



Highland
Community
Justice Partnership

ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025

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Foreword

Welcome to the Highland Community Justice Partnership's Annual Report 2024-2025.

During the last year, the prison population has continued to grow and remains well over 8,000. The reasons for this are complex and include an increase in people serving long-term sentences, an increase in the number of people serving sentences for sexual offences, longer time spent on remand and higher court caseloads.



In responding to this crisis, the Partnership continues to argue for a community-first approach and one that focuses on reserving prison for those individuals who pose a risk of serious harm. There are around 500 individuals in custody at any one time who will not pose a risk of serious harm and that have either a very low or low risk/need level. This is disproportionate, counter-productive, and does not align with the effective principles of risk management.

There are cases where justice social work reports to court assess and recommend a community disposal, but a prison sentence is imposed. Ensuring that, wherever possible, community-based sentences are imposed, particularly for sentences of 12 months imprisonment or less, where there are no indicators of a risk of serious harm and risk is assessed as manageable, would also be more effective and reduce reoffending. The successful completion rate for community payback orders in 2023-2024 was 71 percent; and since their introduction in 2011, 11.6 million hours of unpaid work or other activity have been carried out as part of successful unpaid work requirements.

In 2021, the Scottish Sentencing Council paper, *Judicial perspectives of community-based disposals*, found that although sentencers generally regarded community-based disposals as more conducive to rehabilitation than imprisonment, they noted that provision was inconsistent across the country. Moreover, judicial confidence in community sentences was undermined by concerns about lack of resourcing having a knock-on impact on management and delivery.

If we are to truly transform the justice system and are committed to further enhancing the effectiveness of community sentences, bold choices must be made about the future allocation of resources and better use made of the available tools at our disposal, e.g. increasing the use of electronic monitoring for bail and bail supervision, and speeding up the implementation of restorative justice, GPS tracking and alcohol bracelets (which use transdermal sensors to detect alcohol use and ensure compliance with court orders). Reducing the use of custody reduces expenditure on prisons and frees up resource for re-allocation. Too often, evidence-led community-based practice that would enhance a community-first approach is undermined by slow implementation linked to under-resourcing.

In 2025-2026, the partnership will continue to work collaboratively with justice agencies locally and nationally to argue for and promote the evidence that a community-first approach is the right way forward for our justice system.

James Maybee

Independent Chair, Highland Community Justice Partnership

The Community Justice Landscape

Community Justice in Highland is an increasingly collaborative, community-first approach to justice that focuses on rehabilitation, prevention, and reintegration, supporting better outcomes for individual victims and communities affected by crime. The overarching aim is to reduce reoffending and thereby contribute to the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan priorities of enabling people 'to live independently, safe and well within their community,' and 'to develop sustainable and resilient local communities.'

Highland's vast geography presents logistical challenges, but it is worth noting that Highland is the seventh largest local authority in Scotland by population, living in a range of communities from very small, remote localities through to the large urban population of Inverness and its surrounding area. However, the region benefits from strong traditions of collaborative working, with many smaller communities in particular identifying local solutions to the challenges they face. Often this is through community groups and Third Sector organisations working alongside statutory services to achieve improvement.

Highland Community Justice Partnership (HCJP) is committed to delivering innovative, locally responsive justice services that reflect the needs of its communities, and a feature of our work in the course of the year has been reaching into, and listening to communities right across Highland.

Among the underpinning principles of a community-first approach to justice are:

- *Accountability and Support:* People who have offended are held accountable while being supported to address the root causes of their behaviour and its impact on victims and communities.
- *Community-Based Sentences:* Following risk assessment, safe and appropriate alternatives to short-term prison sentences are promoted to encourage rehabilitation and community reintegration.
- *Early Intervention and Prevention:* Emphasis is placed on identifying and addressing issues early to prevent offending and reoffending.

Governance Arrangements

The HCJP is a distinct partnership within the Highland Community Planning Partnership (HCPP), and is locally accountable to the HCPP Board. The HCPP Board take an active interest in the work of the HCJP, with clear channels for communication in place providing opportunities to update on progress. The HCJP Independent Chair attends and reports to the Board, offering assurance on the implementation of the Highland Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (HCJOIP). Operationally, the HCJP continues to be hosted by the Highland Third Sector Interface, which supports the HCJP staff and independent chair in fulfilling their responsibilities.

In the course of 2024-2025, the HCJP revised its governance structures, establishing two sub-groups to support a clearer focus on delivering agreed actions, as well as enabling wider participation from partners, especially those with an operational focus.



The Strategic Group membership consists of representatives nominated by those bodies which are statutorily responsible under the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016, namely:

- Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service
- NHS Highland
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Scottish Prison Service
- Skills Development Scotland
- The Highland Council – Elected Member
- The Highland Council – Housing Services
- The Highland Council – Justice Social Work

In addition, the HCJP invites representation from:

- Department of Work and Pensions
- Highland Alcohol & Drugs Partnership
- Highland Violence against Women and Girls Partnership
- Victim Support Scotland

The Diversions and Interventions Group takes forward the delivery of diversion from prosecution, early interventions, community interventions and public protection arrangements. The Transitions and Communities Group focuses on the delivery of services which address the needs of individuals accused of or convicted of an offence, in particular those who are moving back to their communities having completed a sentence. In addition to the two sub-groups, short-life working groups are created as required to carry out defined pieces of work on behalf of the Strategic Group.

The two sub-groups met for the first time in February / March 2025, with the original HCJP meeting for the last time in its then current form in March 2025, before convening as a Strategic Group in June 2025.

Community-first in context

Across Highland, partners are working ever more closely together to deliver justice services which address the differing needs of those affected by crime and by the justice system.

