



Highland Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan 2024 - 29





Foreword

As the Independent chair of the Community Justice Partnership for Highland it is my pleasure to present our Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan, 2024 to 2029, on behalf of all our local justice and community partners. This plan represents our commitment to delivering improved community justice services, across the Highlands, in a way that meets the needs of individuals and communities.

In 2022 the Scottish Government published the 'National Strategy for Community Justice' (2022). The strategy highlights four 'National Aims' and thirteen 'National Indicators' that are essential in improving the community justice landscape across a national and local context. Work has been carried out over the past 3 years in relation to a Strategic Needs and Strengths Assessment and development work to ensure our new CJOIP meets the expectations of the national framework whilst delivering to meet the needs of local communities.

Community justice is principally about organisations working together to ensure that people who have offended are held to account, address the underlying causes of their behaviour, and pay back to the community where appropriate. By promoting safe and effective alternative options to short term prison sentences, where appropriate, we will encourage rehabilitation, reduce reoffending and allow those who have offended to reconnect and contribute to their communities.

The Highlands are by far the largest Community Justice Partnership, covering a huge and diverse area which bring many challenges. We have a long and established history of working collaboratively with communities and as a partnership we believe we can deliver on this ambitious plan and continue to reduce reoffending and tackling the issues that bring people into the Criminal Justice system.

Ross MacKillop, Chair of the Highland Community Justice Partnership

Contents

Foreword	1
Abbreviations and Acronyms	3
The Highland Community Justice Partnership	4
Membership of the Community Justice Partnership includes:.....	4
Governance:	4
Distribution:	4
Accountability locally:	4
The Highland Community Planning Partnership	5
Membership:.....	5
Development of the Plan/Participation Statement	5
Overview of the Highland Context	7
Equalities Statement.....	8
Overview of the Community Justice Improvement Plan.....	10
Keeping Me Safe	11
Helping Me To Avoid Offending	12
Helping Me To Realise My Potential	13
Appendix 1: Third Sector organisations involved in the compilation of the Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan.....	14

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CIP – Community Integration Plan
CJ – Community Justice
CJOIP – Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan
CJP – Community Justice Partnership
CJS – Community Justice Scotland
CJSW – Criminal Justice Social Work
Clink – Custody Link
COG – Chief Officers Group
COPFS – Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service
CPOs – Community Payback Orders
CPP – Community Planning Partnership
EM Bail – Electronic Monitoring Bail
HCJP – Highland Community Justice Partnership
HMP Inverness – His Majesty’s Prison Inverness
HOIP – Highland Outcomes Improvement Plan
HTSI – Highland Third Sector Interface
MAT Standards – Medically Assisted Treatment Standards
SNSA – Strategic Needs and Strengths Assessment
VAW – Violence Against Women (and girls)
VSS – Victim Support Scotland

The Highland Community Justice Partnership

The Highland Community Justice Partnership is a sub-group of the Highland Community Planning Partnership with a distinct role in the delivery and development of Community Justice in Highland.

Membership of the Community Justice Partnership includes:

- The Highland Council (1 Elected Member);
- Local Authority (Criminal Justice Social Work and Housing);
- Police Scotland;
- Scottish Prisons Service; (SPS)
- Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service; (COPFS)
- Scottish Courts & Tribunals Service; (SCTS)
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service; (SFRS)
- NHS Highland; (NHS)
- Skills Development Scotland; (SDS)
- Victim Support Scotland; (VSS)
- Highland Alcohol and Drug Partnership (HADP)
- Scottish Children's Reporters Office (SCRO)
- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)

Also, the Highland Third Sector representatives from the wider third sector - currently held by Apex Scotland, Families Outside and Rape and Sexual Assault Service Highland (RASASH). Highland Third Sector sit in attendance.

Governance:

The Community Planning Partnership in Highland have an overarching role in the governance and review of the Community Justice Plan, particularly around the outcomes, which are linked to the Highland Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017 - 2027.

The Community Planning Partnership are supported in their governance role by the Community Justice Partnership who are accountable for the development, implementation, operational delivery and review of the Community Justice Plan for Highland. They also have an ongoing role to consider the development of staff understanding and the use of leveraging resources between partners in order to achieve the outcomes set out within the Plan.

Distribution:

The Community Justice Plan 2024 – 2029 will be accessible on the Community Planning Partnership website on the Highland Council website and the Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI) website as well as being circulated to key stakeholders directly.

