



COMMUNITY JUSTICE AYRSHIRE PARTNERSHIP

ANNUAL REPORT 2020 - 2021

FOREWORD FROM CHAIR

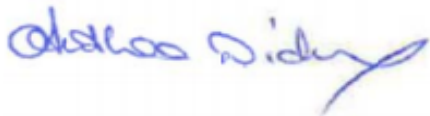
Welcome to the Community Justice Ayrshire Partnership Annual Report for 2020-2021. This has undoubtedly been an extraordinary year, which has required community justice partners to come together like never before.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been with us for the duration of this reporting period and brought with it a range of challenges which impacted on all elements of the justice system.

In a year defined by restrictions and barriers, partners have had to develop new ways to deliver services and engage with those who use them. Support has been provided in different and innovative ways, and interventions adapted to remain effective whilst keeping people safe.

We would like to send our thanks to all the community justice partners who contributed towards this report. The breadth of work which has taken place during a challenging year is a testament to the strong partnership working in place and dedication of staff working throughout services and organisations.

We want our communities across Ayrshire to be safer and stronger, and for everyone to be able to live a good life. That's why we will continue to work together to reduce reoffending and improve outcomes for all those involved in the justice system, their families, victims, and our communities.



Councillor Anthea Dickson
Chair of Community Justice Ayrshire Board



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INTRODUCTION

The Community Justice Ayrshire Partnership is a pan-Ayrshire approach to reducing reoffending, working to tackle the underlying causes of crime. We want to involve everyone affected by the justice system, including people with convictions, their families, victims, communities, and those working in support services. We need everyone to work together to succeed.

We recognise that there is much to be done to raise awareness of community justice amongst local organisations and people who live in our communities. We are committed to working to break down barriers and reduce the stigma faced by people who have been involved in the justice system, so that they may move on with their lives.

Our partnership is made up of statutory and third sector organisations. We are committed to helping people reintegrate back into their community to allow them to realise their potential, this benefits the whole community.

Despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic throughout this year, there has been a range of innovative work progressed and a number of highlights achieved as a partnership. This report outlines the work undertaken by Community Justice Ayrshire partners, either collectively or individually throughout 2020 to 2021 to contribute towards community justice outcomes.

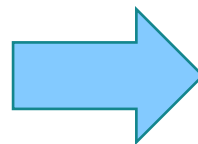
“Working together to reduce reoffending and promote inclusion and equality for all in Ayrshire”



NATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITY JUSTICE

What we deliver as partners

- Communities improve their understanding and participation in community justice
- Partners plan and deliver services in a more strategic and collaborative way
- Effective interventions are delivered to prevent and reduce the risk of further offending
- People have better access to the services they require, including welfare, health and wellbeing, housing and employability



Changes to those who use our services

- 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

We are working together to achieve the outcomes within our local Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan and within the National Strategy for Community Justice

IMPACT OF COVID-19



The spread of Covid-19 has impacted across the whole of the justice system and has resulted in considerable extra demands being placed on all partners including police, prisons, justice social work and wider community justice services. We face a challenge across the country to enable the justice system to return to pre-pandemic levels.

When the first lockdown period was imposed across Scotland, the day-to-day business considered by Scotland's courts was substantially reduced. This was a necessity to help protect the health of staff and the public. A move to virtual proceedings wherever possible enabled court business to restart but a backlog had been created, resulting in delays for both victims and the accused person.

For individuals held on remand within prisons, delays in court proceedings have meant extended stays in prison, placing additional pressures on an already overstretched system.

Justice Social Work have continued to deliver community justice services throughout the pandemic, but this has not been without its challenges. Where possible, the delivery of services has moved to virtual options however this is not always suitable for more specialised interventions such as group work associated with the Caledonian and Moving Forward Making Changes programmes.

Delivery of Unpaid Work has posed many barriers, largely due to the need for social distancing. The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 provided a 12-month extension to all unpaid work orders and other activity requirements. This enabled justice services to suspend these programmes during lockdown without invertedly breaching orders. Whilst a positive move, this has again created a backlog in the system and more delays.