The use of prison continues to play a vital role both in protecting the public and ensuring that those found guilty of some crimes face consequences for their actions, and are held accountable for those. Prison can be a place where individuals address the causes of their offending and prepare for a return to society. However, the effectiveness of prison-based programmes diminishes as the higher prisoner numbers become. Many complex factors have contributed to increased prison numbers including, for example, the number of prisoners held on remand awaiting trial and the increase in the proportion of serious crimes passing through the court system coupled with the length of sentences imposed.

The overarching outcome, shared by all partners, is to reduce crime and its impact on individuals and communities. There is strong evidence that community-first approaches are more effective in reducing reoffending than short-term custodial sentences. However, partners are keenly aware that pursuing this approach can be particularly challenging for the victims of crime, for whom the impact can be direct and personal, and the trauma profound and long lasting.

Further into this report, there is reference to the priorities for the following year, which indicates a desire to shift towards greater inclusion of victims' perspectives in our planning and development. This is most clearly seen in the work being undertaken to develop approaches to Restorative Justice which are victim led and trauma informed.

Ideally, the prevention of crime should be prominent in our strategies and priorities, however, the National Strategy for Community Justice and the Priority Actions which frame the work of Community Justice Partnerships do not include outcomes around prevention and early intervention with young people.

In Highland we have recognised this can be a limitation, and have sought to support partners in addressing this. There continue to be active links with the Highland Community Safety and Resilience Group, identifying areas of shared concern and supporting emerging priorities throughout the year. Also, within the newly developed HCJP structures, the multi-agency Youth Action Service have become participants in the Diversions and Interventions Delivery Group, where there is a focus on the implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024 and the wider implications for the interface between youth and adult justice services.

Community-first approaches take many different forms, and the following examples offer a flavour of some of the work done by partners over the year.

Community-first in practice

Stay on Side and Fireskills

The Stay on Side and Fireskills programmes have been delivered across Highland, led by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). These courses have been possible due to the funding received from The Bairns Hoose and Police Scotland. The courses offer a collaborative programme involving partners from Education, Social Work, Police Scotland, Community Learning and Development and others.

FireSkills is SFRS's core course, where referrals mainly come through schools, with funding often supported by the schools themselves. *Stay on Side* runs as a partnership programme with The Highland Council Home to Highland Care Experienced Education Team and Police Scotland Children and Young Peoples Safeguarding team, aimed at young people who may need some direction and guidance.

The programmes are designed to support young people, aged between the ages of twelve and eighteen who are currently engaged with partner agencies, to develop practical core skills. Its flexibility means that it can be suitable for a range of learners who will experience a variety of individual sessions that can be linked together to provide a course ranging from a few hours to forty hours.

The programmes are modelled on firefighter drills, building skills in:

- problem solving
- basic first aid and CPR
- team working and team leading
- confidence and communication
- citizenship
- understanding the contribution that agencies make to communities

Over the year three courses were delivered. One in Inverness, one in Dingwall and one in Nairn. Each course had a maximum of 12 young people with up to 60 referrals received each time. The courses were delivered over a week by SFRS supported by colleagues from Home to Highland, Police Scotland and other key partners. Due to the popularity and success of the courses, there is a waiting list and there are plans to deliver a further two courses in Fort William and again in Inverness.

Community Payback Orders with Unpaid Work

In recent years there has been an increase in the use of community-based interventions within the justice system. This has developed against a backdrop of other changes across the system, including an extension of the presumption against short-term sentences and the potential for the use of technology to support the system (including electronic monitoring).

Community sentences offer an alternative to short-term imprisonment, and underpin the dual aims of addressing the root causes of offending behaviour and supporting rehabilitation. Highland Council's Justice Social Work team play a pivotal role in the delivery of a range of community-first initiatives and programmes, the most widely used community sentence being the Community Payback Order (CPO) which can include up to ten different requirements (e.g. unpaid work, treatment for alcohol or drug use, restriction of movement or programme requirements). All CPOs are risk assessed and tailored to individual circumstances.

Community Payback Placements & Projects



Fort William: New Connections - Lochaber Hope

Morna, volunteer said: "It's so great to have community payback placements, they've all been really helpful and nice to have around. Great friendships are also made along the way."



Thurso: Thurso Community Development Trust

Sharon, Development Officer said: "We greatly value our collaboration with the payback team, finding every placement they send to us to be meaningful in its own way. Participants not only become part of a team but also benefit from the chance to work and to witness the tangible results of their efforts, and engage in the therapeutic process of nurturing



Nairn: Green Hive

Matthew CEO, said: "We've had very positive experiences where one guy had great joinery and painting skills, he did lots of jobs for us for a few months until he'd completed his sentence. We gave him a good reference and he was successfully employed by a reputable local firm."



Inverness: Inverness Foodstuff

Pam, Manager, said: "We are delighted to offer placements for community payback clients. It has worked really well over the years with some very positive experiences. Some clients have offered their skills to support the homeless people in different ways, had further training and continued on as regular volunteers."

It is always important to note that contrary to the misconceptions often perpetuated in the media and in political discourse, community sentences are not 'soft options'. All are based on rigorous assessment (including risk assessment) prior to consideration by the judiciary, and all sentences are subject to ongoing supervision and compliance with clear conditions, including clear implications for the individual if there is a breach.

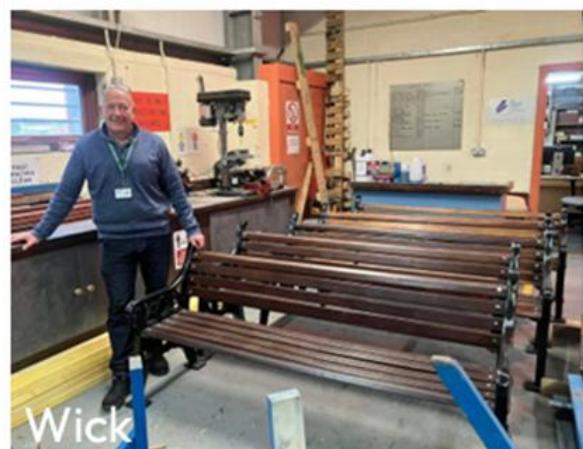
The post of Community Justice Senior Development Officer was established in 2024, with part of the role being to raise public awareness of community justice throughout Highland as well as to support the development of CPOs with opportunities for unpaid work particularly beyond the inner Moray Firth area. CPO teams are based all around Highland, often working closely with third sector organisations and community groups which offer a range of placements. From Thurso Grows in the North to New Connections in the South, Green Hive in the East to St Columba Church in the West, as well as those more centrally based in Inverness, such as New Start Highland and Inverness Food Stuff, and many more.