Accountability locally:

On an annual basis the Community Justice Partnership will produce a public facing annual report for circulation to a wide group of key stakeholders, including the Community Planning Partnership, Highland Third Sector and Community Partnerships. The report outlining progress and impact will also be published on the websites as previously mentioned. This report is in addition to the annual return completed and submitted to Community Justice Scotland.

The Highland Community Planning Partnership

Community Planning is described by the Scottish Government as...

'... about how public bodies work together and with the local community to plan for, resource and provide or secure the provision of services which improve local outcomes in a local authority area, with a view to reducing inequalities.'

The Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015 provides a new statutory framework for how Community Planning should work in Scotland. It outlines the duties public agencies have and the role they have collectively in acting together to tackle disadvantage within our communities.

The Highland Community Planning Partnership meets quarterly and brings together public agencies, third sector organisations and other key community groups to work collaboratively with the people of Highland to deliver better outcomes.

The Partnership also works through a series of geographical local Community Partnerships and regional thematic groups including Community Justice. Ultimately, these deliver our Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP).

Membership:

The members of the Highland Community Planning Partnership are Highland Council, NHS Highland, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Natural Heritage, Highland Third Sector Interface, University of the Highlands and Islands, Skills Development Scotland and Highlife Highland.

Development of the Plan/Participation Statement

The Community Justice Plan for 2024 – 2029 has been developed over the past 2 years whilst waiting for the publication of revised national documents in relation to community justice. An Addendum to the previous Plan was in place until 2022 and subsequently the Highland Community Justice Partnership have issued a 'Position Statement' which is published on the CPP website and the HTSI website in relation to the foregoing.

The Vision for Justice in Scotland was published in February 2022, the revised National Strategy for Community Justice was published in June 2022, the Community Justice Performance Framework (formerly known as the Outcomes Performance and Improvement Framework) was published in March 2023 and the National Strategy for Community Justice Delivery Plan was published in June 2023.

Publication of these documents enabled the Partnership to move forward with expanding on their priorities and actions which had been agreed in principle.

In 2021 a series of Development Circles were held in relation to areas of work that the Partnership had identified as important to take forward into the new plan – Diversion from Prosecution, Mental Health & Wellbeing, Early Intervention & Diversion and Employment and Employability.

Also, in 2021 the Community Justice Partnership produced a Strategic Needs and Strengths Assessment which identified housing and living standards, education, health & wellbeing, work and justice as areas of concern. Around this time the Partnership also commissioned Azets to produce a 'Health Check' in relation to what community justice looked like in Highland. Areas of concern identified from this piece of work were mental health including suicide rates for both males and females, female offending appeared at that time to be higher than the Scottish average and there was also a higher rate of reconvictions for females in Highland than in other areas of Scotland. The reconviction rate in respect of females in Highland remains high. A large proportion of Highland's prisoners are sentenced to more than 4 years and a significant amount are also on remand.

Following on from the Development Sessions a Wash Up Session was held to condense the information gathered into a more usable format for the partnership and ultimately the CJ Plan. A further Development Session was held in November 2022, and this established the priorities for the new plan and other factors which would impact on this looking at the wider local perspective along with information gleaned from the SNSA and Azets Report.

The themes which emerged from the SNSA and Azets reports and which the CJP have included in their CJOIP are –

Poverty – This is a significant factor in Highland with much of the crime being committed in areas of high deprivation and that those committing crime are living in areas of high deprivation. Further work needs to be done in relation to engagement to assist those affected at crucial points of intervention.

Women and Dependents – As mentioned, women who offend has been highlighted as an issue within Highland with higher numbers per head of population of those who offend and reoffend. The research piece of work being carried out should highlight gaps which partners within the CJP can focus on with an aim of improving outcomes for women. Further work needs to be done in relation to engagement to assist those affected at crucial points of intervention.

Consequently, the partnership also needs to look at how incarcerating women from Highland is affecting their children. In addition, the partnership will also consider the impact on dependents of males and females who have offended.

Victims – Victim engagement has been highlighted as a gap which the CJP are keen to remedy, and further work around this needs to be carried out in order to better understand the views and needs of victims within Highland.

The final Development Session was held in November 2023 which was more action focussed for the year ahead along with a horizon scanning exercise which would assist with future development of the CJ Plan as we move forward.

