

**Community Justice Scotland**  
Ceartas Coimhearsnachd Alba

**Community Justice Outcome Activity Across Scotland  
Aberdeenshire Annual Return  
2022-23**

August 2023



# Community Justice Outcome Activity Across Scotland Local Area Annual Return Template 2022-23

## 1. Background

This reporting template has been developed in discussion with community justice representatives from local areas, and is designed to support local areas in reporting to CJS on the achievement of outcomes in order that CJS is able to write its annual report to satisfy s27 of the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 ('the Act'). The process of requesting information from local areas through the completion of this reporting template fulfils the requirement for CJS to consult with community justice partners and stakeholders when preparing the annual report, as set out under section 27(3). Completing the template can also support local areas to make an assessment of progress towards national outcomes and prepare their own local-facing annual report, which is a statutory obligation under section 23..

Significant strategic developments took place in and around the reporting year 2022-23, namely;

1. Publication of the Scottish Government's [Vision for Justice](#) in February 2022.
2. The publication of a revised [National Strategy](#) in June 2022.
3. The review of the OPIF culminating in the publication in April 2023 of the [Community Justice Performance Framework](#) and the accompanying [Community Justice Improvement Tool](#).

These significant strategic developments had substantial implications for local areas in their delivery of their statutory obligations within community justice. Further, they had the effect of creating a de-facto transition year, where the National Strategy for Community Justice and reporting framework were not aligned. In recognition of this, we have reconsidered the scope of this template and the report it informs for the reporting period 2022-23.

CJS approached community justice coordinators and managers in March 2023 seeking volunteers to participate in the creation of the 2022-23 annual report template. CJS would like to extend thanks to those community justice partners that took the time to participate in the development group and others that provided sense-checking comments on the draft.

## 2. Statement of Assurance and Data Usage

The information submitted to CJS using this template will be specifically used for the purpose of fulfilling the requirement under s27 of the Act for CJS to produce a report on performance in relation to community justice outcomes across Scotland. It will also be used by CJS in its role to monitor, promote and support improvement in, and keep the Scottish Ministers informed about, performance in the provision of community justice.

In line with provisions in the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), CJS will use appropriate data to ensure that there is continuous reporting, development and progress towards the national outcomes. By providing data to CJS you are consenting to its use by CJS as indicated. Community



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Justice Partnerships should be aware that any information held by CJS is subject to statutory Freedom of Information obligations.

The template can be used by local partnerships to fulfil their requirements under s23 (1b) of the Act, when published as an appendix to a publicly facing summary statement of annual progress.

### **3. General principles of the template**

The template and guidance have been developed using the following principles:

- Retention of the outcomes and indicators from the 2016 OPIF and previous templates, supplemented with additional guidance and direction around answering the questions.
- The template should enable a shorter return.
- Better support local partners to comply with their local reporting requirements set out in section 23 of the Act. E.g. the inclusion of local outcomes, which also support CJS to understand local issues.
- Continue to seek evidence about new collaborative activities.
- Support CJS to comply with their requirements in section 27 of the Act.



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### 4. How to fill in the template

The return should be completed and consulted on with partners involved in community justice in your local area. In line with the Act this includes statutory partners, third sector bodies involved in community justice in relation to the area, such community bodies in relation to the area as partners consider appropriate, and such other persons as partners consider appropriate. CJS expects that completion of this template will be a collaborative effort.

This template incorporates guidance support completion, with the text *(in blue)* providing reflective prompts to consider to develop your answer, which can be deleted and replaced with your response. These should be considered together through the development of your answer, rather than addressed individually.

In response to feedback on accessibility and in order to support our analysis, we have removed the text boxes around questions and answers.

There is no expectation that areas will return substantial numerical data. We would encourage partners to develop the response to this template in conversation with each other, and view it as an opportunity to reflect on your strengths and needs in partnership.

Where the template asks for evidence, a written response will suffice and there is no expectation that you send additional supporting documentation – if there are any aspects CJS is unclear on it will be our responsibility to request clarification where necessary.

If any response or evidence requires details about people with lived experience (e.g. evidence in respect of someone's life story) please DO NOT include any identifiable personal or sensitive information (as outlined in Schedules 2 & 3 of the Data Protection Act 1998) as CJS does not require such information. If this is unavoidable then please ensure that the data is fully anonymised.

This is the sixth iteration of the template and guidance. If you have any queries about completing the template then please email [CJSImprovement@communityjustice.scot](mailto:CJSImprovement@communityjustice.scot).



**Community Justice Outcome Activity Across Scotland  
Local Area Annual Return Template 2022-23**

<b>1) Community Justice Partnership / Group Details</b>	
Name of local authority area/s	Aberdeenshire
Name and contact details of the partnership Chair	Name: Jeff Shaw Email: <a href="mailto:jeff.shaw@aberdeenshire.gov.uk">jeff.shaw@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</a> Telephone:
Contact for queries about this report	Name: Kathleen Mowat Email: <a href="mailto:kathleen.mowat@aberdeenshire.gov.uk">kathleen.mowat@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</a> Telephone:

**2) Template Sign-off from Community Justice Partnership / Group Chair**

In terms of the Section 27 duty to submit this return to Community Justice Scotland, I confirm that Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership Members have agreed this return as an accurate record. I also confirm that as part of the Section 23 duty to publish a public-facing annual report on progress towards national and local outcomes, this report will be made available on our Community Justice web page ([Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership – Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership \(ouraberdeenshire.org.uk\)](http://ouraberdeenshire.org.uk))

Date:.....

Name: Jeff Shaw



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### **3) Governance Arrangements**

Last year, we asked partnerships to describe their governance structure for community justice arrangements and include links to wider community planning. Please describe any substantive changes since your previous answer.

There have been no substantive changes to local governance arrangements since the last reporting period (2021/22). The Community Justice Partnership continues to report directly to the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership Board on at least an annual basis. The fifth Annual Report on Community Justice in Aberdeenshire was presented to the Board in August 2022 and is available to download from the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership webpage ([Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership – Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership \(ouraberdeenshire.org.uk\)](https://ouraberdeenshire.org.uk)). The Community Justice Annual Report is also reported to the Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board for noting, which allows for additional awareness and scrutiny.

### **4) The year overall**

2022-23 saw substantial developments and change within the service delivery and strategic policy landscape. This section should be used to reflect some of the a) challenges/negative implications and b) opportunities/positive implications from the reporting year on the community justice partnership. This can include impact on the improvement activity, partner collaboration, and delivery of services.

#### **Challenges / Negatives**

In Summer 2021, the Scottish Government began a review of the existing National Community Justice Strategy, while Community Justice Scotland undertook to carry out a concurrent review of the National Community Justice Outcomes, Performance and Improvement Framework. Local Community Justice Partners are required to have regard to both of these national documents when undertaking community justice planning, and must also review their Community Justice Plan as soon as possible after the publication of a revised strategy and/or the publication of a revised performance framework. Although both national documents were initially due to be published by March 2022, due to delays as a result of the pandemic, the pre-election period and other factors, the National Strategy was not published until June 2022 and the Performance Framework was not published until March 2023. The Delivery Plan which accompanies the National Strategy was also not available until 2023. Although this did create a delay in terms of local community justice planning, it also allowed time for Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partners to prepare the Strategic Needs and Strengths Assessment that will underpin the new Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan. To allow community justice partners sufficient time to consider these key documents and identify priorities and performance measures going forward, it is anticipated that the new Community Justice Plan for Aberdeenshire will be in place for 2024/25 onwards.

Although Aberdeenshire has now produced a Strategic Needs and Strengths Assessment, the increased pressure that Community Justice Partners have experienced as a result of recovery from the pandemic and other issues has had



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some impact on capacity to participate in and contribute to collaborative pieces of work (such as production of the needs assessment). Community Justice Partners have experienced challenges in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff, which has also had an impact on capacity to deliver services and capability to deliver 'new' activities, while maintaining existing partnership commitments alongside core service delivery.

Community Justice Partners have also experienced barriers to accessing services for individuals who have had involvement with the justice system, particularly where demand for these services has increased as a result of the pandemic (for example, mental health services).

In addition, the ongoing uncertainty in relation to the development of the National Care Service and the potential implications for Community Justice Partners and Community Justice as a whole continues to have an impact. While Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partners continue to contribute to strategic planning for future service delivery, it is as yet unclear what the community justice landscape is going to look like in the years ahead.

### **Positives / Opportunities**

The Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership continued to meet online during 2022/23 and levels of engagement from partners have remained high. The majority of the actions within the Partnership Action Plan that had to be put on hold during the pandemic have now resumed, and the Partnership has been able to deliver a number of collaborative projects over the reporting year.



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Throughout the reporting period there has been ongoing and, in some instances, increased, collaboration between Community Justice Partners through new and existing activity – such as the Safer in Service Days of Action, Aberdeenshire Safer Streets Initiative, Throughcare Planning Arrangements, the Alternatives to Prosecution and Remand Sub Group, and MAT Standards Implementation.

The additional funding from the Scottish Government that was provided to Aberdeenshire Criminal Justice Social Work for Third Sector commissioning to support recovery from the pandemic has enabled our partnership with the Third Sector to continue to develop over the course of the reporting period. In addition to the Creative Change Collective (formerly Street Cones) Online Unpaid Work Workshops, the additional funding that was made available to the Aberdeenshire has enabled the Partnership to deliver a pilot project with Apex Scotland to work with individuals who have been involved in offending behaviour, including sexual and domestic offending. The Labyrinth programme ensures that participants move closer to work as they are equipped with a holistic toolkit of skills, competencies and positive attitudes to prepare them for this. Further information about the Labyrinth Programme can be found under National Outcome Three below.

During the reporting period, Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partners worked together on the production of a Strategic Needs and Strengths Assessment of Community Justice within the area. This needs assessment will provide the evidence base required to support the development of our new Community Justice Plan, which is expected to be in place from 2024/25. This has been a significant piece of work which would not have been possible to produce without the contributions of partners, including support from the Partnership Analyst from the Aberdeenshire Community Safety Team. This evidence base, alongside the new National Strategy for Community Justice and the new Performance Framework, provides an opportunity for the Partnership to refresh its current priorities and identify new and revised improvement activities to be delivered over the coming years.





## **Community Justice Outcome Activity Across Scotland Local Area Annual Return Template 2022-23**

This section is designed to capture the evidence and data that has been used by your partnership over the reporting period to assess progress against the national outcomes.

