

## Justice Committee

### Community Justice (Scotland) Bill

#### Written submission from North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership

**1. Will the proposals in the Bill transform the community justice system in the way envisaged by the Commission on Women Offenders in its 2012 report, such as addressing the weaknesses identified in the current model, tackling reoffending and reducing the prison population?**

Whilst we can see the significant advantages in linking in the Community Justice agenda to Community Planning more strongly, *transformation* of the community justice system by this means is an ambitious aim. The proposals in the Bill are just one part of a bigger picture. The proposals focus on structural changes, performance and reporting. To achieve a transformation you also require sufficient resourcing, effective partner relationships which require to develop over time, genuine commitment to partnership working across all key partners, and a focus on early intervention and prevention.

**2. Are you content that the definition of ‘community justice’ in the Bill is appropriate?**

The definition of “community justice” in the bill focuses on the management of offenders, and services involved in this. It does not appear to cover other key areas of work such as early intervention and prevention. This focus on offender management alone seems inconsistent with the ambitious redesign aims.

**3. Will the proposals for a new national body (Community Justice Scotland) lead to improvements in areas such as leadership, oversight, identification of best practice and the commissioning of services?**

As North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership is not currently significantly strategically involved in the community justice agenda we do not have a full understanding of current levels of leadership, oversight, identification of best practice and the commissioning of services. As such, it is difficult to comment specifically on whether the establishment of Community Justice Scotland will improve any of these areas. However, given our knowledge locally, and the developments within Community Planning at a national level, North Ayrshire Council is not yet convinced of the need for such a body.

**4. Taking into account the reforms set out in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill relating to Community Planning Partnerships, will Community Justice Partners have the powers, duties and structures**

**required to effectively perform their proposed role in relation to community justice?**

The bill talks of individual “community justice partners” as opposed to “community planning partnerships”. We understand that the Scottish Government explains the reasoning for this is that CPPs cannot be mentioned in the Bill as they cannot be legally accountable for delivering outcomes. However CPPs have evident responsibilities for a range of joint local strategic planning policy areas and the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill is very clear on responsibilities for CPPs. This difference in approach will not help CPPs to bring partners together in a new way to tackle community justice issues.

**5. Does the Bill achieve the right balance between national and local responsibility?**

CPPs currently have a focus on local needs and priorities whilst maintaining a relationship with national outcomes. Aspects of CPPs thematic work require national reporting (e.g. Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships) and we look to national agencies for best practice, training etc. Individual CPP partners also have national bodies they are responsible to. However the proposed arrangements between Community Justice Scotland and local Community Justice partnerships will require CPPs to work in a different way, and whether this will achieve the right balance is not possible to say. There will be new systems of performance and reporting requirements with Community Justice Scotland and the Scottish Government which are different to those of the Single Outcome Agreement. The SINGLE outcome agreement is designed to be a single reporting system for the range of SOA outcomes for the CPP to communicate with communities and the Scottish Government.

**6. Will the proposed reforms support improvement in terms of: (a) leadership, strategic direction and planning? (b) consultation and accountability? (c) partnership and collaboration? (d) commissioning of services and achieving best value for money?**

As already stated, North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership is not currently significantly strategically involved in the community justice agenda. However, given our knowledge of developments in Community Planning emerging from the Community Empowerment Bill we are not yet convinced of the need for these and believe consistency with developments in community planning is key.

**7. Are the resources, as set out in the Financial Memorandum, sufficient to transform the community justice system in the way envisaged by the Commission on Women Offenders in its 2012 report?**

Our understanding from local partners who are currently involved in this area of work is that the community justice system is under-resourced in relation to the custodial system . In terms of resourcing of strategic partnership arrangements the CPP is keen to take over this new area of responsibility and make improvements wherever possible . We understand this will take time and effort both in terms of developing structures, performance measures etc as well as forming relationships with community justice partners and making those links across the wider CPP. This will be a resource requirement on the CPP. After the transitions funding ceases there is an expectation that local partnership arrangements will be self-sustaining. We have concerns about capacity to absorb this whilst striving to make improvements.

**8. Is the timetable for moving to the new arrangements by 1 April 2017 achievable?**

Yes, CPPs have been aware of the proposed changes for a significant period and whilst there are benefits of having a transition period with local CJA colleagues still in post we are keen to put new arrangements in place.

**9. Could the proposals in the Bill be improved and, if so, how?**

Improvements addressed in the responses above.

Morna Rae  
Community Planning Team Leader  
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