In addition to this, the Small Change for Justice and Community Justice Dragon's Den Events enabled those third sector organisations to come together and highlight what ambitions they have for working within the community justice framework, particularly working with those who have lived experience and around the prevention of criminality. From these events, it was abundantly clear to public agencies from the partnership and those working within the third sector that the powerful voice of those with lived experience cannot be underestimated and should be taken into consideration within the whole process.

Consultation on the plan has happened frequently with partners from the CJP and the wider third sector through the Community Justice Forums. There has also been consultation in relation to this through the specific workshop in relation to female offending in Highland which will now form part of the new plan.

Specific issues from those with lived experience from work in the Custody Link Project and Café 1668 have been taken into consideration in the compilation of this plan, and how this can be used to influence and shape services going forward. The compilation and expansion of a website particular to Highland which offers advice and assistance to those within the justice journey will continue. This is relevant to those who have committed crimes, those who have been affected by crime or family members of either.

The Highland Outcomes Improvement Plan for Highland has been reviewed as the development of this plan was finalised. Both the CJP and the Highland CPP have agreed that they are sufficiently aligned that this most recent HOIP review does not necessitate further revision of the Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan (CJOIP).

Community Justice Scotland have also been consulted during the process of the compilation of this Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan 2024-29 for Highland.

The following is their observation - The plan does not currently meet the requirement of statutory partners to assess the existing status of each national outcome in the Highland area. Statutory partners have agreed to engage in a subgroup model which will enable the provision of a baseline for each national outcome within the first year of this plan and subsequently develop appropriate improvement actions based on a clearer understanding of gaps through the lifecycle of the plan.

Overview of the Highland Context

The Highlands consists of one third of the land mass of Scotland with a population of 238,060. It is the largest local government area in the United Kingdom. Through various reports and available data, the area itself presents differing challenges throughout in relation to demographics, deprivation, employment/unemployment, economic activity, health & wellbeing, housing, transport, adult offending, youth offending and alcohol and drug misuse.

As a result, each area of Highland is unique with varying challenges and needs in terms of services, infrastructure and community supports.

The current prison within Highland, HMP Inverness, has a design capacity for 103 but currently the average population is 117. It has been deemed insufficient to meet the needs of Highland and plans are underway to replace the prison with a new building expected in the next couple of years. This is likely to present new opportunities for rehabilitation and preparation for integration as well as to support more prisoners to maintain crucial links to family and friend support by staying within the region.

At April 2023, Scotland's incarceration rate per 100,000 population was 138 which is slightly lower than in England and Wales (141) but substantially higher than most European countries.

The average daily prison population in Scotland was **7,507**. This has been relatively stable post-pandemic at between 7,300 and 7,600.

[Prison population - ScotPHO](#)

The Highland Community Justice Partnership is committed to early intervention and diversionary activity with a view to reducing the prison population in Highland in the longer term. Equally, the Partnership is committed to exploring alternatives to custodial sentences.

Highland's crime rate of 394 crimes per 10,000 people was below the Scottish average of 528 in 2022/23.

[Scotland crime rate by region 2023 | Statista](#)

Within the year 2022/23 there were 4,837 people taken into custody within Highland and 3,502 within the Inverness area alone. (Some of these may have been persons who have presented more than once over that time period).

Recorded vulnerabilities for those taken into custody within Highland are as follows: Alcohol use 540, Substance use 561 and Mental Health 1977. For the Inverness area: Alcohol use 389, Substance use 425 and Mental Health 1420. (Some people may have presented on more than one occasion and have more than one vulnerability).

The Highland Community Justice Partnership is committed to pursuing various opportunities to produce better outcomes for those who have offended whilst reducing levels of crime and victimisation.

The Highland Community Justice Partnership will take cognisance of the Children (Care and Justice)(Scotland) Bill which is currently going through Parliament and will have a significant impact on 16 and 17 year olds who commit crime. The Partnership are currently involved with the Highland Child Protection Committee and the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) in relation to work around Re-imagining Youth Justice in Highland.

The Community Justice Partnership in Highland have fostered good links with the Highland Alcohol and Drug Partnership and are kept up to date in relation to the progression of work around Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards in justice settings.

The Community Justice Partnership in Highland propose to take a gendered approach in relation to female offending and reoffending within Highland, as this has been highlighted as an issue through our strengths and needs assessment.

