



Community Justice Outcome Activity Annual Report

2022-2023

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1. Foreword



Karyn McCluskey, Chief Executive of Community Justice Scotland, and Catherine Dyer CBE, Chair of the CJS Board

On behalf of Community Justice Scotland, we are pleased to present the sixth iteration of our outcome activity annual report, covering activity across Scotland in the year 2022 to 2023.

Our findings show that, across the country, people are working hard with evident skill and commitment for those involved with the justice system. At a strategic level, people are co-ordinating and aligning activity across policy areas for greatest value and impact on shared outcomes. Local areas told us how vulnerability and increasing complexity of need are evident in the populations they serve, and how challenging the circumstances are under which services have been operating. It is to the credit of the workforce that ambition remained undimmed, with continuing efforts across organisations and sectors to deliver collaborative and innovative approaches for communities.

This is the final report measuring progress against the outcomes of the previous national strategy published by Scottish Government, which ran from 2017 until 2023. The local and national community justice partners are now preparing to deliver the ambitious agenda set out by the revised National Strategy for Community Justice. Each area is taking steps to

understand the population it serves, and looking for the data and information so that resources can be directed to where they are most needed.

We thank all who contributed to this report, in particular those working at a local level in community justice. Their candour enables us to better understand the challenges and opportunities faced by delivery partners in community justice, and provides invaluable insight into practice. We will use this understanding to champion community justice issues at a national level and to help to bring change where that is needed. We want to enable those working on the frontline across the public and third sectors to use their invaluable expertise to the fullest, and for the impact to be felt where it is needed most - for communities and vulnerable individuals.

Scotland continues to have an exceptionally high rate of imprisonment compared with other countries. Greater use of appropriate community justice disposals and preventative practice provide the best approaches to address this. But in order to have sufficient impact to safely reduce prison population and improve outcomes for individuals, their families and communities, those approaches must be adequately prioritised and funded to enable partners to deliver iterative improvements.

Our report makes one recommendation this year – for the Scottish Government to work with CJS and all community justice partners to match the policy ambition with appropriate resource. We look forward to taking this vital work forward enabling local community justice partnerships to meet the needs of their communities.

2. Executive summary

This report sets out Community Justice Scotland's (CJS) assessment of progress towards the national outcomes for community justice between April 2022 and March 2023.

Progress is considered against the national outcomes described by the previous national strategy and aligned to the 2016 outcomes performance and improvement framework (OPIF). Activity was planned, co-ordinated and delivered by community justice partners in each of the 32 local authority areas.

The report finds that community justice has consistently received comparatively little funding and resource given the scope and ambition of the activity. At the same time, resources across services are under ever more pressure, while being presented with cases of increasing need and complexity.

The report makes one recommendation: that CJS, the Scottish Government and all partners work together to ensure that community justice across the public and third sectors is resourced in a way that matches the policy ambition.

The report also includes 'Talking Points' for future development, with a focus on the following areas: national levers for local issues; equality in the justice system; and scope and synergy.

Key findings from the reporting year

The year overall:

- Scotland continued to have an excessive prison population, but effective community justice arrangements have significant potential to make a difference.
- There was significant strategic change relevant to community justice policy, including the publication of the new National Strategy for Community Justice. Consequently, local areas were working hard to understand the new strategic landscape; to identify their local priorities; and to develop their planning and delivery.

The local picture:

- All local areas now discharge their duties via a strategic partnership approach.
- Frequently highlighted priorities included diversion from prosecution; access to services from police custody; bail services; strengthening the use of electronic monitoring; supervision, support and services to address needs; access to health services; employability; support after liberation from prison; and strengthening leadership in local partnerships.

- Some areas raised challenges in engaging with some local partners including understanding roles and responsibilities. However, many areas took steps to address this and to build their partnership's capacity for engagement.
- Resources were constrained across the full range of public services. This had implications for capacity for innovation and collaboration.
- Wellbeing and workforce resilience were frequently highlighted as current issues, alongside recruitment and retention.
- Areas highlighted the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on their populations.
- Areas noted the consequences of trauma for people involved in the justice system, and sought to take this into account in their approach to community justice.
- Engagement with the third sector as key delivery partners was evident, with many areas noting its significant contribution.

Progress towards outcomes

National Outcome 1: Communities improve their understanding and participation in community justice.

- Areas enabled people to participate in community justice through, for example, surveys, insight gathering and facilitated engagement to inform strategic planning, and increased awareness through events and publications. For some areas, use of technology enabled wider reach, though several areas noted the benefits of in-person engagement. There was evidence of increased and high-quality participation with people with lived experience of justice, with some areas taking notable steps to facilitate meaningful strategic engagement.

National Outcome 2: Partners plan and deliver services in a more strategic and collaborative way.

- Many areas experienced challenges in building momentum in engagement. There were clear examples of partnerships building links with other strategic local arrangements. This included alcohol and drug partnerships (ADPs) as part of the implementation of medication assisted treatment (MAT) standards, and violence against women partnerships (VAWPs) to explore support for victims and, in some areas, women involved in offending. Areas reported collaboration focusing on priority areas linked to key transitions in the justice system, including arrest referral and release from custody. These efforts are best enabled by local partners who understand the local networks, relationships, assets and information sharing to inform planning and delivery. But they require buy-in from national partners to address barriers and create opportunities.

National Outcome 3: People have better access to the services that they require, including welfare, health and wellbeing, housing and employability.

- Some areas have successfully leveraged resources to support multifunctional, multiorganisational and inter-team working within co-located facilities. Partnerships use their local knowledge and expertise to set out solutions to meet local needs. The centralisation of police custody centres and court business created difficulties for service provision for some, with local integration of support arrangements more challenging. Many areas are focusing efforts on facilitating access to services from police custody, though there are challenges for sustainability linked to short-term funding, information sharing and engagement with distressed people. There is potential for further development, however, building on initiatives such as [Appropriate Adult Services](#) duties.
- Many areas took action to address access to services linked to a broad range of needs, including employability, health and wellbeing, financial inclusion, housing and release from prison. These efforts included referral pathways and recruitment of staff with a specific focus on particular needs. Availability of resources, such as appropriate accommodation, continues to present a challenge. Some areas took steps to proactively employ people with convictions. The continued development of peer workers in many areas added to the community justice workforce and was seen to provide added benefits for employers and service users.

National Outcome 4: Effective interventions are delivered to prevent and reduce the risk of further offending.

- Some local areas have prioritised the improvement and development of bail support services, with clear links to third sector support in the community and requirements to consider bail within a whole local system. Some local areas have also described increased use of electronic monitoring.
- Local partnerships have reported on formal diversion from prosecution cases, with the development of services and strengthened links with third sector organisations. Many areas reported needs assessment and service planning work to improve outcomes for diversion, and several areas have established working groups to explore opportunities. However, areas have raised concerns about the sustainability of such services should numbers continue to increase alongside demand for more complex support.
- Responses to patterns and types of offending included alcohol brief interventions (ABI), domestic abuse programmes and multiagency partnership working.

National Outcomes 5, 6 and 7:

Life chances are improved through needs, including health, financial inclusion, housing and safety being addressed; people develop positive relationships and more opportunities to participate and contribute through education, employment and leisure activities; individuals' resilience and capacity for change and self-management are enhanced.

- Local areas understand the importance of the desistence journey that these outcomes describe for individuals. Several areas described the use of various mechanisms to measure progress, which add value to case management and service quality improvement. However, any inference from aggregation of the data beyond a single service is limited without wider qualitative data to support quality improvement across systems of services.

3. Introduction

This report describes progress towards the achievement of national outcomes for community justice across Scotland between April 2022 and March 2023. This is the final report aligned to the 2016 National Strategy for Community Justice, and the associated outcomes, performance and improvement framework (OPIF). Future reports will be aligned to the [National Strategy for Community Justice](#) published in summer 2022 and the associated [Community Justice Performance Framework](#) (CJPF) published in March 2023.

In developing the report, we have drawn on the available evidence curated over the first five years of the present model of community justice and have used the new national strategy to consider implications for the future. The report includes a recommendation for CJS, the Scottish Government and community justice partners.

Recommendation

Shifting the balance on funding

Community justice is a preventative process which reduces crime and victimisation. In doing so, community justice creates savings for other parts of the justice system and, in the longer term, produces outcomes that reduce service demand and increase resilience for individuals and communities. Despite this, the proportion of investment in community justice has declined in comparison to investment in justice infrastructure.

In 2022-23, funding allocated by national government to support delivery of community justice accounted for 1.53% of the total Justice and Veterans budget. The ring-fenced funding allocated by Scottish Government to local areas for justice social work (JSW) has remained static at £86.5m since 2017¹, though significant additional monies are made available to add to this core and in association with particular activities to be delivered. Resource and sustainability for the third sector are ever-present issues.

Although there are significant structural pressures on all parts of the justice system, a lack of funding flexibility can lead to decisions based on 'what can be cut' rather than 'what should be cut'. The result is that preventative work in public sector and third sector provision has been under-emphasised in funding decisions. This does not serve the preventative aspirations of [The Vision for Justice in Scotland](#) or the new [National Strategy for Community Justice](#), and will not achieve the ultimate goal of shifting the balance between custody and community sentences.