Community justice partners across Ayrshire are committed to working together to help address the impact of Covid-19 and support the justice system to recover.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

RAISING AWARENESS



We want the public to know that community based sentences work better to reduce reoffending than short term prison sentences. To build confidence in community sentences throughout our local communities, we want people to understand that by addressing the complex issues that affect people with convictions, we aim to reduce the number of future victims and make our communities safer.

To raise awareness of the benefits of community sentences and the positive impact they can have on both the individual and the wider community, we worked to develop a range of communication materials promoting the work of community justice partners. This included the 'Let's talk about justice' series, which focussed on the work of the Unpaid Work teams across Ayrshire.

A fantastic example which was highlighted was a project undertaken with a local secondary school. Individuals carrying out unpaid work as part of their community payback order, crafted a range of picnic benches to be used within the grounds of the school. This helped to facilitate social distancing and provided greater choice for pupils being able to sit outdoors to eat lunch during their break. It also provided those undertaking orders with meaningful activity, new skills and a sense of pride in the work undertaken.

The Covid-19 pandemic meant many partners were unable to deliver their services as normal, during a time of rising need within our communities. To provide support, Unpaid Work supervisors adapted their role throughout the pandemic and were redeployed to provide ongoing support to essential services, ensuring communities remained safe and individuals and families provided for.

Supervisors were also redeployed to support Ayrshire Roads Alliance by refilling public grit bins across Ayrshire, to maintain safe walkways throughout the winter months.

Many partners worked together to support the community by:

- Collecting and distributing supplies for local foodbanks
- Assisting in the operation of a school clothing hub
- Making thousands of door-step food and care package deliveries, and
- Supporting a local drug and alcohol recovery service by collecting donations from various organisations to support them in delivering food parcels

Partners have also been involved in the delivery of 'Community Support Hubs', alongside community members and volunteers. These Hubs were established to support people to access food, prescriptions, advice, and referrals during the lockdown period and beyond.



SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

RECRUIT WITH CONVICTION

Rehabilitation is a key part of the community justice approach. We want to help people with convictions in Ayrshire find employment, create stable lives, and reduce the chances of them reoffending.

The enactment of the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Act 2019 means many convictions no longer need to be disclosed as part of the application process for things such as job and university applications or getting insurance. Following these changes, a need was identified to ensure staff were fully aware of the new legislation and how it impacts the people they support.

The Community Justice Ayrshire Partnership worked with the third sector organisation 'Recruit with Conviction' to undertake a campaign and series of events to maximise awareness of these changes and offer support to employers and those supporting applicants across Ayrshire.

This included delivering a specialist training programme for support staff and employers, detailing the benefits of these changes across the labour market with input from employers, public sector and third sector.

"Giving an individual a 'second chance' and an opportunity to create a future for themselves through employment, potentially takes them out of future encounters with the justice system and gives them a real sense of purpose."



PARTNERSHIP WORKING

COLLABORATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY – COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR PILOT

When a person accused of an offence first appears in court, a judicial decision will be made whether they will be released on bail or remanded into custody. For many people, being remanded into custody is their first experience of prison. The Covid-19 pandemic has seen a significant rise of remand in Scotland, with almost 1 in 4 prisoners in Scotland being on remand as of the end of March 2021.

Time spent on remand can often be unproductive, with no requirement to work and limited opportunities to engage with support services and rehabilitation programmes. The negative consequences of remand are similar to that of a short-term custodial sentence, impacting on an individual's employment, housing, physical and mental health, family relationships, and finances.

Recognising a gap in services to support individuals on remand, the Community Justice Ayrshire Partnership worked with the Violence Reduction Unit and the three Alcohol and Drug Partnerships from across Ayrshire to develop the Community Navigator project. Based within HMP Kilmarnock, the 12-month pilot specifically focusses on in-reach support for individuals on remand or those on a long-term sentence with no statutory requirement on release. The pilot recognises the importance of engagement and relationship building within the prison, and ongoing follow-up support in the community.

