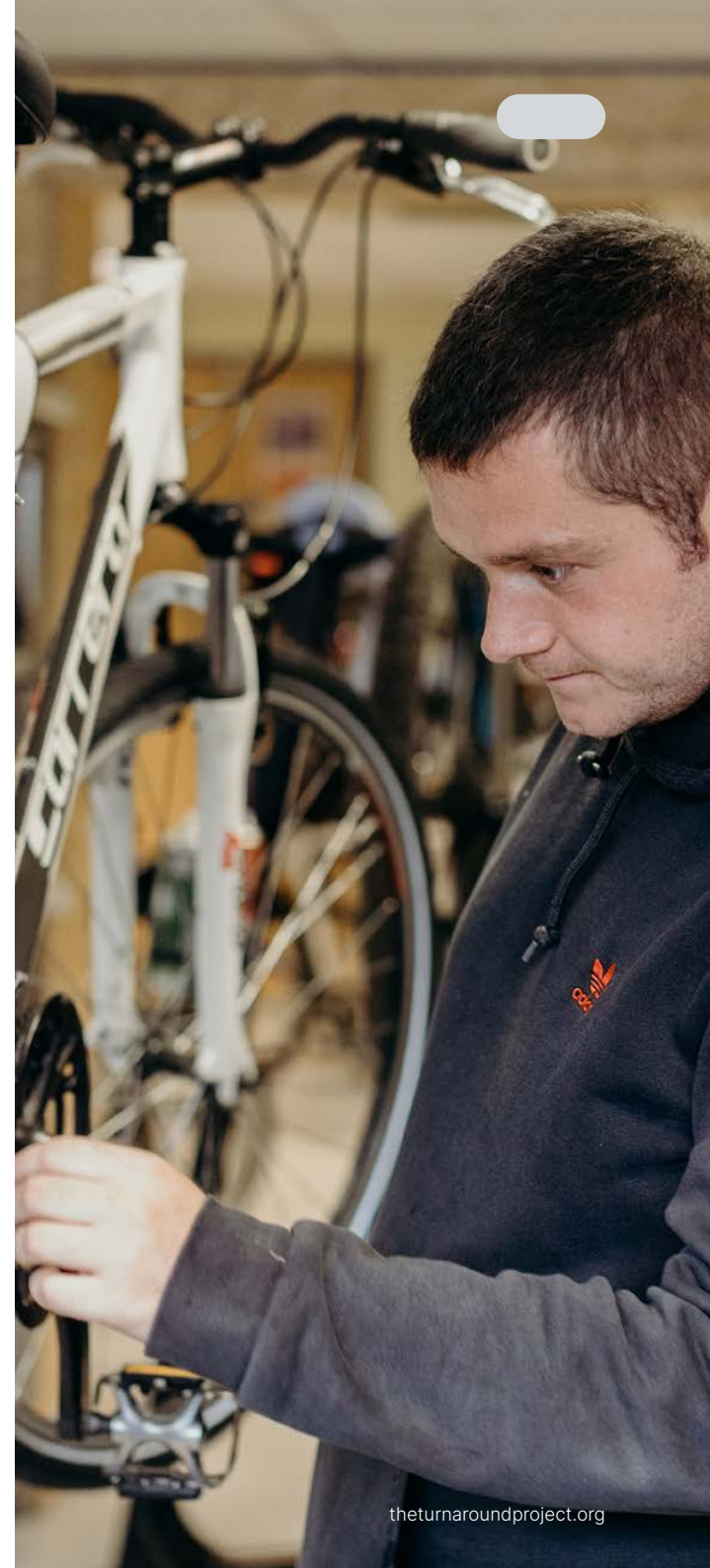
So, the way we work to help people turn around their futures is by also turning around the wider community, encouraging people to turn their faces towards, rather than away from, the justice system and the people sentenced to serve time within it.

We are working to find new ways of enabling and supporting people to make the transition out of the system; new ways of encouraging the wider community to see the links between criminal justice issues and social justice issues; and new ways of working together as people who have, and haven't served sentences, to find new solutions to old challenges.