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### **NATIONAL OUTCOME ONE**

#### **Communities improve their understanding and participation in community justice\***

**Where applicable have regard to the following indicators:**

- Activities carried out to engage with 'communities' as well as other relevant constituencies
- Consultation with communities as part of community justice planning and service provision
- Participation in community justice, such as co-production and joint delivery
- Level of community awareness of / satisfaction with work undertaken as part of a CPO
- Evidence from questions to be used in local surveys / citizens' panels and so on
- Perceptions of the local crime data

\*Community Justice comprises the activities, services and partners that work with and around people from the point of arrest, through the justice system and supporting their exit from justice contact and integration into their community

#### **5) How have you engaged with partners, communities, and individuals to improve their understanding and participation in relation to community justice?**

In August 2022, the fifth Annual Report on Community Justice Partnership activity within Aberdeenshire was presented to the Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board and the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership Board, prior to submission to Community Justice Scotland. This provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the work of the Partnership and Community Justice Partners amongst Board members, which includes Aberdeenshire Elected Members. As the papers for both Boards are made publicly available, the reporting process also helps to raise awareness of community justice activities amongst the wider Aberdeenshire public. The fifth Annual Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership Report is also available to download from the Partnership webpage ([Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership – Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership \(ouraberdeenshire.org.uk\)](https://ouraberdeenshire.org.uk)).

As in previous reporting periods, the Aberdeenshire Unpaid Work Service has continued to deliver unpaid work projects within communities across the whole of the Aberdeenshire area. This has included gardening work such as weeding, planting



trees, creating flower beds, clearing leaves and other garden maintenance activities<sup>1</sup>, litter picking<sup>2</sup>, woodwork / joinery work such as building planters, benches, 'chatty chairs / benches', bird boxes and bird feeders<sup>3</sup>, beach cleans<sup>4</sup>, and sanding / painting<sup>5</sup>. The teams have also been involved in up-cycling items for the charity, Stella's Voice, within Peterhead, and have also delivered a range of items for partners including PPE for the Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership and food parcels on behalf of the Aberdeenshire North Food Bank. The service aims to provide unpaid work services that are both visible and are of benefit to the local community. In total, 33,233 hours of Unpaid Work were completed across the Aberdeenshire area during 2022/23.

Over the course of the year, the Higher Support Needs Team supported the delivery of 2,882 hours of Unpaid Work at four community projects (Longside Allotment, Delgatie Castle, Strichen Community Park and Waulkmill Menagerie) and also the Salvation Army in Peterhead. The Higher Support Needs Team works with individuals who have previously found it difficult to complete the unpaid work aspect of their community order, due to challenges with their mental and physical health, and so these projects have been chosen specifically as all have a positive impact on a person's mental health. The team have found that working from the same agreed locations provides consistency that both the service users and the community projects can benefit from.

As in previous years, those who have received assistance from the Unpaid Work Service were asked to complete a Community Feedback Form about their experience. Unfortunately this year, only a small number of questionnaires (6) were completed, and so results from this year will not be comparable with those for previous years (e.g. 20 in 2021/22). Despite the low return rate, 100% (6/6) of those who received a service from the Unpaid Work team and completed a Beneficiaries form said that they were very satisfied with the work that was done. All respondents said that they found the service easy to contact, that the work completed was worthwhile and that they would use the Unpaid Work Service again. In addition, 67% (<5/6) thought that the type of work completed was a suitable 'payback' to the community, with the remaining 33% stating that they were not sure whether this was the case.

Feedback from those who have received a service from the Unpaid Work Teams has been very positive, a selection of some of the comments received are provided below:

*"Everyone was extremely helpful and positive. They did the jobs requested quickly and professionally with no issues at all. We are delighted with the outcomes of all the*

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<sup>1</sup> At locations within Banff, Portsoy, Whitehills, Turriff, Fraserburgh, New Pitsligo, Strichen, Peterhead, Longside, Cruden Bay, Ellon, Oldmeldrum, Inverurie, Huntly and Westhill

<sup>2</sup> At locations within Portsoy, Ellon, New Pitsligo, St Combs, Fraserburgh, Mintlaw, Peterhead, Cruden Bay, Oldmeldrum, Kemnay, Kintore, Inverurie, Banchory,

<sup>3</sup> At locations within Stonehaven, Turriff, Fraserburgh, Ellon, Cruden Bay and Peterhead

<sup>4</sup> At locations within Fraserburgh, Rosehearty, Peterhead, St Fergus, and Balmedie

<sup>5</sup> At locations within Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Strichen, Turriff, Macduff, Cornhill, Huntly, Inverurie, Portlethen and Stonehaven



*jobs they have done, we couldn't praise [the Task Supervisor] and the various service users highly enough".*

*"Staff are friendly and supportive in all they do with us and we have come to see our relationship as more likened to a community partnership".*

*"Our membership is more mature in years and would not be able to carry out many of the functions done by your groups and without the help and assistance received some of these community activities may have to have been abandoned".*

As in previous years, individuals who had completed a period of work with Criminal Justice Social Work as part of a community-based order were asked to fill in a service user feedback form, to gain their views about their experience of working with the service. During 2022/23, of those who had carried a period of Unpaid Work, 92% (23/28) said that they thought being on their order had benefitted the community. This is an improvement on the previous year, when 82% (23/28) said that they thought being on Unpaid Work had benefitted the community. Further to this, of those who had completed a period of Supervision in the community (which included those subject to a Community Payback Order with a Supervision Requirement, and those with Combined Supervision and Unpaid Work), 64% (14/22) said that they thought this had benefitted the community. Again, this is an improvement on the figure for the previous reporting period (54% or 13/24). Increasing opportunities for Unpaid Work has been a priority for the Community Justice Partnership for a number of years and Community Justice Partners, including Criminal Justice Social Work, will continue to use this feedback from service users to further develop the Unpaid Work Service to ensure that the benefits are clear to individual service users, partners, stakeholders and Aberdeenshire communities.

During 2022/23, the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership continued to work with Glasgow-based charity, Creative Change Collective (formerly Street Cones) to deliver three further modules of online, group workshops to help individuals to progress through their Unpaid Work and Any Activity Hours which they were required to complete as part of a community sentence. During each twelve-week block of workshops, individuals work with facilitators from the Creative Change Collective to develop a script based around a theme that had been identified by the group. The process of developing the script gives participants the opportunity to share their experiences and have their voices heard through storytelling within an anonymous space, where participants use first names only and no one reveals which part of the stories are fictional and which are based on real life. At the end of each module, participants take part in a read through of their script, which is recorded and developed into a short film. The film is then used as the focus for a live event with panel question and answer session, made up of a mix of professionals such as Police, Education and Criminal Justice Social Work, and people with lived experience of the justice system. The live events give participants the opportunity to showcase the work they had been involved in, and to increase public awareness and understanding of community justice and community sentencing, and the work of



community justice partners within Aberdeenshire. Positive feedback was received from the participants involved in modules 5, 6 and 7 which ran during 2022/23, with the following quotes providing examples of the impact the sessions had on people:

*“I really felt like the group was amazing. The end product was an educational experience because you got to learn about yourself and push your own limits. It also helped me get out of myself. I loved working with the facilitators, and I would highly recommend it to others”.*

*“I have so much more confidence and my attitude has completely changed. It has given me a focus and I will continue to carry this confidence wherever I go. I never thought I would do anything like this but I am so grateful for this experience. The facilitators were great and I hope to have the chance to do this all over again”.*

*“The sessions gave me a lot of the tools to rebuild me life and improved my confidence by 100%”.*

Positive feedback was also received from those who watched the Live Event online:

*“Amazing to see the talent and bravery on screen. A great performance, very thought provoking”.*

*“Outstanding performance by all involved. Felt privileged and humbled, watching the cast as they pushed themselves to go on screen, despite the nerves! Huge well done and looking forward to the next stream”.*

*“As someone with justice lived experience, it brought me back to my early days, and I wish this type of commitment had been offered back then”.*

Recordings of the live events are available to access via the Creative Change Collective You Tube channel ([Creative Change Collective - YouTube](#)).

Throughout 2022/23, the Community Justice Partnership has continued to support the delivery of multi-agency Safer in Service Days of Action. As in previous reporting periods, drug supply through “County Lines” and associated “cuckooing” activity continue to impact on Aberdeenshire communities, most notably (although not exclusively) within the Buchan Corner. The Safer in Service Days of Action are designed to address the harms caused by Serious and Organised Crime, and to provide support to vulnerable people who are being exploited and at risk of drug-related harm. This includes the provision of a partnership ‘pod’, located in a prominent location within the area that is the focus for the Day(s) of Action (this will usually be somewhere in the town centre). The pod is staffed by practitioners from a range of Community Justice Partners, including the Health and Social Care Partnership Drugs and Alcohol Service, Police Scotland, Housing Services and Mental Health Services. The presence of the pod allows community members to speak to members of staff about any concerns that they have, and to access resources and materials on a range of issues including drug use, serious and organised crime, cuckooing and exploitation. Naloxone and Nixoid are also available from the pod, with training on their use provided by one of the Health and Social



Care Partnership Drug and Alcohol Nurses who are based at the pod. The inclusion of the pod in Days of Action also provides an opportunity for Community Justice Partners to raise awareness of Community Justice, as communities are able to see how partners work together to help reduce offending and reoffending, and keep communities safe.

As part of Community Justice Scotland's work around 'Capturing Community Justice', a photographer from Community Justice Scotland visited Aberdeenshire to capture images of some of the Community Justice projects that are taking place across the area. The visit coincided with one of the planned multi-agency Days of Action in March 2023, which ensured that a wide range of community justice partners were able to be involved. The images are available via the Community Justice Scotland Flickr page ([Aberdeenshire | Flickr](#)) and can be used in future community engagement activities and community justice documentation, including the Community Justice Web page ([Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership – Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership \(ouraberdeenshire.org.uk\)](#)).

Previous Annual Reports have referred to the Third Sector Community Justice Theme Forum, which unfortunately had to be disbanded during 2018/19 due to declining levels of engagement. It was thought that this may have been due to Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City both having a separate Community Justice Theme Forums for Third Sector organisations, often with the same organisations being represented on both. During 2022/23, discussions were held with Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action, which has representation on the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership, to consider whether this forum could be re-established. Following consultation and engagement with Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Organisations, it was agreed that a joint Community Justice Third Sector Forum for Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City would be piloted. The first meeting of the forum was held in June 2023 – this forum was well attended, with representation from a range of Third Sector providers that operate within the Aberdeenshire area in attendance (including Action for Children, Apex Scotland and Sacro). A terms of reference for the forum has been agreed and future meeting dates have been scheduled for later on in 2023. This is a positive development as it will help to increase engagement with Third Sector organisations that are involved in or have an interest in delivering community justice services within the Aberdeenshire area.