¹ Scottish Government (2016) [Scotland's Budget: Draft Budget 2017-2018](#)

We recommend that CJS, the Scottish Government and all partners work together to ensure that community justice across the public and third sectors is resourced in a way that matches the policy ambition of [The Vision for Justice in Scotland](#).

Talking points

Last year we introduced 'Talking Points' to our annual reporting. These are used when evidence has highlighted issues that require further development with stakeholders involved with community justice, locally and nationally. CJS used the Talking Points from last year as the basis for knowledge exchange forums and discussions with a range of community justice partners. CJ partners found this approach highly effective in developing understanding, identifying barriers and begin to generate solutions within these collaborative sessions. The products of this engagement will continue to develop and inform community justice.

CJS intends to use this year's Talking Points in the same way throughout the year following publication. As before, we will also encourage stakeholders to use them as prompts for their own consideration of community justice.

This year we raise three new Talking Points.

National levers for local issues

Local partners solve problems at a local level by identifying and overcoming barriers or by implementing workarounds. However, some challenges relating to regionally and nationally set policy and practice, require decision-making and influence which are inaccessible to local partners. How can the Scottish Government, CJS and national agencies work better with local partners to overcome barriers and advance developments without compromising local autonomy?

Equality in the justice system

People in contact with the justice system are diverse, experiencing the justice system in different ways and with distinct needs. The focus on the needs of women and young people in the justice system is comparatively well developed. However, there is little evidence of a strategic consideration of the needs of other subcategories of the overall population, or on where different aspects of identity may intersect and contribute to additional complexity and marginalisation. How can local and national partners promote and contribute to equality in justice for people who have distinct experiences as a result of their disability, race, sex, religion, sexuality or other aspect of their lived experience and identity?

Scope and synergy

Scottish Ministers have defined the direction for community justice partners through priority actions in the National Strategy for Community Justice and in the outcomes defined in the CJPF. Policy is also in place for other activity such as community safety, violence against women and girls, alcohol and drugs, employability, poverty, homelessness, health inequalities and education. Much of this work overlaps with community justice and encourages partners to work together. However, it can be unclear how some of the work across various local area partnerships contributes to the overarching community justice outcomes. How can partners better identify opportunities for alignment between policy areas to greatest impact without losing the focus on community justice outcomes?

4. The year in context – change and challenge

The period between April 2022 and March 2023 included significant policy developments and challenging economic pressures on people, systems and resources. But there were also opportunities for community justice partners to refocus. There were no further Covid-19 restrictions, though the ongoing impact of the pandemic and post-pandemic years is evident.

The policy context

The National Strategy for Community Justice was published in June 2022. The associated CJPF was not published until March 2023. The publication of these documents required community justice partners to revise their community justice outcome improvement plans (CJOIPs) taking both the new strategy and the framework into consideration.

Many local partners reported that the gap between publication of these documents created a sense of uncertainty that hindered their ability to engage and progress their strategic planning. Nonetheless, progress was made. Partners took cognisance of the new national strategy and engaged with each other and their local communities to identify their priorities for development.

Concurrently, local partners were engaging nationally with CJS, the Scottish Government and others over significant policy developments that would ultimately have implications for local planning and delivery of community justice. These included:

- key community justice performance and improvement products were in stages of development through 2022 and early 2023, including:
 - the [CJPF](#) (Scottish Government, published 31 March 2023)
 - the [community justice improvement tool](#) (CJS, published 31 March 2023)
 - the [community justice strategy: delivery plan](#) (Scottish Government, published June 2023)
 - [A guide to self-evaluation for community justice in Scotland](#) (Care Inspectorate, published August 2023)
- development of a CJS recommendation to the Scottish Government for the future of voluntary throughcare and mentoring

The year also included the further development of policy initiatives that will have a significant impact on justice arrangements in the future. These included the [National Care](#)

[Service \(Scotland\) Bill](#) and the [Bail and Release from Custody \(Scotland\) Bill](#) which both entered Stage 1 in June 2022.

Taken together, it was a year of substantial strategic change within and around community justice. It was also an opportunity for partnerships to take stock and focus on strategic directives set out by Scottish Ministers.

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- *Renfrewshire Council's chief executive service supported Community Justice Renfrewshire (CJR) with interpreting the new National Strategy for Community Justice. The service reviewed the strategic focus of the new strategy and worked on its alignment with Renfrewshire's revised Community Plan. This created an opportunity to underline the importance of community justice activity in working towards both local and national improvement outcomes and to define the discrete and complementary activity being progressed through CJR and other projects and programmes of work. The service identified that the strategic focus of the new National Strategy for Community Justice created opportunities to leverage partner resources to best effect, improving outcomes for people with living experience of the justice system and supporting their reintegration. This helped inform an approach to enable the community justice lead officer to re-establish CJR and to define an effective vision and purpose.*
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Victims, trauma and justice reform

There were significant developments across justice policy relating to victims of crime and violence against women and girls (VAWG). Discussions initiated by the partners involved in the [Victims Taskforce](#) were further developed following the recommendations of the [Misogyny and Criminal Justice Working Group](#) and consultations on [improving victims' experiences of the justice system](#), culminating in the [Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform \(Scotland\) Bill](#) introduced to the Scottish Parliament in April 2023.

Alongside these developments, the focus on trauma in justice settings was further developed by many national and local partners, in most cases using resources and opportunities available through the [National Trauma Transformation Programme](#).

Restorative justice (RJ) in Scotland continued to develop in line with the vision presented within the [RJ Action Plan 2019](#). As a result of the pressures of the pandemic, and the need to work more collaboratively with partners on serious and complex cases, the timescales for delivery were extended. In early 2023, stakeholders agreed the development of an RJ

policy and practice framework to support the delivery of RJ in Scotland as a parallel process to the criminal and civil justice systems, now due for consultation in spring 2024. There is further information about the work completed in advancing RJ during 2022-23 in the [RJ Action Plan Annual Report](#).

There were changes relating to children and young people in the justice system. The Scottish Sentencing Council's [sentencing young people guideline](#) came into force in January 2022, and contributed to local and national discussions about community justice. In December 2022, the [Children \(Care and Justice\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) entered Stage 1 at the Scottish Parliament, including proposals to put an end to placing under 18s in young offenders' institutions and to create opportunities for 16- and 17-year-olds with offending behaviour to be responded to via the children's hearing system.

Significantly, the final report of the Scottish Drug Deaths Taskforce [Changing Lives](#) (July 2022) recognised the importance of a shift to community-based alternatives to custody in reducing drugs deaths.

Strategic complexity

It was in this context that the community justice partnerships (CJPs) were working to understand the implications of the new national strategy for their local areas in order to identify their local priorities and to develop their approach to planning and delivery.

Community justice arrangements are complex and link to a wide range of policy issues, strategic partnerships and needs. The partners involved in planning and delivering community justice arrangements are, in most cases, also those directly involved in other linked policy issues. Though the populations involved are often overlapping, there are competing demands for resources to achieve specific aims. This means that, unless strategic engagement is effective, there is a risk of missed opportunities and the duplication of efforts, potentially to the detriment of community justice outcomes.

Where local partners are engaged and strategic alignments are identified, we see impactful collaboration across policy issues, with partners seeking to leverage resources and to create opportunities for collaboration. This enables organisations to benefit from the expertise and resources of other entities.

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- *In North Lanarkshire partner funding received from North Lanarkshire Council employability support and skills development has enabled the extension of voluntary throughcare support. The commitment of funding was agreed following significant work undertaken by the NLCJP education and employability group. This was reported in the*

previous annual return and related to horizon scanning, participation with those with lived experience and staff, and reviewing available data. This evidence highlighted a need to increase voluntary support to people leaving custody. The Bridges and Beyond service has been developed over the last year. The service identifies short-term prisoners who originate from NL who may benefit from support to resettlement after release. The project works closely with housing, employment services, health, addictions, Scottish Prison Service (SPS), welfare agencies and families to support individuals being released to achieve better outcomes. While the project is in its infancy, it is already proving to be beneficial in supporting reintegration.

- In East Renfrewshire, joint working between the local employability partnership and the CJP identified the need for a specialist employability programme for people with convictions. While there had been some good examples of progression for clients with convictions within wider employability services previously, there was a gap in provision. A joint review between community justice and employability highlighted the benefits of co-production and a new service is to be embedded within JSW services.*
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Community sentences – contextual extracts from statistical reporting²

Community Payback Orders

The total number of Community Payback Orders (CPOs) imposed in Scotland in 2019-20 was 16,800. The Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting decrease in court business meant numbers fell sharply in 2020-21, to 8,200. Numbers recovered in each of the next two years, reaching 14,700 in 2022-23, still below the level prior to the pandemic.

Drug Treatment and Testing Orders

The reduction in court business meant the number of Drug Treatment and Testing Orders (DTTOs) commenced was lower in both 2020-21 and 2021-22 than in the pre-pandemic years. Between 2021-22 and 2022-23, the number commenced fell by 18% to 300, the second lowest level in the last decade. The main driver for the reduction in 2022-23 was the

² Scottish Government (2024) [Justice Social Work Statistics in Scotland: 2022-23](#)

suspension of new assessments for several months in 3 local authority areas due to clinical staffing issues.

