



## Community Justice Update – Aberdeen

Please find below some updates relating to Community Justice issues, both local and national. If you have any Community Justice ‘news’, issues, or practice you would like to share, or comments/queries about any of the below, please don’t hesitate to contact me (Val Vertigans, Policy Coordinator, Community Justice Redesign) by emailing: [vavertigans@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:vavertigans@aberdeencity.gov.uk).

### 1. Community Justice (Scotland) Act

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The Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 received Royal Assent on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016, and can be found at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/10/enacted/data.pdf>

### 2. Aberdeen Community Justice Transition Plan 2016-17 and Current Activities

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Aberdeen’s Community Justice Transition Plan was approved by the Board of Community Planning Aberdeen at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015, and was submitted to Scottish Government by the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 deadline as required. The final version of the Plan and accompanying documents have been circulated with this Update.

The Transition Plan outlined a number of activities to be pursued during the coming year, in preparation for the development of a ‘Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan’ from April 2017 onwards, and the author is taking these forward.

**Profiling offending and ‘offenders’ in Aberdeen:** Work is underway, with the help of colleagues from the Community Safety Hub, to profile offending across the City. This will help to inform the ‘need’ for Community Justice services in Aberdeen.

**‘Mapping’ of current Community Justice Activities:** The author is also undertaking interviews with representatives of a wide range of organisations and services which currently work with individuals involved with, or at risk of becoming involved with, the Justice System in Aberdeen.

Together these pieces of work will provide a robust evidence base for going on to develop, in wide consultation, priority outcomes (and the related activities) which will form part of the City’s first Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan. Many thanks go to all those who are contributing to this work.



### 3. Women’s Centre - Support for Refugees

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Women at Aberdeen’s Connections Centre have made these wonderful flowers and ‘hottie’ covers as welcoming touches for Syrian refugees arriving in the city. A ‘vase of flowers’ was put in each house, and everyone received a hot water bottle and cover, which it is hoped helped in the adjustment to our local temperatures.



The women who created these gifts are either involved in the Justice System, or are being supported due to being victims of domestic abuse (their (ex-) partners undertaking the ‘Caledonian’ programme for male perpetrators of domestic abuse).

### 4. Diverting Young People involved in the anti-social use of Motorbikes

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Police Scotland’s Operation Trinity tackles the anti-social use of motorcycles, particularly in areas of the city where residents have identified this as an issue locally (Northfield, Mastrick, Tillydrone). Operation Trinity, which is in its tenth year, operates from April to October, and involves ‘disrupting and detecting’ those involved, and bringing them to justice.



A key function, however, is diverting individuals vulnerable to becoming involved in this kind of offending. This effort has taken a number of forms over the years, being dictated by available funding, those engaged in the antisocial behaviour and the nature of the available diversionary activity. This has seen Operation Trinity working in partnership with a number of partners including the (Edinburgh-based) ‘Rural Urban Training Scheme’. The Scheme aims to give the young people involved a positive life choice, and to reduce reoffending, anti-social activities and risk taking behaviour. Using motorcycles as a focus, RUTS provides alternative curriculum education and training to young people through a practical programme of activities. 14 to 19 year olds can get their hands dirty covering such subjects as health and safety, motorcycle mechanics, first aid, road safety, motorcycles and society as well as issues such as employability and progression routes to further learning.



More recently the challenges resulting from reduced funding and a desire to continually evolve the local effort has seen the Community Safety Partnership looking into acquiring land in the city so that the project taken be taken forward ‘in-house’. The success of the Operation is focussed on the partnership effort with local authority Wardens, tradespeople and others, both reporting the antisocial behaviour



and advising when they have noticed motorbikes 'hidden' inside houses they are attending.

## 5. HMP & YOI Grampian - Family Centre and Help Hub

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Action for Children manage the Family Centre and Help Hub at HMP and YOI Grampian, supported by the Scottish Prison Service, and in particular, one Family Contact Officer who is seconded to work in the Family Centre. The Family Centre's most basic function is to provide a safe place where visitors to HMP and YOI Grampian can relax and spend time before and after a visit to the prison. It is a one stop shop where visitors can access a wide variety of support and advice and they can get up to date information about the prison.