Equalities Statement

The Highland Community Justice Partnership is committed to equalities within its work and activities. Under our equality duties, we are required to report on progress made embedding equalities in our approaches and activities. In general, our equality duties require us, in the exercise of our functions, to have due regard of the need to:

Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other prohibited conduct;

Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Partnership is committed to mainstreaming equality and diversity and creating an approach that recognises the diverse needs of staff, partners and other stakeholders with whom we have contact, and promote equality. We will promote a positive attitude to equality, diversity, and

address and eliminate harassment, victimisation and discrimination in staff management and in our relationships with partners and others.

We have adopted a single Equality Statement for the Partnership:

Our Partner agencies, their staff and our other partner organisations will always respond appropriately, knowledgeably and confidently to the needs of colleagues, partners and others with whom we have contact who have protected characteristics.

Our services are accessible to colleagues, partners and others with whom we have contact including those who have protected characteristics.

People who have protected characteristics feel confident about interacting with the Highland Community Justice Partnership because we will not tolerate prejudice and promote an understanding of their needs.

Overview of the Community Justice Improvement Plan

Highland Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan 2024—2029

National Aims and Priority Actions:

The National Strategy for Community Justice, published in 2023, creates a framework of National Aims and Priority Actions that locally our priorities link back to.

Our Strategic Focus:

We have identified three areas that can help to frame our actions and planning and are intended to keep people at the centre of our approach:

Keeping
Me Safe

Helping Me
To Avoid
Offending

Helping Me
Realise My
Potential

Our Cross Cutting Themes:

We have identified three cross cutting themes within these areas of focus that are intended to shape our actions for the next five years and recognise the need to consider the contributing factors, or causes, to help ensure we see the whole person.

Women & Dependents

Although women make up a small proportion of individuals in the justice system and fewer still in prison, our research has indicated that Highland has a higher level of female offending than comparable areas of Scotland. Furthermore, women who do face remand or custodial sentences have to leave the area and experience a more distanced relationship with family and friends. The Commission of Women's Offending and other studies have also recognised the higher use of alcohol and drugs owing to historical trauma and attempts to self medicate. Young people are significantly more likely to experience being placed in care and subsequently entering the justice system if their mother is placed in prison.

Poverty

Poverty has a significant impact on someone's life chances and the likelihood that they will be a victim and/or a person who offends. Poverty can drive people to undertake criminal behaviour to feed themselves, but it can also lock people into a cycle of life chances that disempowers them to make choices which could increase their likelihood of living a life free of the participation of or impact from criminal behaviour. Living in a poorer community you are significantly more likely to feel less safe and crime rates are higher, trending differently to more affluent areas. Historical trauma and the use of drugs or alcohol as a self medication can also trap someone into a life of poverty.

Victims

We need to increase the voice of victims within the community justice work in Highland. Victims are a key partner in service and strategy design. More so because while many victims never offend many people who have offended are also victims of other crimes and have significant instances of trauma in their lives. Trauma informed practice and the ability to see the whole person is a particular focus for the Community Justice Partnership.

National Priority Actions:

2. 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.

7. 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.

8. Ensuring 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

10. Enhance Community Integration and support **by** increasing and promoting greater use of voluntary throughcare and third sector services.

12. 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.

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

Keeping Me Safe

Women & Dependents

- **Continue the CLink** – arrest referral – Ongoing perseverance around securing funding, this is important for all those who offend, particularly women. (2)
- **SLWG CLinks learning on how to change practice** (barriers to MH services) possibly think about diversion from prosecution evidence i.e. where they have supported consideration of the work with the CLinks in relation to sentencing – Potential for COPFS/Courts to consider the engagement of those within the justice system with the Clinks enabling them to make changes to their behaviour/lifestyle. (7)

Poverty

- **Continue the CIP** – including My Compass - This will continue the work already done around the Community Integration Plan and My Compass which will assess the needs of those engaged with these processes to improve planned outcomes for release. (7 & 8, housing is part of this)
- **GP Link work** – engage them around pathways for the justice system support - Raising awareness of the health needs of those within the justice system with the GP Link Workers is key to targeting many of the issues they face. It has been acknowledged that there is a gap in relation to this need. (13)
- **Continuation of café 1668** – The café has been deemed a positive influence on many who have attended in terms of providing advice/assistance to help prevent further offending/reoffending and creating better outcomes. (10)
- **CJS Throughcare Commissioning** – follow up to compliment/work alongside the CIP action (April 2025) - Throughcare is seen as an integral part of the justice journey and national updates around this will be monitored and shared at a local level. (10)

