



## 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 Val Vertigans, Community Justice Officer.

Email: [vavertigans@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:vavertigans@aberdeencity.gov.uk) or Tel: 07342 060939

For past minutes of the Community Justice Group, and other information about Community Justice, follow the link to the [Community Justice page](#) on the Community Planning Aberdeen website.

### 1. Aberdeen Community Justice Group

The last meeting of the CJ Group was hosted by Skills Development Scotland. Interested members took up the opportunity to meet with SDS staff and clients to learn more about their role in Community Justice and more widely.

Discussion at the meeting took place around a number of issues, including the improvement of pathways to support in relation to mental health. It was agreed that a workshop would be arranged to provide a specific focus on this, to provide clarity around current initiatives and to agree future priorities/direction.

For more information about the Community Justice Group, or the wider Community Justice agenda in Aberdeen, please contact the author (details above) or follow the above link to the minutes of meetings of the Group.

### 2. My Way to Employment – Employers’ Workshop

On Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2018 the ‘My Way to Employment’ project team hosted a short workshop for representatives from statutory partner organisations aimed at

- providing an overview of the project;
- discussing good practice and providing helpful hints in relation to providing opportunities for individuals who have been involved in the Justice System;
- signposting participants to further information; and
- hearing first-hand from employers with experience of employing individuals with convictions.

“Definitely food for thought”

The session was well represented by statutory partners, and included engaging inputs from employers James Jack Cranes and the DWP about their experiences of providing placements for, and recruiting, people with convictions.

“We don’t go out and look for applicants, but maybe we should”

Feedback from participants was very positive, and the project team aims to follow up on potential opportunities and developments.



### 3. Unpaid Work in Action



Criminal Justice Social Work Service Unpaid Work Team have recently set up a craft and woodworking stall down at the Health Village on Fredrick Street.



An outdoor area has also been developed behind the glass next to the coffee shop. It is hoped that this will become a season themed area to brighten up the space and show off some of the quality workshop and craft projects that are being produced by the Unpaid Workers at Willowdale. Some of the items are sold to fund Aberdeen City charites as way of paying back to the community from the individuals' court order.

#### STOP PRESS

An 'easy read' version of the Victims' Code for Scotland has been launched to help victims with communications difficulties understand their rights and improve their experience of the justice system. The 'easy read' can be found at:

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/victims-rights-scotland/>

October 2018



## 4. Why Smart Justice matters: a Seminar with Greg Berman

Aberdeen City Council's Town and County Hall was the venue for our 'Seminar with Greg Berman' on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The event was attended by 102 people from a wide range of organisations and services as well as community members.

The session was introduced by Karyn McCluskey, Chief Executive of Community Justice Scotland and T/Superintendent Graeme Duncan of Police Scotland, who is Vice Chair of Community Planning Aberdeen.



Those present were delighted to hear from Greg Berman, Director of the Center for Court Innovation in New York who gave a fascinating insight into the Red Hook Community Justice Center in Brooklyn, which houses a courtroom in which a single judge hears cases that under ordinary circumstances would go to three different courts — Civil, Family, and Criminal. Beyond the courtroom, the Justice Center offers an array of unconventional programs that work to improve both public safety and trust in justice. For more information, watch this short video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxdjnXpZgjl>

The session also included an overview of Aberdeen's Problem-Solving Approach which was given by Lesley Simpson, Criminal Justice Social Work Service Manager, and Cheryl Clark of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. A [Review of Aberdeen Problem-Solving Approach](#) (PSA), which has been running in Aberdeen Sheriff Court since November 2015 (for women) and since August 2016 (for young men), was published recently.

Potential participants have to meet the 10 specific eligibility criteria for the programme, and those admitted into the PSA have their sentence deferred while they engage with service providers for a specified period of time, during which they must return to court for regular judicial reviews with a dedicated sheriff.

Participants of the PSA were overwhelmingly positive about the PSA's overall impact on their lives. Self-reported outcomes included: reduced reoffending, reduced substance use, improved housing situations, improved mental health and wellbeing; and improved social skills and relationships.





## 5. Scottish Courts & Tribunals Service achieve Excellence in Customer Service Accreditation - again

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Aberdeen Sheriff Court was recently visited by the Assessor for 'Customer Service Excellence' accreditation. Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation is used by many organisations throughout the UK to drive improvements to customer-focused services. The organisation first gained CSE accreditation in 2013 and is now assessed over a three-year rolling programme against 57 elements, grouped under the headings:

- customer insight
- culture of the organisation
- information & access
- delivery
- timeliness & quality of service.

Staff at Aberdeen Sheriff Court were able to highlight a number of areas of good practice in relation to Customer Service including:

- Involvement in the Problem Solving Court;
- Work carried out regarding unplanned release of accused from custody;
- Early consideration of a 'One Judge One Family' approach, which is to be progressed;
- Information provided to customers regarding 'Families Outside', and the support they provide to the families of people in prison;
- Information available to customers provided by ACVO e.g. Grampian Women's Aid etc;
- Talk given to staff by NHS colleague regarding advice available to customers.