



**Highland**  
**Community**  
Justice Partnership

# ANNUAL REPORT

**2023-2024**

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## Foreword

I am delighted to welcome you to the Community Justice Partnership's Annual Report 2023-24. I hope you enjoy reading it. The report reflects the significant achievements delivered over the past year. This is the result of the hard work and dedication of all the justice partners working together to help people to reduce and stop their offending and to keep our communities safe. In essence, that is what community justice is about.



And one less crime means one less victim. As the Scottish Government's Vision for Justice 2022 states "We must hear the voices of victims" and we must ensure that they have trust in the justice system.

I passionately believe in our need to continue to evidence and strengthen the efficacy of the range of community justice interventions and community sentences to build and earn that trust. Community justice has a positive and demonstrable impact on the lives of people and communities, fulfilling their potential, turning away from crime and leading law-abiding lives and contributing positively to their local communities.

No one said it is easy. There will always be challenges and these are acknowledged in this report. However, the achievements are testament to the innovative work being undertaken, whether it's the Custody Link Worker Project based in the Inverness Police Custody Suite, the successful completion of community payback orders or the community integration planning process for those leaving HMP Inverness. We should be proud of all this work.

I would like to thank my predecessor, Ross McKillop, for leading the partnership during his 3 years as chairperson. And to Margaret McShane who moved on to other challenges in 2024. As the partnership's manager from its inception in 2017, her drive and commitment were instrumental in the development of community justice in Highland.

Finally, I extend a heartfelt thanks to all the staff at the Highland Third Sector Interface who host the community justice partnership and all those delivering community justice services across the extraordinary range of statutory and Third Sector Services in Highland. Your energy, innovation and commitment are second to none.

James Maybee

Independent Chair, Highland Community Justice Partnership

## The work of the Highland CJP – An overview

### What is Community Justice?

The National Community Justice Strategy states:

*‘Community justice is principally about organisations working together to ensure that people who have offended address the underlying causes of their behaviour and pay back to the community where appropriate. It aims to encourage rehabilitation, reduce reoffending, and protect the public, leading to fewer victims and safer communities.’*

In practice, community justice is an evidenced based approach to dealing with people who have broken the law, which focusses on holding people to account for their actions and supporting them to reconnect with and contribute to their communities. This means that, where it is safe to do so, people who have committed particular crimes receive community sentences, which can include community payback orders (CPO), restrictions of liberty, electronic tagging, fines or treatment for underlying issues such as problematic drug or alcohol use.

Much of society’s perceptions about crime and justice are based on media depictions – from news reporting to crime drama. This skews perceptions, with a media focus on less common and often more extreme examples of the law being broken. Often part of this narrative portrays community sentences as being a ‘soft option’ and reduces the complexity of the justice system to black and white understandings of innocence versus guilt or good versus evil.

It can be difficult for society to rethink justice in the language of compassion, informed by an understanding of the consequences of trauma, and the impact of adverse life experiences, especially when the impact of crime on individual victims and their communities can be stark and profound.

However, there is strong international evidence that a community approach to justice can help to break cycles of law breaking which leads to fewer victims and safer communities. It is also important to note that public protection remains the priority, with robust risk management systems ensuring that those who have committed crimes can be managed safely and effectively in community settings, with the use of prison only for those who pose a risk of serious harm.

### Community Justice in Highland

At a local level Community Justice is about a wide range of justice partners working together to develop responses which are relevant locally, and support the reduction of offending and reoffending.

Shaping local development is a public health approach which means modelling our response around improving health and wellbeing, reducing inequalities and reducing crime. Central to this is recognising the impact of trauma and Adverse Childhood

Experiences (ACEs) which comes with the need to support change in people's behaviours. Appropriate use of diversion from prosecution and community sentencing options (especially when early opportunities present themselves) as alternatives to remand and custodial sentences enables support to be offered in communities, where people's support networks often already exist.

The Highland Community Justice Partnership (HCJP) is fortunate to be part of a local landscape of partnerships and networks, strategically and on the ground, with which we have shared aims. This includes positive links with the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP), the Highland Violence Against Women Partnership (HVAWP) and the Community Safety and Resilience Group. A number of national and local partners contribute effectively to the work of the HCJP.

In 2023-24, the membership of the HCJP consisted of:

- The Highland Council (1 Elected Member);
- Local Authority (Justice Social Work and Housing);
- Police Scotland;
- Scottish Prison Service;
- Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service;
- Scottish Courts & Tribunals Service;
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service;
- NHS Highland;
- Skills Development Scotland;
- Victim Support Scotland;
- Department of Work and Pensions;
- Scottish Children's Reporter Administration;
- Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership;
- Third Sector Representation (Apex Highland, Families Outside and Rape & Sexual Abuse Service Highland – RASASH).

A particular feature of the HCJP is the close collaboration with the Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI). Uniquely in Scotland, the HTSI hosts the HCJP, including the posts of CJP Manager and Senior Development Officer, as well as supporting the role of the Independent Chair.

This strong third sector collaboration and involvement adds value to our partnership, and enhances the work done by our statutory partners as they deliver support and services to the people of Highland. It also enables us to hear the voices and experiences of those whose lives have been impacted by the justice system through the HTSI's connections with local groups and organisations operating across Highland communities.

### **Governance and Accountability**

The Highland Community Partnership Planning Board provides oversight and scrutiny of partnership activities and priorities.

Whilst there were no substantive changes to the structure for community justice arrangements in Highland in 2023-24, it was a year marked by transition and change. Most notable being the culmination of the development of the Highland Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (HCJOIP) for the period 2024-2029.

The development of the plan ran alongside two additional processes. First was the review and update of the Highland Outcomes Improvement Plan (HOIP), which identified three strategic priorities underpinning the vision to: “Maximise opportunities and tackle inequality to build a thriving Highlands for all”.

## 2024-2027 HIGHLAND OUTCOME IMPROVEMENT PLAN

MAXIMISE OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLE INEQUALITY  
TO BUILD A THRIVING HIGHLANDS FOR ALL



The second impact on the development of the plan was the revision of the National Strategy for Community Justice published in June 2022, building on four national aims:

- |   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1. Optimise the use of diversion and intervention at the earliest opportunity | 2. Ensure that robust and high quality community interventions and public protection arrangements are consistently available | 3. Ensure that services are accessible and available to address the needs of individuals accused or convicted of an offence | 4. Strengthen the leadership, engagement, and partnership working of local and national community justice partners |
|---|--|---|--|

To support the achievement of these aims, the Community Justice Performance Framework (CJPF) was published in March 2023 and the National Strategy for Community Justice Delivery Plan in June 2023. The CJPF consists of national outcomes and indicators, with suggested local evidence, all combining to assess performance, and identify areas for improvement. This in turn will shape our local priorities from year to year.



Supporting the National strategy and framework are an improvement tool and self-evaluation framework, both of which will be introduced into our local planning and delivery processes, and will support our reporting to Community Justice Scotland (CJS).



As indicated above, the Highland Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (HCJOIP) for the period 2024-2029 was formally launched in June 2024, having undergone development in 2022-2024. The delay in the production of the national Strategy and Framework meant some disconnect between the details of the HCJOIP and the National frameworks. However, there are still clear connections between the high-level priorities of the National Strategy and the HCJOIP, particularly around the focus on the Victims of Crime, the needs of Women within the justice system and the ambition to embed trauma-informed approaches across the justice system.

## 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.

In addition to the focus and the themes of the HCJOIP, the development process also highlighted the need to reflect on the structures of the HCJP. Work is planned for 2024 to develop new HCJP structures which reflect the National framework and reporting processes.