Building on the work of the teams there was also engagement with local communities ensuring that factual, positive messages were shared through press articles in local newspapers, supplemented by increased use of social media, especially Facebook.

In addition to the development of ongoing placement opportunities, there was support for more involved projects with community groups which strengthened partnerships and were appreciated by local communities.

For example, in Caithness the John O'Groats Journal carried an article on the work done to upgrade the facilities at the Staxigoe village hall overlooking the historic harbour, where the Scottish herring industry had its earliest roots. The hall was built over a century ago by the young men of the village. Young men completing their CPO requirements contributed to the recent refurbishment of the hall. The team supervisor said, "Undertaking such a sizeable project as Staxigoe Hall is very satisfying knowing that if we weren't here to help, it just wouldn't get done." The supervisor, a time-served painter and decorator, takes pride in working with clients and teaching new skills which result in the completion of the job to a high standard – skills which individuals can

Caithness CPO Team



carry with them after they have completed their orders that hopefully they can use to make their lives better in the long term.

On Raasay a community project to develop a historic, but long-disused meal mill was supported by individuals completing their CPOs through unpaid work. The West Highland Free Press reported on the community's vision to create *Muileann Àrais*, an eco-Heritage Centre for Raasay with a café, library, display areas and much more. The leader of the project summed up her experience of working with the local

Developments at Raasay Mill



community payback team, saying "it's a prime example of how well the scheme works. We've had great workers who want to see the job done. One lad with excellent skills will get some paid work with us after his sentence is completed."

Highlighting these, and many other positive news stories of the work carried out by the different community payback teams has generated a great deal of local interest through social media and created a lot of positive community engagement and dialogue.

Beneficiaries are always delighted to be recognised and given the chance to share their experiences, and to express their appreciation of an often unseen group of people. The use of social media has been particularly helpful, with follower numbers almost doubling to over 700 in the course of the year, and the reach going beyond Inverness and Easter Ross to include engagement across all of Highland.

The Senior Development Officer writes in one of her articles, "The chances of someone reoffending are reduced significantly when they can maintain their contact with family, their accommodation and their work. Community justice is about finding ways for offenders to serve a sentence from home, while getting support to rehabilitate and the opportunity to give back to the community. There is of course a place for prisons, but like James Timpson (UK Prisons Minister and businessman) suggests, only one third of offenders need to be behind bars. This does call for a degree of tolerance from our communities, along with the willingness to actively offer meaningful jobs, as well as individual placements especially in remote parts of Highland."

Community Payback Orders, with Programme Requirements

Whilst the CPO with unpaid work is the most commonly used community sentence, there is a wide range of alternative community sentences available in Highland. Primarily these are delivered by Justice Social Workers with significant experience and additional training. These sentences aim to address either particular types of offence and offending behaviour or underlying causes of offending behaviour. In Highland we are fortunate to be able to offer a wide range of highly specialised interventions.

These specialist interventions are referred to as 'programme requirements' which have been developed and accredited through national boards to ensure consistency and that they are based on evidence of what works. They require individuals to participate in structured activities aimed at rehabilitation.

The Caledonian System works with men convicted of domestic abuse offences, whilst Moving Forward 2 Change (MF2C) works with men (aged 18+) who have been convicted of a sexual offence. Both these programmes are delivered by specialist teams within the Justice Social Work team, led by experienced social workers who have undergone enhanced training.

Working together with the whole family and taking a 'systems' approach (with a combination of services for men, women and children) is central to the Caledonian System's ultimate aim of reducing the risk of harm to women and children. In order to keep women and children safe there is close cooperation with partners in Police Scotland and Women's Aid as well as other agencies represented in the Highland Violence against Women and Girls Partnership.

Key features of the system include:

The **Men's Programme** which lasts a minimum of two years and comprises at least 14 one-to-one preparatory sessions (Pre-Group stage) followed by a Group Work stage of at least 26 weekly two-hour sessions, and further post group one-to-one work (Maintenance stage).

The Men's Programme is highly structured and participation is a mandatory requirement of a statutory order or licence. Men are referred by court order if they have been convicted of offences involving domestic abuse and are assessed as suitable candidates in terms of risk and readiness to change. The programme is designed to help men understand the links between their thoughts, feelings and abusive behaviour, and to invite and challenge them to rethink the attitudes and beliefs which have underpinned their behaviour.

The **Women's Service** provides safety planning, information and advice as well as emotional support to women partners and ex-partners of men referred to the Men's Programme. It is provided by dedicated women's workers, who aim to reduce the risk to women and their children and to improve women's wellbeing. In contrast with the Men's Programme, the Women's Service is voluntary – women are not required to accept the support they are offered.

The **Children's Service** seeks to ensure that the needs of children affected by domestic abuse are met and their rights upheld, and the impact that domestic abuse has on their lives is reduced.

This integrated model has been shown to be effective. An independent evaluation undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Government found that women reported feeling safer due to improved safety planning and support to contact police about breaches. Men who completed the programme were judged by case workers as posing a lower risk to partners and children.

