



***Working together to make a real difference***

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## **Orkney Community Justice Partnership - Executive Summary – Annual Report 2023/24**

### **Foreword**

Orkney Community Justice Partnership (OCJP) is pleased to present the third annual local report, extracted from the return provided to Community Justice Scotland (CJS), each September, as part of the reporting cycle. This ensures that locally we comply with statutory responsibilities under Sect 23 of the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016.

Community Justice (CJ) was revamped in 2016, with a move to more local arrangements. It remains a collection of individuals, agencies and services that work together to support, manage and supervise people who have committed offences, from the point of arrest, through prosecution, community disposal or custody and alternatives to these, until they are reintegrated into the community. CJ is about smart justice, where people who have broken the law are held to account and supported to reconnect and contribute to their communities. Such actions are captured within the annual return to CJS, which in turn informs the Community Justice Outcome Activity Across Scotland Annual Report, published in March the following year.

Further strategic developments took place in the reporting year 2023-24, namely publication of a new [Community Justice Performance Framework](#) along with accompanying [Guidance and Technical notes \(Version 2\)](#) and the [Community Justice Improvement Tool](#). These complement the revised [National Strategy](#). This reporting year has been one of transition with the move to a new approach focusing on four national aims, 13 priority actions, ten national indicators and nine nationally determined outcomes. With the local community justice outcome plan (CJOIP) being developed it saw a partial alignment of actions and activities locally, which will continue to be refined in the coming years to ensure we maximise outcomes and benefits locally through a community justice lens.

### **Background**

Local communities and the third sector remain a vital part of CJ, which aims to prevent and reduce reoffending and the harm that it causes, to promote desistance, social inclusion, and citizenship. Partners work collaboratively to achieve the aims and outcomes set out in this report with self-evaluation a consideration to ensure improvement year on year and help focus partnership activity on areas of highest priority. An assessment is provided on whether each action has been met or not.

The content of the original report on CJ outcomes and improvements in our area was agreed by the OCJP and was then shared with our Community Planning Partnership through our local accountability arrangements. The Community Justice (Scotland) Act, 2016 placed a duty on CJ statutory partners to produce a Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (CJOIP). Local activity is then undertaken, and outcomes measured and reported upon.

### **CJS Partnership Recommendations**

During the last reporting cycle (2022/23), the CJS [Annual Report](#) made only one recommendation, namely that CJS, the Scottish Government and all partners work together to ensure that community

justice across the public and third sectors is resourced in a way that matches the policy ambition of [The Vision for Justice in Scotland](#). This has been a consideration of the local partnership in Orkney, which continues to have strong synergy in working relationships.

## **Annual Report Summary 2023/24**

A copy of the Orkney Outcome Activity Annual Report 2023/24 (Appendix 1), which was submitted to CJS is available for members information, however as agreed previously with the IJB a summarised version is provided. There has been no material change to local governance, however a review and refresh was undertaken of the Terms of Reference, with post holders reconfirmed in role. CJS sought contributions from partners about Challenges or Negatives as well as identifying Positives or Opportunities which presented throughout the reporting year, with a summary below.

### **Challenges/Negatives**

As with previous years, and indicative of remote and rural communities, it can be harder to access appropriate support services, which were more readily available in larger urban local authority areas, so geography remained a challenge. Addiction and mental health support in greatest demand. Some partners continued to see heightened need for their services, most acutely felt amongst some third sector representatives. Partners reported seeing clients presenting with more complex needs with some reporting challenges around available accommodation, which impacted on their ability to support some individuals. Uncertainty around funding remained a concern, a view shared by many.

Lived experiences are central to developing community justice, however smaller communities made it difficult to report on such experiences due to concerns of identifying those who had been supported.