Structured deferred sentences

Structured deferred sentences offer courts the option to provide a short period of intensive supervision to individuals post-conviction but before final sentencing. After falling sharply in 2020-21 to 450 during the coronavirus pandemic, the number of these measures imposed in Scotland rose in each of the next two years, reaching its highest level of 1,300 in 2022-23.

Court reports

There were 1,700 same-day reports provided to the courts in 2022-23. This was higher than the pandemic years but still much lower than earlier years' levels. In 2022-23, there were 11,000 post-sentence interviews with people remanded into custody or receiving custodial sentences for the first time. This was higher than the Covid-19-affected totals for both 2020-21 and 2021-22 but still 28% lower than in 2019-20.

The number of criminal JSW reports (CJSWRs) submitted (including supplementary reports but excluding letters sent instead of reports) averaged 28,200 over 2017-18 to 2019-20. With the lower volume of cases going through courts during the pandemic, numbers inevitably fell in the following two years to 16,900 and 23,000 respectively. For 2022-23, numbers increased by 15% to 26,400, though this was still slightly lower than the pre-pandemic levels. The number of full CJSWRs (that is excluding supplementary reports) also fell sharply between 2019-20 and 2020-21. Numbers then rose in both 2021-22 and 2022-23, reaching 24,600 in 2022-23. In 2022-23, 7% of all reports were supplementary, the lowest in the last ten years.

Fiscal work orders

The number of Fiscal work orders (FWOs) commenced in Scotland increased after they were introduced nationally, reaching a high of 1,000 in 2017-18. Numbers then dropped in each of the next four years, though they did rise from 76 in 2021-22 to 140 in 2022-23. In 2022-23, 290 FWO assessments were undertaken by local authorities. In 150 of these assessments the orders were accepted, with the remaining 140 deemed unsuitable by local authorities. The number of orders that finished was 110, of which **76%** were successfully completed.

Restriction of liberty orders

Restriction of liberty orders (RLOs) have been available in Scotland since May 2002. This order can be imposed for periods of up to one year. It involves restricting an individual to a

specified place for up to 12 hours per day and/or from a specified place for up to 24 hours³. There were 5,893 RLOs issued in 2022-23. This is the highest number on record, 4% more than 2019-20⁴.

Bail supervision

Updated national bail supervision guidance was published in May 2022⁵.

There were 1,100 bail supervision cases commenced in 2022-23, the highest in the last 10 years. Around 130 bail supervision cases (11%) involved an electronic monitoring order.

There were 4,200 assessment reports for bail suitability submitted to the courts in 2022-23.

Community justice and imprisonment

Scotland's rate of imprisonment on 1 January 2023 was 131.9 per 100,000 inhabitants, marginally lower than in England and Wales (136.8). This is significantly higher than that of other otherwise comparable European countries, including Austria (98.8), Northern Ireland (86.6), Finland (51) and Iceland (36.1)⁶.

There are multiple drivers of the high level of imprisonment in Scotland. These include shifts in behaviour, social attitudes, sentencing practice, capacity of the courts, capacity of wider public services, and national legislative and policy decisions. Taken together, the consequences of these factors have resulted in an excessive rate of imprisonment in Scotland.

While imprisonment can temporarily remove someone who may otherwise reoffend, the consequences of incarceration can be profoundly harmful for individuals, communities and Scotland as a whole. Even a comparatively short term of imprisonment can result in the disruption of family life, the loss of employment and accommodation, damage to social capacity, and exposure to trauma and retraumatisation. These experiences have an impact on an individual's ability to move on from offending behaviour after release.

Policy and practice targeting the balance of custody and community have had an impact. For example, the share of the (average daily) sentenced population serving shorter index sentences remained below pre-pandemic levels in 2022-23. In 2019-20, 53% of the sentenced population had index sentences of four years or less. In 2022-23 this proportion had fallen to 43%⁷.

³ Ibid.

⁴ [Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services Criminal Disposals Dashboard](#)

⁵ Scottish Government (2022) [Bail supervision: national guidance](#)

⁶ Scottish Government (2023) [Scottish Prison Population Statistics 2022-2023](#)

⁷ Ibid.

This reduction in the use of short-term sentencing occurred in tandem with evidence that people were presenting with more complex needs in services. The proportion of CPOs with supervision requirements was 67% in 2022-23⁸, its highest level except for the pandemic years. Similar indicators in the complexity of cases exist in the long average length of supervision requirements at 16.4 months and long average length of community payback requirements at 131 hours⁹. Both exceed pre-pandemic years.

Similarly, 1,100 bail supervision cases were commenced in 2022-23¹⁰, the highest number in the last 10 years.

The (average daily) remand population fell by 3%, but it remained high at 1,804 which equated to 24% of the overall prison population¹¹.

These are high-level indications that community justice arrangements are making a significant contribution towards a shift in the use of custody and community. There are, however, ongoing structural problems that limit the potential for further improvement, including a general lack of investment in community infrastructure compared to other justice spending, alongside the broader drivers of imprisonment.

Community first

International evidence indicates that desistance from offending is best supported by addressing needs, building social capital, and helping people build empowered lives with agency and resilience. In Scotland, these principles underpin approaches to community justice delivered by partners across the sector, from JSW to community-based organisations. Community justice approaches alone cannot solve the prison population problem. However, community justice partners can make contributions that not only help individuals but can also be part of shifting the balance from custodial responses to community approaches first.

These contributions are well represented in the new National Strategy for Community Justice, which has been formative in many partnerships' development activity since publication in June 2022. The most powerful contribution that community justice can make to address the excessive use of imprisonment in Scotland is through focusing on improving and increasing the use of community-based solutions, ensuring that provision matches need and that services are truly accessible.

⁸ Scottish Government (2024) [Justice Social Work Statistics in Scotland: 2022-23](#)

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Scottish Government (2023) [Scottish Prison Population Statistics 2022-2023](#)

5. The local picture

Governance

Community justice comprises the activities, services and partners that work with and around people from the point of arrest, through the justice system, exit from justice contact, and integration with the community. The Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 requires that the relevant statutory partners take a strategic approach to planning and delivering these arrangements at local authority area level.

All local areas now discharge these duties via a strategic partnership approach, aligned to the relevant local governance and planning arrangements: 'community justice partnerships' (CJPs).

Priorities

The purview of the CJPs is set by the scope of the National Strategy for Community Justice alongside any additional local priorities. This can encompass a wide range of practice issues. The following issues were commonly identified by local areas across the reporting year:

- diversion from prosecution
- access to services from police custody
- bail services
- strengthening the use of electronic monitoring
- supervision, support and services to address needs
- access to health services
- employability
- support after liberation from prison
- strengthening leadership of local partnerships

Further detail about activity on these priorities is in this report.

Engagement

Last year we highlighted a [Talking Point](#) about the difficulties of engaging community justice partners. There are signs of improvement, but partnerships continue to report difficulties in building and sustaining engagement with partner agencies. Over recent years, every sector and organisation has seen substantial change, including staff changes. Areas report that, when people move on, it is often challenging to transition, to develop quality relationships and to maintain momentum in the shared community justice agenda.

This is particularly acute if the change is in a key role, such as a community justice co-ordinator or partnership Chair. It is also difficult if it involves a representative who is entirely new to community justice.

Several areas reported that some partners struggle to clearly identify their roles and responsibilities in the shared community justice agenda. This was a barrier to engagement. Many areas reported developing induction packs with an explicit focus on introducing community justice to new partner representatives. They often used products from CJS to add content and context, such as templates to assist in developing the local evidence base.

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- *In Perth and Kinross, there was rigorous engagement in various partnership activities, including quarterly partnership meetings, establishment of the community safety third sector collaborative meetings, engagement with the ADP lived experience group, and the formation of working groups and topic-specific sessions. The Third Sector Forum was re-established, expanding its membership to include relevant statutory services. The partnership aimed to address the cluttered service landscape, emphasising the need for a 'no wrong door' approach. A significant amount of activity – primarily developing local area needs assessments – aligned the partnership to the new National Strategy for Community Justice, involving extensive engagement and information gathering for the new CJOIP. This examined complex topics such as arrest referral, people remanded in custody, and voluntary throughcare and mentoring, revealing significant similarities and crossovers in some work. For example, the same individuals commonly receive services for remand, arrest referral and for throughcare after short-term sentences.*
 - *These strategic needs and strengths assessment (SNSA) activities were found to be useful for improving understanding and collaboration, leading to the launch of partnership test of change (ToC) activities including arrest referral, complex needs co-ordinator, voluntary throughcare and specified worker. The cluttered service landscape highlighted the need for service pathways, resulting in the development of flowcharts for arrest referral and voluntary throughcare. The partnership explored opportunities for improved collaborative working to increase alignment.*
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Resources

Public sector budgets across the system were put under strain throughout the year, with unanticipated inflationary pressures reducing the intended impact of spending plans at a time of increased demand.

Areas reported increasing pressure on housing and homelessness services. In many areas, a shortage of suitable housing stock and supported accommodation is not, in itself, a new issue. However, several respondents reported that there were more challenges than previously.

As a result of these budget pressures, in some areas the capacity for innovation and collaboration was reduced. Areas reported that some partners were struggling to maintain their existing commitments to community justice collaboration and engagement alongside their core service delivery. Typically, as agencies must prioritise their statutory functions, this meant that resourcing activities beyond statutory requirements, particularly third sector and community-based prevention activities, were at significant risk throughout the period.