## NATIONAL OUTCOME TWO

### Partners plan and deliver services in a more strategic and collaborative way

#### Where applicable have regard to the following indicators:

- Services are planned for and delivered in a strategic and collaborative way
- Partners have leveraged resources for community justice
- Development of community justice workforce to work effectively across organisational/professional /geographical boundaries
- Partners illustrate effective engagement and collaborative partnership working with the authorities responsible for the delivery of MAPPA

#### 6) How has your partnership worked to enable strategic and collaborative service planning and delivery?

As highlighted in previous Annual Reports, the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership previously committed to producing a Strengths and Needs Assessment of Community Justice in Aberdeenshire, that would help provide an evidence base to inform our next Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (CJOIP). Over the course of this reporting period, Community Justice Partners have continued to work together to produce a comprehensive assessment, in line with the guidance produced by Community Justice Scotland ([Strategic Needs and Strengths Assessment: Guidance - Community Justice Scotland](#)). The process of developing the Strategic Needs and Strengths Assessment was supported by the Health and Partnership Analyst from the Community Safety Team, with data and information provided from a range of Community Justice Partners including Police Scotland, Criminal Justice Social Work, Housing Services, Scottish Prison Service, Third Sector providers including Families Outside, Victim Support Scotland and Action for Children, and also Justice Analytical Services within the Scottish Government. The findings and recommendations set out within the needs assessment will now be considered by the Community Justice Partnership and a new plan will be agreed for 2024/25 onwards.

The Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership remains committed to ensuring that teams are appropriately trained to respond to the complex trauma that is often experienced by those who come into contact with justice services. During 2022/23, Community Justice Partners continued to build on the connections that have been established with training provider, Epione Training and Consultancy, to secure further provision of Level 3 Safety and Stabilisation (Trauma Enhanced) training for key staff. This year, this has included a mix of practitioners from across the Criminal Justice Social Work, Youth Services Social Work and Health & Social Care Partnership, including Team Managers, Project Managers, Social Workers, Care Managers, Community Mental Health Nurses, Support Workers, Local Area Coordinators and Health Care Support Workers. Feedback from those who have attended the training has been very positive, with 95% of those who attended the course in March 2023 stating that all of their expectations of the training course were met and that it provided valuable learning and/or development. Those who attended



the training also identified the lived experience input as one of the most useful aspects of the training. Since May 2021, 135 workers from across these services have taken part in the 2-day training. This will help ensure that Aberdeenshire is able to meet the requirements of National Community Justice Strategy Aim 2 and Priority Action 5, and Medication Assisted Treatment Standard 10, that services are trauma-informed and that practitioners are appropriately trained to provide trauma informed and trauma responsive support. In future years, the Partnership would like to explore how this training can be extended to include staff from other partner organisations, such as Police Scotland, Housing and Community Safety Services.

Drug supply through “County Lines” and associated “cuckooing” activity continue to impact on Aberdeenshire communities, most notably within the Buchan Corner. The joint work in relation to county lines and cuckooing which began in 2018 has continued under the auspices of the Community Justice Partnership, through the Joint Cuckooing Initiative. Following on from the four successful joint Days of Action in 2021/22, a further ten days of action and a smaller ‘day of reaction’ were held at various locations across Aberdeenshire throughout 2022/23. The Days of Action are designed to address the harms caused by Serious and Organised Crime, and to provide support to vulnerable people who are being exploited and at risk of drug-related harm. The Days of Action continue to involve a range of partners - including Criminal Justice Social Work, Health and Social Care Partnership Drug and Alcohol Services, Housing, Children & Families Social Work and Community Safety, alongside Police colleagues from Community Policing Teams, CID and specialist units - who carry out a combination of enforcement and outreach support work to offer a multiagency approach to safeguard communities and individuals following enforcement activity. This provides increased visibility of Police, Criminal Justice Social Work, Community Safety and Drug and Alcohol services within communities. The presence of the Police ‘pod’ and Community Safety Visits to households provide reassurance, while the joint visits engage and re-engage people at risk, offer fast track into treatment as required, and provide access to other support services. The enforcement activity itself helps to disrupt those responsible for activities relating to drug supply. Although individual partners still retain their own priorities within the Days of Action, the Partnership has found the approach of pulling all partners together to deliver a collective operation to be more effective than when individual partners try to address their single area of responsibility by themselves. Given the focus of the Days of Action, there are also clear crossovers with the work of the multi-agency Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) Thematic Group and the Youth Services Strategic Group. Moving forward, Days of Action will also extend to include colleagues from mental health services.

Following a period of inactivity, the Aberdeenshire Youth Services Strategic Group met in December 2022 to review membership and agree priority actions for the immediate period. It was agreed that membership would be expanded to include Housing, Throughcare and Aftercare (Children’s Services Social Work), Group / Children’s Homes, Early Interventions (Police Scotland Youth Justice Management Unit) and the Scottish Prison Service (HMP Grampian). Further to this, towards the end of the reporting period, Children’s Services Social Work began a review of



existing service planning arrangements with a view to streamlining some of the existing groups and ensuring that the right structure was in place to support the delivery of the priorities within the new Children's Services Plan (2023-2026). From 2023/24, a new Thematic Group, 'Young People are safe, valued and listened to in our communities', supported by working groups as required to meet the aims of the Thematic Group, will replace the existing Youth Services Strategic Group. There are clear crossovers between youth and adult justice and the recent changes to Children's Services planning arrangements provides an opportunity to review, refresh and update our collective approach to youth justice across Aberdeenshire, in line with current guidance and standards. There are also a number of pieces of new legislation and national consultations at present which when / if progressed could have a potentially positive impact on youth justice nationally and locally, such as the Children (Care and Justice) Bill.

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## **NATIONAL OUTCOME THREE**

**People have better access to the services that they require, including welfare, health and wellbeing, housing and employability**

**Where applicable have regard to the following indicators:**

- Partners have identified and are overcoming structural barriers for people accessing services
- Existence of joint-working arrangements such as processes / protocols to ensure access to services to address underlying needs
- Initiatives to facilitate access to services
- Speed of access to mental health services
- % of people released from a custodial sentence:
  - a) registered with a GP
  - b) have suitable accommodation
  - c) have had a benefits eligibility check
- Targeted interventions have been tailored for and with an individual and had a successful impact on their risk of further offending

**7) What steps have you taken to improve access to services, and what impact has there been as a result?**

### Diversion from Prosecution

Increasing the use of Diversion from Prosecution for all age groups has been a priority for the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership since the Community Justice Plan was agreed in April 2017. Since then, the total number of Fiscal Diversions has continued to increase, from 75 in 2017/18 to 184 in 2022/23. The total number of Diversions from Prosecution involving young people aged 16 and 17 has also increased considerably, from 20 referrals in 2017/18 to 55 referrals in 2022/23 (although there was a slight decrease in comparison to the figure for 2021/22, when 58 Diversion cases were commenced). Following earlier adaptations to service delivery in response to COVID 19 restrictions, in 2022/23, diversionary work returned to being delivered primarily on a face-to-face basis – although telephone appointments were still offered where required (for example, where an individual could not attend office appointments due to employment commitments). The dedicated Social Worker post within Criminal Justice Social Work continues to work with individuals who have been referred to the service for a period of Diversion, however due to the increasing volume of cases being referred, this work has been shared out amongst other members of the Criminal Justice Social Work Fieldwork Teams. To help manage this increase in referrals, the Diversion Social Worker has continued to look to identify more agencies that can help fulfil elements of diversionary work, including existing services such as Youth Services Social Work, Barnardos, Health & Social Care Partnership Drug and Alcohol Services, Apex, Employability Services, Creative Change Collective, etc.



Over the course of the year, the service has experienced a more diverse range of referrals coming through for Diversion, and so some communication has been undertaken with Fieldwork teams to encourage them to consider assessments for offences that may not have been considered suitable for diversion previously. This has included promoting dialogue with the Procurator Fiscal Service to explore these more serious offences and the rationale for referral.

In February 2023, the report on the joint review of diversion from prosecution was published. The review sought to assess the end-to-end process of diversion from prosecution, including from a policing, prosecution and justice social work perspective<sup>6</sup>. The report notes the many ways in which diversion from prosecution is working well, and highlights opportunities to optimise its use further and to ensure the diversion process is as efficient and effective as possible. The review makes 34 recommendations, directed to individual Community Justice Partners, Community Justice Partnerships, Community Justice Scotland and the Scottish Government. Some recommendations can be delivered by a single agency, while others will require the relevant agencies to work together. The review and subsequent report provide an opportunity for Community Justice Partners within Aberdeenshire to improve our collective approach to diversion from prosecution, which from March 2023 has included the option to assess undertaking cases for potential suitability for diversion. This could lead to a potential reduction in the number of cases calling in court and could also help to reduce the length of time between someone being charged with an offence and receiving a justice outcome.

### Employability

Increasing access to services, including employability services, remains a priority for the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership. Community Justice Partners will utilise a range of supports and services to help people they are working with to progress through the employability pipeline, from Pre-Stage 1 through to Stage 4. Skills Development Scotland are a valued partner within the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership and have provided a valuable contribution to the Strengths and Needs Assessment that has been produced by the Partnership during the reporting period. As in previous years, the dedicated Criminal Justice Employability Workers for under 25s and over 25s have continued to provide support to people who are referred to them from the Aberdeenshire Criminal Justice Social Work Service. The support provided is tailored to individual need and can include initial assessment, CV creation and job searching, extending to 'in work' support and aftercare once employment has been found. An example of this being an individual who was initially supported to create a CV and apply for job vacancies. He was successful and gained part time employment in a cafeteria. However his confidence increased to the extent that he wanted to improve his employability prospects. The Employability Service provided additional support and helped him to enrol in a part

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<sup>6</sup> [Supporting documents - Diversion from prosecution: joint review - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2023/02/Supporting_documents_-_Diversion_from_prosecution:_joint_review_-_gov.scot)



time college course. The skills he is learning has in turn motivated him to apply for more challenging job roles, in order to better provide for his young family.

The Criminal Justice Employability Service will also signpost and support individuals to access services provided by other partners where appropriate, such as Community Learning and Development. An example of this being a client who experienced significant barriers to finding employment due to difficulties with literacy and IT skills. This made it particularly difficult to apply for online job vacancies. Although the Criminal Justice Employability Service assisted him to complete online applications, it became clear that the client's confidence and self-esteem would be greatly enhanced if they became more independent by improving these skills. The Employability Service discussed the situation with the Aberdeenshire Council Community Learning and Development service and the client was referred to them for additional support.

It is also recognised that some Criminal Justice clients may have significant underlying health and wellbeing issues to address before achieving work readiness. These are often linked to substance use. Therefore, in some cases, progress has been measured by small successes, such as the introduction of structure and routine into previously chaotic lifestyles.

The Criminal Justice Employability Service is available to people who have come into contact with the justice system for a variety of reasons including through Diversion from Prosecution, Community Payback Orders and voluntary or statutory throughcare following release from prison. The service consists of two full time practitioners who are based within the Criminal Justice Social Work Service and work alongside colleagues in the Fieldwork teams. During 2022/23, the Criminal Justice Employability Workers provided employability support to 93 individuals, 33 were under the age of 25 and 60 were over 25. The increasing number of referrals to the Criminal Justice Employability Service indicates encouraging signs that individuals are realising the importance of gaining qualifications to improve their employability prospects and life chances.