Furthermore, a challenge with ongoing local media reporting, which was felt to be over intrusive, particularly around sexual violence cases. The recognised impact was causing survivors to vocalise an unwillingness to report instances to police. Not because of the investigative and subsequent court process but rather local media scrutiny that was the norm and how they felt this would be reported in the local newspaper. Moreover, the impact on defendants or those convicted of an offence and how they were reported upon in the media. Leading to challenges further down the line when it came to employment opportunities. This was a topic of discussion amongst partners not only at the OCJP, however it was reflected across other partnerships and escalated for executive level consideration.

Cost to families travelling to prison remained a challenge for Orkney, as with other remote communities. Work ongoing with Families Outside and Scottish Government including the submission of a letter to three of the cabinet secretaries with joint responsibility, which OCJP endorsed.

Staffing across the partnership was highlighted, with police reporting the reduction of the full time Preventions and Interventions Officer role to a part time position on account of fiscal pressures. Other partners highlighted similar challenges.

Justice services experienced delays in accessing the right support, at the right time on occasions for some clients, which affected engagement with their community orders. This was further impacted with the requirement for a GP referral, rather than a self or justice social worker direct referral to the mental health team. However, once access gained to support services locally, these were found to offer consistent beneficial support.

A number of partner agencies reported ongoing challenges around annual funding arrangements. This did not lend itself to sustained and settled activity with the lack of certainty having an impact on what could be achieved, and longer-term visions being realised. Specifically Local Employability Partnership (LEP) and, No One Left Behind activity, experienced significant challenges at all levels of provision including planning and service delivery due to delays in OIC receiving the grant offer letter from Scottish Government. Effectively partners had to mobilise, deliver and report on an annual allocation within an eight-month period.

### **Positives / Opportunities**

Following on from last year's challenges around staffing on the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP), positive recruitment and staff returning has seen greater activity in this area, which has allowed for the development of local initiatives to support individuals, families and the wider community affected by alcohol and / or drug dependency and related harms.

The continuation of the court user group, after it was reinstated last year, facilitated close discussion amongst prosecutors, sentencers, defenders and justice services to hear justice experiences from support services working with those individuals.

Partners continued to remain engaged with community justice in Orkney with strong attendance at partnership meetings. A hybrid style of meeting is now well established, which allows partners to meet in person whilst still affording the opportunity for meaningful online attendance. Partners also report still being able to engage nationally with virtual invitations and welcome the continuation of this. This was highlighted to CJS to ensure the voice of remote and rural communities was heard and to encourage continuation of this good practice. **The benefit allow a levelling up for remote and rural communities to remain engaged nationally on a more regular basis.**

Due to the small geographical size of the local authority area this engendered a close working relationship amongst the partners, which helped the network build on last year's progress by maximising access to limited resources. In addition to the Creative Change Collective (formerly Street Cones), Grace Chocolates and RCA Trust inputs on gambling, further work and presentations have been provided to networks in Orkney by the OCJP with partners' support. Specifically inputs from Families Outside amplifying the voice of the child where a relative was navigating the justice system and considerations for families responding to imprisonment of a family member. Further work has been developed with Fast Forward on gambling and gaming addiction. In addition, 'Other Activities' in community sentences have been improved and can count against 'hours awarded'. These have enhanced learning and employability skills as well as safety advice and addiction support. All with the intention of aiding community reintegration and reducing reoffending with structured holistic support.

As part of self-evaluation the Chair introduced a new standing agenda item to encourage partners to report on matters that have gone well in their respective organisations since the last meeting. This encouraged attendees to think more of how they approach their work through a community justice lens, with the added benefit of capturing information throughout the year rather than a retrospective memory trawl whenever the annual return is called for.

## **Priority Actions from CJS Strategy**

**Priority Action One** - *Enhance intervention at the earliest opportunity by ensuring greater consistency, confidence in and awareness of services which support the use of direct measures and diversion from prosecution.*

As Scotland's smallest local authority our numbers are lower than mainland authority areas by some considerable distance. In some instances, this is beneficial as a community which sees low levels of crime and offending rates. However, this also translates to fewer examples throughout the priority actions. Additionally, there are less support services available, with geographical barriers a challenge to accessing the right support in a timely manner. However, Orkney benefits from strong working relationships across the CJP, particularly with third sector engagement and support.