Workforce and wellbeing

The rising interest rates and high inflation throughout the reporting year also meant that much of the workforce was under significant pressure in their own lives. Poor mental health and wellbeing, and 'burnout' are issues evident across the workforce. At the same time, workloads were high and increasing because of demand and limited capacity. In spite of these challenging circumstances, areas reported progress against their activities.

Recruitment and retention of staff were reported as significant issues across agencies, in JSW¹² and also the third sector and wider community justice workforce.

Cost of living

Poverty remains an endemic issue for those who experience community justice. The challenging economic circumstances undoubtedly made this more acute, with community justice agencies supporting more people in a greater degree of need than before. The evidence returned by local partnerships frequently highlighted the requirement to provide support to meet basic needs, including access to food.

Trauma for people who are in conflict with the law

Sometimes, a previous experience of trauma can lead to behaviours and reactions that are challenging for other people, services and systems to respond to. Those involved with the justice system have often themselves been victims of serious crimes, in some cases unreported and unrecognised.

¹² Social Work Scotland (October 2022) [Written Evidence on Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2023-24](#)

Service providers emphasise that individuals entering the justice system present increasingly complex needs, often stemming from unresolved trauma. Human connection serves as a protective factor against the impact of trauma, and the restrictions of the pandemic significantly increased isolation for many. The complexities in casework in community justice may be exacerbated by these factors.

There are examples of the community justice workforce using its expertise in trauma to cascade learning to other policy issues, with practical examples of trauma-responsive work evident in many local areas.

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- *In Aberdeenshire, participation in the two-day trauma training has not only increased and improved the practice skills of the social work workforce, but has also created opportunities to review, through a trauma lens, how the service operates. The criminal JSW service has established a trauma-informed practice group, which links in with the Aberdeenshire trauma-informed development group, and is working to identify ways in which policies, practices and documentation can be more trauma-informed and responsive.*
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The third sector

As in previous years, there was a strong presence of third sector agencies supporting delivery of community justice across Scotland, from operational level to strategic involvement within partnerships. Research indicates that interventions that support desistance are, ideally, often delivered by non-statutory routes. Service provision from the third sector is important for a range of quality services that meet the needs of a diverse and vulnerable group, in the interests of increasing desistance from offending.

The limited funding opportunities, tightening public sector budgets, the precarity associated with single-year contracts, and absolute need to increase wages if recruitment and retention are to be supported, all combine to put the third sector and the mixed provision of services at significant risk¹³.

As the straitened economic conditions continue to put pressure on commissioning bodies and the public sector, it is likely that this will show in the further reduction of third sector funding, and in turn the sector's capacity. This will inevitably have a consequence for organisations across Scotland, their staff, the people who receive services and the communities in which they live.

¹³ Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (September 2023) [The Scottish Third Sector Tracker – wave 6 summary report](#)

There will also be implications for strategic implementation of community justice. In many partnerships, the role of the third sector often not only incorporates frontline service delivery but also contributes to strategic discussions and activities; represents or links to the wider sector; and frequently facilitates engagement with marginalised groups and communities. Many third sector partners contribute to community justice outcomes. The following organisations were highlighted most by partnerships:

[Access to Industry](#)

[Action for Children](#)

[Apex Scotland](#)

[Barnardo's Scotland](#)

[Circle Scotland](#)

[Cyrenians](#)

[Families Outside](#)

[Heavy Sound](#)

[Phoenix Futures Scotland](#)

[Right There](#)

[RCA Trust](#)

[Sacro](#)

[Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs](#)

[Recovery Scotland](#)

[Resilience Learning Partnership](#)

[Change Grow Live](#)

[Tayside Council on Alcohol](#)

[Scottish Recovery Consortium](#)

[Stirling Community Enterprise](#)

[Turning Point Scotland](#)

[Venture Trust](#)

[Victim Support Scotland](#)

[The Wise Group](#)

Community integration and person-centric outcomes are enabled with contributions from thousands of other community-based groups. [Third Sector Interfaces](#) play a pivotal role in many CJP's. Additionally, partnerships report that local [Women's Aid groups](#), [rape crisis centres](#) and others provide valuable insights for community justice arrangements.

6. Progress towards the national outcomes

This reporting period is a transition year for community justice. It relates progress towards outcomes set out by the previous national strategy.

National outcome 1: Communities improve their understanding and participation in community justice.

How did local areas engage with partners, communities and individuals to improve their understanding of and participation in community justice?

Participation

All areas provided evidence of their approaches to enabling people to participate in community justice. The depth of this engagement varied significantly. Examples are publishing partnership meeting papers on local authority websites; references to scrutiny of community surveys; use of targeted surveys and feedback; and active and participative facilitated engagement to have community justice-focused conversations with communities and individuals. Engagement, particularly where it has involved the latter approaches, has been used to inform strategic planning and CJOIPs.

Use of technology

There is substantial evidence of areas using technology for engagement and participation. This included using social media to promote community justice topics; publishing content on websites; and conducting interactive discussion and consultation events online.

Using technology to facilitate virtual engagement is clearly invaluable particularly for remote and rural communities. It creates opportunities to connect local and national justice partners, people and services.

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- *Partners in Orkney reported continuing access to such inputs, particularly with the majority being held in the central belt of Scotland. This allowed more frequent engagement and offered significant cost savings in travel and accommodation as well as time. This was a particular benefit which partners in Orkney wanted recognised nationally with a view to it being adopted as continuing good practice, illustrating that meaningful hybrid meetings were an option rather than returning to solely face-to-face meetings. This was reflected in other rural and remote communities in peer discussions. By extension, some partners, in particular Families Outside, which offers support to the relatives of those serving a custodial sentence, identified the positives*

for remote and rural communities of progress with virtual prison connectivity.

Learning from the pandemic has optimised the ability of areas to use technology as part of a portfolio for engagement, with some areas becoming particularly skilled in ensuring that online participation is meaningful and inclusive. This has benefited a range of audiences across Scotland. Some partnerships, however, reported that virtual engagement with partners and the public limited their ability to develop high-quality conversations and relationships. They emphasised the importance of face-to-face interaction. The strongest examples used a mix of approaches including technology and in-person contact.

Awareness raising

Approaches to raising awareness of community justice included publishing reports and holding large-scale events on community justice themes. Several areas used opportunities and products from CJS and worked with their local communications teams to promote local justice topics, such as the benefits of unpaid work undertaken as part of CPOs.

- *In Fife, members of JSW provided inputs to various organisations to increase awareness of the role of JSW and to reduce the stigma associated with service users involved in the justice system. These have taken place at Robert Gordon University, Stirling University, Fife high schools, Fife College, Police Scotland and with justices of the peace from Dunfermline Sheriff Court. There was also the opportunity to attend the people and communities scrutiny committee.*
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Public confidence in JSW is essential, and areas took steps to increase awareness and understanding. In some cases, local areas sought to maximise exposure for community justice through local and national press. Several areas told us about events focused on community justice and community justice inputs to other events, or training and development opportunities. Most of these events targeted organisations with a potential overlap with community justice, including the public and third sectors.

- *In Highland, the conference 'Where is the justice in poverty?' was held in March 2023 with around 80 attending from across Highland. Speakers discussed the links between poverty and those entering/within the justice system. There was media interest in the conference and clients from Apex were interviewed for an [STV News feature](#). Moray Firth Radio also covered the conference.*
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Participation with people with lived experience

JSW and third sector services are commonly cited as sources of information for engaging with people with lived experience to co-produce services.

The following talking point was raised last year on co-production with people with lived experience. 'It is reasonably straightforward to summarise high-level activity where the expertise of those with lived experience is valued and incorporated. However, as well as providing valuable context about needs, evidence and innovation for the partnership, it can create both risks and opportunities for participants. It is not always clear how these risks and opportunities are managed to ensure that engaging those with lived experience is authentic, meaningful, ethical and effective.'

This year, partnerships provided more examples of meaningful strategic engagement with people with lived experience of the justice system.

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- *In Dumfries and Galloway, projects working with people with lived experience have enabled the partnership to consult, listen to and involve those with direct experience of justice. These aim to improve understanding of people's experience of justice with a view to improving services. This includes the 'Amazing Futures' initiative provided by third sector partner, Summerhill Community Centre. The project promotes co-production and joint delivery as fundamental, with those using the service being directly involved in developing activity. The project also commissions individuals with lived experience to provide aspects of the service. This approach meant that those individuals were able to use the skills and knowledge of those attending Amazing Futures to run a particular session and to get paid for doing so.*
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- *In East Lothian, a third sector partner, Access to Industry, developed a listening tool with funding from the Corra Foundation. The project produced a framework to embed listening into practice. The toolkit was developed as an internal resource for the staff team to support their engagement with all their clients, not just young people. The toolkit explores active listening tips and tricks; how case workers initially engage with clients and build trust; what language they use to create safe spaces and encourage client engagement; and how clients' needs are assessed. It shows how this can be transformed into an action plan*

which is tailored to individual clients' needs and includes resources which enable their personal development. There is a section on evaluation which outlines how to gain feedback from clients to inform and develop services. The CJP has agreed to use the listening tool as a framework for ongoing engagement with people involved in the justice system.

National outcome 2: Partners plan and deliver services in a more strategic and collaborative way.