Prior to the start of the pandemic, some work was carried out with Aberdeenshire Criminal Justice Social Work teams which identified that there was a gap in services for those who had been convicted of sexual and domestic offences, and discussions took place at this point around how to potentially fill this gap. As services began to recover from the impact of the pandemic, Community Justice Partners found that they were in a position to revisit this priority area and ensure that those who have been convicted of sexual and domestic offences are able to access employability supports and services just as others involved in the justice system can.

Apex Scotland is a charity organisation that works across the whole of Scotland to reduce reoffending, promote desistance, tackle deprivation and make communities safer. Whatever their background or circumstances, Apex want to ensure that those who are at risk of offending and reoffending are given the education, support and opportunities they need to change their behaviour, become effective citizens and lead fulfilling lives ([About us \(apexscotland.org.uk\)](https://www.apexscotland.org.uk)). Apex Scotland offer the Labyrinth



Programme to individuals who have been involved in offending behaviour, including sexual and domestic offending. The Labyrinth programme ensures that participants move closer to work as they are equipped with a holistic toolkit of skills, competencies and positive attitudes to prepare them for this. Participants gain self-confidence and motivation to progress as they gain a better awareness and understanding of their personal barriers and gain support to tackle these. Through initial intensive one-to-one support, participants gain skills to be more independent and self-reliant. Participants will achieve fundamental employability skills that enable them to identify, pursue and sustain employment opportunities for the long term. Participants gain knowledge and awareness of the impact their criminal record will have on their employment prospects. This is empowering as it often dispels misperceptions about the types of jobs that participants can access or that they would normally deselect themselves from, opening up realistic labour market opportunities. Knowledge of the correct process and legal position of what is required to be disclosed to an employer and the management of conviction related restrictions will also help empower the participant. Apex Personal Development Mentors (PDMs) also signpost to specialist agencies for ongoing support to address other lifestyle barriers to work, so they are managed for the long term e.g., substance use, meaning the participant is more likely to remain in work.

During 2022/23, the Aberdeenshire Criminal Justice Social Work Service agreed a 6-month pilot with Apex Scotland, to work with up to eighteen individuals referred to them from the Aberdeenshire Criminal Justice Social Work Service. The programme would be delivered on a one-to-one basis over a period that worked for the individual. Apex anticipated that any individual would require a minimum of 3 months support and usually longer than that. Apex aimed to have a minimum of 3 hours working with each individual per week, although this may vary depending on where people are in their journey, as it is key that participants feel that being on the programme is going to benefit them. Aberdeenshire Criminal Justice Social Work Service utilised the additional, ring-fenced funding from the Scottish Government for Criminal Justice Social Work for this project. There were caveats attached to this funding, in that it could only be used to commission Third Sector organisations to help clear the backlog of Unpaid Work hours. At the time the pilot was agreed, the funding was only available for one year (2022-23), although this funding was also made available during 2021/22.

The pilot with Apex commenced in October 2022, with referrals to the service being made between then and March 2023. As some individuals were not referred in until nearer the end of the pilot, they still had a number of weeks of support outstanding, which brought some of the work with Apex in to financial year 2023/24. Feedback on the pilot was positive - between October 2022 and March 2023, 9 people were started on the Apex Labyrinth Programme. During this period, individuals involved with the Labyrinth Programme have entered employment (3), achieved qualifications (2), created a CV (6), developed interview skills (2), carried out disclosure work (7) and received benefits advice (4). Based on the feedback so far, an application was submitted to the Aberdeenshire Employability Partnership for No One Left Behind funding to support the delivery of the project to a further 35 individuals during



2023/24. This application has since been approved and the Labyrinth Programme will recommence within Aberdeenshire from July 2023.

### Health and Wellbeing

It is widely known that people who have come into contact with the justice system are often affected by mental health and mental wellbeing issues. Various needs analyses have highlighted high levels of mental health need within the justice population, including anxiety and depression, suicide attempts and self-harm. There was also a high prevalence of childhood traumatic experiences, illicit drug use, complex and co-morbid mental health and substance use problems. Action 15 of the Mental Health Strategy aims to increase the workforce to give access to dedicated mental health professionals to all Accident and Emergency services, all GP practices, every police station custody suite, and prisons.

Previous Annual Reports have explained how Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partners have been involved in the development of a dedicated out of hours service to support both Fraserburgh Custody Suite and Fraserburgh Minor Injuries Unit, as part of the Aberdeenshire approach to the implementation of Action 15. Unfortunately, during 2022/23, a decision was taken that due to the low number of referrals to the service, the out of hours element should be removed and the service now operates on a Monday to Saturday, 9am – 5pm basis. The service continues to strive to provide safe, effective, fast care for those patients / service users that are in crisis during these hours. The team also continues to work to develop referral pathways from Police Scotland (including both Community and Custody), Scottish Ambulance Service and the Community Mental Health Teams in North Aberdeenshire.

To ensure equity of service provision, in early 2021/22, an application for funding was submitted to the Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership Action 15 Project Group with a proposal to employ a Social Worker on a fixed term basis to provide next day, follow up support to people from South and Central Aberdeenshire who had been arrested and taken to Kittybrewster Custody Centre in Aberdeen, and were experiencing distress as a result. The application for funding was approved and the worker took up post in early December 2021. The post is based within the South / Central Criminal Justice Social Work team and mirrors aspects of the North Aberdeenshire Court Support Social Worker around providing follow up support to people who require it, particularly in relation to low level mental health support and interventions. Unfortunately, it was not possible for the worker to gain physical access Kittybrewster Custody Centre, however the service and supports were instead provided from Aberdeen Sheriff Court, with follow up virtual and in person support provided to people within the community following release from Court, as required. There was a slight break in service towards the end of the reporting period, after the original worker moved roles, however the post has since been filled and will continue until at least March 2024.





Occupational therapy is a health and social care profession that is regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Occupational therapists aim to improve health and wellbeing through the ability to participate in the occupations of daily life. These occupations can include self-care, home management, work, or leisure activities. Occupational therapists recognise the importance of developing roles, habits and routines contributing to a pro social occupational identity; understand the role that motivation for participation plays in performance; and assess the processes underlying the development of performance skills<sup>7</sup>. Within a justice context, Occupational Therapy provision can provide alternative and complimentary interventions to address mental health and wellbeing that contribute to the improvement of peoples' functioning, so that they are better able to engage with the opportunities that are presented to them in terms of their recovery and progression. Occupational Therapy assessment better informs case management approaches, so that an individual is supported in a way which is more person centred around their needs and so reduces the possibility that lack of engagement or non-compliance is misinterpreted as intentional. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the Occupational Therapist posts that were planned for HMP & YOI Grampian have been unable to progress in the way that was intended, however an equivalent service has now been developed for people within the community who are working with the Criminal Justice and Drug and Alcohol Services.

During 2022/23, these community-based services worked to deliver a test of change to gather evidence of current understanding of Occupational Therapy and how it may benefit people within the justice system, and contribute to overall service delivery. In March 2023, an evaluative report was produced which details the test of change findings including how any future posts require to be positioned and designed in order to achieve a sustainable improvement to criminal justice services<sup>8</sup>. Community Justice Partners will now consider the recommendations from this report and how they can be taken forward within the next Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan for Aberdeenshire.

Speech, language and communication needs refer to those who have difficulties or conditions that affect aspects of their communication<sup>9</sup>. For some individuals, these difficulties may be mild and limited to particular situations, whereas for others, difficulties may be persistent, pervasive and complex<sup>10</sup>. Speech, language and communication needs are extremely common amongst both youth and adult justice populations, although often these difficulties go undiagnosed. While there is no specific evidence to suggest that the position in Aberdeenshire is any worse than in other areas, there is no evidence to the contrary. In response to this, from June 2023, a Speech and Language Therapist will be attached to the Youth Services and Criminal Justice Social Work Service, to identify how Speech and Language Therapy could contribute to assessment and support to meet the needs of children and young

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<sup>7</sup> [Community criminal justice occupational therapy test of change – Fiona Murray, Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership, March 2023](#)

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> [A Guide to Youth Justice in Scotland: policy, practice and legislation \(cycj.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> [SLCN-final.docx \(live.com\)](#)



people who end up in the justice system. The post will be funded for 12 months initially, for one day per week and will contribute towards early intervention, including Diversion, Bail Supervision and Structured Deferred Sentences and keeping young people out of the criminal justice system wherever possible.

## Drugs and Alcohol

In January 2021, in response to Scotland's drug death crisis, the Scottish Government announced the National Drugs Mission to improve and save lives of people who use drugs and their loved ones. The Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards<sup>11</sup> is one of the platforms for successful delivery of the aspirations of the National Mission. The first five Standards were expected to be in place by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, with full implementation of all ten Standards by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. The implementation of the MAT Standards will bring significant change to the way services are delivered by the Health and Social Care Partnership Drug and Alcohol Service and wider partners within the Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership. Within Aberdeenshire, a range of partners have been working together to develop and implement plans to support the delivery of MAT Standards 1-10, including all drug and alcohol services (both statutory and Third Sector contracted services), Police Scotland, Scottish Prison Service and healthcare services within HMP Grampian, Community / Criminal Justice Social Work, Housing, Community Safety, Children and Families Social Work (Education and Children's services), GPs and Primary Care, Psychology and the Alcohol and Drug Team in Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. Work has been ongoing through multi agency Project Groups to progress all aspects of what is essentially, a redesign of service delivery. The Project Manager (Community Justice – Drugs and Alcohol) is now a member of the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership, and updates on how MAT implementation is progressing are shared with Community Justice Partners on a regular (quarterly) basis. These updates are essential, as by April 2025, the MAT standards must also be implemented across all justice settings. This will be a significant piece of work for Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partners over the course of the next few years and will likely be a priority area for the Partnership within its next Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan. However, the expectation that MAT standards will be implemented within justice settings by April 2025 also presents a welcome opportunity to increase collaborative approaches and improve and enhance access to services for people in Aberdeenshire who are affected by drug use, including those who are in custody.