# The work of the Highland CJP – Performance Review

## Reviewing the year

As the HCJP transitions towards new structures, this section is framed within the Four National Aims and Priorities, which have emerged as the framework for future reporting.

All the tables are taken from the CJS Highland Indicator Report (unless otherwise stated), along with the CJS assessment of progress against the national indicators.

The Local Area Annual Return, prepared in September 2024 encouraged reflection on some of the challenges and positives faced by the partnership over the year 2023-24.

Amongst the positives and the opportunities identified were:

- The CLink project was externally evaluated by the University of Stirling covering the period from March 2020 to 31 March 2023. The report was submitted to the HCJP in June 2023, demonstrating positive individual and service-level outcomes.
- A collaboration led by Justice Social Work (JSW) and the HTSI resulted in the creation of a two year post of Senior Development Officer, with a focus on developing Community Payback Orders (especially in more remote parts of Highland) and improving communication across the partnership and with the wider public. The post was filled in January 2024.
- Engagement beyond the partnership took place through the circulation of regular newsletters and a quarterly Community Justice forum engaging with a range of partners working within and across their local communities.
- Statistical evidence had previously highlighted the distinctive experiences of women within the justice system (including higher than national average rates of women being imprisoned from Highland). Dr Brieger Nugent, from the University of Strathclyde, was commissioned to research, *‘What social-economic factors are contributing to Highland’s higher rates of female offending and reoffending and how well are our services and interventions prepared to meet needs arising from those factors?’*
- The partnership funded two initiatives in 2022-23 (*Dragon’s Den* and *Small Change for Justice*) to support organisations involved in CPO’s and providing opportunities for those who had experienced the justice system. Most of the projects ran from 2022 into the current reporting year, with end of project reports presented in 2023-24 highlighting a number of imaginative activities.
- During the year the CJP invested in the creation of a Highland Justice Services and Interventions Website (<https://highlandcjp.org.uk/>). The website is based on the journey for those involved in the justice system, including victims of crime, those who have committed crimes and their families and wider communities. The website signposts people to organisations which can offer support and guidance.

Amongst the challenges identified were

- Interest in the partnership from a number of partners, including some statutory partners was difficult to maintain, as evidenced by low attendance at some meetings and the challenge of gathering information for reporting.
- The partnership's primary focus during the year on the development and creation of the HCJOIP meant there was a great deal of positive engagement with some partners and the wider justice community, but it was difficult to garner input from across the partnership. There was also the additional challenge of delay in the production of national frameworks, which resulted in a degree of disconnect between what has been developed locally and subsequent national expectations and priorities.
- The Custody Link Worker (CLink) project, which is managed by the HTSI faced uncertainties over funding, which disrupted their ability to sustain referrals.
- There was also a sense that the understanding of the concepts and principles of Community Justice was limited across the wider justice community, reflected amongst some partners who struggle to understand their role within the Community Justice 'ecosystem'.
- Recruitment is a perennial problem across Highland in all sectors, and particularly in more remote areas, this often resulted in gaps in services and a sense of discontinuity both operationally and at a partnership level.

## National Aim 1

### Optimise the use of diversion and intervention at the earliest opportunity

#### 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

#### *Nationally determined outcome and indicators:*

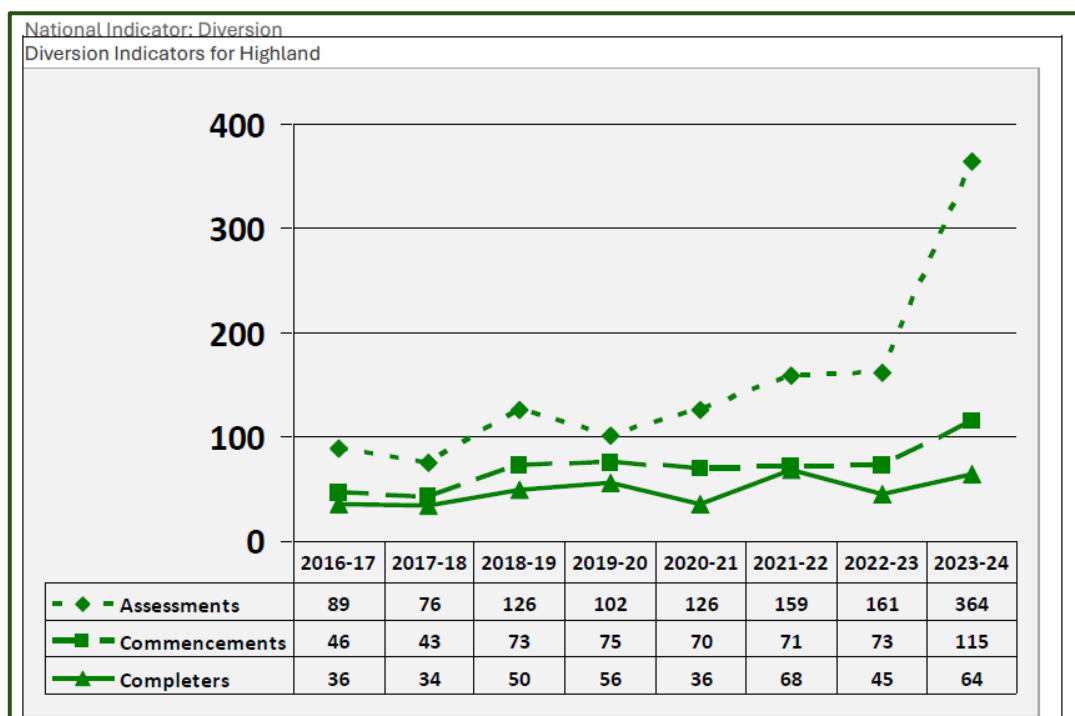
Outcome: More people successfully complete diversion from prosecution.

Indicator: Number of diversion from prosecution:

- i. assessments undertaken;
- ii. cases commenced;
- iii. cases successfully completed.

Assessment of the data for this outcome by CJS indicates improvement in this area:

- The number of assessments undertaken shows an emerging pattern of increase in line with the desired direction;
- The number of commencements shows an emerging pattern of increase in line with the desired direction;
- The number of completions shows an emerging pattern of increase in line with the desired direction.



## Local Evidence

The CJS Improvement Tool indicates two areas of local evidence, and these will require development in Highland:

- i. *Mechanisms are in place to understand the views of people undertaking diversion from prosecution and are used to support improvement;*
- ii. *Mechanisms are in place to understand the views of people supporting the delivery of diversion from prosecution and are used to support improvement.*

However, there is evidence of positive activity around diversion from prosecution underway in Highland.

Justice Social Work commenced over one hundred diversions during 2023-24 which provides an appropriate person-centred response to an alleged offence(s). During the assessment and later during the provision of the diversion honest discussion takes place between Justice Social Workers and individuals to enable a swift intervention, which can interrupt a cycle of offending and/or prevent further offending. The focus was on one to one support due to lower numbers of people completing diversion.

Justice Social Work also offer a range of in-house programmes to people completing a diversion from prosecution, including *Decider Skills* (using Cognitive Behaviour Therapy to help people develop skills to recognise their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours) and *SMART* recovery groups (SMART – Self Management and Recovery Training – is a programme guided by trained facilitators that provides training and tools for people who want to change their problematic behaviour, including addiction to drugs, alcohol and other behaviours).