How did partnerships enable strategic and collaborative service planning and delivery?

Partner engagement

Several local areas reported difficulty in building and maintaining momentum at a strategic level in the community justice agenda because of changes in staff. New partner representatives are often not clear about their roles and responsibilities in the community justice agenda, and it takes time for relationships to be built and buy-in to be gained. Nonetheless, there is substantial evidence of partnerships working collaboratively to progress strategic responses to local community justice priorities.

Strategic engagement across policy issues

Several areas reported strategic engagement with other local or regional partnership groups with overlapping populations of interest. Most frequently this was with ADPs. ADP involvement is evident across a wide range of community justice activities at operational and strategic levels, from point of arrest through to release from custody and beyond. There are clear indications of developed strategic relationships enabling targeting of resources at local priorities, particularly as partnerships work collaboratively to deliver the MAT standards in justice contexts.

Talking point: scope and synergy

Scottish Ministers have defined the direction for community justice partners through priority actions in the National Strategy for Community Justice and in the outcomes defined in the CJPF. Policy is also in place for other activity such as community safety, violence against women and girls, alcohol and drugs, employability, poverty, homelessness, health inequalities and education. Much of this work overlaps with community justice and encourages partners to work together. However, it can be unclear how some of the work across various local area partnerships contributes to the overarching community justice outcomes. How can partners better identify opportunities for alignment between policy areas to greatest impact without losing the focus on community justice outcomes?

The strategic development of services for women

The other frequently cited example of strategic engagement was with VAWPs. For example some areas highlighted collaboration with their local VAWP to increase their CJP's understanding of victims' experiences in order to inform their planning. Some areas specifically highlighted that women involved in offending are often also survivors of abuse. Local areas provided several examples of collaborative working across policy areas to support women in the justice system.

There is a clear priority in local areas to reduce the barriers to women accessing services. Justice-linked services incorporating co-ordinated 'wraparound' approaches and co-

location to are now common. There are some examples of embedded structures, such as the Glen Isla Project and the Glen Clova Project also known as 'The Glens', an all-women team that supports women across Angus.

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- *The Glen Isla Project supports women who are involved with the justice system. Most referrals to the project come through statutory routes. The Glen Clova Project is the 'voluntary' women's team, and referrals can be made via a worker or by contacting the project directly. Both projects work in a trauma-informed way. The team is aware of the importance of establishing a therapeutic relationship. Enabling women to understand how their trauma has affected them is at the heart of the work, alongside developing problem-solving skills, practical day-to-day support and advocacy work. The teams work in partnership with other agencies to offer a holistic approach to caring for, and supporting, the women and their families.*
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- *In Midlothian, the Spring Service has operated with a full-time justice social worker since November 2021, providing support to women on both a statutory and voluntary basis. The service collaborates with the NHS, [Health in Mind](#), [Shine](#), Women's Aid and other third sector organisations. To enhance efficiency, all workers are now involved in the assessment process. A 'conversation café' with service users in February 2023 led to various developments, including mindful gardening, sessions on online safety, and a smaller group for socially anxious women. The 'Monday group' includes sessions on wellbeing, budgeting, and a cooking programme, led by an occupational therapist. A Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits adviser began attending in March 2023 because financial inclusion was identified as a priority issue. Recognising the prevalence of trauma among female offenders, a minimum training standard for staff was implemented, including training in domestic abuse and trauma, and to deliver the groupwork programme 'Survive and Thrive'. During the reporting period, 32 women received support from the Spring Service, with referrals from various sources, emphasising the multiagency support the service provides. Positive feedback reflects the impactful and life-changing nature of the support offered by the Spring Service.*
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SPS opened two new community custody units (CCUs), the Bella Centre in Dundee and the Liliac Centre in Glasgow. SPS states: 'The purpose of the CCUs is to provide safe accommodation and to support the needs of women who will benefit from closer community contact and access to local services, to create and sustain independence in preparation for successful reintegration into the community. Each CCU is comprised of a number of small accommodation units and a community hub where women can meet with visitors and a range of services and activities will be delivered'¹⁴. From a community justice perspective, the local areas in which these new CCUs reside have been, and continue to be, engaged in developing community connections to support these aims, with an initial inspection¹⁵ of the Bella Centre identifying a positive trajectory in these efforts.

Elsewhere, the opening of the new national facility housing young and adult women prisoners provided an opportunity for the local area to collaborate in raising awareness of women's imprisonment and rehabilitation.

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- *The Stirling community justice partners were engaged at the opening of His Majesty's Prison & Young Offenders Institution (HMP & YOI) Stirling. This provided a unique opportunity for staff across the partnership, community organisations and citizens to visit and learn more about the national facility and the vision for community justice and the rehabilitation of women in Scotland. HMP & YOI Stirling facilitated successful community open days and a considerable number of people received a tour of the prison before it opened. Journalists, including from Stirling Observer, BBC Scotland and STV News, were also invited to visit the facility, resulting in positive and nuanced media content with a significant reach. The Stirling Observer's lengthy article was entitled 'Stirling at heart of new era in our prison system'.*
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Collaboration and multiagency working

There are many areas where strong strategic relationships have supported targeted collaborative efforts to work towards community justice outcomes. Notable examples often occur around points of transition between stages of the justice process; around point of arrest and admission into custody; and around release from prison. Two areas highlighted their multiagency collaborations to develop approaches to arrest referral services, working to enhance access to services to address needs.

¹⁴ Scottish Prison Service (2022) [Community Custody Units](#)

¹⁵ His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (2023) [The Bella Centre Annual Report 2022-23](#)

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- *The North Lanarkshire Arrest Referral Service is an 18-month ToC for people arrested and held in police custody. It is funded by NLADP and developed in partnership with the NLCJP. The service is delivered by two local third sector organisations which have employed support workers with experience of the justice system to engage with people while in custody. This aims to improve access to treatment when alcohol, drugs or mental health issues have been factors in being in police custody. The service has been up and running since April 2023, with operational oversight delegated to the arrest referral steering group, which meets on a bi-monthly basis. Progress is reported to the NLADP, NLADP justice sub group and NLCJP. Initial reports indicate a good uptake of the services. Further information will be included in annual reporting for 2023-24.*
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Most areas reported their collaborative efforts on working with prisons to enable targeted support on release from prison, including housing, benefits and access to treatment for drug and alcohol issues.

These efforts are best enabled by local partners who understand the local networks, relationships, assets and information sharing to inform planning and delivery. However, they cannot be implemented without commitment from national partners. For example, agencies that work on a national or regional basis such as NHS boards, Police Scotland, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and CJS, should ensure that they provide meaningful support and resource to these approaches. There has been good practice in, for example, developing information-sharing protocols. However, further work is required.

Despite the strategic challenges, some partnerships demonstrated strong examples in co-ordinating resources, planning and service delivery.

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- *JSW in Inverclyde introduced a bail supervision service, emphasising a wider partnership approach through the short-life working group (SLWG). The SLWG identified potential partnership improvements in relationships with third sector organisations and local housing partners to prevent people on bail supervision from becoming homeless. Simultaneously, efforts were made to address housing needs for those subject to public protection arrangements.*
 - *Work with the Inverclyde ADP resulted in funding for a justice support worker post focused on addictions in the justice population. The local*

commitment to becoming trauma-informed and trauma-responsive continued, with workshops, training and conferences on trauma-informed systems and services. A trauma-enhanced training programme was initiated, and a community justice strategic health improvement group was formed to identify health improvement evidence in community justice.

- *The reporting period saw collaboration with Public Health Scotland for a community justice and remand population health needs assessment, linking remand population data with public health information. The partnership also engaged in workshops to gather views on the National Strategy for Community Justice, influencing the development of the Inverclyde CJOIP. The Inverclyde partnership worked productively with third sector partners, leading to the creation of a third sector community justice forum and the identification of new opportunities. The emphasis that people live inside communities rather than inside services guided the CJP's approach, fostering a renewed focus on partnership and the upcoming publication of the outcome improvement plan.*
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National outcome 3: People have better access to the services that they require, including welfare, health and wellbeing, housing and employability.

What steps have areas taken to improve access to services, and what impact has there been as a result?

Access to services

Local community justice arrangements have successfully leveraged resources in some areas to support multifunctional, multi-organisational and inter-team working within co-located facilities.

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- *In Falkirk, JSW provides one such hub. The Tackling Inequalities, Improving Outcomes Project supports justice service users with social welfare and wellbeing needs, aiding their engagement with CPOs and licence conditions. The project addresses barriers to accessing universal services, providing practical tasks, financial support, health assistance and more. Community justice partners also support the social inclusion project, targeting individuals with substance use and anti-social behaviour issues. Collaborative efforts with mental health leads have embedded a community psychiatric nurse, enhancing mental health support. The NHS Keep Well nurse and a recovery service contribute to holistic health and substance-use support. Additionally, an outreach service, a cost-of-living skills course, and access to the employability pipeline aim to enhance wellbeing, community integration and employment opportunities for JSW clients. The justice employability project, Cyrenians and Falkirk housing service further contribute to the overall wellbeing and reintegration of individuals within the justice system. The Falkirk model demonstrates that regional or national services can find flexibility to connect to services.*
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Community-level connections are important in both urban and rural areas. Therefore, community justice partners must remain observant to the fact that local flexibility and empowerment in community justice arrangements are prerequisite for success. The challenges are different across areas, and partnerships use their local knowledge and expertise to find solutions to meet local needs.

