

# Community Justice Ayrshire Partnership

## Newsletter No 3 – Winter 2025/26



### Latest News

The Partnership held a second 'Positive Pathways' event in September within HMP Kilmarnock. These events provide men in prison the opportunity to speak directly to employability support agencies, local employers, training providers, and volunteering organisations about opportunities available to them upon liberation. 16 stallholders from a range of agencies and employers took part and over 70 men in custody attended on the day. Men were keen to discuss a range of information including "could they work with a criminal record", "information on courses", "volunteering opportunities", and "how to link into the service when out". It was also encouraging to hear from one stall holder who has attended both events say that following the previous event in January they have had follow up in the community from individuals they spoke to at that event.



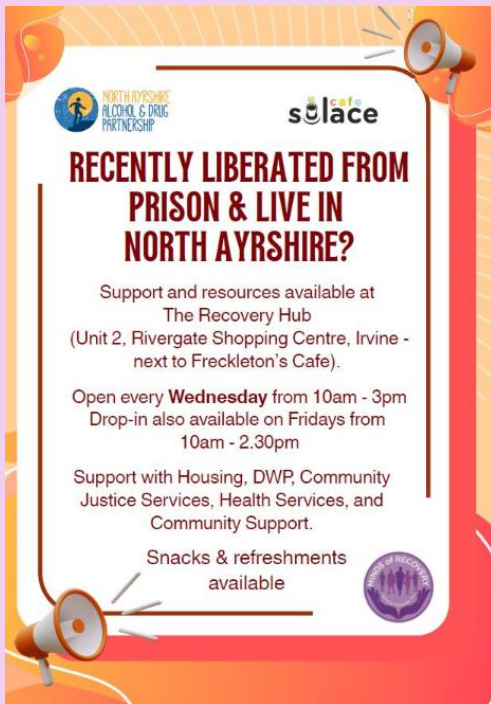
In August, the Diversion, Intervention and Alternatives to Custody delivery group, along with additional partners took part in a focussed session around Diversion from Prosecution. Partners used a range of data to pose and answer a selection of questions in relation to current delivery and identify any future actions partners think should be progressed. One of the outcomes from the day was to reinstate the Pan-Ayrshire Diversion Forum where partners can share good practice and discuss issues locally.



The first three sessions in our series of webinars took place in September to December where a total of 74 individuals attended. These sessions covered the topics of community sentences, myth-busting, and leaving prison. Feedback was sought and all responders agreed the webinars increased their knowledge and awareness. Partners will also use this feedback to shape the content for future webinars. The CJAP

Team remain available to attend team meetings, and development days to provide inputs. If you would like something delivered for your team or service / organisation, please contact the team.

Recent reflections and partner feedback have highlighted opportunities to refine the partnership structure — particularly regarding the format, purpose, and naming of our main partnership meeting. Following discussions with partners and the Chair, the decision was taken to rename the CJAP Board to the CJAP Leadership Group. This change was accompanied by the agreement on three core responsibilities: 1) Maintaining strategic oversight of the partnership's work, 2) Ensuring progress on the Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (CJOIP) and 3) Building partner understanding, capacity, and contribution to the community justice agenda. These changes are being made to better support strategic leadership, enhance engagement, and maximise the value of everyone's time.



North Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership in conjunction with Café Solace and MINDS of Recovery are providing support to people residing in North Ayrshire who have recently been liberated from prison. A need was highlighted due to people slipping through the gaps during transition out of prison. After discussions with CJAP, a pilot was established in August for six months, running one day per week from the Youth Legacy Hub in Rivergate Centre, Irvine, with the view to developing as required and responding to the needs of people attending.

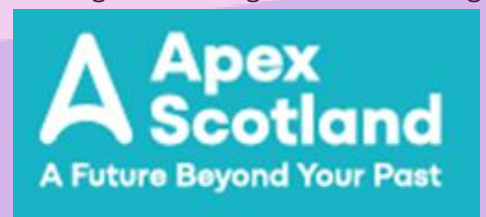
CJAP have provided a small pot of funding to support with starter packs for people in need. Staff are providing support to link people in with DWP, Housing and Primary Care, as well as ensuring holistic needs are met through the community pharmacist who also attends. Upside Community Mentors attend the hub along with Recovery Development workers.

Engagement is increasing and some people who have engaged have went on to volunteer with Café Solace and links are also made with recovery communities in North Ayrshire.

Compass in South Ayrshire have supported many people leaving prison since it opened, and discussions are ongoing about how the CJAP could support work in East Ayrshire for those leaving prison.

The Partnership previously worked with the national organisation 'Recruit with Conviction' to deliver a range of training sessions looking at how best to support someone with convictions to apply for work, an outline of the changes in the Management of Offenders Act, and what that means for spent/unspent disclosure periods for convictions. Partners felt refresher sessions would be helpful as a way of ensuring the learning from that training will continue in Ayrshire.