Local police, as key stakeholders in the partnership make use of direct measures to reduce criminalisation. However, where a standard police report is submitted to Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service consideration for diversion rests solely with them. A close working relationship exists between the local procurator fiscal and the justice services manager, which ensures a smooth pathway for discussion and onward allocation, where appropriate.

During the relevant reporting period there have been diversion instances considered locally, all of which resulted in individuals successfully completing diversionary activities. This included addiction support and mental health mentoring to enhance individual resilience and self-worth. The development of employment opportunities and further education also strengthened the individuals outlook and future opportunities, which have contributed to reduced likelihood of reoffending.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) also provided excellent support, guidance and mentoring in relation to fire raising offences. Their expertise and experience allowed for a greater understanding of the potential consequences of such offences, which significantly reduced recidivism. Diversion also assisted an individual to enter further education and led onto throughcare/aftercare support with a positive destination. Furthermore, a strong working relationship has been developed between the justice services team and the local SFRS community safety advocate with safety inputs delivered

during community orders. During which there have been notable self-reflections from individuals convicted of driving offences and the consequences of their actions after some of these inputs.

Partially met, however Diversion remains a focus for partnership activity.

**Priority Action Two** - *Improve the identification of underlying needs and the delivery of support following arrest by ensuring the provision of person-centred care within police custody and building upon referral opportunities to services including substance use and mental health services.*

Due to the remote nature of the local authority area, in relation to the primary regional custody centre in Inverness, any custody staffing requirements for Orkney utilises local officers, who whilst trained, are not full-time custody officers. Oversight is provided by Inverness Custody Centre, however there is no access to the custody referral programme and any medical support requires to be sought locally from NHS Orkney. Signposting for support, both local and national, is facilitated by local police who continue to distribute the Z-fold cards, which direct service users to available support services.

In addition, police remain strong referral partners on the Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) pathway, accounting for approximately 95% of referrals. The service provider, Orkney Blide Trust and police have a productive relationship, with all officers trained in the referral process. Increased use of DBI diverts relevant clients away from criminal justice intervention through a more holistic, compassionate community-based support. It is recognised that not all DBI referrals relate to those who had touched the justice system.

As detailed above the local ADP has resumed local intervention work with a renewed focus around Alcohol Brief Intervention activities.

Partially met.

**Priority Action Three** - *Support the use of robust alternatives to remand by ensuring high quality bail services are consistently available and delivered effectively.*

During the reporting period there has been an increase in the number of assessments of individuals to test their suitability for bail, with a subsequent increase in cases commenced and completed. This is a positive direction of travel with greater use of high-quality bail services an available option rather than reliance on Remand (into custody).

An assessment of monthly custody figures for Orkney, issued by Scottish Prison Service (SPS) shows that the year (April 2023) began with six male prisoners, serving a mixture of Remand, Short-Term Prison (STP) sentences and Long-Term Prison (LTP) sentences. This rose throughout the year culminating in March 2024, with ten male prisoners. The rise in prisoner numbers can be attributed to several Solemn prosecutions which, in some instances had been delayed because of COVID-19, being concluded. The focus remains on reducing figures for Remand and STP, where suitable for bail monitoring or a community sentence. Most Orkney prisoners are now serving LTP sentences.

In regard to support for those on bail or undertaking a community sentence the following agencies and support groups form part of the OCJP and contribute as follows:

**Relationship Scotland Orkney** – provide opportunities to individuals who have been bailed away from the family unit, which is usually a consequence of the particular offence. Where appropriate, they will facilitate contact between a ‘bailed’ parent and children to help maintain that vital relationship. Addiction support also available.

**Right There** - provide support to individuals who are accommodated within local authority Young Persons Supported Accommodation facilities specifically catering for 16 – 25-year-olds who are homeless, some of whom are navigating the justice system. Addiction support also available.