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- *For example, the Outer Hebrides archipelago covers a line of islands through 130 miles of sea. So, the partnership identifies different strengths, needs and logistical challenges from most other areas. The public sector in the island authorities operates on a much smaller scale*

than in mainland authorities but with more obvious integration. Therefore, planning and reporting of community justice must be nuanced and proportionate. Homeless services have played a vital role in implementing pre-release arrangements. This ensures that the released person's practical needs are considered and that they have an identified address prior to release, wherever possible. This is particularly important in island and remote rural communities where travel back to the home area from a prison takes significant time and delays same-day access to services.

A Talking Point on geographic difficulties – place-based challenges in accessing services – was raising in [last year's report](#). Local returns for this year included more information about geographic challenges.

The centralisation of police custody centres has created challenges for some local areas, such as providing suitable adult services. Similarly, centralisation of court business has created difficulties for service provision. Some local authorities have neither a police custody centre nor a sheriff court, which means their residents interact with multiple police custody centres and courts. This makes local integration of support arrangements more challenging. Host local authorities also have additional workloads from out-of-area clients.

Further analysis is required to improve understanding of the impact of distance and compliance on requirements to attend courts and police stations. The prohibitive cost and lack of availability of public transport to access services are ongoing issues which services try to mitigate. However, there are also examples of more consideration of geography in designing and delivering services. Place-based working is a person-centred, bottom-up approach used to meet the unique needs of people in a given location by working together to use the best available resources and to collaborate to gain local knowledge and insight.

- *During 2022-2023, the Argyll and Bute MAT standards pilot in the Cowal and Bute area was established. This area was chosen as a result of an analysis of need carried out by the ADP on drug and alcohol harms and deaths. During the same period, there were concerns about Oban, and discussion on collaborative opportunities to review the justice and addiction pathways in both these areas was agreed. Involvement of Public Health Scotland in facilitating workshops on the MAT standards in order to set a baseline for the justice pathways was also agreed. This is a key area of ongoing activity during 2023-2024.*
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The development of the local community justice plan is considering a place-based approach and associated service mapping.

- *Shetland has been testing the place-based approach to address local challenges for communities. The Shetland partnership's locality plan for islands with small populations began in 2016. A locality plan for implementation and collaborative working was approved and signed off by all partners three years ago. 'Nort Natters' began the process in the North Mainland, and is still at an early stage.*
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Geographic access to services is also a concern in urban areas.

- *In Edinburgh, it was recognised that travel and distance can be barriers to the most vulnerable in society including those in the justice system, discouraging them from accessing vital services. The [20-minute neighbourhood](#) approach aims to create inclusive and accessible communities with easy access to key services. To date, the partnership has identified 19 local areas for implementation. A phased roll-out aims to help address those place-based challenges, and to encourage citizens to engage with their communities and access universal services locally. For those accessing justice services, staff employ a flexible approach including face-to-face meetings with people in their local area and telephone appointments. Groupwork interventions are, however, delivered centrally.*
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Linking services in the community

Police custody

Many local areas are prioritising the development of services linked to police custody. There is strong collaboration with ADPs so that this work bridges support on substance use. Similarly, mental health services have been leveraged locally through Action 15 of the [Scottish Government Mental Health Strategy 2017–2027](#): 'Increase the workforce to give access to dedicated mental health professionals to all A&Es, all GP practices, every police station custody suite, and to our prisons. Over the next five years increasing additional investment to £35 million for 800 additional mental health workers in those key settings.

Full local integration with wider services, such as housing, social security, financial inclusion, language and communication support, is also critical for success. Some areas have developed connections between services that provide local voluntary throughcare arrangements, arrest referral and bail support. This is advantageous because there is a

core group of people with significant and complex needs who are arrested, held in custody and often returned to prison for short periods. The ongoing instability that they experience means that continuity of care from the same key workers is beneficial.

There are continuing challenges including:

- high prevalence of pilot and ToC activity around police custody from short-term funding which raises questions about the sustainability of such services
- reported information-sharing problems in many areas between Police Scotland and services in communities, and between police custody nursing services and community health provision
- practical problems for meaningful engagement inside police custody settings – detainees are more likely to be under acute stress and, therefore, less likely to be able to engage meaningfully or to retain information
- limited evidence about how services might enable more people to be released on undertakings rather than being held in police custody – for example, supporting people to attend court on an undertaking. The national Scottish Health in Custody Network continues to implement steps towards achieving quality health and social care services in police and prison custody – for example, rolling out training to custody nurses and police staff on general healthcare and mental health

An issue of potential significance that is not yet developed at a local area level is the role of [Appropriate Adult Services](#) in enabling equitable access to justice for people who are vulnerable. During the reporting period, COSLA hosted the national appropriate adult co-ordinator and the policy and participation officer. This was a result of an agreement to work with the Scottish Government to implement the new statutory duties relating to Appropriate Adult Services in justice settings. There is an associated oversight group which has regard to duties relating to the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 (Support for Vulnerable Persons) Regulations 2019. During the reporting year, the Care Inspectorate was developing its quality improvement framework for Appropriate Adult Services. This will be an area for further development by community justice partners, with support from national partners to identify and address issues.

Employability

There are positive examples of employability workers based in some JSW services and local links with employability pipelines through the [No One Left Behind](#) strategy. These provide pathways to employment and wraparound support for continued complex needs. There is, however, less evidence of the availability of services relating to when, why and how to disclose criminal convictions (or to legally not disclose) to support employment progression. Further, there is still little evidence of progress towards embedding the

opportunities which arise from more realistic disclosure/rehabilitation periods implemented by the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Act 2019.

Employing people with convictions

Some partners are leading the agenda in recruiting people with convictions, beyond the peer role function. This demonstrates to local employers that there is untapped potential which they can deploy by recruiting people with convictions.

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- *In Ayrshire, all three local authorities, North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire and East Ayrshire, agreed to become organisations for employing people with convictions. Ambassadors promote safe and sustainable employment for people with convictions in their own workplace and try to influence other workplaces too. Ambassadors aim to ensure that internal recruitment policy and practices are current and proportionate about employing those with convictions.*
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Peer workers

Mistrust of public services is a barrier. This can stem from bad experiences over lifetimes and generations, and lack of hope after previous unmet promises from services. Peer workers can be important in overcoming this. There has been progress through increased employment of people with lived experience within service delivery, and the term 'peer worker' is used more commonly in local returns. Employing people with lived experience enables a more diverse and relatable workforce to encourage participation in services.

There are several examples in the returns.

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- *In East Dunbartonshire, funding was secured to employ a peer navigator (justice). The procurement process was completed with Apex Scotland, the preferred supplier. The peer navigator has been part of the JSW team since late 2022.*
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There are complications such as vetting and disclosure. Similarly, more evidence is required to ensure that the 'peer' workforce is supported, integrated and developed effectively through supervision, fair pay, training, career progression, vicarious trauma monitoring and equality of opportunity.

Health

Justice settings are used as an opportunity to address health inequalities by reaching people in poor health who do not commonly access services except in an emergency or crisis. For example, Keep Well nurses, occupational health and mental health professionals

have been deployed in justice settings. There is considerable pressure on the availability and accessibility of universal health services. However, community justice remains a critical opportunity for health boards to address health inequalities by engaging with people who they otherwise cannot reach.

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- *In Dundee, a Keep Well service co-located with JSW used anticipatory healthcare checks and health consultations to engage with people at risk of health inequalities. The nurse engages with people as they attend supervision, unpaid work, prison release appointments and/or when on home leave. Over the year, this involved 129 consultations over multiple appointments. Compared to pre-pandemic profiles of people receiving checks and subsequent support, those referred to and/or attending appointments with the Keep Well nurse had more complex and/or unmet health needs. They continued to be given support beyond initial consultations.*
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Financial inclusion

The cost-of-living crisis has created new needs. Areas have described access to financial inclusion services such as Citizens Advice Bureaux and emergency referral to foodbanks. This is often, as stated by the Trussell Trust, to provide ‘additional support to help people resolve the crises they’re facing so that they don’t need to use a food bank again in the future. This could include things like debt advice, mental health support, or benefits guidance’¹⁶.

Housing

The availability of suitable housing remains a structural problem. However, there are significant developments through the [Ending Homelessness Together](#) strategic work; implementation of the [SHORE](#) Standards (sustainable housing on release for everyone) (described later in this report); and anticipated new policy and legislative proposals on homelessness prevention.

Liberation from prison

Enabling access to services after short periods of imprisonment is particularly challenging, especially unplanned liberations from court. Many local areas have prioritised activity in this area.