Sessions have been delivered by Apex Scotland for practitioners (enabling them to provide basic support and guidance to those they support), for employers/businesses (giving them robust guidance on processes and good practice), and shorter overview courses have also been delivered. To date, 10 sessions have taken place, with a further 4 to come in the next couple of months – if you'd like to enquire about a place on the training please email [cgilsenan@north-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:cgilsenan@north-ayrshire.gov.uk).



In April 2024, Sacro launched a new service in Saltcoats, funded by the Violence Reduction Unit, aimed at reducing re-entries into custody. The service placed a worker in the custody suite on Sunday afternoons to engage with individuals about their immediate needs, with follow-up support available at court on Monday mornings through signposting to relevant services. Although funding for the service concluded in January 2026, it has supported a significant number of people, and the learning gained—particularly around individuals' needs—will inform future developments in arrest referral work. Police custody staff continue to make Arrest Referrals where appropriate and increasing the number of referrals to support agencies remains a key priority for the Partnership.

## National Updates

In November, MSPs voted to approve another period of emergency early release from prison with the number of people in prison in Scotland reaching a record high. This means that some short-term prisoners (serving under four years) due to be released within six months could be released earlier than their current release date. This will be done between November 2025 to April 2026. Emergency early release is deemed necessary to ensure the prison service can maintain the security and good order of prisons and the health, safety and welfare of prisoners and prison staff. This is only a short-term solution and Community Justice Partnerships must strengthen alternatives to custody and reduce reoffending to achieve long-term change.

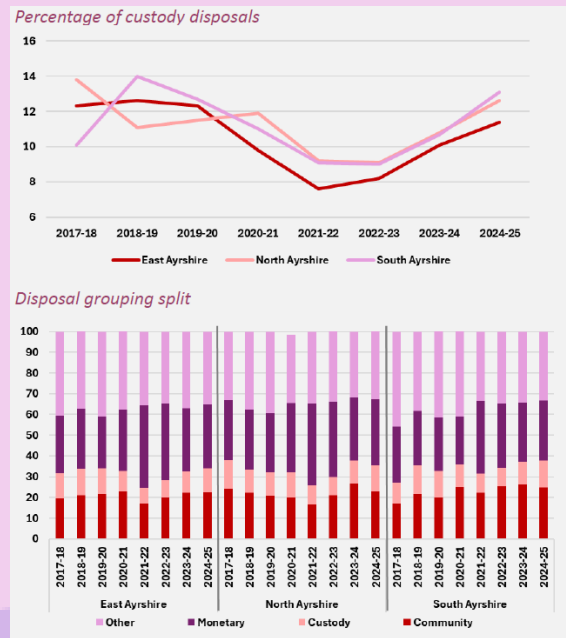


**Did you know** At our recent myth busting webinar we talked about how evidence shows that community sentences are more effective at reducing reoffending than short term prison sentences. The average cost per prisoner place is over **£47,000**, while the most used community sentence, a community payback order, costs around **£5,000**. Even though the reconviction rates for short term prison sentences are much higher than reconviction rates for community-based disposals.

## Performance and Reporting

The Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (CJOIP) was launched in April 2024 (read the plan in full [here](#)). In October, the Leadership Group received their third 6-monthly update which detailed progress of the deliverables which showed 70% sitting green/completed, 11% amber and 8% red, with 11% on hold.

Following the submission of the CJAP statutory annual return to Community Justice Scotland, along with Part 1 of our public-facing annual report in the summer, Part 2 was published in December. The annual return to CJS and Part 1 of the report outline the activity undertaken throughout the year to support the priorities of the national strategy. Part 2 focuses on local and national indicator data, assessing our progress in achieving the outcomes set for the partnership. All reports can be accessed [here](#).



## Up Next

- Following a feedback session with men undertaking unpaid work in South Ayrshire in the summer, a session with women will take place in February. This feedback will help strengthen the offer by highlighting if/how wider services can better support people serving sentences in the community, and by looking at the use of 'Other Activity' (structured, purposeful activities that are not Unpaid Work placements but still contribute to the individual's rehabilitation and community integration).
- Similar to the focussed session on Diversion which took place in August, partners will take a targeted look at Arrest Referral in the summer of 2026 to explore ways to strengthen the offer.
- An initial meeting took place in January to review the liberation information packs provided to men leaving HMP Kilmarlock. This is an opportunity to refresh and add to the information given to ensure those leaving prison have all they need.
- Planning continues following the first meetings of two new groups: following Justice Social Work court teams raising concerns around people being released from court with no means to travel home, or where people have been released from remand when they had expected to be returned to custody, the first meeting of a 'Safeguarding from custody' working group was held. There was also an initial meeting of a pan-Ayrshire forum looking specifically at women involved in the justice system.
- Planning is in progress for two new rounds of partner training: one delivered by Families Outside to support practitioners in better understanding the impact of imprisonment on children and families, and another focused on enhancing support for neurodivergent individuals involved in the justice system.
- Building on our webinar series, work is now underway to develop a suite of 7-minute briefings designed to increase partner knowledge and awareness of a range of community justice topics and priorities.

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