In Highland groups for the men are delivered over a number of sites including Inverness, Dingwall and in the coming year additional sites will include Wick and Skye. Over the last twelve months the group has also been delivered in Fort William. The Caledonian Team is responsive to the needs of the clients and services are delivered to, and strive to ensure that more remote areas are as well serviced as more densely populated areas. The number of men across Highland that are currently subject to a requirement for the Caledonian Programme is 49. There are approximately 30 women who are actively engaged in the Women's Services with the numbers of individual children receiving a service standing at 10. Indirect work is undertaken with caregivers, both in Highland and other countries. Additionally, the Children's Workers contribute to increasing parenting capacity through the co-facilitation of groups, particularly the Children and Fathering module.

Moving Forward 2 Change (MF2C) is an updated version of a previous intervention, Moving Forward Making Changes which works with adult males convicted of sexual offences or offences with a sexual element who have been assessed as being medium to high risk.

The re-designed programme draws on the latest available evidence and builds on earlier independent evaluation and consultation with those who had experienced the programme. It is designed to be delivered by trained facilitators as part of a community payback order programme requirement or prison licence condition. MF2C consists of pre-programme work and a combination of essential and optional modules in a group setting followed by maintenance sessions.

The main aims are to:

- help the individual to understand and reflect on the risk factors relevant to their offending behaviour;
- provide an opportunity to address the factors relevant to their offending;
- assist individuals to develop the skills to make changes in their thinking and behaviour that will increase confidence, wellbeing and the ability to cope with life stresses and problems;
- help individuals to develop plans to reduce the risk of them causing sexual harm to others, and

- work in partnership with other agencies in the management and assessment of risk, including the UK-wide Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

There are currently 53 men subject to MF2C requirements across Highland. Groups are currently running in Fort William and Dingwall, which includes men from the Inverness area. A group will also be starting in January 2026 in Wick. As with the Caledonian Programme the MF2C Programme is delivered as closely as possible to the areas that the men reside in. Recently, one participant has just completed the Programme, this is the first completion of MF2C in Highland with more to follow over the next few months.

2024-2025 Improvement Report

Community Justice Scotland (CJS) produce an annual *Local Improvement Report* for each Community Justice Partnership. The report presents centrally analysed data drawn from a range of sources which local partners have inputted to. These relate to each of the national indicators and provide a broad perspective on progress. CJPAs are encouraged to use this data to identify areas of activity which require further analysis and reflection.

As part of the restructuring of HCJP planning and delivery processes, 2024-2025 was a transitional period where local and national priorities became more closely aligned, with frameworks developed to support better reporting. The following tables bring together national and local information, with a simple RAG tool applied as a first step towards further analysis.

	Improvement indicated by clear emerging pattern of increase/decrease in relation to desired direction
	No notable change
	Deterioration indicated by clear emerging pattern of increase/decrease in relation to desired direction
	Data is not valid (e.g. insufficient, incomplete or in development)

The Local Improvement Report is a vital part of the HCJP review process. Whilst the information is high level and specific to the national indicators it does present HCJP with a snapshot of the Partnership's strengths and weaknesses. In particular, where deterioration is indicated this alerts the Partnership to areas of activity which require further examination and a response going forward. This informs prioritisation for the coming year, and is reflected in the delivery plans of the Strategic and Delivery Groups.

It must be noted that Community Payback Order information and Drug Treatment and Testing Order information are not normally available until the spring of the following year, so there is always a delay in reporting these.

A baseline of 2017-18 has been used in most instances, primarily because it avoids the skewing of data which resulted during the period of COVID19 restrictions. Exceptions to this are noted individually.

The improvement indicators included are those stated by CJS in their Local Improvement Report for Highland 2024-2025.

NATIONAL AIM 1

Optimise the use of diversion and intervention at the earliest opportunity

Priority Action 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

National Outcome: More people successfully complete diversion from prosecution

National (Performance) Indicators

Number of diversion from prosecution:	Baseline 2017-18	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
i. assessments undertaken	76	279	356	
ii. cases commenced	43	112	179	
iii. cases successfully completed	34	79	107	

Note: desired direction for all – increase

Local Activity

Justice Social Work (JSW) offers a range of interventions to support the successful completion of Diversions from Prosecution, including Decider Skills and SMART (Self-Management and Recovery Training) which people can access as required. Individuals residing in the inner Moray Firth area can also complete their diversion while continuing to work and receive support from third sector organisations where appropriate. Young people aged 16 - 17 would normally complete their diversion with Highland Council's Youth Action Service using their expertise in provision of interventions for young people.

The Diversions and Interventions Delivery Group have identified the implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024, as presenting issues which will need to be addressed particularly around the impact upon the interface of Youth Action and JSW. The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration is also involved in this discussion in terms of the potential impact on the Children's Hearing system.

The Diversions and Interventions Delivery Group has also taken the opportunity to reflect on the way that Diversion from Prosecution works within the Highland context, including discussion about the length of time it can take for diversions to come through to JSW and the use of diversions for people with a significant history of offending or non-compliance with previous orders.

Police Scotland report continued use by officers of alternatives to prosecution and direct measures as disposals for offences and monitors the use of these regularly. The publication of the Lord Advocate's guidance on the use of direct measures for adult offenders was particularly welcomed by Police Scotland colleagues.

As a result of the wider range of interventions aimed at addressing individual needs more effectively delivery has been much more person centred and focused. JSW continue to find that diversion works best for individuals who have some or no prior convictions, especially young people and women.

Priority Action 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

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

National (Performance) Indicators

Proportion of people in police custody that were:	Data under development			Improvement indicator
i. offered support and declined				
ii. offered support and accepted				
iii. recorded as n/a				
Referrals from custody centres	No baseline	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
		82	121	

Local Activity

There has been an ongoing, well-developed approach to custody-based services in Highland. Partnership working between Police Scotland, NHS Highland and the Third Sector Custody Link Worker Project (CLink) continues to be strong. The presence of the Third Sector within the custody setting facilitates improved access to support for individuals who present with a range of vulnerabilities.

