



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.

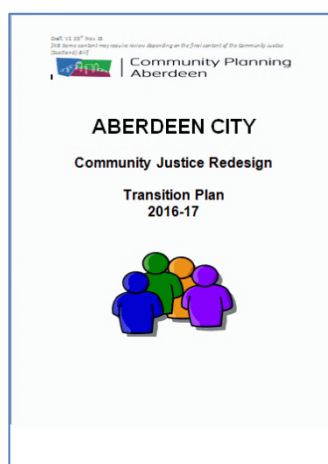
1. Community Justice Partnership Event

A successful partnership event was held on 11th November 2015 at the Beach Ballroom in Aberdeen. The event, which was hosted by the Chair of Community Planning Aberdeen, was attended by approximately 54 people, including members of the Community Planning Aberdeen Board and Management Group and a wide range of partner and community representatives.

The event began with presentations on national and local issues with regards to Community Justice Redesign, and then attendees participated in three short workshops. These were aimed at: exchanging and contributing ideas about a 'Vision' for community justice in Aberdeen; and consulting partners and stakeholders about how partners will work together, and engage with Victims, Communities, Individuals and Families, in developing plans for taking the 'Community Justice' agenda forward locally.

Feedback was very positive and demonstrated that the main aims of the event had been met, in engaging partners at an early stage in the Redesign, and in securing buy-in as we move forward with this agenda.

2. 2016-17 Transition Plan



Information gathered during the Workshops at the Partnership Event was also invaluable in informing the development of the Community Justice Transition Plan for Aberdeen for 2016-17, which has been circulated widely to partners in consultation. (Please let me know if you haven't yet seen a copy of this, and I can forward it to you.)

The Plan sets out how arrangements will be developed in Aberdeen in preparation for local partners taking on responsibility for improving Community Justice outcomes from 1st April 2017 onwards.



3. Community Justice (Scotland) Bill

The [Community Justice \(Scotland\) Bill](#) is the draft piece of legislation which is to underpin the Redesign of Community Justice. It is currently being considered via the Parliamentary processes, and it is envisaged that the Bill will become effective in May 2016. Issues raised about the Bill by the Justice Committee and by Members during the Parliamentary debate include:

- The need for clarity about the roles of and relationships between the national and local bodies;
- The definition of 'Community Justice' should be reviewed, to give consideration to reference to 'prevention and early intervention' and also to victims' interests;
- The definition of 'offender' should also be reviewed – currently this includes "persons who have at any time been convicted of an offence";
- Scottish Government to reflect on whether the requirement in the Bill for statutory partners to only 'consult' with community bodies is strong enough to ensure effective collaboration and engagement with the Third Sector;
- The Bill should specify that Community Planning Partnerships have responsibility for Community Justice planning with a view to making the new arrangements as clear and simple as possible (there is currently no specific reference to CPPs in the draft Bill);

The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs, Paul Wheelhouse, sponsor of the Bill, advised that he would respond to the issues arising in January 2016.

4. Aberdeen Problem Solving Court

A Problem-Solving Court started on 2nd November on a pilot basis in Aberdeen. This approach involves regular post-sentence review hearings with the Sheriff, with a view to supporting the convicted person to comply with their community-based sentence and to address the reasons behind their offending behaviour.

The Problem-Solving Court in Aberdeen focuses on women from Aberdeen City who have multiple and complex needs who are prolific offenders, and who are medium to high risk in terms of their needs and the likelihood of their reoffending and ending up with a custodial sentence. The approach in Aberdeen varies from that of other Problem-Solving Court models, which tend to focus on a specific need such as support to address offending related to drug/alcohol misuse.



Close partnership working between Police Scotland, the local authority Criminal Justice Social Work Service, the Procurator Fiscal, the Scottish Court and Tribunals Service, and defence agents, is crucial to the success of this model. There is an ever growing evidence base to suggest that problem-solving courts reduce



reoffending, leading to increasing public confidence. Individuals benefitting from the problem-solving court approach also perceive that this type of justice is fairer.

5. HMP & YOI Grampian – Media Access Project

The Media Access Project (MAP) has begun supporting prisoners in HMP & YOI Grampian to return positively into the community having used media as a unique engagement and development platform to address and overcome a range of issues prior to release.



The Big Lottery and Fairer Aberdeen funded project, is hosted in the Creative Media Unit in partnership with HMP & YOI Grampian, delivering the first cross-platform media programme within a UK prison. The Unit, in conjunction with MAP, offers a range of innovative opportunities for engagement in radio broadcasting, filmmaking, magazine and music production including accreditation up to SQA level 5.

In addition to on-going support from MAP Community Support Workers and other key services pre and post-release, support is provided to participants so that they can continue to volunteer in media-based activities within the community, linked to SHMU's (Station House Media Unit) extensive community media programmes in Aberdeen's regeneration areas. Where appropriate, it is hoped that media then created in the community will be broadcast and shared in the prison, encouraging others to engage in the project.



Currently, prisoners are producing and broadcasting six new radio shows per week covering a range of topics and sharing information about services and opportunities within the prison setting. It is anticipated that more community based services will likewise take up the opportunity to promote their work and develop more effective links with prisoners and the prison in the near future via the project.

For further information about the MAP please email gary.dawson@shmu.org.uk

Further information can also be accessed at <http://www.shmu.org.uk/map>



6. Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill

[NB This is different from the 'Community Justice (Scotland) Bill', the purpose of which is to enable Community Justice Redesign.]

The Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill, which takes forward a range of proposals to modernise and improve efficiency within the criminal justice system, has been passed by the Scottish Parliament. This Bill includes a number of measures including in relation to:

- Police Scotland's approach to 'stop and search';
- Sentencing for handling knives and weapons;
- The modernisation of arrest, custody and questioning procedures, including enhanced protections for child and vulnerable adult suspects;
- Creation of a clear framework for the fundamental police powers to arrest, hold in custody and question people suspected of having committed a crime;
- Improving the right to legal advice for individuals taken into police custody; and
- Making greater use of technology in criminal procedure.

Following recommendations made by Lord Bonomy, the Scottish Government accepted that it was not appropriate to continue with corroboration reform as part of this legislation.

7. Supporting Offenders with Learning Disabilities

The 'Supporting Offenders with Learning Disabilities Network' (SOLD) is funded by the Scottish Government, with the aim of reducing offending and improving support for people with learning disabilities who offend. For more information, follow the link to the [SOLD website](#).



Merry Christmas to all