**Orkney Blide Trust** - offers mental health, addiction and therapeutic support to members. Referrals made from criminal justice, police, social work, health and other agencies where a risk assessment is undertaken, and support offered. Several members have touched the justice system and receive vital support from this key third sector mental health charity. The Blide offers a safe space as well as a community law clinic. They also facilitate the DBI process.

**ODAT** – Orkney Drugs and Alcohol Team – NHS led Self-Management and Recovery Trained (SMART) support meeting where clients are supported with addiction advice including CPN help.

**Learning Link** – clients undertaking a community sentence can be supported and provided with free SQA accredited modules to enhance English/Maths/digital skills/employment advice and CV writing.

**Families Outside** - national charity in Scotland working exclusively on behalf of families affected by imprisonment. Support provided to families in Orkney along with local training to professionals around wider impacts of imprisonment for families. The main issues for families of those imprisoned are reflected in the national research "[Paying the Price](#)" and "[No Easy Journey](#)". This has highlighted the disproportionate impact the cost of imprisonment has on those living on islands. Training also delivered in person to professionals on upholding children's rights when impacted by imprisonment.

**Grace Chocolates** – a social enterprise supporting women that have experienced the justice system, and who are looking to make positive changes in their lives. They provide a combination of online mentoring and wellbeing support in addition to in-person workshops to help women being released from prison to reintegrate back into communities.

**Fast Forward/RCA Trust** – free to attend in-person and online session arranged by the OCJP for professionals in the community to raise awareness around gambling and gaming addiction, facilitated by Fast Forward and RCA Trust.

**Justice Services** - small team of social workers, community payback supervisors and community justice coordinator enjoy a close working relationship with the above local agencies and refer clients where appropriate through agreed pathways.

Partially met with further focus anticipated in this area.

**Priority Action Four** - *Strengthen options for safe and supported management in the community by increasing and widening the use of electronic monitoring technologies.*

Prior to this reporting year (2023/24) electronic monitoring had not been a consideration in Orkney, however developments in partnership working have provided an opportunity to consider this disposal. Consequently, in addition to any bail supervision report submission electronic monitoring (EM) is now a consideration in every instance, outlining this additional option.

Partially met with further focus anticipated in this area.

**Priority Action Five** - *Ensure that those given community sentences are supervised and supported appropriately to protect the public, promote desistance from offending and enable rehabilitation by delivering high quality, consistently available, trauma-informed services and programmes.*

Some of the responses in Priority Action Three should be considered as part of this response.

Orkney had limited opportunities to work with perpetrators of domestic violence other than one to one interaction between clients and their criminal justice social worker during supervision. This developed further engagement with Caledonian and Advance – D programmes. These have been long established and provided parallel support programmes to families and survivors. For sexual offenders one to one engagement took place with their criminal justice social worker during supervision making use of Moving Forward, Making Changes (MFMC) programme.

Excellent work undertaken by the small justice services team supporting those who touched the justice system and assisted them to reintegrate back into the community. Exit questionnaires or voices of the client reports captured views of those undertaking community sentences and offered valuable insight and lived experiences to allow the justice services team to shape future service delivery to maximum effect. 52 separate responses were recorded from clients who undertook some form of community sentence; only two clients did not feel their experience was a positive one. One client did not feel it would reduce their chances of reoffending. Conversely, many of the clients, who provided their voice, 96%, felt the experience was positive, where they acknowledged new practical and social skills learned, existing skills developed, and support provided to them from the justice team. Equipping some with better coping mechanisms. Again, the vast majority acknowledged the community sentence allowed them to give something back to the area in which they had offended and helped some of them come to terms with the consequences of their actions.

Lived experience quotes:

- Many challenges in life however improvements experienced with alcohol, drugs, housing and mental health; now sober from drink and drugs.
- Become a far better version of themselves thanks to the support; previously a "lost cause"
- Introduced to the proper use of tools – now undertaking an apprenticeship.
- Self-reflection on actions and behaviours which led to the offending in the first place.