Five years since our foundation, Turnaround is growing in impact and credibility. To date over 240 people have been referred to Turnaround, and we have supported over 90 people to gain confidence, skills and direction as they seek to move on from the justice system. We have provided over 17,500 hours of paid employment in our two social enterprises. Informed by evidence and the experiences and insights of people who have served sentences, and with a committed and talented team of Trustees, staff and volunteers, this Strategic Plan sets out our ambitions for the next three years, and the difference we believe that can make.

The issues we exist to tackle are longstanding and complex, but we are confident in the abilities and tenacity of our team, and of those we will continue to enable to turn their lives around.

¹ Figures released by the Department of Justice in 2017 showed that of adults released from prison in 2014/15, 61.2% had committed previous offences, and 37.4% went on to commit a further offence within 12 months of release.



What drives us

Our Vision, Mission and Values reflect and inform how we see the world and how we respond. They provide the foundation upon which we build our strategy, describing why we exist and what we want to achieve.

Our vision

“An inclusive community where everyone has hope and opportunity.”

All of our work is directed towards achieving this vision.

Our mission

“To work with society to enable people who have served sentences to turn around their futures.”

Linking together our work with individuals and our work with wider society, our mission reflects the reality that for individuals to be able to turn around their futures we need society to understand, and to take steps to remove, the barriers that people face as they do so.

Our values

Our trustees, staff and volunteers commit to four values in our engagement with the Turnaround Project:

We nurture hope – Each of us is more than our pasts. We use our past experiences to strengthen, and not to limit, our futures.

We create opportunity – We enable, encourage and support each other to pursue new futures.

We all play our part – Everyone works as part of the team, growing as individuals and helping to create more opportunities for others.

We respect each other – We all have strengths and a positive contribution to make, so whatever our backgrounds, we work together to achieve our goals.

Our present, and our future

Where we are now

The Turnaround Project is best known as a provider of transitional employment opportunities. In order to provide those opportunities, over the last five years we have created and grown two social enterprises – Outwork and Big Loop Bikes.

Alongside a job, we provide each transitional employee with strength-based coaching to help them identify their own strengths, to set and pursue personal goals, and to think about how they can use

their past experiences to help them turn around their futures.

And in the last two years we have begun to build a wider network of people with lived experience of the justice system, and to use their experiences and insights to engage more effectively with wider society around the barriers that people face on their journeys away from the justice system.

We have experienced sustained growth in our profile, income, organisational size and – most importantly – our positive impact on the lives of individuals.

But we retain the ambition that has fueled that growth and want to go further.

Where we will be

As we reach the end of our first five years of operation, we're looking ahead with excitement and determination to evolving into an organisation that:

- Is recognised across these islands as a leading provider of strength-based, gender and trauma-informed coaching for people who have served sentences in the justice system.
- Provides that coaching and personal development opportunities to people beyond those who we employ in our enterprises.
- Has three self-sustaining, expanding enterprises in which to offer transitional employment.
- Offers at least 40 transitional employment places at any one time.

- Offers transitional employment opportunities that are appealing to women and men.
- Has provided transitional employment opportunities to over 250 people in our first ten years.
- Has an established network of employer partners, who recognise the benefits of transitional employment, are committed to giving opportunities to people with previous convictions, and who recognise Turnaround as a strategic partner that can help them do so.
- Is achieving systems-change by enabling people with lived experiences to shape the policies and practices of policy-makers, service-providers and employers.

- Is able to communicate inspiring stories of impact on individuals and society as a result of our work.
- Has a culture in which every beneficiary, employee and volunteer enjoys strong mutual support, has clear goals and is effectively supported to achieve them, and is recognised for their achievements when they do.

In doing so, we will be able to look back on our second five years and say that we have lived up to our Board's commitment to fostering **courage, creativity and resilience** in our learning and growth.

2024-2026 Impact strategy

Inspired by our vision, and in pursuit of our mission, our impact strategy explains how we plan to move from what we do now towards where we want to be by the end of 2026.