The partnership approach presents unique opportunities to engage with individuals who find themselves in police custody. This is focused in the custody suite at Burnett Road in Inverness, which has the additional benefit of proximity to the Inverness Justice Centre.

During the year the CLink project worked with 144 individuals to understand what is going on in their lives from their own perspectives, seeking to ensure safety and stabilisation, and supporting onward referral where necessary.

Amongst the desired outcomes are a reduction in patterns of behaviour that could become escalated and lead to custodial sentences; supporting individuals to make positive changes to their life circumstances and signposting/referring to support services that individuals would otherwise not be aware of or inclined/confident to engage with as a result of social inequality of opportunity, stigma or lack of trust in statutory services.

Within the custody setting, NHS nursing staff continued the development and implementation of the MATPACT (Medication Assisted Treatment Prevention and Care Toolkit), supported by the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP). The aims were to increase the number of referrals to appropriate health services, support a reduction in the number of drug related deaths for those who have been in custody within 6 months, increase the number of referrals to outreach teams, increase number of take-home naloxone kits distributed and increase the volume of blood borne virus testing. These aims sit within the vision of the national MAT (Medication Assisted Treatment) standards to tackle drug-related deaths. This approach takes the opportunity presented in the custody setting to improve user experience and create a person-centred focus, and ultimately contribute to a reduction in the number of drug related deaths (which in Highland during the period reduced from 26 deaths to 21 deaths).

In addition to the assessment tools used in Inverness, different approaches have been used elsewhere. For example, the NHS team have developed a 'Trigger Checklist' which is used as a form of initial screening for substance use in the custody setting in Caithness.

Police Custody staff continue to value the close cooperation and partnership working with the CLink project, as well as the positive relationship that exists with NHS colleagues in the custody setting, where there is a high degree of trust and mutual respect underpinning close working practices and improved outcomes for individuals.

In addition to the work in the custody settings, the HADP funded a community focussed Harm Prevention Officer (HPO) post covering mainland Highland. The aim of the HPO role has been to identify those deemed to be at substantial risk of death due to alcohol or drug use and to collaborate with relevant partners and individuals to reduce this risk. The target population is adults, although young people have been supported when appropriate. During the year the HPO engaged with 97 individuals, as well as developing links with partner agencies across the community.

It is worth noting that the number of custody referrals from Highland accounts for over 12% of all such referrals for the whole of Scotland (121 out of a total of 976).

NATIONAL AIM 2

Ensure that robust and high quality community interventions and public protection arrangements are consistently in place

Priority Action 3: Support the use of robust alternatives to remand by ensuring high quality bail services are consistently available and delivered effectively

National Outcome: More people are assessed for and successfully complete bail supervision

National (Performance) Indicators

Number of:	No baseline	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
i. assessment reports for bail suitability		386	358	
ii. bail supervision cases commenced		31	22	
iii. bail supervision cases completed		28	4 (23) See note (ii)	

Note: (i) desired direction for all – increase; (ii) the completion figure has been revised following a review of reported numbers. Updated information has been submitted to Justice Analytic Services.

Local Activity

Having a dedicated team of Justice Social Work Officers and a Social Worker means that completing assessments and providing Bail Supervision Services has been more consistent over the year.

However, a number of challenges around the use of Bail Supervision have been identified by the Divisions and Interventions Delivery Group as needing to be addressed in the coming year. Also, the lack of clear risk assessment and the potential impact on victims of individuals

being released on bail need to be better understood as well as the perception that breaches are not always responded to timeously.

JSW team members continue to find that Bail Supervision works very well for young people and for women. However, the issues identified above will be a focus for this coming year.

Priority Action 4: Strengthen options for safe and supported management in the community by increasing and widening the use of electronic monitoring technologies
(No National Outcome)

Local Activity

A range of court disposals and forms of licence can be electronically monitored or 'tagged'. These arrangements are managed by G4S, under contract to the Scottish Government. In their statistical bulletin for 2024-2025, G4S report that in Highland electronic monitoring was imposed as part of a Restriction of Liberty Order 36 times, used as a Condition of Bail 35 times and twice to support a Movement Restriction Condition for young people.

Currently Electronic Monitoring (EM) uses radio frequency technology which is independent of mobile signal, and available across the whole country, including remote and island areas. New technologies are available utilising GPS and alcohol monitoring technologies, but these remain to be rolled out by the Scottish Government.

Priority Action 5: Ensure that those given community sentences are supervised and supported appropriately to protect the public, promote desistence from offending and enable rehabilitation by delivering high quality, consistently available, trauma-informed services, and programmes

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

National (Performance) Indicators

Percentage of:	Baseline 2017-18	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
i. CPOs successfully completed	73%	74%		
ii. DTTOs successfully completed	43%	78%		
Number of community sentences compared to other disposals	11.8%	12%		

Note: (i) desired direction for all – increase; (ii) verified information for 2024-25 not available until April 2026

Local Activity

Justice Social Work continues to deliver a wide range of specialist interventions across the Highland area as part of a Community Payback Order, including unpaid work, and Drug Testing & Treatment Order (DTTO and DTTO2). In the course of the year the following programmes have been offered, including:

Moving Forward 2 Change
The Caledonian System
SMART Recovery
Decider Skills

Justice Social Work operates across Highland, seeking to offer the full range of interventions regardless of the geographical challenges. For example, though the team delivering the Caledonian and MF2C programmes (highlighted elsewhere in this report) is based in Dingwall, these interventions have been offered at a number of locations from Caithness in the far north to Lochaber and Skye in the south and west.

Awareness raising efforts have increased the community uptake of the unpaid work squads. Communities have responded very positively and tangibly to the news stories that have been published on social media and the local press. The increase in demand has at times stretched the Community Payback teams especially when coupled with the increase in numbers of clients, also with higher tariffs.

Questions have been raised about offering opportunities for personal development to individuals completing unpaid work requirements, but there seems to be a lack of clarity about how this might be achieved within current processes and constraints. Over the year there was investment in training for Community Payback Supervisors, and a Senior CPO role was created to strengthen the delivery of the service across Highland.