Individuals living in the inner Moray Firth area can complete their diversion while completing work and receiving support from third sector organisations contracted by Justice Social Work. Young people aged 16 to 17 normally complete their diversion with the Highland Council's Youth Action Services which has the expertise to provide interventions to young people.

This is an area of work which has become more effective over the period, with a recognition that this form of early intervention can identify and address individual needs more effectively which can break cycles of offending.

However, it is also recognised that further development is needed around a shared understanding of diversion suitability reports, particularly for individuals already sentenced to Community Payback Orders and even custodial sentences and people with significant histories of contact with the justice system. The evidence is that diversion works best for individuals who have few or no prior convictions, young people and women.

## 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

*Nationally determined outcome and indicators:*

Outcome: More people in police custody receive support to address their needs

Indicator: Number of referrals from custody centres.

CJS report that the number of referrals from police custody shows no emerging pattern due to insufficient data. The desired direction is to increase.

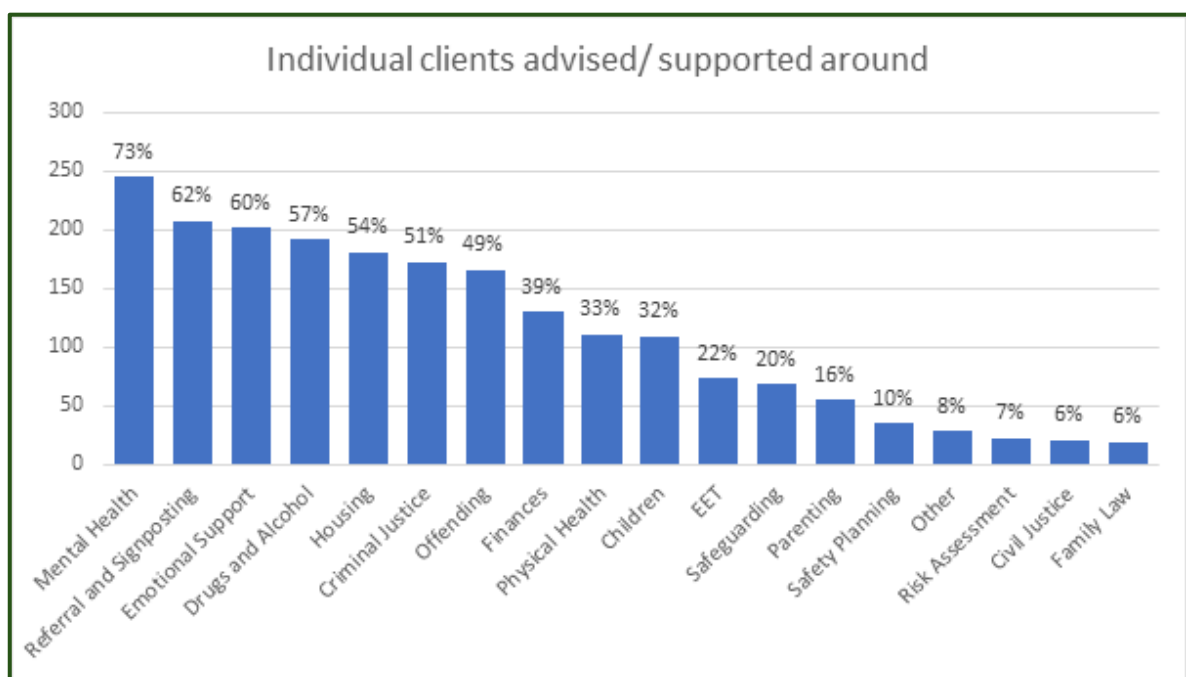
For the year 2023-24 processes for the collection of data were not in place. CJS advise that new data collection procedures are being introduced during 2024-25, with 2024-25 figures thereafter being considered as the baseline for future reporting.

## Local Evidence

- i. *There is an effective relationship between community justice partners, Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs) and police custody centre for local population;*
- ii. *Referral pathways and support are in place from police custody centre for local population.*

In Highland there is a well-developed approach to arrest referral operating within and beyond the Police Station in Burnett Road, Inverness. In addition to the partners operating within the custody setting, there is also proximity to the Inverness Justice Centre which brings added synergy.

Since March 2020 the Custody Link Worker Project (CLink) has supported individuals coming into police custody assisting them to identify behaviours which heighten their risk of offending and returning to custody as well as identifying actions that will enable them to access wider support and to reduce risks. Unsurprisingly, client issues are interlinked and complex, with the following chart (from the CLink quarterly report, March 2023) indicating the range of support offered.





The University of Stirling undertook analysis of custody record data reported in 2024 and found that rates of custody amongst those who accepted a referral declined significantly. Their report concluded that “A... key area repeatedly raised by participants is the empathetic and emotionally supportive approach of Link Workers, building rapport and trust in changing and pressured circumstances at the arrest referral and bail stage.”

The analysis also demonstrated that:

Many individuals, particularly females, present with far more complex and challenging circumstances and higher levels of vulnerability and adversity than were envisaged at the beginning of the project.

Police Custody is an ideal place to engage with individuals who are motivated to seek assistance.

Individuals who have accepted a referral are significantly more likely than those who have declined the referral to report mental health problems, current thoughts of self-harm or suicide, to take one or more prescribed medications, to previously having attempted self-harm or suicide, and to report dependence on alcohol.

Those accepting the offer of a referral tended to highlight getting stabilised before being referred to and accessing alcohol and drug-related services and supports as helpful.

This area of work is a very positive example of the Partnership in action, with Police Custody staff working closely with the CLink team and NHS nursing staff within the custody setting as well as linking across to the Inverness Justice Centre. A high degree of trust and mutual respect underpinned close working practices and improved outcomes for individuals experiencing this part of the justice system.

It also demonstrated strong cross-Partnership working, with clear involvement from the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP) in the development and resourcing of the initiative, particularly where it supports the implementation of the Medication Assisted Treatment Standards, aimed at reducing drug-related deaths in Highland.

## Innovative Practice

The NHS team worked collaboratively with police colleagues to gather data and use quality improvement methodology to map current processes, identifying gaps for patients at high risk of drug related harm. They used the Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) model for improvement as their approach to identify and define problems and to identify what they need to try do to make the change and measure impacts.

The team created a toolkit to ensure equitable healthcare called *Medication Assisted Treatment Pilot at Custody Toolkit* (MATPACT). MATPACT includes patient identifiable information, current drug use, risk assessment, harm reduction offered and accepted, blood borne virus screening offered and accepted, encourages referral to outreach services and option to commence or continue on Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) of Opiate Substitution Therapy. On admission to police custody, all patients who answer 'yes' to any drug related question are now referred to health for use of MATPACT. The nursing team delivering care and trialling tests of change continue to provide feedback and suggest improvement ideas. MATPACT is discussed at all health team meetings. Information and education has been shared with police colleagues.

The team have started to gather feedback from custodies as to their experience from the use of MATPACT, what went well, and what could be better. There has also been feedback on how people who have received harm reduction advice, training and been supplied with naloxone has gone to save the lives of friends.

The MATPACT project allows for timely person centred care and intervention to be carried out according to need. Although time spent in custody is minimal, initial harm reduction can be carried out and referral to onward services can be made thus increasing numbers of people being referred into drug and alcohol recovery services. People are able to voice their experiences and participate in decision-making. The toolkit changed the team's approach in identifying those at risk of drug related harm whilst they were in police custody and allowed them to carry out a strategic intervention specifically around MAT and harm reduction.