Overall intention of our impact strategy

During our first five years The Turnaround Project has become known as an organisation that provides transitional employment opportunities within our social enterprises. But alongside those opportunities we have also provided coaching support and, as our network of people with lived experience of the justice system has grown, we have begun to make their voices heard.

Over the next three years we will evolve further beyond our initial focus on transitional employment, pursuing our mission across three key service areas:

- **Equipping People**
- **Enabling Employment**
- **Engaging and Advocating**

We will improve the ways in which we enable people to develop, enhancing our coaching model in ways that are gender and trauma informed, and which can be used to support people into conventional employment who don't necessarily need to go through a transitional employment route.

We will build on the progress we have made in developing enterprises that offer transitional employment opportunities, securing more business and in new areas; and working with women to co-create an enterprise that will provide an appealing employment option for women.

And as we build, we will grow a community of people with lived experience, who can use those experiences to effect change in policy and practice, lowering societal barriers for people on similar journeys.

In each of our service areas we set out broad Strategic Impact Goals that we will pursue over the three years of this strategic plan. Given the stage of our organisation's development and future uncertainties in our operating environment, we express our intent narratively rather than setting operational goals for as far ahead as three years.

Each year we will set Operational Goals for the following year, taking account of our performance against our Strategic Impact Goals and the operating environment at that time.

Sustainability: at the heart of our strategy

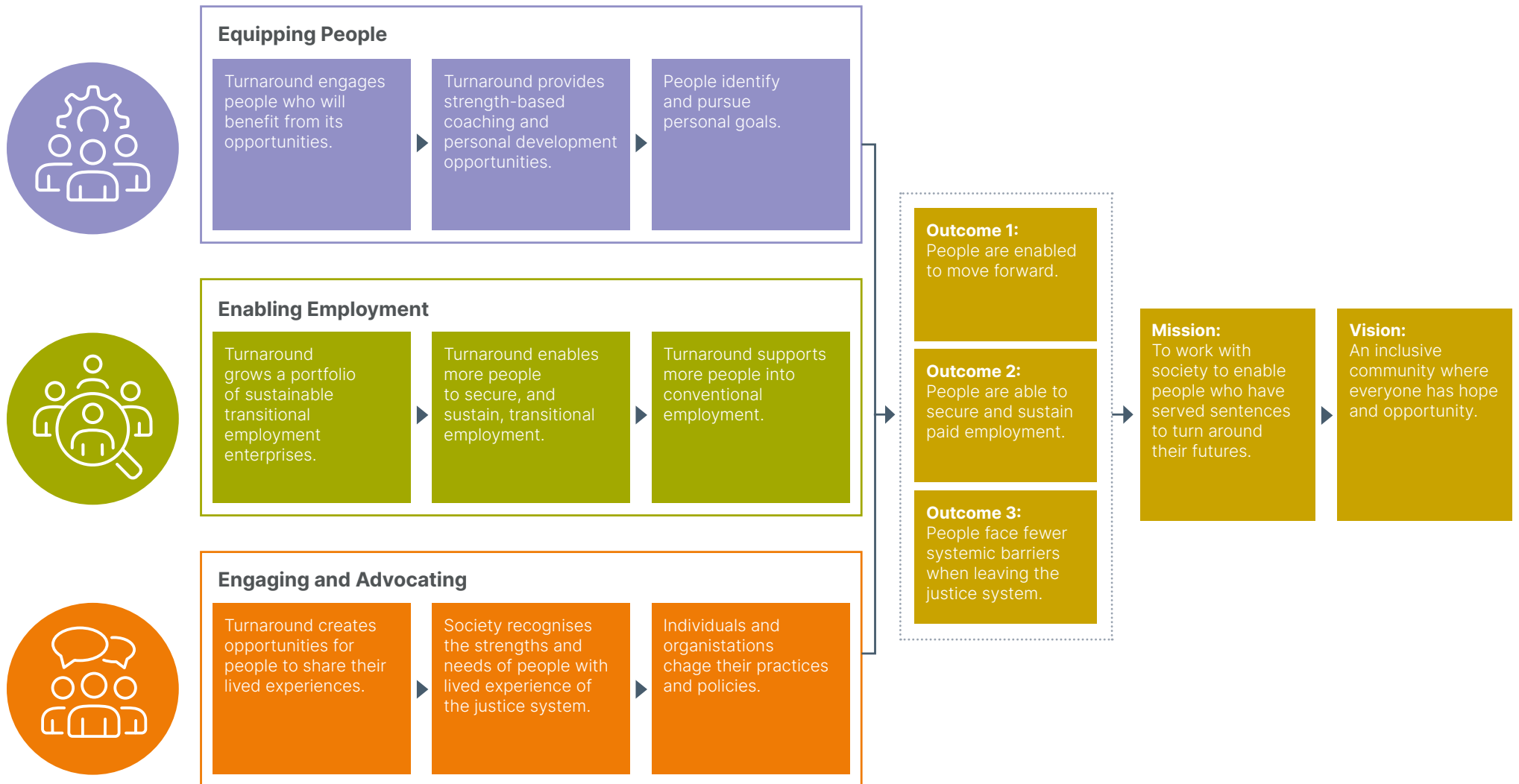
In each of these areas, sustainability will be a watchword. We will seek to enable individuals to sustain their journeys away from the justice system, and in particular to sustain employment. We will use