¹⁶ Trussell Trust (2023) [How food banks work](#)

There are significant challenges in enabling access to services, including:

- Low awareness of the term 'voluntary throughcare and mentoring support' creates confusion and means that people do not know what services are available or who provides support.
- Service provision and availability are inconsistent across the prison estate. The number of prisons which might liberate people to any one local authority adds complexity, and the distances which some people travel to return to their local authority after imprisonment are too far.
- Disengagement can be a challenge, and timing of the offer of support is crucial to aid engagement.
- For people on remand, not knowing court/release dates means that forward planning is difficult.
- The lack of support available for men on remand is inequitable, and a missed opportunity to engage and support them and to prepare them for release.
- Services delivering voluntary throughcare and mentoring support face difficulties in funding/resources; co-ordination/communication between organisations; and co-ordinating access to basic needs which support resettlement and desistance. These include suitable housing, medication, money, and connections to a local area and important people in an individual's life.
- Mentors suggest that the insecurity of year-on-year funding undermines staff retention and, therefore, service stability. More support for staff wellbeing may be required, given the complex and emotive work they are involved in, and the need for professional development.

Co-ordination of integration support after liberation from prison

In response to these challenges, some local areas have implemented complementary services to improve arrangements for people returning from prison. Some local areas described improving their use of the information-sharing agreement between SPS and local authorities. A growing number of areas have developed co-ordinated systems to help reach people with the right service, in the right place and at the right time, so that basic needs are prioritised. Local co-ordination is essential because the best outcomes are achieved from holistic approaches with joined-up services. The availability of services is fluid, and their accessibility is relevant at microgeographic levels inside local authorities. People commonly present in services again after being arrested, and a continuum of the same system of support is beneficial.

Accommodation

Local areas are continuing to develop their housing solutions in line with the SHORE Standards. Areas are at various stages of implementation but problems with the availability of suitable housing remain, amid increasing demands for housing.

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- *In Scottish Borders, a SHORE working group was reconvened in 2022–2023. The working group includes representatives from homelessness services, registered social landlords (RSLs), justice service, youth justice, SPS and housing support. The aim of the working group is to improve housing outcomes for people leaving prison, regardless of their housing status and how long they have been in prison, and young offenders. It works collaboratively to allow for dynamic involvement across a range of stakeholders. Achievements include: developing the information-sharing protocol, to allow sharing of information from the SPS weekly reports with the four local RSLs to promote homelessness prevention activities; developing a shared understanding of homelessness prevention activities when a tenant is incarcerated to ensure a consistent approach and to support the ‘no wrong door’ initiative; in partnership with Waverley Housing, acquiring a property to provide bail supervision and home leave accommodation; using ‘Ending Homelessness Together’ funding to employ a part-time SHORE homelessness case officer for a year to support embedding of new practices.*
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Support with substance use

The profound impact of drug-related deaths in Scotland is clearly recognised. Community justice partners are collaborating with ADPs to implement the MAT standards across all justice settings. The progress made by ADPs in developing MAT standards in previous reporting years is valuable learning for integrating these standards within a justice framework. Recovery groups have also further developed inside prisons and in the community.

Voluntary throughcare

There are some new local services to support people after liberation and there is increasing reference to peer workers. These new services are operating inside local systems of support in tandem with voluntary throughcare from JSW and the New Routes, SHINE and Moving On Scotland voluntary throughcare and mentoring programmes.

CJS will continue to support improved access to services when it assumes grant management and monitoring responsibility for the Scottish Government-funded third sector voluntary throughcare and mentoring service.

Social security

The return to usual working after the pandemic for DWP work coaches in prisons and additional resources in some areas are welcome developments. Some areas mentioned positive collaboration in enabling financial inclusion.

Mental health

Integration Joint Boards are statutory community justice partners. There are numerous examples of investment in services to reach people with mental health services in justice settings using allocations from Action 15 of the [Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027](#).

Employment

Community justice partners are collaborating with their local employability partnerships to maximise the impact of the No One Left Behind strategy and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Some people are ready and motivated for employment, education or training straight after prison. Some partnerships have described strengthening pathways to jobs and learning for people being liberated so that they can access opportunities at the right time.

People being liberated from prison can connect to these community pathways but, ideally, there should be links before they leave prison.

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- *In Aberdeen City, a new employability sub group comprising HMP Grampian, DWP, Aberdeen City Council employability team, Aberdeenshire Council employability team and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is focusing on employability pathways and support for individuals pre-release. The group tested the impact of pre-release support with employers offering pre-release job interviews so that individuals had secured employment in advance. This has been tested with private sector employers. This change has shown that provision of in-work support for those being released from prison and moving into employment is essential. The Aberdeen local employability partnership will be procuring this. It will give those leaving custody similar levels of support to individuals accessing employability support via the community route.*
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SDS and SPS collaborated to develop a memorandum of understanding on the approach for services to young people in custody. This identified the need for further work such as

revising the data-sharing agreement so that services, such as access to training and education, can be better facilitated when the young person is liberated.

Families

Many partnerships described close working with Families Outside to raise awareness within local systems of services for families and to develop referral mechanisms for support. The welfare and resilience of families affected by imprisonment are critical. There is, however, little policy focus in local areas or at a national level on families affected by imprisonment. Partnerships mentioned learning from engaging in the development of [Paying the Price: the financial cost to families of imprisonment and release](#).

Overall, the work of local partners aims to improve integration of and support for individuals, emphasising collaboration, proactive planning and addressing needs.

Equality and access

The activities described cover the breadth of need associated with the justice population. Nonetheless, it is not clear that partners are accounting for diversity within the justice population. The Equality Act 2010 created a duty for the public sector to consider all individuals in shaping policy and delivering services, and to take steps to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity. Good practice in equality impact assessments encourages agencies to take into account the challenges that individuals with protected characteristics experience, and to consider how a policy may affect, positively or negatively, different sectors of the population in different ways. It is not clear to what extent community justice partners are considering diversity in developing and delivering community justice arrangements.

Talking point: equality in the justice system

People in contact with the justice system are diverse, experiencing the justice system in different ways and with distinct needs. The focus on the needs of women and young people in the justice system is comparatively well developed. However, there is little evidence of a strategic consideration of the needs of other subcategories of the overall population, or on where different aspects of identity may intersect and contribute to additional complexity and marginalisation. How can local and national partners promote and contribute to equality in justice for people who have distinct experiences as a result of their disability, race, sex, religion, sexuality or other aspect of their lived experience and identity?

National outcome 4: Effective interventions are delivered to prevent and reduce the risk of further offending.

What changes have been made to community justice arrangements to enable desistance, reduce reoffending and promote integration, and what impact has there been as a result?

Bail support services

Some local areas have prioritised improving and developing bail support services. The Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023 brings opportunities to improve bail support. Increasing the effective use of bail assessment reports by sheriffs will be key. However, resourcing production of these reports and associated bail support services will continue to present difficulties.

There are clear links to third sector support in the community. Bail must be considered within the local system as a whole, including voluntary throughcare, arrest referral, MAT standards, mental health provision, financial inclusion, employability pathways, whole family support and housing.

Electronic monitoring is in its infancy in Scotland compared to south of the border. The research evidence on electronic monitoring¹⁷ asserts that it is ineffective without wraparound support. Electronic monitoring, with improved support and supervision, has the potential to reduce the ever-increasing prison population. However, resources are needed to ensure that the necessary wraparound services are available before electronic monitoring can be expanded.

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- *The Glasgow partners have a bail support improvement plan with priorities for, Housing, Mentoring, Victims, Mental health, Judicial and Public confidence, Trauma informed practice, Performance, and electronic monitoring. Over the year, they have made progress with some of these priorities including: the co-location of the prison homelessness casework team with the JSW court team so the court team has better access to information to inform its reports. This allows up-to-date information on housing status and accommodation to be included in court reports, supporting bail decisions. The court social work team is embedded in Glasgow Sheriff Court. It manages a high number of bail supervision cases, with support for the whole person, including addiction, housing, debt and employment/training and educational opportunities; working links with the homelessness management team, ensuring community justice priorities are reflected*

¹⁷ Scottish Government (2022) Reducing reoffending – Electronic monitoring

in the city's housing and homelessness strategies; continuing work with the COPFS national marking team to ensure that the procurators fiscal (PFs) who are marking cases before they go to court are aware of all the options in Glasgow to support bail; bail mentoring service temporarily funded and, while this funding will end, work being undertaken to find alternative community support for people on bail.

Diversion from prosecution

Redirecting individuals from prosecution, when suitable, allows them to address early on the various issues contributing to alleged offences. This benefits both individuals and communities, reducing instances of offending and reoffending, leading to fewer victims and less harm to society. Recognising that those in contact with the justice system often have greater vulnerability and complex needs, the aim is to ensure timely diversion after arrest. It uses well-informed and tailored opportunities reflecting the nature and severity of the alleged crime to address underlying needs and causes of offending behaviour.

Diversion activities can occur in the form of warnings from the police or the PF or fixed penalty notices. There are other types of non-court-based disposals available to police and prosecutors such as a conditional offer, compensation offer or a FWO. More formal diversion from prosecution cases is managed by JSW when an individual accepts an offer from the PF to receive services or treatment to address underlying needs which relate to the offending behaviour.

Local partnerships have reported widely on formal diversion from prosecution cases for the reporting year. Services have been developed and links have been strengthened with third sector organisations. There is widespread reporting of needs assessment and service planning to improve outcomes for diversion from prosecution. Several areas have established working groups to explore opportunities, with increasing use of formal diversion.

The number of diversion from prosecution cases commenced fell by 2% between 2021-22 and 2022-23 to 2,600. This was the second highest level in the last 10 years¹⁸.