## Housing

In Aberdeenshire, Housing First is recognised as an important part of breaking the cycle of homelessness and in some cases, involvement with the criminal justice

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<sup>11</sup> [Medication Assisted Treatment \(MAT\) standards: access, choice, support - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/mat-standards/pages/1-introduction-and-standards-1-5.aspx)



system and imprisonment. A number of Housing First Clients have been taken onto the programme in advance of their release from custody and the transition from custody to the community has been much smoother, with wrap around support available over the first few days to get their tenancy set up, utilities on, etc. Uncertainty around these issues can sometimes put undue stress and pressure on someone and could lead to relapse. In recent years, the Aberdeenshire Housing First Scheme has upscaled from two full time equivalent officers to eleven, along with one Senior Housing Officer. This includes one peripatetic member of staff who can pick up clients when their worker is on leave or off sick. The level of staffing is set to increase to eleven, which will allow further expansion of the scheme to support up to 80 clients who have multiple complex needs and almost all of them having had involvement in the justice system. As evidenced through the Housing First Outcomes briefing, published in June 2022<sup>12</sup>, outcomes from the service are excellent and the scheme has been recognised nationally and locally. The report highlights that although the data is limited in places, it helps to demonstrate that being part of the Housing First pilot has had an overall positive impact on participants outcomes - with improvements in relation to health and well-being, and decreases in substance use, criminal activities, admission to prison and increased tenancy sustainment. The approach is based on a partnership involving representation from the Scottish Prison Service, Police Scotland, Social Work, Health, Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, etc. A further report on Housing First Outcomes is currently being produced and will be shared with Community Justice Partners when available, which will assist with future planning and priority setting for the Partnership.

In addition to the Housing First Service, the Aberdeenshire Council Housing Service also have a mainstream housing support service, which is commissioned via Aberdeen Foyer and the Salvation Army. Referrals to the service can be made for people coming out of prison who may require housing support, for example, due to previous poor tenancy history, rent arrears, debts, etc. During 2022/23, 31 individuals were referred for assessment and of this, 21 agreed to accept housing support and were allocated a worker from The Salvation Army or Aberdeen Foyer. Nine of these individuals have now been closed to the housing support service, however 12 remain open and are doing well.

### Planning for Release from Custody Arrangements

The Case Management Board at HMP Grampian continues to discuss all new admissions, and information is sent out weekly to housing partners so that appropriate referrals and actions can be taken. Scottish Prison Service information is shared with Housing on a weekly basis providing details regarding admission, releases and transfers within the prison estate. This allows for an assessment of housing need and homeless prevention activity to be carried out where appropriate. The Housing Liaison Officer and the case management team in the Prison have an excellent working

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<sup>12</sup> Outcomes Briefing Note 2022. Housing First Programme. Aberdeenshire Council, June 2022.





relationship that supports this process well. Despite the low number of Aberdeenshire cases, the Housing Service is committed this process and believes it is working very well. An example of this is that during the reporting period, Housing Services were able to house two individuals directly into a permanent tenancy on release from prison. The tenancies were signed a few weeks before the date of liberation and Universal Credit claims were completed at prison on release. Furnishings were identified by family members and the Housing Service and a Community Care Grant was completed and actioned on the day of release.

During the reporting period, Housing colleagues identified issues where individuals were serving long periods on remand and/or were being given custodial sentences beyond the period in which they could continue to claim Universal Credit to cover the cost of their rent. This meant that individuals faced losing their tenancy, even where they had not been convicted of an offence. Although the issue was raised with the Community Justice Partnership, there was no obvious solution and as a result, the Housing Service has had to think creatively about how people can be supported to retain their tenancies in these circumstances. A number of tenancies have consequently been sustained through arrears arrangements being put in place and in another case, the transfer of tenancy into a parent's name was facilitated and paperwork completed with the person in prison.

The number of homeless applications made by prison leavers in Aberdeenshire has been falling since Aberdeenshire adopted a rapid rehousing approach and the SHORE standards, and in 2022/23 the number of applications was 31. This is also the case with the number of repeat homeless presentations which was 25 last year (2022/23) compared with 51 in 2019/20.

The monthly virtual Throughcare Planning Meetings, which were initially introduced in 2020/21 in response to the need for collaborative planning in relation to Emergency Early Release from Custody, have continued throughout the reporting period. These planning meetings help to ensure that partner agencies are organised and well prepared to provide support to those who were being released from custody – this includes those who are subject to Statutory Throughcare and those who are to be offered Voluntary Throughcare. By continuing to meet on a monthly basis, good working relationships have continued to develop between the partners, which supports information sharing, allowing partners to adapt how services are delivered and respond quickly any issues that have emerged. This in turn ensures that services, including Housing, Health and Social Care (including substance use), are in place for people prior to their release from custody, which is in line with SHORE standards. During 2022/23, 32 new Voluntary Throughcare cases commenced.

Set up in 2022, the Grampian Outreach Team at HMP Grampian was established in response to an identified gap in services for people, at a time when the prison was seeing a decrease in access to and engagement with services, and an increase in incidents where individuals have been managed under the Management of Offender at Risk Due to Any Substance (MORS) policy, longer periods of remand, unplanned or unscheduled releases from Court, as well as non-fatal overdoses and drug related deaths within in the community. The team will focus on those individuals who are



not engaging with services within the prison and will identify creative ways to work with people to break down barriers to engagement and encourage people to access the supports that they require. Support is available from the Outreach Service for up to three months but can continue for longer where required. Already the service has reported some successes, with 90.3% of people reporting an improvement in their mental health since engaging with the Outreach Service. In addition, 90.3% also reported an improvement in managing emotions and 87.1% reported an improvement in thinking positively, hope for the future, self-belief and confidence.

People leaving custody from HMP Grampian continue to be supported to access services prior to release, which can help to ensure a smooth transition to the community. During 2022/23, 73.2% of Aberdeenshire people released from a custodial sentence from HMP Grampian were registered with a GP, which is a considerable improvement in comparison to previous reporting periods (45.5% in 2021/22 and 33% in 2020/21). There was also a significant improvement in the proportion of people who had a benefits eligibility check, which increased from 73.7% in 2021/22 to 83.9% in 2022/23. The proportion of people who have suitable accommodation on release from a custodial sentence remains high at 91.1%, although this is a slight reduction in comparison to the previous year, when nearly all (99%) people had suitable accommodation on release.



## NATIONAL OUTCOME FOUR

### Effective interventions are delivered to prevent and reduce the risk of further offending

#### Where applicable have regard to the following indicators:

- Use of 'other activities requirements' in CPOs
- Effective risk management for public protection
- Quality of CPOs and DTTOs
- Reduced use of custodial sentences and remand:
  - a) Balance between community sentences relative to short custodial sentences under one year
  - b) Proportion of people appearing from custody who are remanded
- The delivery of interventions targeted at problem drug and alcohol use [NHS Local Delivery Plan (LDP) Standard]
- Number of Police Recorded Warnings, police diversion, fiscal measures, fiscal diversion, supervised bail, community sentences (including CPOs , DTTOs and RLOs )
- Number of short-term sentences under one year

#### 8) What changes have been made to community justice arrangements to enable desistance, reduce reoffending, and promote integration, and what impact has there been as a result?

As highlighted in previous Annual Reports, the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership has established an Alternatives to Prosecution, Remand and Custody Sub Group, which has representation from Police Scotland, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Scottish Courts Service and Criminal Justice Social Work. The sub group continued to meet throughout the reporting period to review progress, discuss any issues and identify potential solutions in relation to Diversion from Prosecution, Undertakings, Court Support, Bail Supervision, Electronic Monitoring and Structured Deferred Sentences. This group has helped to improve communication and information sharing in relation to people who have been released on Undertaking to appear at Court at a later date, so that Criminal Justice Social Work is better placed to offer support and assistance to the person prior to them appearing in Court. The group has also helped to increase the use of Diversion from Prosecution, as there is now an opportunity to identify potential Undertaking cases that may be suitable for Diversion rather than prosecution – these cases are then flagged up to the Procurator Fiscal for their consideration. These developments would not have been possible had it not been for the robust working relationships that have been developed through the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership.

In terms of performance, between April 2022 and March 2023, over 180 (181) Aberdeenshire individuals were assessed for Bail Supervision, with 16 cases being commenced. This is a significant increase in comparison to the previous reporting period, when two Bail Supervision cases were commenced, and much closer to the pre-pandemic level of 17 that was achieved in 2019/20.



During the same period, 21 Structured Deferred Sentences were imposed for 18 individuals from the Aberdeenshire area. Structured Deferred Sentences provide an opportunity to divert individuals from the Criminal Justice System, whilst assisting those with underlying problems or chaotic lifestyles that result in offending behaviour. Structured Deferred Sentences also provide an alternative for those with a higher risk/need level and who require or would benefit from Social Work support. Work involves a combination of practical and therapeutic support, initially focusing on welfare needs to achieve stability and positive change in the individual's life, before proceeding to offence-focused work. Prior to the provision of the additional recovery funding from the Scottish Government, which enabled Criminal Justice Social Work to invest in additional staffing, this disposal was not available within Aberdeenshire. The Structured Deferred Sentences Criminal Justice Social Worker is based within Aberdeen Court for part of the week, which has helped to increase awareness amongst Community Justice Partners and stakeholders including the Court Service, Sheriffs and Defence Agents of the services that are available when a person from Aberdeenshire is appearing in Court.

The increase in capacity that has been created through the additional Scottish Government funding also meant that Aberdeenshire was in a position to go live with the introduction of Electronic Monitoring of Bail on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022, which has led to a small number of cases where electronic monitoring of bail has been imposed. Despite some staffing challenges during the reporting period, Criminal Justice Social Work also now has capacity to cover all three courts within our area (Aberdeen, Banff and Peterhead Sheriff Courts), which was not possible previously.

In terms of Court Support, Community Justice Partners recognise that it can be difficult for people to attend welfare services when released from custody, due to the large, rural nature of the Aberdeenshire area. For example, where an individual appears from custody at Aberdeen Sheriff Court, their local services may not be open by the time they are released. As a result, the Court Support Social Workers now hold a collection of items including mobile phones and top up cards, clothing, toiletries, food vouchers and bags for clients to access whenever they require. Bags containing a selection of toiletries are also available so that clients in need will have access to a tooth brush, toothpaste, face wipes, shampoo and conditioner, soap, deodorant and a hair brush and bobbles. This is reported to have been well received by service users.

A Fiscal Work Order is where an individual is offered the chance to carry out between 10 and 50 hours of unpaid work as an alternative to court proceedings. As was the position in the previous reporting period, the number of Fiscal Work Orders issued remained low during 2022/23 (>5 in both 2022/23 and 2021/22). As a Fiscal Work Order is an alternative to prosecution, it is possible that the increase in the number of cases referred to Social Work for a Diversion from Prosecution has led to a corresponding decrease in the number of Fiscal Work Orders that have been issued. This is seen as a positive development, as Diversion from Prosecution would tend to be offered in cases where the individual has an identifiable need that may be contributing towards the offending behaviour, that could be addressed through referral to Social Work.



