

CJS Corporate Plan Consultation Response from Social Work Scotland

7th November 2017

Social Work Scotland members welcomed many aspects of the plan. Particular strengths which were highlighted were the adoption of a whole systems approach with emphasis on the need to address issues holistically in order to prevent and reduce re-offending.

We are pleased to see a commitment to work with those who design and provide community justice services across the whole spectrum as well as with those who have lived experience of the system including families, victims and the wider community and to do so for the duration of the Plan.

We fully support an approach to CJS activity that will be trauma informed, evidenced-based and collaborative and believe, if this is executed, it will take us some way along the road of achieving the stated aim of a more robust and effective community justice system. There is also much to support within the longer term outcomes, CJS corporate outcomes and strategic themes.

We are also encouraged by the commitment to changing perceptions and creating public support and look forward with interest to seeing how CJS will reach new audiences beyond those already involved in community justice, particularly at a community and wider public level. Sharing learning in this regard would be welcome given this is a common agenda with community justice partnerships.

Given the socio-economic profile of some local authorities a major consideration is tackling the effects of high levels of poverty and deprivation. This is also true of the work carried out by Justice Social Work Services and Community Justice Partnerships. However, the multiple problems which deprivation gives rise to: ill-health, high levels of unemployment, poor education achievement/attainment, low levels of confidence and low aspirations, low income, poor housing and an increased fear of crime requires a whole systems approach at a national as well as local level. We therefore welcome the focus on promoting equality which runs throughout the plan.

Whilst it is positive to note that the Plan includes a commitment to being a Living Wage Employer, support for Modern Apprenticeships and promoting employability measures for those with convictions, there is scope we would suggest for being more aspirational around how CJS might work to support greater joined up thinking within government departments and indeed the whole system of public services to tackle the causes of disadvantage and vulnerability.

In general the plan appears succinct with strong links to the national strategy. The plan appears to be straightforward and easy to read and understand which should encourage and enable those not involved in justice to access it. The actions were described as fairly clear and achievable by respondents. However some aspects of the plan were identified as requiring further clarification and/or greater or lesser emphasis.

We are committed to establishing excellent communication links with CJS and community stakeholders and feel that communication between stakeholders should be emphasised throughout the plan.

We recognise that in order to improve people's lives and reduce offending in the long term prevention is important (page 2). The approach outlined in the Plan includes a primary focus on early intervention and prevention and within this context it speaks to gaining a better understanding of the 'wider landscape'.

Whilst there is a growing consensus around the need for public services to prioritise a preventative approach, spurred by the publication of the Christie Commission report, thinking around how this shift might be achieved is less well developed. We welcome the opportunity to work together with Community Justice Scotland to develop a conversation about how this might be achieved.

Some respondents were unsure how a preventative approach would fit with the legislative agenda, where the focus is on re-offending. There is also reference on the same page to 'work with statutory partners and stakeholders to deliver a wide range of services including early years'. Some felt that this may deviate from the thrust of the Community Justice Scotland Act as it makes no mention of preventing offending before a person has actually come into the criminal justice system. Rather the focus of the act appears to be on people given alternatives to prosecution or subject to criminal penalties (as captured within s.27 of the SW Scotland act). Our concern is that at a local and national level there could be the potential for disconnect, as local partnerships endeavour to deliver on their statutory duties. We welcome the opportunity to work with CJS on how this can be addressed.

The Community Justice Scotland strategy/vision is to 'prevent and reduce further offending by addressing its underlying causes and community justice plans are based on preventing further offending from the point of arrest. This is in keeping with the meaning of community justice under the act. Some raised a concern that community justice may lose the focus on working collaboratively with people currently involved in the criminal justice system, becoming over involved in areas beyond the scope of the act e.g. moving into primary prevention and early years. In short we appreciate that Community Justice Scotland acting in an advisory role to agencies involved in primary prevention would be useful, particularly as those children excluded from school (for example) are at risk of involvement in the justice system in later life. Some members wondered whether this should be the 'primary focus' as stated in the plan however. It would also be helpful to know more about CJS engagement with other strategic partnerships on key areas such as youth justice, domestic abuse and gender based violence.

Whilst the Plan makes reference to '..... a more robust and effective community justice system based on local planning...(pg4)', there is little specific reference to local community justice partnerships and expectations with regard to CJS relationship with them. We would contend these are critical local bodies and the CJS engagement with them should extend beyond "feedback", "support", "attend" and "meet with".

It would also be helpful to have more information detailing how CJS will engage with families, victims and communities. This is an area in which local partnerships would benefit from the support of CJS, to update capacity for this type of in-depth work.

On page 5 reference to bail supervision and support seemed to single out an individual disposal and it was suggested that the plan should perhaps refer to 'alternatives to prosecution and remand'.

We welcome the commitment to review the OPI framework (page 8) as there have been challenges with it in its current format. At the heart of such a reform should be the requirement to evidence what added value community justice partnerships have brought to delivering better outcomes for those who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with CJS to develop the framework to measure outcomes and improvement in a more meaningful way. We are interested in looking at how the framework could be developed to more creatively measure factors related to desistance for example. We see this as a high priority and would hope for early engagement to this end.

We would suggest the Christie Commission principles of empowering individuals and communities, integrating service provision, preventing negative outcomes and improving efficiency through reducing duplication and sharing services should also be among the key tests for community partnerships. We would also expect CJS to show ongoing leadership in these areas. It would also be beneficial to break down and add more detail to the timeframes involved e.g. 'year 1, year 2' etc.