Local areas have raised concerns about how to resource growing demand for formal diversion from prosecution without increased funding. Some areas have managed to leverage funding for third sector provision. However, there are sustainability concerns.

Though there are comparatively small number, concerns about diversion referrals relating to gender-based violence have been raised by some partnerships. There is also widespread

¹⁸ Scottish Government (2024), "[Justice Social Work Statistics in Scotland: 2022-23](#)"

reporting of people presenting with more complex needs. Such cases typically require more time.

The [Joint Review of Diversion from Prosecution](#) was carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland. It highlighted that diversion from prosecution, designed to address the underlying causes of offending behaviour, was well established as an effective intervention for those aged under 18, but that more could be done to promote confidence in its use for adults. It found scope for improvement in how diversion from prosecution operates and made 34 recommendations. This will be monitored by national partners as part of the Community Justice Strategy Delivery Plan.

Partnerships reported on work to review these recommendations locally within the context of their planning and improvement processes. Local areas which participated in the review expressed positive experiences from the process and the wider recommendations have been welcomed by stakeholders.

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- *South Lanarkshire advised that feedback from the Care Inspectorate commended its delivery of diversion from prosecution, highlighting good case management, strong partnerships, effective use of funding and positive service-user experiences. The recommendations and feedback have informed content in the CJOIP.*
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There are reports that people with more complex needs are presenting in formal diversion services. However, there is no rigorous evidence yet to define whether the increase in cases is being driven by de-escalating prosecution or the escalation of cases which would previously have been resolved through fiscal warning letters, or other drivers. The CJS improvement tool and associated proposed logic models will provide better evidence for this in the future.

COPFS reports¹⁹ that there were significantly fewer fiscal warning letters issued in the reporting year. Only 3,249 fiscal warning letters were sent in the reporting year compared to 5,203 in 2021-22, 6,583 in 2020-21 and 5,261 in 2019-20. This will be monitored through the lifecycle of the National Strategy for Community Justice.

¹⁹ [Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 \(copfs.gov.uk\)](#)

There are several developments in diversion from prosecution from some local areas.

- *West Lothian reports that its JSW has employed extra staff to respond to the increasing need for assessments and interventions. It has managed the increase in Electronic Monitoring Orders (EMOs) together with community referrals for immediate support. Its diversion from prosecution cases have shown consistently high numbers of referrals and completions with minimum statistical fluctuations over the last three years despite the pandemic. This contrasts with a reduction in other areas of statutory work within the service. West Lothian accepts all diversion from prosecution cases for assessment that are sent from the PF, with a dedicated response to age and stage. Those up to age 21 receive a service from the youth justice team and adult justice services accept all other cases. Given the focus for expansion, which is likely to include an increase in complexity, it is now increasing the resource to support individuals on diversion.*
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Alcohol brief interventions

Alcohol remains a significant factor in relation to crime and some areas use ABI as part of efforts to address the issue.

- *The Moray health improvement team has been actively delivering an ABI training programme with validated evaluations to practitioners from the local authority, NHS Grampian and the third sector interface. The training equips practitioners with the knowledge and confidence to provide early intervention and prevention support to their clients to prevent the long-term health and social implications of excess alcohol consumption. In the reporting period, 85 practitioners completed ABI training.*
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Some areas reported activity linked to nationally set policy priorities and programmes, including those linked to domestic abuse, sexual offending behaviour programmes and statutory duties linked to public protection.

Domestic abuse

The Caledonian System has been embedded in JSW in a number of Local Authorities across Scotland since 2011. It is an integrated approach to addressing domestic abuse, combining a court-ordered programme for men aimed at changing their behaviour, with support services for women and children. The Scottish Government commit £4.1m annually

to support delivery of the System and it is now in operation across 20 Local Authorities In Scotland. In the areas that do not presently have the Caledonian System, alternative approaches are taken.

One area that does not receive direct government funding for the Caledonian System has taken steps to implement the approach from within its existing resources.

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- *West Dunbartonshire partners identified a need to expedite implementation of the Caledonian System locally because of the continued high level of domestic abuse reported in the area. Partners have leveraged funding from within their present allocations for two years to implement the system.*
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National outcomes 5, 6 and 7

- Life chances are improved through needs, including health, financial inclusion, housing and safety, being addressed.
- People develop positive relationships and more opportunities to participate and contribute through education, employment and leisure activities.
- Individuals' resilience and capacity for change and self-management are enhanced.

What mechanisms and arrangements enable areas to understand progress for people against these outcomes?

Specific person-centric outcomes have been removed from the new National Strategy for Community Justice. However, embedding person-centredness and trauma-informed practice is threaded through the strategy.

Person-centric issues are unique to individuals. Therefore, defining person-centric outcomes for someone else or for groups of people, is contradictory. Meaningful reporting and evaluation of person-centric outcomes at a systemic level was challenging under the previous national strategy. These are a core principle of trauma-informed, person-centred and assets-based working rather than something that is easily measurable across a system.

It remains important for person-centric outcomes to be monitored within the context of services and for them to be integrated within quality improvement. Local areas have described the use of various mechanisms, such as Justice Outcomes Star, which measure progress of individuals. These are valuable operational tools which add value to case management and service quality improvement. However, any inference from aggregating the data beyond a single service is limited without wider qualitative data to support quality improvement across systems of services.

At a partnership level, there should be curiosity and the right leadership across whole systems of services to develop person-centric outcomes. In [last year's annual report](#) we raised a talking point about the difficulty of identifying progress in the longer term to inform community justice improvements at system level.

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- *Triangulating the views of people with lived experience in analysing the evidence base has been embedded in Clackmannanshire where the SNSA was co-produced. Case studies through justice journeys were considered by people with lived experience of the justice system, alongside analysis of these involving a wide range of service providers. Many of the individuals and organisations participating in the process noted the value of using this approach in allowing the strengths and gaps within the system to be identified. The partnership will use a*

similar process as part of future monitoring of outcomes to ensure that lived experience is embedded within the quality assurance of services that support people's justice journeys. Additionally, a person with lived experience co-chairs the partnership board.

To respond to these challenges, CJS is designing a series of resources to complement the CJS improvement tool to support partners to assess progress towards national outcomes and to identify opportunities for improvement. A core feature of the resources is triangulation of evidence involving community justice leaders, the community justice workforce and people with lived experience. The intention is to improve oversight of the disconnections and gaps between services; to monitor solutions or workarounds; and to provide clearer evidence for changes that partners need to make at regional or national level.

Talking point: national levers for local issues

National levers for local issues

Local partners solve problems at a local level by identifying and overcoming barriers or by implementing workarounds. However, some challenges relating to regionally and nationally set policy and practice, require decision-making and influence which are inaccessible to local partners. How can the Scottish Government, CJS and national agencies work better with local partners to overcome barriers and advance developments without compromising local autonomy?

Community justice leaders have participated in the Scottish Trauma Informed Leaders Training (STILT). This is part of the [National Trauma Transformation Programme](#) which sets out a blueprint for developing systems, services, programmes and interventions to help them to be more trauma-responsive. The language of being trauma-informed is commonplace in CJsPs and training has been undertaken by the community justice workforce.

7. Conclusion

Community justice partners are moving ahead with the new national strategy and the national outcome and indicators set out in the [Community Justice Performance Framework](#) published on 31 March 2023.

The nine national outcomes are:

- More people successfully complete diversion from prosecution.
- More people in police custody receive support to address their needs.
- More people are assessed for and successfully complete bail supervision.
- More people access services to support desistance and successfully complete community sentences.
- More people have access to, and continuity of, health and social care following release from a prison sentence.
- More people have access to suitable accommodation following release from a prison sentence.
- More people with convictions access support to enhance their readiness for employment.
- More people access voluntary throughcare following a short-term prison sentence.
- More people across the workforce and in the community understand, and have confidence in, community justice.

CJS published the [Community Justice Improvement Tool](#) to complement the national framework at a local level. This tool will help promote improvement in local areas, setting out the local supporting evidence that should be considered throughout the year to help local community justice partners plan and monitor improvement activities.

The next annual report to be produced by CJS will describe progress against the nine national outcomes above. We will request information from local and national partners to evidence progress towards outcomes and to understand what needs to happen to support progress.

All areas have been working to produce their new CJOIPs that will set out how they will work towards the national outcomes. Local areas will develop, gather and use information in collaboration with CJS to support improvement; to report on progress towards outcomes; and to provide CJS with local evidence as part of their annual reporting for Scotland. CJS will support implementation of the improvement tool throughout the coming year and beyond, and will work with partners to encourage and monitor improvement in community justice.

This was another year during which the collective community justice workforce strove, in exceptionally challenging circumstances, to deliver improved outcomes for some of Scotland's most vulnerable people. Existing challenges were aggravated, and it is unlikely that conditions will ease soon.

In the introduction, we set out our recommendation:

We recommend that CJS, the Scottish Government and all partners work together to ensure that community justice across the public and third sectors is resourced in a way that matches the policy ambition of [The Vision for Justice in Scotland](#).

A substantive shift from custody to community, as set out by the Scottish Government's Vision for Justice, cannot be achieved without a more systemic approach to reform. It needs to adopt a cross-portfolio approach to tackling the causes and effects of offending. More effective approaches to prevention and support could lead to substantial financial savings, improvements for communities and victims of crimes, and less offending and reoffending.



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