Community Payback Orders remain the most common community-based disposal within Aberdeenshire, with 521 of these orders in place during 2022/23. This is an increase in comparison to the previous two reporting periods (485 in 2021/22 and 325 in 2020/21) and is perhaps indicative of a return to the position pre-pandemic (660 in 2019/20). The number of individuals with a Programme Requirement as part of a Community Payback Order has also increased, from 49 in 2021/22 to 58 in 2022/23. The number of Programme Requirements made as part of a Community Payback Order (which includes requirements to participate in the Caledonian Programme, the Caledonian Respect Programme or the Moving Forward Making Changes Programme) has also increased from 49 in 2021/22 to 63 in 2022/23.

During 2022/23, 65% (79/122) Community Payback Orders were successfully completed, which is a reduction in comparison to the previous reporting period, when 76% (89/117) orders were successfully completed. There has also been a slight increase in the breach rate during the period, from 8% (39/485) in 2021/22 to 11% (57/521) in 2022/23. There are a number of possible reasons for the increase in breach rates and reduction in successful completions, including an increase in the number of orders overall, as well as an increase in need amongst service users leading to increased complexity of cases. Also, since the pandemic, Criminal Justice Social Workers had been mindful of the Court backlog and would look at ways to engage or re-engage with service users wherever possible, as an alternative to submitting a breach report. As the Courts have returned to full capacity and Criminal Justice Social Workers have returned to delivering services in line with National Standards, those orders which remained in breach have been returned to court, which is another possible reason for the slight increase in the breach rate.

The use of the 'Any Other Activity' component of an Unpaid Work Requirement within a Community Payback Order remains crucial in the completion of unpaid work hours within Aberdeenshire. During 2022/23, 40% (210/521) of Community Payback Orders had the use of 'Any Other Activity' hours in place. Some examples of the types of other activity that individuals completed during the period included attending College and Open University courses and sessions with the Criminal Justice Employability Officer, attending health appointments (including appointments with Drug and Alcohol Services, Criminal Justice Occupational Therapist and Psychiatry), accessing Housing Support Services and also the completion of Home Working tasks such as preparing and assembling planters, bird feeders and bird boxes. Aberdeenshire also continued to collaborate with the Creative Change Collective (formerly Street Cones), to deliver a series of online creative writing workshops, engagement with which can count towards completion of Any Other Activity hours as part of a Community Payback Order Unpaid Work Requirement. During the period, a total of 36 participants attended at least one Creative Change Collective online session, and over the three modules, 606 Any Other Activity hours were completed. Each of the three modules completed during the period led to the production of a script which was then performed to an online audience – the recordings of which are available to view online ([Creative Change Collective - YouTube](#)).

Individuals who have come to the end of their time working with the Aberdeenshire Criminal Justice Social Work Service are asked to complete an Exit Questionnaire. This helps the service to measure the quality of service provided in relation to





community-based disposals, such as Community Payback Orders. In previous years, the questionnaires had been redesigned to ensure that feedback was captured that could help evidence progress towards both the structural and person-centric National Outcomes for Community Justice. During 2022/23, 91% (20/22) of people who completed an Exit Questionnaire said that they felt they got good support from their supervisor during Supervision, a slight reduction in comparison to 2021/22 (100% 24/24). 95% (21/22) of people said that they thought they were treated with respect by their supervisor while on Supervision, which is also a slight reduction in comparison to 2021/22 (100% 24/24). And 95% (21/22) of people also felt that their progress was recognised and regularly reviewed as part of their plan (compared to 100% or 24/24 in 2021/22). 77% (17/22) of people said that they thought being on Supervision had helped them to stop or reduce offending, which is a reduction in comparison to 2021/22 (96% 23/24). Examples of this can be seen through the following quotes from people who had completed a period of Supervision with Criminal Justice Social Work:

*“At the start of my Supervision order I had regular weekly meetings with my allocated case worker, which were subsequently reduced in frequency. However, I had awareness that should I felt I needed support at any time, this was available to me”.*

*“I wasn’t judged, I was given opportunity to talk how and when I wanted to when I was ready to, although the guilt and remorse was always there I felt the sessions were focused on what I felt and how I was coping”.*

*“I no longer get involved in any trouble and if I find myself in a situation I can handle it a lot better. It has made me think in different ways as to how I can better control my emotions and respond appropriately, rather than lashing out and getting mad”.*

Restriction of Liberty Orders are available to courts as an alternative to custody. A Restriction of Liberty Order will require a person to stay within their home at times specified by the court (also known as a curfew), and compliance with these requirements will be monitored electronically through an electronic tag. Restriction of Liberty Orders continue to be used as an alternative to custody within Aberdeenshire, with 48 orders made during the reporting period. Fewer orders were made this year in comparison to the previous reporting period (58 in 2021/22), but is still an increase on the figure for 2020/21 (38) and is more in line with the number of orders made prior to the pandemic (47 in 2019/20).

The Higher Support Needs Team continues to work with individuals who have previously found it difficult to complete the Unpaid Work aspect of their community order(s) due to challenges in relation to their mental health including anxiety, alcohol and drug issues and general ill health. The project has developed over the years it has been running, with team members realising the importance of building positive relationships with service users. By doing this, the team gains a better understanding of the individuals’ needs and how best they can assist them to ultimately stop them reoffending and get their lives back on track. It can take a long time for trust to be built between the individual and their worker. To help facilitate this, the team works in a structured manner by taking people to safe places, which have a positive impact on their anxiety, mental health and wellbeing. The team



assist at four different projects, all of which have been selected as they have a positive impact on mental health. Some of the Higher Support Needs Team (HSNT) projects have facilities that provide a safe space where the team can spend time with people and discuss their issues, needs and establish how best to help them move forward. These spaces are also used to hold discussions with an individual or group of service users, to discuss their offending and help them realise not only how their offending has an impact on them, but also their families and their victims. This gives them a greater insight on the impact this has and can help prevent further offending. The team offers a range of supports to people, including attending Job Centre interviews, medical appointments, Court appearances, writing CVs, and attending Social Work, Housing and Drug and Alcohol appointments. Some people also require help with budgeting. In relation to unpaid work, the team encourages individuals to come up with projects that they want to be involved in and make sure that they continue to work on these projects until they are completed. This not only gives people a sense of job satisfaction but a feeling of self-worth as they have fully contributed to the project. The team also encourages people to learn new skills which can ultimately help when applying for jobs. The team have found that some people really benefit from working with the service, as this has provided them with stability and routine in their lives, which they did not have before. Some felt that they needed to continue working with the team even though they had successfully completed their Community Payback Orders as this also reduces the risk of them re-offending. Due to this, an after-care service is now provided by the team, so that people can continue working with them on a voluntary basis for as long as they feel necessary.

The Higher Support Needs Team is intended to provide a community-based alternative for people who would be at risk of receiving a short custodial sentence. During 2021/22, the most recent period for which the data is available, of the 143 people from Aberdeenshire who received a custodial sentence, 104 (73%) received a sentence of 12 months or less<sup>13</sup>. This is a reduction in comparison to previous reporting years (195 in 2019/20, 211 in 2018/19), which is a positive development, as it demonstrates that fewer sentences under 12 months are being used as a disposal for people from the Aberdeenshire area. Although it is not possible to attribute the reduction in the use of short custodial sentences to the existence of the Higher Support Needs Team specifically, it is hoped that by having services such as this available within the community, sentencers will become more confident in the use of community-based disposals to address underlying causes of offending, as opposed to short periods in custody.

### Aberdeenshire Safer Streets Initiative 2022

Summer 2022 saw the reintroduction of the first full calendar of summer games and shows across Aberdeenshire since 2019. In response, throughout summer 2022, Community Justice Partners (Police Scotland and Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership) worked in partnership to deliver a violence prevention strategy that

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<sup>13</sup> Scottish Government Criminal Proceedings in Scotland, Post Codes 2020/21- [Supporting documents - Criminal proceedings in Scotland: 2020-2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2021/02/Supporting_documents_-_Criminal_proceedings_in_Scotland_2020-2021.pdf)



aims to reduce the harm caused by violence for victims, their families and communities across the north-east and identify and support those requiring assistance as a result of alcohol or substance use. The Safer Streets Summer Games and Shows Initiative involved joint teams of Police, Criminal Justice and Drug and Alcohol practitioners carrying out high visibility patrols at six marquee events, showgrounds and within local communities (including Meldrum, Echt, New Deer, Turriff, Banchory and Invercairn), proactively engaging with those attending the event and local residents. A focus on early intervention and support resulted in largely positive experiences of events, reducing impacts on communities from anti-social behaviour and violence. Very few incidents of violence or antisocial behaviour were recorded by Police Scotland which were linked to these events. The presence of the joint teams and their use of early intervention and engagement is therefore likely to have contributed to the success of these events and the prevention of harm within Aberdeenshire communities.

During December 2022, Police Scotland North East Division and Aberdeenshire Criminal Justice Social Work delivered a further Festive Safer Streets Initiative. This initiative aims to prevent violence and antisocial behaviour and to reduce the associated harm caused to victims, their families and communities across the north-east at a time when town centres are traditionally much busier. The initiative was run over three nights in the lead up to Christmas 2022, with a focus on communities in Fraserburgh, Peterhead and Inverurie. Where individuals had been identified as vulnerable through substance use, domestic abuse or cuckooing, joint visits to their home address were carried out by Police and Social Work teams, which offered an additional opportunity for contact with services over the weekend. Within town centres, high visibility, joint patrols were carried out by Police and partners to identify individuals who would have been considered to be at an increased risk of harm due to alcohol and/or drug consumption. Where appropriate, individuals were removed from immediate risk and supported to return home, with referral details for longer-term support being provided where appropriate. The high visibility patrols within the town centres, along with proactive use of the mobile Police CCTV van, can help to deter people from engaging in antisocial behaviour. In addition to patrols and engagement, over the three nights, 25 vulnerable adults were visited by the Safer Streets teams, 38 Perpetrator Bail Checks were carried out, 6 individuals were visited by the teams while in Police custody, 36 licensed premises were carried out, and 3 referrals were made for support to Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health services. Only three offences were recorded and reported by the teams during the course of the initiative.

Over the three nights, footfall around licensed premises and the nighttime economy was notably less than it was prior to COVID. Community Justice Partners will take the opportunity to review the current Safer Streets model and consider how this should be delivered in future, to meet current need.







## **NATIONAL OUTCOME FIVE**

**Life chances are improved through needs, including health, financial inclusion, housing and safety, being addressed.**

## **NATIONAL OUTCOME SIX**

**People develop positive relationships and more opportunities to participate and contribute through education, employment and leisure activities.**

## **NATIONAL OUTCOME SEVEN**

**Individuals' resilience and capacity for change and self-management are enhanced.**

**Have regard to the following indicator:**

- Individuals have made progress against the outcome

### **9) What mechanisms and arrangements enable your area to understand progress for people against these outcomes?**

As highlighted above, individuals who have come to the end of their time working with the Aberdeenshire Criminal Justice Social Work Service are asked to complete an Exit Questionnaire. This helps the service to measure the quality of service provided in relation to community-based disposals, such as Community Payback Orders. In previous years, the questionnaires had been redesigned to ensure that feedback was captured that can help evidence progress towards both the structural and person-centric National Outcomes for Community Justice, which were in place from 2016-2023. Going forward, the questionnaires will need to be reviewed to ensure that they are capturing the information required to evidence improvement towards the new National Outcomes for Community Justice (from 2023/24 onwards).