In terms of numbers, key results include:

- Overall, there was a reduction from 53% to 12% of missed opportunities of referral to custody healthcare.
- Out of 934 Naloxone kits offered, 260 people accepted take home Naloxone.
- Out of 934 Bloodborne Virus (BBV) tests offered, there was uptake by 35 people with 2 positive cases identified.
- There was increased referral to outreach and core Drug and Alcohol Recovery Services.

Use of the MATPACT improved understanding across the professional teams and supported better signposting and connections between services.

Amongst the feedback from those supported with the MATPACT is one person who reports, this is the "first time anyone has bothered asking me about my substance use."



## Local Evidence

- i. *Mechanisms are in place to support a high quality bail assessment;*
- ii. *Referral pathways are in place that support identified needs of people on bail supervision.*

2023-24 proved to be a challenging year for the provision of bail supervision orders across Highland. There are five Courts in Highland with the busiest being Inverness, then Wick and Tain. From April 2023 over 400 Bail Supervision assessments were completed, although less than 10% of these assessments translated into a Bail Supervision Order.

Recruitment difficulties meant that there were challenges in completing assessments and providing Bail Supervision Services. However, a dedicated team has formed including Justice Social Workers and Justice Officers (Justice Officers are paraprofessionals trained in interventions such as Decider Skills and SMART and are able to support individuals as well as signpost them to support and services in the community).

Justice Social Work team members anecdotally reported that Bail Supervision works very well for young people and for women, with early intervention allowing timely intervention and the ability to address needs ahead of a Court case which at times can take over a year to be resolved.

### Priority Action Four

Strengthen options for safe and supported management in the community by increasing and widening the use of electronic monitoring technologies

*Nationally determined outcome and indicators:*

There is no nationally determined outcome, and no information available for the current year relating to the use of electronic monitoring in Highland to support people on bail.

### 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

*Nationally determined outcome and indicators:*

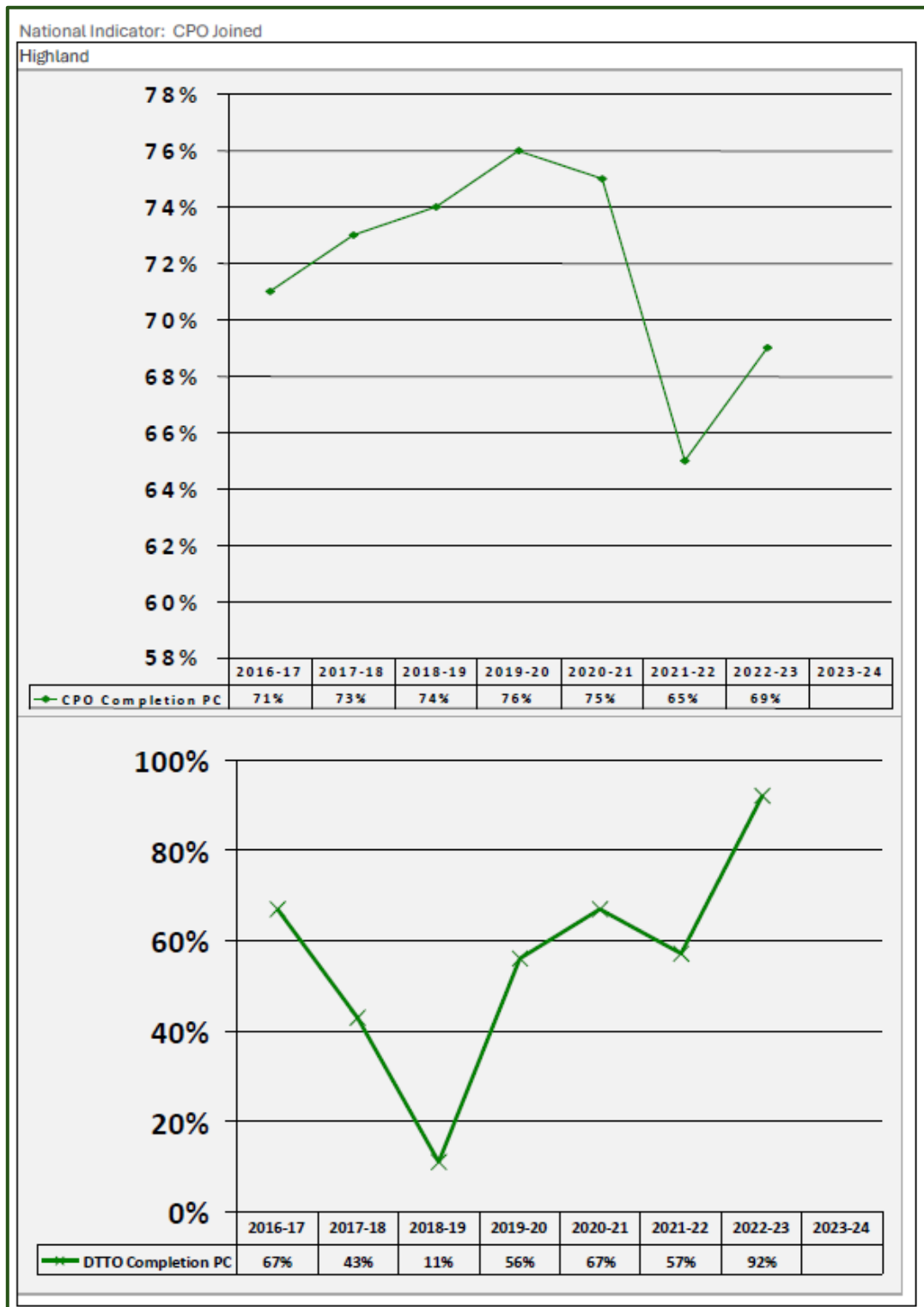
Outcome: More people access services to support desistance and successfully complete community sentences

Indicators: Percentage of:

- i. Community Payback Orders successfully completed;
- ii. Drug Testing and Treatment Orders successfully completed.

Assessment of the data for this outcome by CJS indicates:

- That the number of CPO completions shows no emerging pattern, against the desired direction of increase;
- That the small numbers of DTTOs means that the percentage of completions is not statistically valid.



CJS acknowledges that the local use of DTTOs is 'nuanced and complex', especially when set alongside the use of Structured Deferred Sentences and of CPO's with Drug



Treatment requirements. Analysis of the statistics for CPO's and DTTO's has not yet been published, but will be included in future reporting.

#### **Local Evidence:**

- i. Availability of local programmes to support desistance from domestic abuse and sexual offending;*
- ii. Availability of referral pathways to support the needs of local population on community disposals;*
- iii. Mechanisms are in place to understand the views of people with experience of community disposals to support improvement;*
- iv. Mechanisms are in place to understand the views of the community justice workforce with regard to supporting the needs of people subject to community disposals to support improvement.*

A range of programmes and interventions were offered by the Justice Social Work Teams, including:

The Caledonian Programme for people who have Domestically Abused;

Moving Forward: Making Changes (MFMC) which is being replaced by Moving Forward to Change (MF2C) for people who have committed Sexual Offences;

Drug Treatment and Testing Orders (DTTO) / DTTO2 for individuals who offend mostly due to substance use and would like to change their lifestyle.

It is often found that some of the requirements for CPOs are not suitable in Highland unless Justice Social Workers and/or Justice Officers complete the work themselves. The mandatory nature of a Community Payback Order can be at variance with the voluntary ethos that would normally underpin Drug, Alcohol and Mental Health treatments. This can mean that such interventions are rarely used, although CPO requirements for these areas of need could be extremely beneficial to individuals who have been assessed as potentially benefitting from them.