A desktop study compiled examples of Women's Programmes around Scotland. This was circulated to a range of partners, locally and nationally, and is being used to support the design of a women's programme in Highland.

The Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO) team is based at the Justice Centre in Inverness, however, as with other services the intervention and accompanying support is offered across Highland. The central DTTO criteria is that the individual has a history of offending linked to drug use and is also at risk of receiving a custodial sentence. The DTTO2 (funded by HADP) is a form of early intervention, aimed at people who are not dependent on drugs and are more likely to respond to intervention, for example, individuals aged 16 and older who may be facing their first drug charge and females with less entrenched drug use.

Priority Action 6: Ensure restorative justice is available to all those who wish to access it by promoting and supporting the appropriate and safe provision of services
(No National Outcome)

Local Activity

During the year exploratory work was undertaken by the Senior Development Officer to assess the level of interest across Highland for the provision of Restorative Justice (RJ).

Real interest was identified across a range of statutory and third sector partners resulting in a working group being established including Justice Social Work, Action for Children, Victim Support Scotland, Custody Link Worker Project and HCJP with the aim to research, raise awareness, train up and collaborate with partners to explore what model of provision might be achievable and sustainable in the Highland context. Support has been received from CJS and from Space to Face, a RJ organisation based in Shetland.

Both HMP Inverness and Action for Children have, in the past, explored RJ with some of their clients. A number of organisations committed to fund a staff member to attend RJ training in 2025, and a unique event was delivered in autumn 2025 at University of Highlands & Islands which will be reported on next year.

NATIONAL AIM 3

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

Priority Action 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

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

National (Performance) Indicators

Number of transfers in drug/alcohol treatments from:	Baseline 2021-22	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
i. custody to community	31	30	29	
ii. community to custody				

Note: desired direction – increase

Local Activity

Throughout the year the Highland Community Integration Plan (HCIP) continued to be delivered using a partnership approach involving Scottish Prison Service, NHS Highland, Justice Social Work and a number of third sector agencies providing community support. The focus is on those living in the inner Moray Firth area who have known drug and alcohol issues. It continues to be successful in terms of supporting those who are returning to the community from prison in assessing their needs and tailoring plans to support them on their release. For those opting to engage with the HCIP, planning normally begins at 6 weeks prior to release.

As part of the assessment process, there is particular attention to the risk of suicide. Should such a risk be identified a case conference will be held to clarify the relevant factors relating to the release that need to be addressed. The case conference will involve relevant partners to shape the direction of the plan and the support required.

Also used within HMP Inverness is the locally developed assessment and outcomes tool, My Compass broadly similar to the Justice Outcomes Star.

Throughout the year Families Outside have highlighted the issues faced by the families of those who are imprisoned. These are particularly acute in Highland, especially in more remote parts of Highland where transport to visit family members in prison can be difficult. There is also a significant impact on the families of women from Highland who are imprisoned, who face long journeys to visit and to maintain family contact.

The creation of the Transitions and Communities Delivery Group has provided a forum for partners to come together to share thinking, explore opportunities for collaboration and support the transition to the new national Voluntary Throughcare service, Upside.

One innovation developed in Highland is the provision of FitHome technology by Albyn Housing Society. With the use of non-intrusive technology in peoples' homes there is evidence of:

- A significant drop in substance use related ICU visits.

- Early detection of overdose via the use of FitHome sensor monitoring by a client's drug & alcohol nurse.
- No clients returning to prison on charges brought against them during their stay in a FitHome equipped property.

Research into the impact of the FitHome technology is being undertaken by Napier University, with a focus on the rehabilitation of those leaving prison and on the prevention of reoffending.

Priority Action 8: 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

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

National (Performance) Indicators

Number of homelessness applications where prison is last known address.	Baseline 2017-18	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
	40	35	50	

Note: (i) desired direction – decrease; (ii) These figures are rounded to nearest 5

Local Activity

Housing partners (including local authority housing) play a central role in the delivery of the Highland Community Integration Plan (HCIP). For people on licences, Justice Social Work and the Highland Council's Housing work together when liberations are taking place. Both services normally plan ahead of time where the person is likely to present as homeless, and for cases where the individual is a Registered Sex Offender, Police, Housing and Justice Social Work work together to complete Environmental Risk Assessments.

Also, the My Compass assessment tool used in HMP Inverness identifies housing issues at an early stage, and how to address these. HMP Inverness has good links with housing providers and with the local CAB which supports planning for liberation. Upcoming planned liberations (Home Detention Curfew, parole etc.) are communicated to relevant partner agencies to support suitable accommodation planning. However, the lack of available housing in parts of Highland make improvement difficult in this area.

In addition to the health benefits offered by the use of FitHome technology outlined above, there are wider housing support benefits which have been identified.

The non-intrusive technology includes a ring doorbell camera that enables individuals to manage their door, minimising the risk of unwanted visitors. The FitHome technology requires a minimum housing support package to be agreed prior to release. This comprehensive approach leads to:

- improved tenancy sustainment;
- increased partnership working has benefitted the tenants through an enhanced housing allocation partnership and more coordinated support practices, and
- a greater sense of safety and stability for clients that normal properties/tenancies lack.

Priority Action 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

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

National (Performance) Indicators

Participation in an employment programme: percentage of people with convictions	No baseline	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
		5%	6%	

Note: (i) desired direction – increase; (ii) This data relates to NOLB (no-one left behind) programmes. Other employability programmes exist and support people with convictions through national and locally commissioned services

Local Activity

HMP Inverness has a strong relationship with the local DWP team and Job Centre+. This includes the provision of a prison work-based coach, who attends the Links Centre on a regular basis and organises scheduled quarterly employability events.