our engagement and advocacy work to elevate voices of people with lived experience to achieve sustained system change. We will also seek to ensure that our own enterprises, and The Turnaround Project as a

whole, operates on a sustainable financial basis. And we will seek to play our part in addressing the challenge of climate change by operating in environmentally sustainable ways.

Our Theory of Change

Our Theory of Change shows the underlying logic in how our activities within each of our service areas link together and how, collectively, they deliver outcomes and help us achieve our mission and vision.





Equipping People

While we have become best known as a provider of transitional employment opportunities, each of our transitional employees also receive strength-based coaching support. Our coaching model is structured around the social and economic factors that have been identified as important on people's journeys away from the justice system, however what that looks like will be different for each person.

In recent years the impact of trauma, adverse childhood experiences and neurodiversity in many people's journeys into – and out of – the justice system has become better understood; as have the different experiences, barriers and needs of women within the justice system.

So, in addition to being strength-based, we want to develop the extent to which our work is trauma, gender, and neurodiversity-informed, and become recognised as a leading provider of such coaching to people who have served sentences in the justice system.

While we are ambitious about continuing to grow our enterprises, sustainable growth is best achieved slowly and steadily. This limits the rate at which we can increase transitional employment opportunities. But having seen the benefit that people receive from effective coaching, and eager to maximise our impact,

we plan to extend the provision of our coaching support and personal development opportunities to people beyond our transitional employees.

We will also offer these opportunities to people still serving prison sentences, helping them to develop relationships that will be available to support them as and when they transition back into the community. This will require us to deepen our working relationship with prisons and probation staff.

We also plan to develop and deliver a tailored leadership programme designed to enable people with lived experience to progress towards and within leadership roles that they are pursuing, whether in employment or voluntary settings.

Having witnessed the strength that people gain from interaction with others within a supportive community, and of having opportunities to engage in personal development and wellbeing activities beyond the employment setting. So, in partnership with other organisations, **we plan to pilot and develop other personal development opportunities that will be available for people, whether they are current or former transitional employees or are receiving Turnaround's support in other ways.**

Our Strategic Impact Goals for 'Equipping People'

Over the next three years we aspire to:

Engage, recruit and retain more people whose experience of being in the justice system has created barriers.

Become recognised across these islands as a leading provider of strength-based coaching and personal development that is trauma, gender and neurodiversity-informed.

Develop our model to provide people with a longer, sustained pathway of opportunity and support as they move through, out of, and away from the justice system.



Enabling Employment

Many people have been through the justice system, and each person's journey is different. Some can secure and sustain employment using their own connections, strengths, and networks of support; others require more intensive support than we can offer.