Justice Social Work (through Highland Council) has contracts with Third Sector organisations who offer support, interventions and guidance to individuals completing a CPO. There are clear referral pathways for these providers and whilst some provision is only available in the Inner Moray Firth area, others provision is Highland-wide.

As an individual progresses through their order there are regular reviews, and an opportunity to adjust goals and agreed outcomes. On completion of an order, individuals are offered an anonymised feedback form which enables the team to reflect on the effectiveness of the programme and introduce improvement.

Community Payback teams around Highland have worked effectively in partnership with Community Councils, trusts and Third Sector organisations to complete useful unpaid work projects. During the year, project beneficiaries across different communities reported being 100% happy with the standard of work completed, with activities being well managed and supervised. All beneficiaries reported being willing to have these types of projects done again by the CPO Unpaid Work scheme.

The CPO Officers reported anecdotally that their clients were largely benefitting from the structure and work of the CPO unpaid work requirement. Some continued to volunteer at their placement after the order was complete, or even start up a small business in response to an identified gap in the market. One client was quoted as saying:

“I just want to say thank you for your help to get my hours done and for the chats we had made me believe in myself again.”

In the course of the year areas for improvement and expansion were also identified and addressed. For example, in Caithness the recognition of a lack of SMART provision led to collaboration with the NHS to offer a group in Caithness east with the NHS providing another in the west.

The increasing demand for community sentences means that Community Payback unpaid work teams can be stretched. There is recognition of the need for ongoing training for teams around Trauma-Informed Practice. It was also acknowledged that though some clients move on positively after their order is completed, many can be at a loss afterwards.

Raising public awareness of the benefits of community payback in order to increase offers of projects and placements around Highland and reduce stigma has provided the impetus to create the new post of Senior Development Officer which was filled in January 2024.

### 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

#### *Nationally determined outcome and indicators:*

There is no nationally determined outcome, and whilst there is real interest amongst a number of HCJP partners and others (including Action for Children) to build some capacity for restorative justice in Highland, development has been hampered through lack of resource and leadership.

## National Aim 3

**Ensure that services are accessible and available to address the needs of individuals accused or convicted of an offence**

### 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

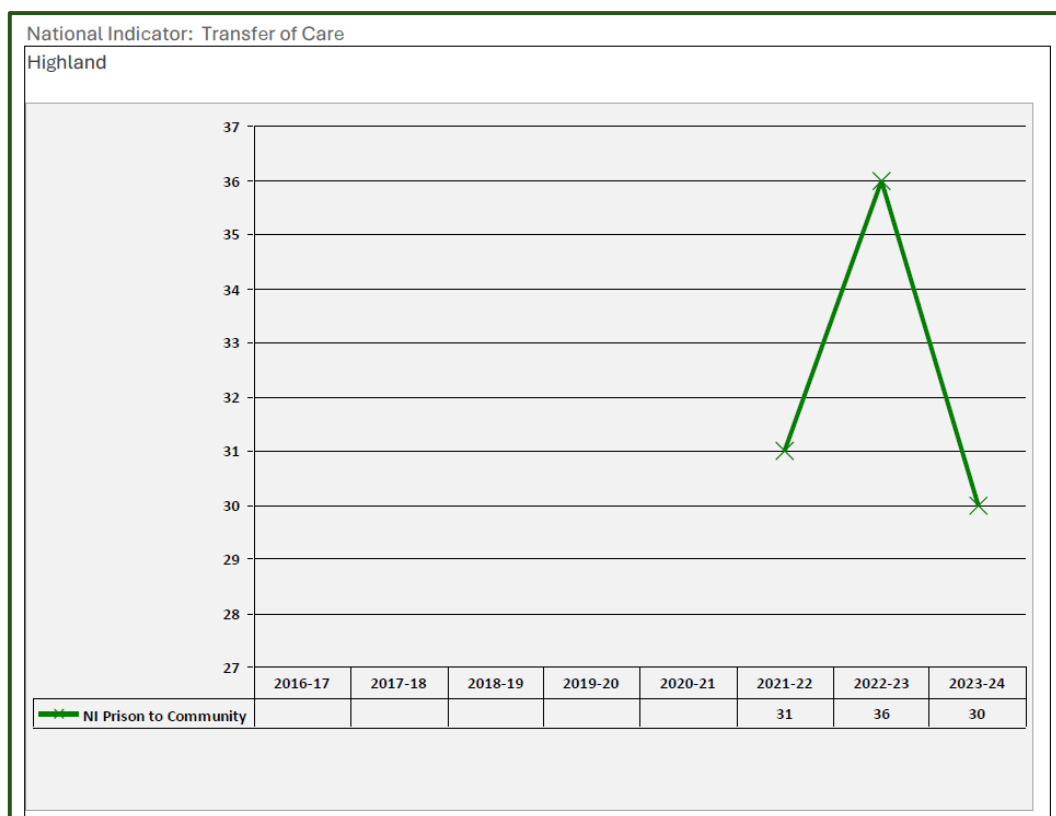
*Nationally determined outcome and indicators:*

Outcome: More people have access to, and continuity of, health and social care following release from a prison sentence

Indicators: Number of transfers in drug/alcohol treatments from:

- i. custody to community.

The number of transfers in drug/alcohol treatments from custody to community shows no emerging pattern due to insufficient data. The desired direction is to increase.



### Local Evidence

- i. *Health and social care circumstances/care plans are reflected in collaborative plans for release;*

- ii. *Referral pathways and information sharing arrangements are in place to support timely access to health and social care supports upon release.*

The Highland Community Integration Plan (HCIP) was delivered in partnership with Scottish Prison Service (SPS), NHS Highland and Justice Social Work with a range of third sector agencies providing community support.

The HCIP was initially established within HMP Inverness in December 2020, with set criteria for those living in the Inner Moray Firth area with drug and alcohol issues. It is a multi-agency project which has been successful in terms of assisting those who are returning to the community from prison to assess their needs and tailor plans to support them on their release.

For those who wish to engage with the HCIP, liberation planning begins at 6 weeks prior to release, attended by partners including NHS, prison-based and community-based social workers, local authority housing, New Routes, and other third sector agencies.

The *My Compass* assessment tool was used to highlight individual needs prior to release allowing a focus for appropriate referrals prior to liberation. Particular attention was given to individuals assessed as being at risk of suicide on liberation, with a case conference called to clarify the factors relating to the release that needed to be addressed and a plan for support drawn up.

There has been a focus on specific training for prison staff to understand and promote positive pathways for those in their care, including promoting better understanding of community partners and what they are able to offer.

The HCIP model allows for structured and supported liberation from prison, aiming to avoid the “cliff edge” often faced by those re-entering their communities. The model aims to support individuals to re-engage with their communities and address any perceived barriers to accessing services through structured support.

Families Outside reported that these developments over the period contributed to better partnership working and service visibility for family members of people leaving custody. SPS colleagues reported better communication across a range of partners and better planning to support people on liberation from prison.