#### National Outcome Five

With regard to National Outcome Five, individuals who had completed a period of work with Criminal Justice Social Work were asked to identify any issues they had been having trouble with, and whether this had improved either during or after their order. It should be noted that the total number of questionnaires completed this year remained low, and so care should be taken when drawing conclusions based on the figures provided below. Of those who had completed a period of Supervision (which included those with combined Supervision and Unpaid Work Requirements, in addition to Supervision only), similar to previous years, the most commonly reported issues included Confidence (9), Coping Skills (7), Self-Esteem (7) and Mental Health (7). Additionally this year, Money Issues were highlighted as an area of concern for justice service users (8). Of those who reported Confidence as an issue before Supervision, 78% (7/9) reported that this had improved either during or after their order. Of those who reported that Coping Skills as an issue before Supervision, 71% (5/7) reported that this had improved – this was also the case for those who had identified Self Esteem as an issue. Of those who reported Mental Health as an issue, 100% (7/7) reported that this had improved. Where individuals had identified



Money Issues as an issue, only 38% (<5 / 8) said that this had improved either during or after their order. This is perhaps reflective of the current cost of living crisis and helps demonstrate that those within the justice system are also being affected by this. Overall, of those who completed an Exit Questionnaire, 73% (16/22) agreed that being on Supervision had helped them to improve their life chances.

*“I have always had low self esteem in myself and my situation made this worse although brought on by myself and my actions.. through supervision the talking helped to see things differently and notice things about myself I hadn't before”*

Individuals who completed a period of Unpaid Work were also asked to identify any issues they had been having trouble with, and whether this had improved either during or after their order. As was the position in relation to Supervision Exit Questionnaires, the total number of Unpaid Work Exit questionnaires completed this year remained low (26), and so care should be taken when drawing conclusions based on the figures provided below. Similar to previous reporting periods, the most frequently reported issues this year were Mental Health (10) and Coping Skills (5). For both issues, 60% of people had reported that there had been an improvement either during or after their order. Physical Health had also been identified by some people (5) prior to Unpaid Work, however only 20% (<5 / 5) reported that this had improved during or after their order. Individuals also reported that their Self Esteem had improved, even where this had not been identified as an issue prior to being on their order (5/<5 or 125%).

This year, it also possible to include some feedback from people who had completed a period of Diversion from Prosecution. However as with other types of disposal, the number of Exit Questionnaires for Diversion was low (5), and so care should be taken when drawing conclusions based on these figures. The most frequently reported issues for people on Diversion were Mental Health (<5/5) and Self Esteem (<5/5), and all those who had identified these as issues prior to Diversion reported that there had been an improvement either during or after their Diversion. Overall, of those who completed an Exit Questionnaire, 60% (<5/5) agreed that being on Diversion had helped them to improve their life chances.

In addition, feedback from individuals who had participated in modules 5, 6 and 7 of the Creative Change Collective online unpaid work workshops helps to evidence the impact that these sessions have had on participants, and how these have helped meet unmet need.

*“When I came into the sessions, I had no confidence. This has given me confidence as well as helped me with my reading and writing. This has given me my life back”.*

### National Outcome Six

Individuals who had completed a period of work with Criminal Justice Social Work were asked a range of questions about their experiences of being on an order with Criminal Justice Social Work, with a view to establishing whether this had helped them to develop positive relationships and more opportunities to participate and contribute through education, employment and leisure activities (National Outcome



Six). It should be noted that the total number of questionnaires completed this year remained low, and so care should be taken when drawing conclusions based on the figures provided below. Of those who had been on Supervision, 77% (17/22) agreed that they now knew how to find out more about what was available to them in their community and how to get involved in any activities that interested them. This is a slight increase in comparison to the figure for the previous reporting period (71%, 17/24 in 2021/22). In addition, 68% (15/22) agreed that they felt more able to make constructive use of their time following being on Supervision – a slight reduction in comparison to the figure for 2021/22 (75%, 18/24).

This year, it also possible to include some feedback from people who had completed a period of Diversion from Prosecution. Again, the total number of questionnaires completed this year was low, and so care should be taken when drawing conclusions based on the figures provided below. Of those who completed an Exit Questionnaire, 60% (<5/5) agreed that they knew how to find out more about what was available to them in their community and how to get involved in any activities that interested them, and 100% (5/5) agreed that they felt more able to make constructive use of their time.

Individuals who had completed a period of Unpaid Work were also asked a range of questions related to this Outcome. Of those who completed an Exit Questionnaire, 65% (17/26) reported that the experience of being on Unpaid Work had helped them to learn about working as part of a team. This is in line with figures for previous reporting periods. In addition, 54% (14/26) said that they had developed new skills while on Unpaid Work, and 27% said that being on Unpaid Work had helped to further develop skills that they already had. While the percentage of people who said they had learned new skills has increased in comparison to previous years, the percentage of people who said that being on Unpaid Work had helped them to further develop existing skills has reduced slightly in comparison to previous years.

Feedback from individuals who had participated in modules 5, 6 and 7 of the Creative Change Collective online unpaid work workshops helps to evidence the impact that these sessions have had on participants, and how these had helped people to develop positive relationships and have more opportunities to participate in activities. It is clear from the summary sheets as well as the debrief that the participants enjoyed the teamwork aspect of the workshops, and the chance to explore their creativity. Some examples of feedback include:

*“Gave me my confidence, motivated me and brought us all together as a team”.*

*“Everybody coming together and working towards something, and then having a final outcome”* (a participant, when asked about their favourite part of the workshops).

### National Outcome Seven

Individuals who had completed a period of work with Criminal Justice Social Work during 2022/23 were also asked about their experience of being on an order and whether this had enhanced their resilience and capacity for change and self-management (National Outcome Seven). As explained above, the total number of



questionnaires completed this year remained low, and so care should be taken when drawing conclusions based on the figures provided below. Of those who had been on a period of Diversion from Prosecution and had completed an Exit Questionnaire (5), 100% said that this experience had changed their thinking and changed their behaviour. In addition, 80% (<5/5) of people who completed an Exit Questionnaire said that as a result of being on Diversion, they felt more able to deal with setbacks and make decisions about their own lives and the things that affect them. The same questions were asked of those who had completed a period of Supervision with Criminal Justice – this included those who had both a Supervision Requirement and Unpaid Work as part of a Community Payback Order, as well as those who only had a Supervision Requirement. Of those who completed an Exit Questionnaire, 82% (18/22) said that being on Supervision had changed their thinking, and 77% (17/22) thought that it had changed their behaviour. Both of these figures are an improvement in comparison to previous years (for example, in 2021/22, 67% (16/24) thought being on Supervision had changed their thinking and 75% (18/24) thought it had changed their behaviour, and in 2020/21, the figures for both were 67% (10/15)). In addition this year, 73% (16/22) of people who completed an Exit Questionnaire said that as a result of being on Supervision, they felt more able to deal with setbacks and make decisions about their own lives and the things that affect them.

Of those who had completed a period of Unpaid Work and had also filled in an Exit Questionnaire, 81% (21/26) said that they thought being on this order had changed their thinking, and 77% (20/26) said they thought this had changed their behaviour. This is a reduction in comparison to the figures for 2021/22, when 89% (25/28) thought that being on Unpaid Work Requirement had changed their thinking, and 100% (28/28) said they thought this had changed their behaviour.

Feedback was also sought from individuals who had participated in modules 5, 6 and 7 of the Creative Change Collective online unpaid work workshops, to help evidence how the sessions had helped to enhance their resilience and capacity for change and self-management. From the feedback provided, it was clear that the workshops had a therapeutic and confidence-boosting impact on each participant. Some examples of quotes from participants include:

*“Enjoyable and took me out of myself. I couldn’t wait for the drama sessions, I haven’t thought of using since starting the sessions”.*

*“It shows me that if I put my mind to something, I can achieve it. I never thought drama would tickle my fancy, but I loved it”.*



**10) If available, provide one or more supporting case studies, lived experience narrative or other information to demonstrate activity and impact relating to the objectives reflected by person-centred outcomes 5, 6 and 7.**

**Aberdeenshire Criminal Justice Employability Service**

This case study example involves an individual, Client A, who had been subjected to the negative influences of associates which led to issues with alcohol and drug use and resulted in their employment being terminated. Due to this, Client A's personal circumstances deteriorated further, and they were then charged with drug offences.

When referred to the Criminal Justice Employability Service, Client A identified gaining employment as being a key element of their rehabilitation and their desire to improve their life chances. However, by their own admission, Client A "didn't know where to start". Client A was helped to create a CV and assisted to apply for online job vacancies. During this process it was clear Client A was becoming increasingly disheartened by the initial rejections they received. To address this and strengthen their resilience, Client A received a significant degree of mentoring from the Employability Service to increase their confidence and raise their self-esteem. Client A responded well to this and was successful in gaining two part time jobs.

Client A's hard work and commitment impressed one of the employers to the extent that they were offered a permanent position and given the additional responsibility of opening and locking the premises. This degree of trust demonstrated how much Client A had achieved and motivated them to continue making positive changes. Support from partner agencies also led to Client A securing a permanent Aberdeenshire Council tenancy, improving their health and wellbeing by regularly attending a local gym and undergoing acupuncture to address their substance use, which helped them tackle these issues. In particular, Client A felt increasingly motivated to maintain the positive changes they had made to their life.

Due to being supported, Client A identified that:

- Their life chances had improved by adopting a healthier and more active lifestyle and securing a permanent housing tenancy
- They developed positive relationships and gained opportunities to become fitter by joining a gym, and also contributing by finding full time employment
- Their resilience had increased and their capacity for change and self-management had improved, which was demonstrated by their greater self-confidence and ability to make and maintain positive changes to their lifestyle.





## **Aberdeenshire Higher Support Needs Team**

Client B is a vulnerable young male who stays at home with his mother, stepfather, and siblings. Client B's parents separated when he was young and this amongst other things has led to him having a poor relationship with both his parents. Client B also witnesses several traumatic incidents, which has had a negative effect on him and his ability to deal with difficult situations. This impacted on his anger management, especially when his mother tried to exert some authority over him. His relationship with his father eventually broke down and resulted in him having no contact. This also had a knock-on effect on his education as his attendance at school was poor.