Navigators receive daily reports on arrivals into the prison, enabling them to offer a service to all eligible individuals within 72 hours of arrival. Following assessment, a person-centred plan is agreed to address the individual's priority areas and to help identify existing strengths and supportive networks the person may already have. The plan considers coping strategies, triggers, and relapse prevention. There is also a clear focus on linking in with other relevant services, which may be beneficial to the individual. Following liberation, the person is supported to put their plan in place and to access services and appointments as required. A planned transition to services in the community takes place, with warm handovers wherever possible.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the pilot at various stages, including the Navigators being unable to access the prison for several months. Despite the significant challenges this brought, the service has been fully established and saw an increase in referrals following access being reinstated. The original funding allowed the pilot to run to the end of August 2021, which has now been extended in East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire until March 2022 to allow the evaluation to be completed and the impact of the pilot to be understood.



IMPROVING OUTCOMES



Working together to provide opportunities for improved outcomes for those who come into contact with the justice system is a central aim of the Community Justice Ayrshire Partnership. We want to make sure people are provided with support to address their needs no matter which stage of the justice journey they are at.

The population in contact with the Justice system is a vulnerable one in terms of health and wellbeing, with people experiencing high levels of mental health problems and trauma. We want to ensure the right pathways are in place for people to receive support.

Ayrshire's police triage pathway provides direct access to the Crisis Resolution Team for police officers who meet an individual presenting with mental health concerns. It provides access to specialist Mental Health Nurses for members of the public who would otherwise have to be taken to Emergency Departments at general hospital and would have a significantly greater wait to access specialist mental health services. In most cases access time is within the hour generally shortening the time to wait for mental health input by three hours or more.

Being remanded into custody can bring many negative consequences, similar to those experienced when serving a short-term prison sentence. This can be particularly damaging for women who will often face additional caring and family responsibilities. Too often women are inappropriately remanded into custody – almost two-thirds of women remanded to prison are either found not guilty or are given a community outcome. Sending women to prison unnecessarily is damaging to them, their families, and the children who depend on them.

Our local Court Screening Service aims to reduce the number of women who are remanded in custody from Ayr and Kilmarnock Sheriff Courts by providing the Sheriff with detailed information regarding the woman's circumstances and outlining a needs-led Court Action Plan. Interviewing women within the custody cells allows justice workers to explain the court process and help alleviate any fears the women may have. Women are also given an opportunity to provide details of anyone and/or services to be contacted with updates on their current situation.

ADAPTING SERVICES



CO-LOCATION

Community justice partners are committed to providing people in the justice system with equitable and effective access to the services they need to move on in their lives.

A key method of enabling this is through the provision of co-located services. Meaning people can access several services in one location, reducing the time spent seeking help. Examples of this across Ayrshire include the co-location of Justice Social Work services with Financial Inclusion teams and Employability and Skills teams.

During the pandemic, justice services staff were based within a local Ayrshire primary school hub which provided food and clothing banks, amongst other support services. This increased the opportunity to engage directly with people who use services within their own communities and assist wherever possible.



ACCESS TO HOUSING

We want to ensure that people returning to Ayrshire after serving a custodial sentence have a safe and comfortable home to return to. The impact of Covid-19 resulted in several changes being made to the way housing was provided to people returning to Ayrshire after serving a custodial sentence. Homeless interviews are now held virtually, six weeks prior to liberation. Resulting in reduced time in temporary accommodation and increasing the possibility of the offer of a permanent tenancy, which contributes towards reducing reoffending.

The completion of homeless applications at the earliest opportunity allows for early interventions to take place, with accelerated housing options discussions and future planning prior to release. Discussions throughout the homeless application process focus on perceived barriers, emotional and physical needs, and realistic expectations prior to any offer of housing, allowing for effective interventions to be put in place, increasing the chances of sustaining the tenancy.

PARTNERSHIP RESPONSE TO COVID-19

SERVICE UPDATES



During the lockdown period, organisations and teams had to change the way they delivered services. Many premises had to close, so alternative ways of contacting services became even more important. To support partners working directly with service-users, a list of service delivery updates was created - providing up-to-date service delivery information and contact details for over 65 separate services/organisations.

This information enabled practitioners to support individuals to access services during the lockdown periods and were positively received by many partners, who commented on the usefulness of the information contained in the updates.