- Improvements in areas which had caused difficulty previously– confidence/coping skills/ education /training.
- Support from the supervisor has me -" getting along with complete strangers, not usually something I'm very good at".

Fully met, however work continues.

**Priority Action Six - *Ensure restorative justice is available across Scotland to all those who wish to access it by promoting and supporting the appropriate and safe provision of available services.***

Restorative Justice (RJ) was not available during the reporting period in Orkney. However, work undertaken to develop a pathway and discussions at an advanced stage with a RJ provider to develop a local process. Very much a challenge to progression was uncertainty around funding which would be provided to facilitate RJ, with an announcement still awaited from Scottish Government.

Not met and is a priority for the subsequent reporting period.

**Priority Action Seven - *Enhance individuals' access to health and social care and continuity of care following release from prison by improving the sharing of information and partnership-working between relevant partners.***

Geographical terrain for remote and rural communities presented challenges around access to services, however it has also offered a close-knit, well-connected partnerships where accessing services could be achieved. This was enhanced with the refreshment of the information sharing protocol between OIC and SPS to allow for onward sharing of data on prisoners released. These are categorised as statutory (supervisory conditions with a justice social worker) or standard (no conditions) release.

A newly developed prisoner release pathway allowed voluntary throughcare (VTC) support to be coordinated through the local community justice coordinator role for standard releases to complement the statutory release process. Liaison links enhanced with prisons to inform discussions in advance of any release and help facilitate better links to services to support successful integration back into communities and reduce reoffending. Apex as the lead VTC provider is crucial to supporting this.

Partially met.

**Priority Action Eight - *Ensure that the housing needs of individuals in prison are addressed consistently and at an early stage by fully implementing and embedding the Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE) standards across all local authority areas.***

Orkney, like most local authorities in Scotland, experienced challenges around housing provision. As alluded to earlier in this report the number of prisoners returning to Orkney is low. Housing providers remain committed to delivering the SHORE standards and this remains a consideration as part of the prisoner release pathway discussed above. During the relevant time frame no homeless application was made from any prisoner who was being released. In recent years this has usually seen only one application per year, which has been managed effectively locally.

Fully met, however remains under consideration to ensure continued compliance.

**Priority Action Nine - *Enhance individual's life skills and readiness for employment by ensuring increased access to employability support through effective education, learning, training, career services and relevant benefit services.***

Strong links exist between the OCJP and LEP with key individuals represented on both Partnerships. This is in recognition of the value that employment can have on supporting a justice experienced individual to not reoffend. Community Learning, Development and Employability (CLDE) teams and justice services team have been working to strengthen relationships and work together to support individuals with experience of criminal/community justice to access relevant learning/training and employment opportunities.

During 2023/24, 16 individuals, who disclosed having criminal convictions, engaged with the CLDE team. Of those ten left the service and six continued to work with the team. Of the ten who left the service, five entered employment opportunities and one was supported through the employer recruitment incentive scheme. In addition, three people gained recognised qualifications to support

them on the employment journey. Discussion also took place with local businesses to encourage thinking to develop around employment opportunities for those with convictions.

Partially met, however remains an area of focus.

**Priority Action Ten** - *Enhance community integration and support by increasing and promoting greater use of voluntary throughcare and third sector services.*

Please also consider the response to Priority Action Seven.

During this reporting period less than five people have been supported with VTC, delivered either by Apex under New Routes or as part of local authority throughcare support. The former took advantage of the new prisoner release pathway, which has been positive thus far. Cognisant of the low numbers of prisoners being released back to Orkney. It should be acknowledged that a strong working relationship exists between the OCJP and Apex, a third sector provider of VTC. In addition to regular contributions at partnership meetings they are also key to the local prisoner release pathway and engage well with statutory and third sector partners to join up support.

Partially met, however remains an area of focus.

**Priority Action Eleven** - *Deliver improved community justice outcomes by ensuring that effective leadership and governance arrangements are in place and working well, collaborating with partners and planning strategically.*

During this reporting period the CJOIP was under development and as a consequence alignment will not fully take place until next year, however actions and initiatives have begun to be implemented.