As part of the review it may be helpful to develop reporting procedures which go beyond CPO delivery so that there is equivalent scrutiny of all partners in the community justice system. This would be in keeping with the partnership approach which the legislation is aiming for. This could be addressed by widening the parameters of CPO annual reports and/or subsuming them within CJOIP annual reports and would provide greater oversight. It may also be helpful to dovetail the CJOIP/LOIP content and timeframes so that they are aligned moving forward.

Page 9 of the plan makes reference to consultation on strategic commissioning and we would welcome more information on how wide this consultation has been and with whom.

On several occasions the plan refers to supporting community justice partners to explore new thinking and promote best practice (page 10 and 11). This support would be very welcome and we look forward to building collaborative conversations about how this will be achieved in practice. We expect that this would involve exploring the challenges partners are faced with at ground level, helping to identify areas for improvement and good practice and CJS being an overall visible support to partners.

In terms of responsibility for training and development, we welcome the opportunity to support CJS in looking at social work specific functions and developing a new model for

training provision. Moving forward we feel that there is a need to focus on involving all stakeholders when exploring training needs and opportunities.

We also felt that rather than having a purely academic advisory group we would hope to see an advisory group comprised of academics, professionals, people with lived experience and, crucially, people with expertise in leadership, change management and implementation.

We very much welcome the development of the Learning Hub to “Design and deliver training and other resources to assist community justice partners and develop identified best practice in service delivery and new research.” We trust that the hub will link with the RMA’s important resources. TDO posts were created to support justice social work training and development needs post qualification whilst SPS and police benefit from having colleges. It is important that the training needs of criminal justice staff are fully met going forward.

Some respondents reported that they would have liked to have seen more context in relation to why Community Justice Scotland was established. Given that the catalyst for the creation of the model was the 2012 Audit Scotland report and the Commission on Women Offenders the plan could say more about the needs of women involved in the justice system. We would suggest that this could go beyond discussion of the redesign of the custodial estate in Scotland.

There did not appear to be any reference to local public protection arrangements or specific reference to prisons, the Parole Board or MAPPA. Police Scotland are only mentioned once (page 4), named alongside the other statutory partners. Perhaps they could be referenced alongside information how CJS will work with each of them.

It was suggested that on page 5 under ‘we will work with others to contribute to longer term outcomes’ that ‘effective and evidence based’ be added to this section.

Feedback from local community justice partnerships highlighted that the plan doesn’t refer to the third sector. They felt that given the robust third sector representation and the level of their engagement there should have been reference to this in the Corporate Plan. This was regarded as at odds with the National Strategy for Community Justice which states:

‘The third sector plays an important role in improving community justice outcomes. They are a source of innovation, responsiveness and flexibility, and can provide a meaningful connection to otherwise hard-to-reach service users and communities. The most effective way to improve outcomes for people and communities is by joined up working with the Third Sector at the planning stage’¹.

Whilst we recognise that the Corporate Plan in its current form is a consultation draft some points about presentation are indicated. The Community Justice corporate outcomes for this three year plan highlighted on page five are worded slightly differently to the headline outcomes/actions from page eight onwards; it would improve consistency if these were the

same. It would also be useful to match the activity with the timescales; a single action may have several areas of activity which relate to it each with a different timescale, this is clear on pages eight to ten but could be improved in other parts of the document.

The first action on page eleven regarding establishing an academic advisory group sits under the outcome 'We will work with our partners and help drive change by identifying challenges and supporting improvements to our community justice system'. This fits better with the previous outcome², particularly in regard to exploring new thinking and promoting best practice.

On page 11 we note with interest that CJS is developing demonstration projects to test new approaches for community justice with an action for the improvement team to identify an initial demonstration area. We would welcome further information on how this might be achieved and the criteria used to identify such an area. We would welcome more dialogue across all of the local community justice partnerships regarding this, to support both transparency and shared learning.

Action four refers to activity and utilisation of the Community Justice Website to promote resources and information locally and nationally. There is a lack of clarity regarding whether this refers to another website for members of the public to be signposted to or to the existing CJS site. We felt that it was also important to support local area websites to promote information.

Some respondents noted that despite a requirement for links to local Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plans to be with Community Justice Scotland by 31st March 2017 these are still not available on the website. This appears to be contrary to the stated activity.

On page 12 the activity for action five should be amended as it states 'attendance at all 32 local community justice partnerships' however this does not reflect the current landscape. There are currently only thirty partnerships as North, South and East Ayrshire are delivering as a single partnership.

Under the outcome 'We will work with others to prevent offending and reduce further offending', action three includes activity to organise events across Scotland for local and national practitioners to promote discussion on community justice issues. Local Community Justice Partnerships support and indeed are actively working towards/undertaking this activity at present. As such it would be useful to explicitly acknowledge community justice partnerships in to this area of activity. Indeed if local partnerships were not consulted this could lead to unhelpful duplication.

Under the action on 'work with stakeholders and statutory partners to (a) promote diversion from prosecution' members noted that involving COPFS will be critical to this action.

On page 13 there is a need for clarity regarding the order of production of communication strategies whether local areas should delay producing their communication strategy until CJS have produced theirs.

With reference to page 15 there was a view that if funding for local co-ordinator posts are continued beyond March 2018 CJS should have a role in bringing them together as a formal network and form a view as to their role and remit. It was also suggested that they should have oversight of resources to help co-ordinators fulfil their role e.g. developing training in strategic needs assessments.

In terms of overall layout, it may be better to place organisational actions under each stage of the community justice process and place more emphasis on prevention, reducing risk in the LOIPs and City Plans elaborating more on the roles of all partners.

We hope these comments are of value and look forward to working with CJS to achieve a safer, more progressive and socially just Scotland.