The Centre has a café which provides affordable, healthy meals and snacks to the visitors and staff of HMP and YOI Grampian. There is also a large play room and outdoor covered play area where visiting children have been really excited to play, explore and discover new things.



Action for Children work closely with a number of partner agencies in the Family Centre and Help Hub and three of the main partners provide support and assistance to visitors on a weekly basis from the Centre. These are Families Outside, Shelter and Early Years Scotland.

The vast majority of those using the Family Centre are from Aberdeen City.

For further information please contact the Centre Manager, Pam Simpson, on: 07718114015

[Pamela.Simpson@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:Pamela.Simpson@actionforchildren.org.uk)

### Family Centre and Help Hub Case Study (names have been changed)

Lisa is 19 and her partner is serving a 27 month sentence. It is his first time in custody - he went into prison weeks before she was due to give birth to their first child. Lisa lives in Aberdeen and so bringing her baby on the bus is difficult.

Having previously worked with Families Outside, Lisa had then not engaged with anyone for help for several months. As soon as the Family Centre opened she started to use the centre as she is visiting regularly by public transport.

She doesn't have many friends and doesn't have any contact with other young Mums and children. She has gradually started to engage with staff and has asked for



practical advice around parenting, information around her partner getting out on an electronic tag, and has been able to open up about her worries. It was noticed that her buggy had fallen to bits so the Family Centre have helped her source a new one from a local recycling centre.

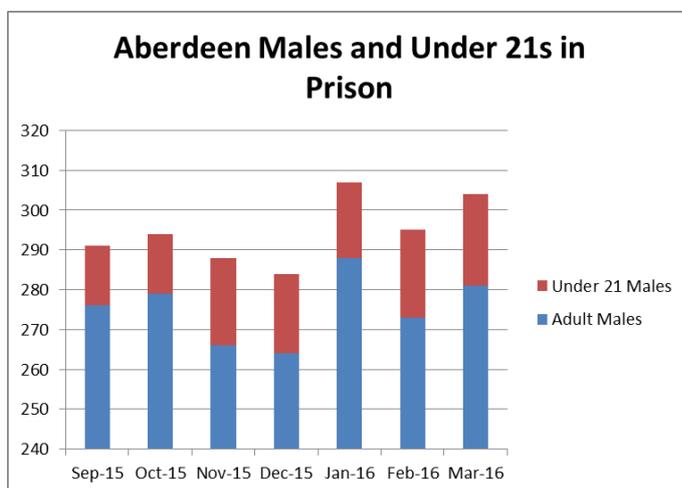
Through talking to Lisa and her partner in a visit they have concerns over benefits and seeking employment when he is released, so they have been referred to the 'Tackling Money Worries' project worker based in the family centre to talk this through.

She attended the family Hallowe'en event and loved meeting with other families first in the Help Hub and then over in the Visit room. She now recognises the benefit of arriving early and staying on after a visit to get some support.

## 6. Housing Support

For 2016-17 a full time Housing Support Officer post is to be seconded by Aberdeen City into HMP and YOI Grampian. This will enable individuals to receive support from arrival in prison to ensure that housing needs are addressed. This should assist in preventing unplanned accommodation loss, help to allay prisoners' anxieties about their housing situation, and enable consideration of applications for housing assistance prior to release, so that individuals are not leaving prison without named accommodation.

## 7. Aberdeen Prisoners



As at the beginning of March 2016 there were 304 males from Aberdeen in prison, of which 23 were Under 21. Of these, 205 were residing in HMP & YOI Grampian, 22 (young offenders) were in HMYOI Polmont, and the remainder were located in prisons across the country. The chart shows the change in the number of Aberdeen males in prison over the period from September 2015.

Also as at 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016, there were 23 women from Aberdeen in prison, all adults. Apart from one person who was in HMP Cornton Vale, these women were all in HMP & YOI Grampian. As can be seen from the chart, there has only been one female Under 21 from Aberdeen in custody in the period since September 2015.