### 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

### *Nationally determined outcome and indicators:*

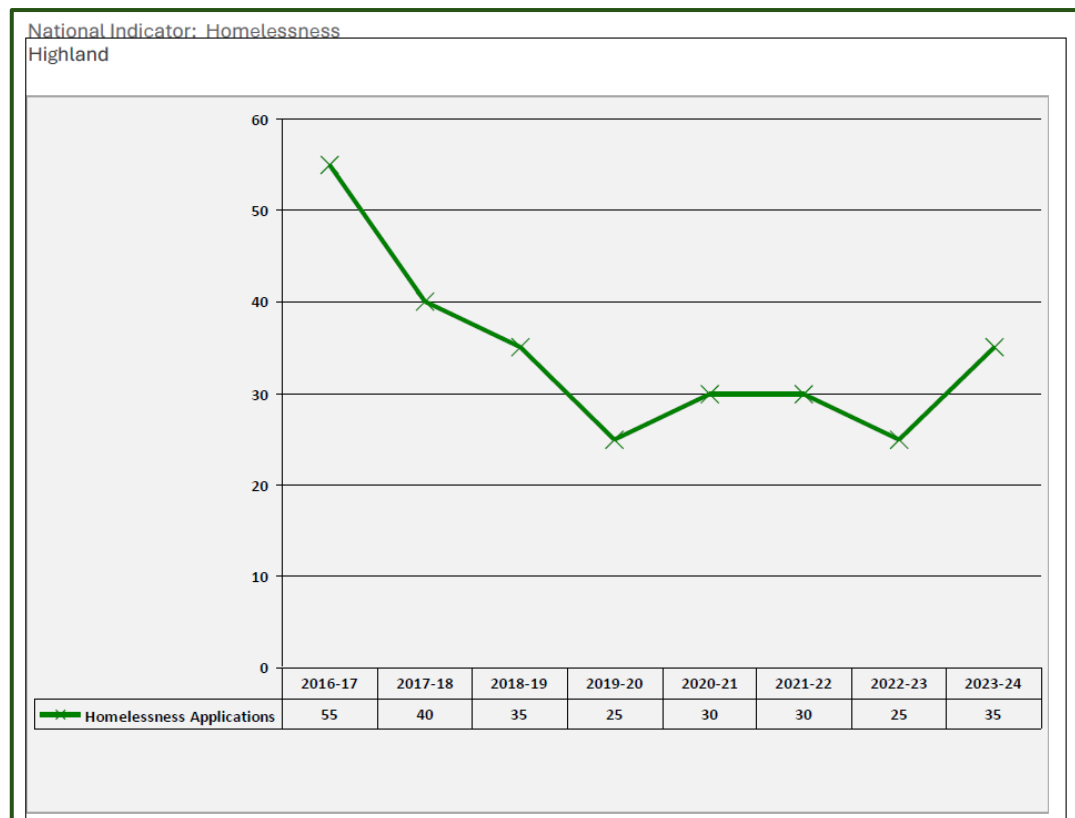
Outcome: More people have access to suitable accommodation following release from a prison sentence

Indicators: Number of:

- i. homeless applications where prison is last known address.

Assessment of the data for this outcome by CJS indicates:

The number of homelessness applications where prison was the property the main applicant became homeless from, shows no recent pattern, although there was a significant decrease to 2019-20 in line with the desired direction.



## Local Evidence

- i. *SPS admissions and liberations information is shared with relevant partners to support suitable accommodation planning;*
- ii. *Proportion of admissions where housing advice was provided;*
- iii. *Percentage of people leaving prison who have been housed by the local authority and have maintained tenancy for more than 1 year.*

As part of the Highland Community Integration Plan (HCIP) described above, Housing partners (including local authority housing) played a central role in its delivery. The *My Compass* assessment tool used in HMP Inverness identifies housing issues at an early stage.

For people on licences, Justice Social Work and the Highland Council's Housing Department worked closely together when liberations were taking place, including



planning ahead of time where the person ought to present as homeless. HMP Inverness has good links with housing providers and with the local Citizens Advice Bureau which supports planning for liberation. Where the individual is a Registered Sex Offender, Police, Housing and Justice Social Work, work together compiling Environmental Risk Assessments.

The HCIP supported a pilot project with FIT homes (Albyn Housing) securing accommodation for individuals with more complex needs (in particular, substance misuse) ensuring good links with substance misuse services. Housing partners provided input around FIT Homes for vulnerable/homeless clients to a Sheriff's annual event highlighting the opportunities this presents when considering sentencing. Areas for development and improvement have also been identified, particularly around increasing demand and the limits of housing supply.

### 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

#### *Nationally determined outcome and indicators:*

Outcome: More people with convictions access support to enhance their readiness for employment

Indicators: Participation in employability services:

- i. percentage of people with convictions.

Assessment of the data for this outcome by Community Justice Scotland (CJS) indicates that the percentage of people referred to No One Left Behind (NOLB) employability programmes with a criminal record shows no emerging pattern due to insufficient data. The desired direction is to increase.

National Indicator: Employability	
Highland	
Employability Data	
	2023-24
NI Percentage of participants with Criminal convictions	5
Number of participants with Criminal convictions	27

## Local Evidence

- i. *Effective links between the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) and Community Justice Partnership supports:*
  - a. *local employment, education and training providers to respond to the needs of those with convictions;*
  - b. *local employment, education and training providers are confident and competent in providing effective conviction disclosure support;*
  - c. *local employers to develop more inclusive recruitment processes and employ people with convictions;*
- ii. *Referral pathways are in place to connect people to appropriate services and support:*
  - a. *at commencement of, during and at the end of a CPO;*
  - b. *following release from custody.*

Employability partners including Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) contribute regularly to the HCJP. HMP Inverness has a well-established Life Skills facility, with a dedicated officer, running regular employability training as part of the Life Skills course. This included CV building, budgeting and mock interviews, in partnership with Fife College, all of which helped to develop personal skills, build confidence and enhance opportunities for individuals. The Life Skills Officer is proactive in engaging with local employers to establish connections and potential routes to employment.

SPS has a national partnership with the DWP. HMP Inverness has a strong connection and effective working relationship with the local DWP and Job Centre+. This includes the provision of a prison work-based coach, who attends the Links Centre on a regular basis and scheduled quarterly employability events. The DWP arranged two employability events through the year (one promoting work in hospitality and one focused on construction). Also, in the course of the year the DWP ran a pilot scheme designed to allow people to apply for Universal Credit prior to liberation from custody.

The CJP funded two initiatives in 2022-23 (*Dragon's Den* and *Small Change for Justice*) to support organisations involved in CPO's and providing work opportunities for those who had experienced the justice system. The end of project reports were presented in 2023-24, highlighting a number of imaginative activities.

**APEX Highland** embarked on a new project which involved reclaiming wood destined for landfill, burning or dumping. Using this wood, they were able to recycle and make planters, benches, tables, bird boxes and other items. This project was a massive inspiration for our clients to recycle and make items for local charities, churches, schools and personal use, whilst engaging in sustainability and making an impact on the local community ... 18 clients participated, registering a total of 133 attendances (931 hours), 3 of which progressed into volunteer mentor roles and 1 individual gained part time employment with Apex Highland.

**New Start Highland** provides a platform for training people either with a background of offending or at risk of being involved in offending behaviour. People gained a range of qualifications and work experience, but most specifically, a PAT testing qualification. This has contributed to New Start Highland's service which provides household and electrical goods free of charge or at a very low cost to people experiencing poverty or crisis in the local area. The project worked with 14 people ... and supported them as they carried out meaningful work experience. All had an induction and gained qualifications including manual handling, emergency first aid at work, fire awareness and a forklift certificate. All achieved SQA work related and life skills modules and one gained the "Certificate of Work Readiness".

SDS continued to work in schools across Highland and have continued to develop their responses to the opportunities arising in the Inner Moray Firth area, particularly in relation to the Green Freeport.