Client B continued to live with his mother during his teenage years, but the relationship between them was very difficult, which resulted in Client B being violent towards her on several occasions and the Police becoming involved. As a result of this behaviour, Client B ended up in the Court system and eventually received a Community Payback Order with Unpaid work and Supervision.

Client B was receiving support from his Social Worker and from Childrens Services but found it difficult to engage with them. He was also placed on an Unpaid Work work party, but failed to attend this. Due to this lack of engagement, he was referred to the Higher Support Needs Team to see if the team could assist with his unpaid work hours whilst also providing him with the support that he needed.

On initially being referred to the Higher Support Needs Team, it was apparent that Client B would be very difficult to engage with as it was difficult to speak with him and hold a conversation. Any conversation that was had with Client B, he would turn it round to speaking about violence and how he felt it was appropriate for males to be violent, whatever the situation. These conversations were quite concerning but the team found this to be a way of starting to break down barriers with him and turning these conversations back around so that he would realise the impact violence not only had on his own safety but also the safety and wellbeing of others, especially his mother. Client B had a strong belief that if he continued to be violent, he would end up in prison, which at this time was his goal and thought it would be 'cool' to be in prison.

Client B had no real desire to gain employment and be financially independent. His self-esteem was extremely low and felt he was worthless and believed that prison would be good thing for him, as he felt there was no alternative. Client B also felt that his mother should continue to provide for him, so there was no need for him get a job and to earn money. He also felt that she should continue to put a roof over his head even though he would often cause damage to the property.

Over the weeks and months that followed the Higher Support Needs team slowly started building a good relationship with Client B. He started to trust them and relax more in their company. This resulted in him becoming more open and speaking about the events in his past which had had a negative impact on him, especially the traumatic events he had witnessed caused by his father, some of which he believed he was responsible for. These conversations helped him realise that his father's



actions were his responsibility, not Client B's. Client B began to feel that he was not worthless, and he potentially had something that he could give back and perhaps turn his life around.

During this time, it was decided to pair Client B up with another service user who had been through the prison system several times and also had a very challenging childhood. This allowed Client B to gain a better insight into his own issues. It also allowed him to get a first-hand insight into the realities of prison life and the negative impact being in prison can have on a person's mental health and general wellbeing. The service users advised Client B in no uncertain terms not to go down the route of being in prison if it could be avoided. Client B appeared to listen to this service user. His negative attitude was changing, and he appeared more open to the advice he was being given. The team could see that his views on prison were changing and he could see it was not for him. He also started speaking about his relationship with his mother in a more positive way and how his relationship with her was changing for the better. He realised that his mum was the one constant in his life and was extremely supportive of him and his conduct towards her was not acceptable. Strategies were discussed that he could put in place to deal with any anger issues he had, not only towards his mother but also to others.

With conversations becoming easier Client B started speaking about his interest and hobbies and new skills he wanted to learn. One of his interests was chess, having taught himself to play. On realising this the Higher Support Needs team arranged for him to teach others how to play. He agreed to this and was extremely patient in teaching other service users this skill and found that this made him gain in confidence. This also gave him a feeling of self-worth that he could do something that others could not and he was able to communicate well with them. From this he also developed new friendships with other service users, whom he had found difficult to communicate with in the past. Client B also became more open to learning new skills that could potentially help him gain employment, something he had been very averse to considering. The Higher Support Needs team tapped into this newfound interest in learning, using it as an opportunity to teach Client B new skills and focused on him potentially gaining employment. The team encourages this at every opportunity, advising Client B that it would be good for him not to be financially dependent on his mother.

An opportunity also arose for Client B to participate on an outward-bound course which initially he was very resistant to go on. Again, with encouragement he decided to participate in this course, which he enjoyed and gained a lot of experience from. On returning from this the difference in his self-confidence was also apparent as well as his self-discipline.

Client B at this point was more settled and had not been involved with Police for several months, which prior to this had been a regular occurrence. It was evident that he was more settled and the relationship with his mother had improved greatly. He could see that there was a difference in his attitude and felt that due to this he would like to start working and earning his own money. He gained employment shortly after this and sees the benefit of having his own money and not being financially dependent on others.





Client B successfully completed his Community Payback Order. On completion he was a totally different person to the person the Higher Support Needs team and his Social Worker initially met. He is aware that things in the future might be difficult, but he is now in a much better place to deal with these.

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## Apex Labyrinth Programme

Client C started the Labyrinth programme following being convicted of a sexual offence. Client C was previously self employed but had had to give this up following conviction. As Client C and their partner were now relied on Client C's pension and some savings, the focus of the work with Apex was around financial issues and communication with their partner.

Client C's partner had ongoing health issues and so Client C and their worker from Apex worked on how Client C could help their partner to apply for benefits. These health problems upset client C and made it more difficult to engage in meaningful conversation around their future. Client C originally wanted to set up their business again but after a few months of looking into disclosure and discussing how the police would have to go through their business online records, client C decided they did not want to pursue this any longer and was happy to just be retired. Client C explained how they were interested in writing fiction books and how they would like to use their time they have now since retiring from their self-employed business. Client C was supported to access the Open University to enrol on a course, which they completed and then went on to enrol in another Open University course that will enable client C to progress their writing. Client C and their Apex worker also looked at websites which will help client C edit their story as well as publish to help boost client C's confidence in their writing.

Client C was given a Community Payback Order Unpaid Work as a disposal method and once they had completed this, they worried they would have nothing to do and no reason to leave the house. Client C and the Apex Worker then looked at other outdoor activities that Client C could get involved with in the community. Client C now attends a local community group on a weekly basis where they can do everything from woodworking to metal working along with just a chat with their peers. Client C is also using this as an opportunity to identify new ideas for their stories. Client C regularly meets with their Social Worker, their Apex Worker and a therapist in relation to issues resulting from a traumatic childhood. Client C has now begun to open up and has shown a capacity and capability for change and self-management, this has been a skill that Apex has helped them to develop thus empowering Client C to take the initiative and discuss issues which affect them with the correct individuals to continue on a new journey.

This example helps demonstrate progress towards the three person-centred Outcomes for Community Justice in that:

- Client C's life chances have improved through access to support with financial issues
- Client C was able to participate and contribute through accessing Open University courses and attending a local community group where they have opportunities to engage with peers
- Client C has begun to access support to explore previous trauma, evidencing a capacity for change and increased self-management.



**11) Look ahead with the new National Strategy, Community Justice Performance Framework and Community Justice Improvement Tool. Please tell us what the next steps are for your partnership in light of these significant developments.**

The Aberdeenshire Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan is currently under review. During 2023/24, the Community Justice Partnership will consider the findings of the Strategic Needs and Strengths Assessment of Community Justice in Aberdeenshire and, in consultation with stakeholders, communities and service users, will identify priorities for the new plan for 2024/25 onwards. As part of the development of the new plan, we will consider as a Partnership how we record progress and performance against the new Performance Framework<sup>15</sup> that has been produced by Community Justice Scotland and the Scottish Government.

At this stage, no priority areas have been agreed for the next Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (CJOIP), however given the need for MAT Standards to be implemented within all justice settings by April 2025, it is expected that this will be included as a priority for improvement. The new CJOIP will also likely be structured around the aims and priorities identified within the new National Strategy for Community Justice<sup>16</sup>.

Based on existing collaborative work through the Community Justice Partnership, Aberdeenshire is well placed to deliver on the priorities related to Diversion from Prosecution and Alternatives to Remand, including Bail Supervision and Electronic Monitoring, and access to services such as Employability and Housing, both within the community and on release from custody as part of statutory and voluntary throughcare arrangements. Aberdeenshire also has good links with the Third Sector, which will help to ensure that the voice of victims and survivors, families, people with lived experience of the justice system and the wider community are considered within the new plan. Community Justice Partners have also demonstrated their commitment to ensuring that services are trauma-informed, through the provision of trauma-enhanced training for Criminal Justice and Drug and Alcohol Service practitioners, and the new plan provides an opportunity to consider how training can be rolled out to include other community justice partners. There are also opportunities to develop our approach to Undertakings, Arrest Referral Services, and further joint work with Police and partners around tackling emerging trends in relation to serious organised crime, violence, and around reducing stigma in relation to drug and alcohol use.

Although progress continues to be made in relation to increasing access to services for people in the justice system, some barriers do still remain. The impact of the pandemic is still being felt by many services, particularly Health and Social Care Services, which can create barriers in terms of access to services for both those within the general population and the justice population. There are also challenges, both locally and nationally, in relation to the availability of suitable housing, with demand continuing to exceed supply. There are also challenges for Community

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<sup>15</sup> [Community Justice Performance Framework - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

<sup>16</sup> [National Strategy for Community Justice - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)



Justice Partners in relation to access to buildings that are able to meet the needs of services, in areas that are accessible to service users. For example, the Drug and Alcohol Service continues to experience challenge in relation to the availability of premises that are suitable for the delivery of Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards, which also have to be applied to all justice settings by April 2025.

In terms of access to services, a research team based at the University of Stirling, led by Dr Catriona Connell, recently commenced a research project that aims to understand how social networks influence help-seeking for substance use and mental health among people who have had involvement in the justice system<sup>17</sup>. Like other behaviour, help-seeking is influenced by the people we interact with in our social environment. The research aims to look at these 'relational' influences, which could be important but have not received as much research attention as individual and systemic factors. It is thought that taking a new perspective could open up new ways to intervene to support people who have been involved in the justice system, moving away from targeting individuals towards working with social networks in context. The research will explore differences between contexts by focusing on two different areas in Scotland – Aberdeenshire and Inverclyde<sup>18</sup>. Ethical approval for the research project has been received from the University of Stirling and the project has been approved by Community Justice Scotland for assistance with recruitment via their networks. The research study will run until May 2025. The study will be of interest to Community Justice Partners in Aberdeenshire and will help inform future policy and practice responses to people from Aberdeenshire who have become involved in the justice system.

Throughout 2022/23, the Criminal Justice Social Work Service and Drug and Alcohol Service have experienced challenges in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff to support the delivery of key services. Where services have been able to recruit, challenges remain in relation to access to national training courses, for example, training for Criminal Justice Social Workers. While not unique to the justice sector, this does present some challenges in terms of the ability of services to continue to make improvements to service delivery, which in turn impacts on ability to make progress towards the National Outcomes for Community Justice.

In addition, the ongoing work in relation to the development of the National Care Service and potential implications for Community Justice is creating uncertainty for a number of Community Justice Partners, most notably Criminal Justice Social Work and the Health and Social Care Partnership Drug and Alcohol Service.

However, in spite of these challenges, we are confident that as a Partnership, we will be able to continue to work together to find new and innovative ways to deliver community justice services and make progress against the new National Outcomes for Community Justice.

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<sup>17</sup> Relational influences on help-seeking for substance use and mental health among justice involved people: ESRC NIRG Network Study Overview

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*