Turnaround's transitional employment model works to enable those in between – people for whom a period of transitional employment, and/or effective coaching and supportive relationships can make the difference in securing and sustaining a conventional job. Our transitional employment opportunities offer the benefits of routine, agency, and social interaction; they help to raise people's self-esteem, improve their mental health, and change how they are seen by themselves and others; and they provide them with the means to support themselves and contribute to others.

We offer each of our transitional employees a minimum of two days' employment per week, on an initial 12-month contract. Some people stay for less than 12 months, others seek extensions to their contracts to give them more time to ready themselves for conventional employment. As they move through their time as a transitional employee, our Coach works with them to help identify follow-on employment opportunities.

Over the next three years, **we plan to continue the expansion of the number of transitional employment opportunities we offer. We will do this by securing more business for our enterprises, and working with a group of women with lived experience of the justice system to co-create an enterprise** that will be more appealing to women as a source of employment.

To fill these opportunities, **we will work with referral partners and seek new opportunities to promote our transitional employment model directly among people who are serving, or have served, sentences.**

And to open up conventional employment opportunities for our transitional employees and others for whom having served a sentence is creating barriers to employment, **we will work proactively with other employers to encourage them to consider how they can lower barriers for people with convictions**, whether in their recruitment and onboarding processes, or in other aspects of their conditions or employment or workplace culture. **We will explore with employers how we can help them to fill and sustain job opportunities and work collaboratively with other organisations with expertise in recruitment of people who have previous convictions.**

Our Strategic Impact Goals for 'Enabling Employment'

Over the next three years we aspire to:

Grow our enterprise income by securing new clients, expanding our services, and motivating our transitional and permanent staff to create more opportunities for themselves and others.

Grow Big Loop into a financially and environmentally sustainable social enterprise.

Grow the number of transitional employment opportunities we provide to at least 40 at any one time.

Co-create an enterprise opportunity for women by 2026.

Partner with employers to lower barriers to conventional employment.

Ensure that our enterprises and employment opportunities prepare people for the requirements of the future economy.

Find new ways to ensure that people's employment journeys are sustained within conventional employment environments.



Engaging and Advocating

It's in everyone's interests that people can turn around their futures after leaving the justice system. However, too often, society turns its face away from the justice system, assuming that the passing of a sentence is the end of the story. But the story continues, and the passing of a sentence often deepens the rupture between the person who has been sentenced and the society of which they are a part. The deeper that rupture, the harder it becomes for that person to turn around their future.

So, we also work to turn around the wider community, encouraging people to turn their faces towards, rather than away from, the justice system and the people sentenced to serve time within it. Our advocacy and engagement work has begun to amplify the voices of people who have been through the justice system, helping society to recognise and utilise the strengths of people who have travelled that journey; encouraging people to think about how they might help to lower barriers; and promoting improvements to the systems that exist to help people move on.

As well as ensuring that we bring people's lived experiences and insights to bear on our own activities, we have enabled people to have their voices heard in government consultation exercises, raised awareness of the challenges that people face through media coverage of our work, and built a steadily growing

audience for our 'lived experience' podcast series. **We plan to continue these advocacy activities, with a determined focus on enabling those with lived experience to make their voices heard. When we or others identify issues that need to be addressed, we will raise those with anyone we believe can influence systemic change and reductions in the barriers people encounter.**

Our trading activities within the community will continue to provide us with opportunities to engage in conversation with people about why our organisation exists, and to inform them of the challenges we are enabling people to overcome.

As well as continuing to respond to invitations from others to attend and present at their events, **we plan to organise events of our own, with a strong emphasis on telling the stories of people who have faced the barriers we are seeking to lower.**

Our Strategic Impact Goals for 'Engaging and Advocating'

Over the next three years we aspire to:

Influence systems change, based on people's lived experience, by engaging with the public, service-providers and policy-makers.

Extend our reach by continuing to grow the audience for our 'Lived Experience' Podcast and other communication platforms.

Undertake co-produced research projects to inform our work and influence others.

Enable people's stories to be told to positively impact them and the wider community.



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