Café 1668 is a social café in central Inverness operated by the Highland Third Sector Interface to provide healthy food and a safe space for all. The Café offers hot food and drinks free of charge to those in need three days a week and has staff who can support, identify and signpost people to services which are relevant to their needs. The Café has hosted individuals who are fulfilling their Community Payback Orders unpaid work requirements providing opportunities to learn hospitality and other skills.

One Highland GP writes: “Cafe 1668 is an invaluable resource for those who are vulnerable for a variety of reasons. For those attending the Homeless Healthcare Service, and those attending the DARS (Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service) in Inverness, Cafe 1668 forms part of our signposting and also a location for outreach services to make contact with people. Aside from the provision of food, which is a core need for people who are struggling with poverty, there is also the opportunity of social connection, which is vital to the mental health and wellbeing of those who experience severe and multiple disadvantage.”

With regard to employability, HMP Inverness and the Scottish Drugs Forum (SDF) have worked together during the year to develop a pilot for the SDF National Traineeship programme to be offered within the prison setting. The programme will run into year 2025-2026, and evaluation will take place on completion of the pilot.

2024-2025 has been a developmental year as regards employability. Working towards the creation of the new Transitions and Communities Delivery Group has stimulated renewed engagement with employment / employability partners. Since the formation of the group there has been active participation from DWP, Skills Development Scotland, Highland Council Employability Service, Justice Social Work, Highland Council Economy and Regeneration, Highland Council Adult Learning, University of the Highlands and Islands, the Scottish Drugs Forum and from industry partners, Amey and Balfour Beatty. Also, the DWP has continued to

focus on work coaching, with a number of larger employers (e.g. Balfour Beatty and G&A Barnie Group) offering placements for individuals.

Priority Action 10: Enhance community integration and support by increasing and promoting greater use of voluntary throughcare and third sector services

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

National (Performance) Indicators

	Baseline 2017-18	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
Number of voluntary throughcare cases commenced	87	1	6	

Note: desired direction – increase

Local Activity

It is recognised that the provision of statutory voluntary throughcare in Highland by Justice Social Work has been limited and preparation for the delivery of the new National Voluntary Throughcare service by Upside is anticipated to significantly improve outcomes in this area of activity. Available from April 2025, Upside will provide people in short-term custody, or remand with the practical and emotional support they need to transition to community life. The service is voluntary and will address any issues they may have as an individual on release like health, housing, finance, skills and employment.

Some statutory Throughcare has been offered by JSW, but provision has been constrained by recruitment challenges in the course of the reporting year, which have been addressed. Although the indicator shows improvement, this is modest, and there is some way to go to return to previous levels of delivery.

HMP Inverness continued to work in partnership with APEX offering specialist Disclosure advice for participants with an offending background, as well as Throughcare Mentoring services, Drug & Alcohol recovery provision through SMART Recovery, SMART Family & Friends and Mental Health provision through Decider Skills and outdoor Greenspace Regeneration projects and Employability upskilling through training courses and job focused practice.

NATIONAL AIM 4

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

Priority Action 11 (Governance and collaboration): 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.

National Outcome: Improved Collective Leadership and engagement supports achievement of shared community justice outcomes

Local Activity

Reference to the changes in governance have been highlighted elsewhere in this report. The overarching purpose of the exercise was to align the work of the HCJP to the Aims and Actions of the National Strategy for Community Justice so as to support delivery improvement and clearer accountability in reporting, whilst still recognising the place of the HCJP within local planning and delivery structures.

There was also value in broadening the reach of the partnership. With focus moving beyond a single group, to include the delivery groups for partners who wish to proactively engage with the HCJP, there is opportunity to widen representation, especially at an operational level. For comparison, the invitation list to the original HCJP meeting sat at around 22 (with an average of 14 attending each meeting), now the combined lists for the strategic and delivery groups sits at over 30 (with an average combined attendance of 26 [omitting duplicate attendance] at the three group meetings). Included in this broader attendance is representation from NHS (custody and prison-based services), housing and employability services (including Housing association provider and large employers) and third sector organisations involved in a range of justice focussed activities.

We have always been fortunate to have positive and supportive links with the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP). Not only do the HADP commission or fund justice focussed services (for example the Custody Link Project and the Harm Prevention Officer post within Police Scotland), there are well developed strategic links between the HADP and the HCJP.

There are clear links with the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). The HCJP independent chair is also the independent chair of the MAPPA Strategic Oversight Group in Highlands and Islands. There is cross representation on the HCJP and Highland Community Safety and Resilience Delivery group, and the independent chairs of the Highland Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership and the HCJP are members of each other's partnerships. Links have also developed with the Adult Support and Protection service.

Priority Action 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

(No National Outcome)

Local Activity

HCJP has struggled over a number of years to meaningfully engage with victims' organisations and to ensure participation in HCJP structures and activities.

As part of the restructuring of the HCJP, it was central to the planning process that engagement with victims' organisations would be a priority, and that Victim Support Scotland would be named as a strategic partner within the new structures.

It has also been evident that the partnership has struggled to gather the views and perspectives of individuals and their families.

Two strands of work have been undertaken to seek to address this deficit. Our quarterly Community Justice Forums have sought to ensure that organisations and individuals with lived or living experience are encouraged to attend and contribute. For example, the in-person forum held in November 2024 included lively discussion from a number of people with lived experience (mainly as family members) around the issues of justice, antisocial behaviour and support for individuals who have used drugs and have been in contact with the justice system.

During the year we also engaged with organisations who have an understanding of working with people with lived experience. There has been limited contact with Next Chapter Scotland (who were then invited to speak at our May 2025 Third Sector Forum) and also with the Scottish Drugs Forum, who have a strong track record in engaging with those with lived experience of using drug services, and who already have a presence in Highland through a contract with the HADP.

Engagement with victims, families affected by the justice system and those who have lived experience of the system has been identified as a HCJP priority going forward.