Café 1668 is a social café in central Inverness operated by the HTSI in line with the previous CJOIP to provide a warm welcome, nourishing food and a safe space for all. The Café offered hot food and drinks free of charge to those in need three days each week, with staff on hand to offer support, identify and signpost people to services which are relevant to their needs. Several monthly drop-in sessions were offered, including *Cuppa with a Copper*, *Homeless Mental Health Drop-in* and *Voiceability*.

The Café also hosted individuals who are fulfilling their Community Payback Orders providing opportunities to learn hospitality and other skills.

### Priority Action Ten

Enhance community integration and support by increasing and promoting greater use of voluntary throughcare and third sector services

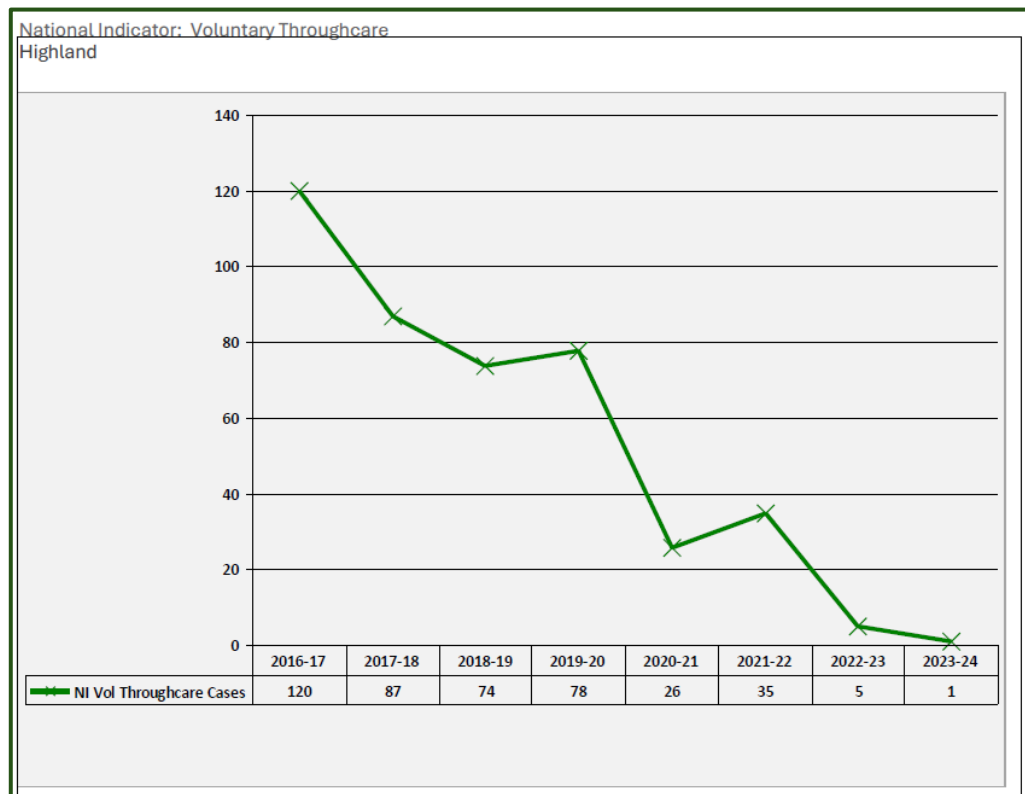
*Nationally determined outcome and indicators:*

Outcome: More people access voluntary throughcare following a short term prison sentence

Indicators: Number of:

- i. voluntary throughcare cases commenced.

Assessment of the data for this area indicates that the number of voluntary throughcare cases commenced shows an emerging pattern of decrease, where the desired direction is to increase.



## Local Evidence

- i. Mechanisms are in place for partners to support people serving short term sentences;
- ii. Proportion of people liberated from short term custody:
  - a. made aware of support;
  - b. accepting support offer;
  - c. with a co-ordinated pre-release plan in place;
- iii. Mechanisms are in place to understand the views of people accessing voluntary throughcare to support improvement;
- iv. Mechanisms are in place to understand the views of community justice partners in delivering voluntary throughcare to support the needs of people leaving short term custody.

HMP Inverness worked under a national contract with APEX Scotland (New Routes), who provided voluntary Throughcare on release and prison mentoring. This included elements of pre-liberation planning and meeting individuals on release.

Some voluntary Throughcare provision was also available through the Justice Social Work team, although their capacity to provide throughcare support was limited due to recruitment and staffing challenges. However, all prisoners serving short-term prison sentences who are not subject to statutory prison licences on release are eligible to request this service from justice social work.

There was recognition that the provision of voluntary throughcare in Highland has been limited, as evidenced also by the assessment of the national indicators. Looking ahead, the provision of the voluntary National Throughcare Service will lead to improvement in this area of work.

## National Aim 4

### Strengthen the leadership, engagement, and partnership working of local and national community justice partners

#### 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

There is no nationally determined outcome in this area, however during 2023-24, a number of activities contributed to progressing this priority and addressing the need for local evidence, including:

- i. *Mechanisms are in place to support engagement in each local authority, specifically:*
  - a. *a community justice outcomes improvement plan (CJOIP);*
  - b. *a participation statement;*
  - c. *an annual report on progress towards nationally and locally determined outcomes;*
- ii. *Mechanisms are in place to support an effective interface between national partner organisations and their local representatives within Community Justice Partnerships;*
- iii. *Evidence of mechanisms to engage non-statutory partners in strategic planning;*
- iv. *Use of the Care Inspectorate 'self-evaluation guide to support quality improvement for community justice in Scotland', with focus on Leadership and Direction.*

The HCJP Terms of Reference were reviewed in June 2023 and partners agreed that no changes were required at that stage. The HCJP's place within local Community Planning Partnership structures is clear, as are lines of communication and accountability.

The primary focus for the HCJP in 2023-24 was the finalisation of the new HCJOIP. Development work had taken place over a two year period, culminating in a final development session in November 2023.

This consultation and development process was generally positive. Engagement with a number of partners was productive and effective. This included helpful input from partners including Police Scotland, Scottish Prison Service, Highland Council JSW, Highland Council Housing, Highland Council (elected member), Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Department of Work and Pensions, Skills Development Scotland, Highland ADP, NHS Highland, Scottish Children's Reporters Administration and the University of the Highlands and Islands.

Not only did the Highland Third Sector Interface host the posts of CJP Manager and the Senior Development Officer and support the role of independent chair, it also facilitated strong links with wider third sector partners. During the year APEX Highland, Families



Outside and Rape and Sexual Assault Service Highland (RASASH) all contributed to the work of the Partnership.

Emerging from the HCJOIP development process was the need to reflect upon, and renew the structures of the HCJP. Work commenced in 2023 to review current structures and proposals are being carried forward for implementation in 2024-25 to strengthen the partnership as a whole and its planning and delivery processes.

### 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

*There is no nationally determined outcome in this area, however, there was significant engagement through the year linked to the development of the CJOIP, and this has included with families, victims and wider communities.*

The HCJP organised regular Community Justice Forums, bringing together community groups, third sector agencies and others on a quarterly basis. The forum served as a conduit for information, getting messages and information about community justice out to a wider audience, but also hearing from and receiving input from that wider audience.

Victim Support Scotland (VSS) have had a strong presence across Highland, and especially in the Justice Centre in Inverness. In the course of the year they provided professional support to vulnerable witness and victims of crime and within the Justice Centre setting they provide links with court-based partners. In addition their administration of the Emergency Assistance Fund has provided practical support and improved security for many victims, including significant numbers of victims of gender-based violence.

### Priority Action Thirteen

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

*Nationally determined outcome and indicators:*

More people across the workforce and in the community understand, and have confidence in, community justice.