Partners recognised the need to ensure that women were aware that specialist health services were still available during lockdown periods. Our local NHS Health Improvement Team developed resources for agencies specifically engaging with women in the justice system. These resources provided information on how to access specialist services such as Sexual & Reproductive Health and Termination services. Ensuring equitable access to services is a key aim of community justice work.

Ensuring people are supported following liberation from prison is vitally important in our efforts to reduce reoffending and keeping our communities safe. People in prison are an extremely vulnerable population and will often experience multiple and complex health and social care needs. Continuity of care is essential so people are able to access the services they need and remain safe on release.

In April 2020 the Scottish Government announced they would be using powers within the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 to enable the early release of a limited number of short-term sentenced individuals. To improve information sharing and collaborative working across services, a pan-Ayrshire multi-agency Early Release Planning Group was established with representation from a range of statutory and third sector partners.

This helped to ensure people leaving prison were able to access housing, apply for benefits, receive drug and alcohol support, and receive the support they required. Meeting as a group aided with the planning of releases and enabled connections to be made to strengthen the support provided to individuals.



EARLY RELEASE PLANNING

SUPPORTING RESETTLEMENT

Liberation from prison and resettlement into our communities is a vitally important time for individuals. Community Justice Partners want to ensure that people are well supported during this period, not only with essential needs, but making sure people feel welcome, valued, and connected to their communities.

Justice Social Work teams across Ayrshire produced liberation bags to support individuals, containing a range of useful items including toiletries, sanitary products, household cleaning products, puzzle book and pen, towels, bedding, a digital radio, and a mobile phone. This initiative helped to promote social inclusion and to reduce social isolation amongst Justice service users throughout Ayrshire.

Although unable to meet in person, Ayrshire's three justice service user involvement groups Making a Difference (MAD), People's Involvement Networking Group (PING) and Community Voices Network (CVN), remained active throughout the lockdown periods. E-mail a prisoner was utilised to contact individuals approaching liberation to offer support and connection. In the community, the groups met virtually where possible and employed a range of methods to engage with group members including a regular newsletter and activity booklet. A series of cooking challenges proved extremely popular, with members being provided with all the required ingredients and encouraged to cook along at home before sharing a photograph of their finished meal on social media.

"It's given me the help to be able to cope with the lockdown"

"My favourite was the relaxation guide. It really calmed me."

For many individuals, liberation from prison was the first time they had experienced lockdown restrictions in the community. In our local prison HMP Kilmarnock, a range of throughcare support services worked collectively to ensure people leaving a custodial sentence had immediate access to hand sanitiser, face masks, travel information, Covid-19 advice and contact details for key services.



TIME TO REFLECT

As a partnership, we want to ensure we have the right structures and arrangements in place. We have been taking some time to reflect on how we operate and considering how we can improve and work together to deliver better community justice outcomes across Ayrshire.



REVIEWING THE PARTNERSHIP

LISTENING TO PEOPLE'S VIEWS



We have introduced 'Have Your Say' sessions with people with convictions across Ayrshire, serving community sentences and in prison. The purpose of these sessions is to listen to the experiences of people who use our services and hear about their journey through the justice system. We want to enable them to tell us what they think needs to change and how we can better help them, with things like: Training and Employment; Housing; Addiction issues; and Mental Health and Wellbeing.

We want to listen to the people who access our services to help us to provide the right help at the right time, to help them feel part of their community and reduce reoffending in Ayrshire.

The 'Have Your Say' sessions have proved extremely popular and have resulted in a rich range of views, opinions and thoughts being gathered, which will be used to inform our Strategic Needs and Strengths Assessment and new Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan. Almost all of those asked said these sessions improved their understanding of community justice and it made them feel more involved in community justice in Ayrshire. Almost all said they would be keen to participate in future sessions and this was a positive move on behalf of partners. Further sessions are planned throughout 2021.