Victims

- **Increase liaison with Victim organisations including RASASH, VSS & VAW** – Better liaison is required to understand the views of victims. The engagement of those with lived experience is paramount in the work in relation to community justice particularly in Highland where, as outlined in the Highland Context section, so many external factors influence outcomes for those across the region. (12)

Helping me to avoid offending

National Priority Actions:

1. 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
3. Support the use of robust alternatives to remand by ensuring high quality bail services are consistently available and delivered effectively
4. Strengthen options for safe and supported management in the community by increasing and widening the use of electronic monitoring technologies
5. 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
6. 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.
9. 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
12. 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.

Women & Dependents of Offenders

- **Research piece of work around female offending** – Research to be carried out to ascertain why female offending and especially reconviction rates for females is so high in Highland. (12)
- **Pilot (peer) befriending/mentoring** – Pilot to be carried out to ascertain the merit in peer befriending/mentoring amongst those who have experience of the justice system and who have moved on to better outcomes. (12)

Poverty

- **CPO engagement 3rd sector** – Increasing the scope and diversity of activities which can be undertaken by those carrying out CPOs is crucial. It is anticipated that working with third sector organisations will encourage an increase in varied activities across Highland which in turn will improve outcomes for those involved. (5 & 9)
- **Increase use of Diversion from Prosecution** – The CJP aim to influence an increase in diversion from prosecution in Highland by working more in a more focussed and collaborative way. (1)
- **Increase use of Bail Supervision** – The CJP aim to influence an increase in Bail Supervision in Highland by working in a more focussed and collaborative way. (3)
- **Increase use of EM Bail** – The CJP aim to influence an increase in EM Bail in Highland by working in a more focussed and collaborative way. (4)

Victims

- **Increase liaison with Victim organisations including RASASH, VSS & VAW** – Increasing awareness of the needs of victims is crucial in terms of service provision and any gaps across Highland. There is a need for the CJP to develop this further to fully understand how this might shape their work going forward. (12)
- **Monitor/Support roll-out of restorative justice** - The CJP will take cognisance of the work being done nationally around this with a view to implementation, if possible, within Highland. (6)

Helping me realise my potential

National Priority Actions:

- 5. 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
- 9. 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
- 12. 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.

Women & Dependents of Offenders

- **Explore employment opportunities for women/caregivers in Highland** – This will form part of the research work in relation to female offending and reconviction rates within Highland. (9)
- **Explore opportunities with ongoing work of Families Outside in Highland in relation to families' dependents** – This will form part of the research work in relation to female offending and reconviction rates within Highland. In addition to this, the CJP would benefit from the views of families who have been affected by a loved one's imprisonment in general. (12)

Poverty

- **Create better links with Employability Partnership & Employability Forum** – Creating better links will potentially create better opportunities for those within the justice system by ensuring they are considered in relation to employment and other development opportunities. (9)
- **SPS work around training and matching to industry needs and working to engage the industry leaders** - SPS will continue their work in relation to engaging with industry needs and provide training in this regard to maximise outcome opportunities for those involved. (9)
- **Volunteering – through CPO clients** – Engagement with third sector in relation to the prospect of engaging those carrying out CPOs in volunteering opportunities. (5 & 9)
- **Work with UHI around further education** – The CJP to continue to engage and liaise with UHI in relation to a pathway for those involved in the justice system to access further education. (9)

Victims

- **Justice Pipeline and to also include support for jurors** — The development of the Community Justice website in Highland will include a range of information for people along the entire justice journey. This will also include those affected by crime.

Appendix 1: Third Sector organisations involved in the compilation of the Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan

The following groups were involved in consultations, focus groups or in some other way input to the identification of the needs and wide creation of the CJOIP.

Abriachan Forrest Trust

Action for Children

Apex Highland

Birchwood Highland (now Centred)

Café 1668

Citizen's Advice Bureau

Custody Link Project

Families Outside

Highland Third Sector Interface

Highlife Highland

Libertie Project (now Red Chair)

Lochaber Hope

Newstart highland

Rape and Sexual Assault Service Highland (RASASH)

Scottish Drugs Forum

Signpost