Priority Action 13: Support integration and reduce stigma by ensuring the community and workforce have an improved understanding of and confidence in community justice

National Outcome: More people across the workforce and in the community understand, and have confidence in, community justice

Local Activity

As a consequence of the initiative to widen opportunities for unpaid work and support the continued development of Community Payback Orders in more distant parts of Highland, opportunities emerged during the year to develop positive links with local press which has progressed alongside the wider use of social media to inform public understanding and present positive stories of the benefits brought to local communities through unpaid work. This has been of tremendous benefit, but sits against wider societal perceptions that remain largely negative towards any form of 'punishment' which is not custodial and therefore perceived to be 'soft'.

The HCJP Senior Development Officer has undertaken a range of activities to raise public awareness and address issues of stigma and raise awareness of community-first approaches.

The HCJP 'Highland Justice Services and Interventions' website continued to expand during 2024-2025. It signposts people to organisations who can assist them at whatever stage of the justice journey they are at. It is intended as a place holder for justice services and interventions that can assist those who have offended, those affected by crime and families of either. Click [here](#) to visit the site.

A Highland Community Justice information campaign went out on both Facebook and X raising awareness of community justice and highlighting various justice related themes. Click [here](#) to view PDF.

The HCJP Facebook presence continues to effectively engage with communities around Highland exceeding 700 followers at the end of the 2024-2025. For example, in March 2025 after a visit to the CPO team and local beneficiaries in Fort William, the town moved from 9th up to 3rd place in terms of numbers of followers. Partner visits around Highland and coverage of local stories have also added localities to the demographics data which were not previously listed. Only Inverness and Dingwall were listed at the start of 2024 and now there are eight additional places listed.

Following planned visits to CPO teams and other partners around Highland, press articles were prepared and a number were taken up and published in local papers as well as appearing online. These included: West Highland Free Press, John O'Groats Journal & Caithness Courier, Ross-Shire Journal, Lochaber Times and Inverness Courier.

In addition, there have been numerous visits to and contacts with community groups, men's sheds, churches and others right across Highland, all of them presenting opportunities to speak about the community-first approach to justice.

National (Performance) Indicators

Percentage of individuals who agree that: i. people should help their community as part of a community sentence rather than spend a few months in prison for a minor offence	Baseline 2018-19	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
	84%	82%	Data not available	Note: This data is available only at a Scotland level

Looking Forward

As part of the restructuring exercise there was the creation of delivery plans for the Strategic and Delivery Groups. As indicated above, the annual review process is informed by the Local Improvement Report and the RAG tool. Identified priorities are reflected in each group's delivery plans going forward. In summary, the priorities for 2025-2026 are:

Strategic Group Actions

1. Fully implement new HCJP structures and update Terms of Reference.
2. Prepare for a self-evaluation exercise, including review of data and information gathered.
3. Support improved engagement with Victims of Crime, and victim support organisations.
4. Support the potential roll out of restorative justice.
5. Continue to build on the research into women's experiences of justice in Highland.
6. Develop processes to gather the views and experiences of those who have experience of the Justice System (including narratives, case studies etc).
7. Create a HCJP Communications Plan.

Diversion and Interventions Delivery Group Actions

8. Develop agreed local processes to support the use of Diversion from Prosecution and Direct Measures within Highland.
9. Monitor and support developments in Youth Justice (particularly the interface between Youth and Adult Justice services).
10. Review existing processes and pathways for individuals from arrest to potential court appearance.
11. Address perceived challenges in the use of bail in Highland.
12. Build on existing pathways and opportunities for community sentences.

Transitions and Communities Delivery Group Actions

13. Review current use of Highland Community Integration Planning processes to ensure:
 - a. pathways are in place which support continuity of health and social care provision for individuals on liberation;
 - b. better collaboration between housing providers to support better housing outcomes, and
 - c. opportunities are maximised for Employability and Training.
14. Support the establishment of the Upside Service in Highland.

15. Deliver improved engagement with families and dependents affected by imprisonment.

Identified Risks

There are two main risks identified to the implementation of the actions outlined above.

The first relates to lack of buy in from partners. Resource constraints can mean that not all partners fully engage with the activities of the HCJP. This appears to be a problem across many CJP's, and perhaps the solution partially lies in action and leadership on a national basis to ensure fuller participation. However, we have sought to extend our engagement across the partnership by taking a more flexible and nuanced approach that reaches beyond formal meetings and structures so as to support wider forms of participation.

The second relates to resources, particularly the availability of funding.

Every year the HCJP highlights the precarious financial position of many Third Sector partners and services. There is also recognition of the budgetary and resource challenges faced by our statutory partners. This clearly can constrain development of fresh initiatives which are vital for the delivery of improvement within the justice system. Examples of this limitation include initiatives to develop Restorative Justice across Highland, and also the imperative to significantly improve our engagement with those who have lived experience.

However, there is much evidence that the old adage "the sum of the parts is bigger than the whole" is true when reviewing the work of the Highland Community Justice Partnership. We are more effective the more closely we work together.

Acronyms Used

CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CJS	Community Justice Scotland
CLink	Custody Link Worker Project
CPO	Community Payback Order
DARS	Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service
DfP	Diversion from Prosecution
DTTO	Drug Treatment and Testing Order
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
EM	Electronic Monitoring
HADP	Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership
HCIP	Highland Community Integration Plan
HCJP	Highland Community Justice Partnership
HCJOIP	Highland Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan
HCPP	Highland Community Planning Partnership
HPO	Harm Prevention Officer
HTSI	Highland Third Sector Interface
JSW	Justice Social Work
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MATPACT	Medication Assisted Treatment Prevention and Care Toolkit
MF2C	Moving Forward 2 Change
NOLB	No-one left behind
RJ	Restorative Justice
SDF	Scottish Drugs Forum
SFRS	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
SHORE	Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone
SMART	Self-Management and Recovery Training
UHI	University of the Highlands and Islands

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

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

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