



Community Justice (Scotland) Bill

Bill Number:	SP Bill 68
Introduced on:	7 May 2015
Introduced by:	Michael Matheson MSP (Government Bill)
Passed:	11 February 2016
Royal Assent:	21 March 2016

Passage of the Bill

The [Community Justice \(Scotland\) Bill](#) was introduced in the Parliament in May 2015.

The Justice Committee was designated as lead committee for parliamentary consideration of the Bill. Its stage 1 report was published in November 2015, with the stage 1 debate taking place later the same month. The general principles of the Bill were agreed to following the debate.

Stage 2 consideration of the Bill was carried out by the Committee in January 2016.

The Bill was passed following the stage 3 parliamentary debate in February 2016 and became the [Community Justice \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) following Royal Assent in March 2016 (asp 10).

Purpose of the Bill

The Bill as introduced sought to establish new arrangements for the delivery and oversight of community justice services, with current arrangements being replaced by a model involving:

- Scottish Ministers being responsible for a number of matters, including a national strategy and national performance framework for community justice, and holding Community Justice Scotland to account
- national leadership, oversight and support for community justice services by a new body called Community Justice Scotland

- local planning, delivery and monitoring of services by community justice partners
- Scottish Government funding for local services being allocated directly to local authorities

Parliamentary Consideration

In its stage 1 report, the Committee accepted that improvements to current community justice structures and arrangements were needed. It went on to state that it broadly supported the general principles of the Bill, whilst making a number of recommendations aimed at strengthening the proposals.

Amendments agreed at stage 2 included ones widening the definition of community justice used in the Bill and emphasising the role of relevant third sector organisations in relation to community justice planning. Further information on a number of key issues highlighted during stage 1 and stage 2 consideration of the Bill is set out in the SPICe briefing [Community Justice \(Scotland\) Bill: Stage 3](#).

The definition of community justice and the role of third sector organisations were also areas where amendments were agreed at stage 3. In relation to the former, these included Government amendments removing some changes agreed by the Committee at stage 2. For example, a stage 2 amendment (agreed by division) had extended the meaning of community justice as used in the Bill to cover some elements of work aimed at preventing first-time offending. However, the Government argued that the Bill should focus on preventing further offending by those who have already offended; with the prevention of first-time offending being taken forward through a range of other policies (eg on educational attainment and youth unemployment).

In relation to the role of third sector organisations and community justice, amendments agreed at stage 3 included ones highlighting the relevance of organisations promoting the interests of victims and families of victims.

The Bill, as amended, was passed without division.

Frazer McCallum
Senior Researcher