Furthermore, justice services in the spirit of coproduction and partnership working provided funding support for the development of web design for a Safer Orkney application. This was under the auspices of the Orkney Partnership for Action Against Gender Based Violence and Abuse, which tackles gender-based violence against women and girls and had been unable to fund the venture.

As alluded to earlier, Self-Evaluation discussions have taken place with the Care Inspectorate and processes identified for further consideration to support quality improvement in these areas. Under the direction of the Chair the inclusion of a standing agenda item will assist this process to ensure timely capture of good practice across the Partnership.

Partially met.

**Priority Action Twelve** - *Enhance partnership planning and implementation by ensuring the voices of victims of crime, survivors, those with lived experience and their families are effectively incorporated and embedded.*

The voice of lived experiences in small communities can be challenging to air, particularly in a public facing document as there is always the potential to inadvertently identify an individual. Exit interviews and questionnaires for those who undertake a community sentence help to understand the views of those who have experience of the justice system. These interviews form part of Self Evaluation activity.

Moreover, local partner organisations who support victims, survivors and justice experienced individuals and key stakeholders, particularly client facing justice services workers. They play their part by articulating on behalf of their service users and wider support groups on their experiences of the justice system, including the punishment element.

Partially met.

**Priority Action Thirteen** - *Support integration and reduce stigma by ensuring the community and workforce have an improved understanding of and confidence in community justice.*

The Chair of the OCJP, as a senior leader within OIC, sits across numerous partnerships and boards in Orkney for both the local authority and the NHS. This provides great reach to advocate for the work of community justice. The local coordinator for community justice in Orkney has increased visibility and presence of community justice.

Furthermore, a local media campaign displaying posters provided by CJS, which explained community justice, with individuals advocating the valuable impact that it had on their lives. Additionally, several training events, sponsored and promoted by the OCJP, have been undertaken throughout Orkney offering free guidance and information to broaden understanding and awareness



amongst the local population about community justice. Furthermore, there has been a regular sharing of support services availability, particularly online support, across the wider Orkney care sector.

A page on OIC website, dedicated to community justice, remains available to access with regular updates uploaded for public consumption.

Partially met.

## **The Year Ahead**

- During the forthcoming years there will be an embedding of the new CJOIP along with a proposed annual action plan, which should help direct partner activity, with a focus upon SMART objectives. This will assist partners to consider their role, through an adjusted community justice lens, reflecting the new strategy and performance framework.
- In parallel there is a planned self-evaluation project to ensure opportunities to improve and develop the services we deliver are identified and exploited to maximum benefit.
- Finance remains a barrier, or risk, to the partnership, with component and contributing partners reporting challenges around funding arrangements and the difficulties or uncertainties which they come with due to annual funding settlements versus multiyear planning initiatives. These present hurdles to long-term sustainability around some initiatives or support processes.
- Activity in train considering the development of a perpetrator programme for those convicted of domestic abuse in addition to ensuring the availability of restorative justice in Orkney. Both projects however are reliant upon finance, within a fiscally challenging time frame, which is also a risk.
- As with every forecast there remains a desire to enhance or increase support to those who are navigating the justice system, with a view to reintegrating them back into a community. Employment and upskilling those who undertake a community sentence, through 'Other Activities' remains a focus for the justice team as this can help reduce the chance of reoffending where self-worth or self-belief can be restored. In addition, developing opportunities for unpaid work with local employers, where there is potential for employment post sentence. Diversion from prosecution will continue to be an area that we look to develop.
- It has also been recognised that the number of women clients entering justice services is on the increase, so development of additional women's support services is an aspiration. A good gender balance has been struck within the justice team, which is a beneficial first step.
- Finally, public reassurance and understanding of community justice will continue to be a focus for the partnership. The local community need to have faith in the process and see tangible benefits to this policy, where it is appropriate to do so.

Stephen Brown – Chief Officer – Chair Orkney Community Justice Partnership  
October 2024