### **Local Evidence**

Community justice partner contribution to joint activity across policy areas to tackle stigma.

Already mentioned was the HCJP funded *Dragon's Den* initiative to support community projects. Two additional end of project reports outline initiatives which had tangible community impact.

**Lochaber Hope** offered a two part project: (i) Early intervention working in schools with young people and in particular young people who were not engaging with school and with no positive destination, or were engaging but noncompliant due to several factors including lack of tools and resilience to cope with the pressures of school and learning environment. (ii) New Connections, bringing people together in the community to rekindle dreams and aspirations and provide a place to belong to and be part of. Our most disadvantaged community members came together with those who are advantaged and socialise, find commonalities, and activate motivation and momentum resulting in increased positive psyche.

**Care And Learning Alliance (CALA)** worked within HMP Inverness to tailor and deliver programmes of support that best met the needs of individual families. There was a focus on strengthening and maintaining family ties with fathers in prison and their children, especially those unable to see their children regularly because of distance ... the project was set up to both support father's understanding of the importance of play in their child's learning and development and provide fun and easy connections between father and child at family visits while also providing a link (memory) for the child between each visit.

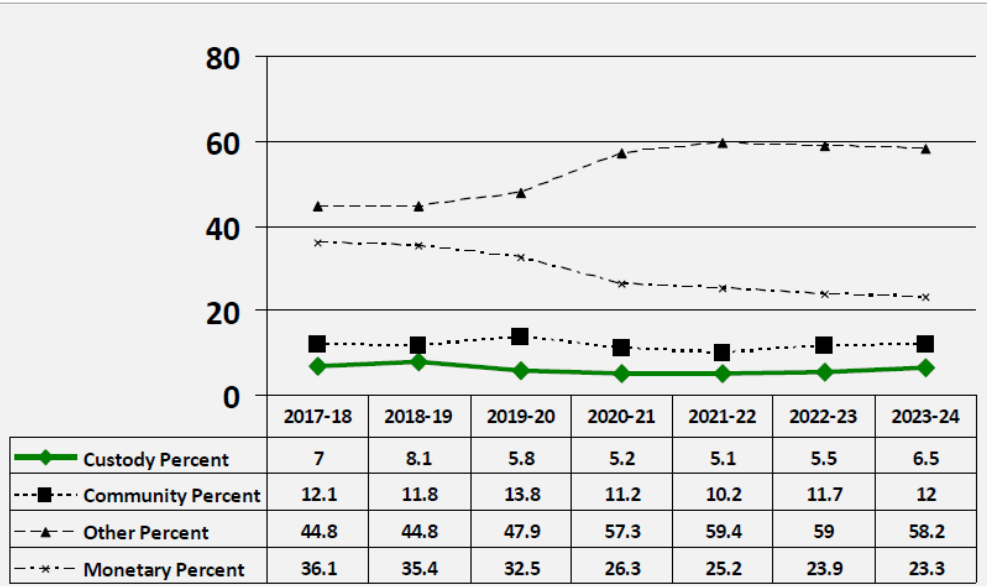
There was also work done strategically to strengthen links with other partnerships. Positive links continued to develop with the Highland Alcohol & Drug Partnership (HADP) who contributed to partnership meetings as well as providing funding for activities which were of shared interest to the HCJP and the HADP. Links were also strengthened with the Highland Violence against Women Partnership (HVAW). Members of the HVAW partnership presented to the CJP meeting in March 2024, and areas of collaboration around gender-based violence in Highland were identified, including the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) processes, addressing work with people who have domestically abused.

At a strategic level, assessment of the data by CJS indicates there is an indication of a positive change in sentencing. The desired national direction is for a decrease in the percentage of custody disposals compared to other disposal groups (including community sentences, fines and compensation and other disposals such as admonishment, absolute discharge and a range of orders relating to mental health).

The emerging pattern in Highland is of a decrease in custodial sentencing, in line with the desired direction.

## High Level Indicators

## High level community/custody split indicator for Highland



## The work of the Highland CJP – Looking ahead

The first half of the year 2024-25 saw significant change in the leadership of and support for the CJP. The support team, namely the manager and the Senior Development Officer were new in post, and the role of Independent Chair was recently filled by an experienced leader who has brought insight and connectivity across the partnership and beyond.

With the publication of the Highland CJOIP in June 2024, the focus has shifted on to the creation of a new structure for the HCJP and the development of outcomes focussed delivery plans. These two facets are closely linked, and together present opportunities to refresh and refocus the work of the Partnership.

The proposed HCJP structure will build on the four National Aims and the associated priority actions, with two delivery groups reporting to the HCJP strategic group which will co-ordinate the partnership's work and have direct accountability to the Highland CPP and Community Justice Scotland.

Work is at an advanced stage to prepare clear action plans for the HCJP as a whole, and for its constituent groups, with clear baselines to measure improvement from. These plans will prioritise delivery and link clearly with the reporting responsibilities that the HCJP has from the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016.

Whilst the HCJP will be structured around the national aims, it will also take forward the priorities of the HCJOIP, recognising the central role that local planning and engagement has played in identifying relevant priorities and delivering positive outcomes.

Further opportunities will arise from the opening of HMP Highland in the near future in creating new working relationships and approaches within a more open and inclusive context. Linked to this are the opportunities which will emerge with the commissioning of the national voluntary throughcare service which it is anticipated will support the HCJP in addressing one identified area of weakness.

Closer ties with the Inverness Justice Centre and the partners based there will be pursued. There is recognition of the pressures faced within the court settings across Highland and the HCJP would wish to gain a clearer understanding of the challenges and create processes which make engagement more meaningful and productive.

The ongoing development of stronger partnership links with the HADP and HVAW partnership will continue, as will re-establishing the presence of VSS and other victims-focussed organisations at the heart of the partnership. Linked with this is the need to constantly develop trauma-informed practice and approaches which recognise the value of lived experience.

The Nugent report identified the very positive experiences of women who had come into contact with Justice Social Work, however it also highlighted issues around the up-tariffing of sentences that appear particularly to impact women. Further insight is required to inform future responses to this.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service have identified areas of cross-over with their Highland delivery plan, and based on experiences elsewhere across Highlands and Islands, see opportunities for closer working with partners especially with younger people around the Fireskills programme, anti-social behaviour projects and road/driving issues.

A clear deficit identified in the review of the HCJP's work is the lack of mechanisms to gather evidence of outcomes and to ensure that the voices of victims, families, communities and others with lived experiences are brought to the heart of the HCJP's planning and delivery. There have been attempts to address this by individual partners, but in developing delivery plans for the upcoming year, this has been identified as a collective responsibility, requiring a coordinated approach.

On a broader theme, it is also recognised that further work needs to be developed to interact with local communities, to inform peoples' understanding of community justice, and why approaches such as Community Payback Orders and other community sentences can be more effective in addressing crime and ultimately reducing the numbers of victims of crime. With this aim in mind it is proposed that the HCJP will develop a clear communications plan, which will include a commitment to engagement with communities across Highland.

Perhaps the greatest challenges and risks relate to the best use of the resources at the disposal of partners, linked with the scope of our ambition. The creation of new structures and the implementation of new delivery plans carry the risk of overloading already busy partners, and progress (and expectations) will need to be managed carefully.

**If you would like to find out more about the Highland Community Justice Partnership, then please visit:**

[Community Justice Partnership | HTSI main \(highlandtsi.org.uk\)](https://highlandtsi.org.uk)

**or contact the Community Justice Partnership Manager, Kevin Flett**

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