We understand the importance of including the views of staff and partners involved in the delivery of community justice in the work of the partnership. To guide and support a range of our work we circulated staff and partner surveys covering areas including:

- Partnership strengths and weaknesses
- If we have the right people round the table
- Impact of Covid-19
- Awareness of and involvement with community justice
- Contribution towards achieving community justice outcomes

Partners told us about what they thought has worked well so far and discussed areas where we could make improvements. Feedback from these surveys will be considered and used to shape the future direction of the Community Justice Ayrshire Partnership and included in the review of Operating Arrangements around Community Justice in Ayrshire.



STAFF AND PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

REVIEWING THE PARTNERSHIP - GOVERNANCE

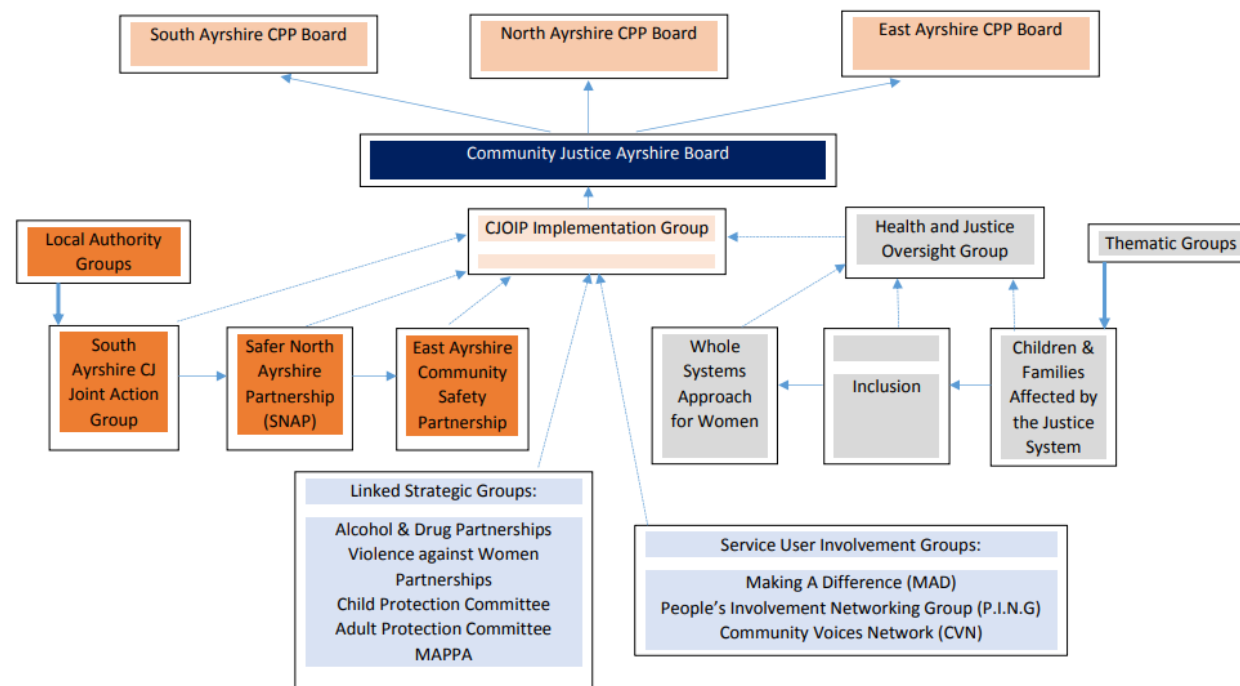
Effective leadership and suitable governance arrangements are vital in enabling community justice partners to work together and achieve shared outcomes.

We want our partnership to be productive and have the best possible structures in place to be successful in reducing reoffending across Ayrshire.

We have listened to partners and are reviewing current arrangements to develop a proposed new structure for the partnership.

In doing this we aim to:

- Build on existing success and ensure that those who have a stake in community justice feel part of our partnership
- Improve links with other strategic groups relating to community justice, through better alignment within Community Planning arrangements
- Retain a Pan-Ayrshire approach, whilst enabling specific local issues to be addressed in a more targeted way
- Allow for better accountability / reporting of outcomes and oversight of the work of the Partnership by the Board and each Statutory Partner





communityjusticeayrshire@north-ayrshire.gov.uk



www.communityjusticeayrshire.org.uk