



Equality Impact Assessment March 2017

Appendix A

Overview

- 1 Community justice is about protecting the community. As well as delivering justice for the victims of offending and about making our communities feel safer, It's about working with people with convictions to give them the support and help they need to reduce the risk of re-offending.

Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 received royal assent on 21 March 2016. Under the new model, the Community Justice Authorities will be disestablished on 31 March 2017 and new community justice arrangements are being put in place at both a national and local level.

Community Justice Renfrewshire was created in response to the Act and is now firmly established within Renfrewshire Council's robust Community Planning arrangements. It reports to the Safer and Stronger Renfrewshire Thematic Board and sits alongside the Community Safety and Public Protection Steering Group.

It is a requirement of the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 that statutory partners must work together to prepare a plan for their local authority area. This must be submitted to Community Justice Scotland by March 2017. A National Strategy for Community Justice and Outcomes, Performance and Improvement Framework was published on 24 November 2016 which partners have a duty to regard in their planning process.

Community Justice Renfrewshire has produced a Community Justice Local Outcomes Improvement Plan. The plan sets out our assessment against national outcomes and identifies local priorities for action, along with a participation statement detailing actions taken to involve community bodies and third sector bodies in community justice and the preparation of the plan. The draft has been sent for consultation to Community Justice Scotland and wider community consultation has been undertaken via the Renfrewshire Council 'Have your say' website.

Throughout 2016 to 2017, Community Justice Renfrewshire has been working with the North Strathclyde Community Justice Authority to learn from good practice and ensure a smooth transition following the shadow year when they accept full responsibilities for Community Justice from 1 April 2017.

2. ***Main equality and human rights impacts (negative and positive) identified from the assessment against the general equality duty and human rights.***
 - Eliminating discrimination – No impact found
 - Promoting equality of opportunity – Found is likely to have a positive impact
 - Fostering good relations – Found is likely to have a positive impact
 - Human rights – Found is likely to promote fairness and dignity

3. ***What (if any) changes to the policy or service will be undertaken as a result of the impact assessment.***
 - No changes, but monitoring of implementation of action plan will reveal areas for action, if needed.

Evidence of assessment

1. Throughout November 2016 a strategic needs assessment of the Renfrewshire area was carried out which included a series of focus groups/interviews with people with convictions from the Renfrewshire area. These took place with groups on a voluntary basis who were subject to community sentences and groups of prisoners within HMP Low Moss.

The purpose of these sessions was to give service users the opportunity to share their views and experiences of their journey through the Criminal Justice System, to get first hand feedback of what is currently working well within Renfrewshire and to identify areas for improvement.

Focus groups were undertaken with the following groups;

- The women's group, Renfrewshire Women's Community Justice Service, Backsneddon Street, Paisley.
- Men's Life Skills Group, Backsneddon Street, Paisley.
- Remand Prisoners, HMP Low Moss.
- Short Term Prisoners, HMP Low Moss.
- Long term Prisoners, HMP Low Moss.

The sessions involved group discussion with participants thinking about their journey and the different stages where services may have been involved. From the point of arrest, to prosecution, to disposal (including diversion, structured deferred sentence, right through to CPOs, custody and release) and covered the following topics;

- **Impact:** what has/is your experiences been? What has been positive/less positive, what's important/less important? Your families experience?
- **Outcomes:** what difference has/is/should services make to improve your lives? What would need to happen to make things better?
- **Processes:** accessing services, getting the right help at the right time, for as long as you need it, being involved/having control. Having your voice heard, speedier justice

- **Involvement:** experiences of being involved/consulted on services so that they can improve? Being able to influence how things work
- **Leadership:** key messages, what are the important things they need to consider when trying to provide quality services that will (a) make a difference to you and (b) improve your lives
- **Services and support:** social work, health (general, addictions, mental health), housing, employability, training, relationships, offending behaviour, court, custody.

The information provided by these service users has helped to form priorities for action in the Renfrewshire Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

Data and information taken from the Equalities evidence finder shows that 16-24 year olds are much more likely to be victims to crime. It is for this reason; we ensured that younger people were represented at our various focus groups where possible. Other evidence found on the tool suggests that racist incidents are most likely to be directed at Pakistani people and second most likely African/ Caribbean or other Black people. We are mindful of this evidence, and continue to review our local statistics in partnership.

It is also known through research that men's and women's experience of crime and the justice system can be very different and we recognise the gendered nature of much violence. This is why we have explicitly addressed gender based violence in the plan and ensured that we held women's and men's focus groups to ensure the particular issues were addressed.

2. *Justification of the option that will be taken.*

The plan will be adopted as presented, given that we have consulted with many affected groups and responded to need. We will continue to monitor implementation of the associated action plan to ensure that we do all we can to foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity. Where it is appropriate and possible, we are encouraging use of mainstream services, and so we are working with our partner service providers, as they ensure there is no discrimination in their services. The approach is one founded in fairness and dignity, which we expect will have positive impacts for human rights, but we will monitor this.

3. *Actions to remove or mitigate negative impacts and actions to maximise positive impacts to promote equality and human rights.*

Monitoring of the implementation of the action plan

4. *Publication date of impact assessment if not the same as the Board Report.*

The Impact Assessment will be published alongside the Plan and submitted for national review

5. *Further update on the identification of impact resulting from the implementation of the policy service delivery.*

The Plan should have positive impacts on those covered by the Plan, and we will monitor implementation of the action plan, as referred to earlier.

Conclusion

1. Outcome of the evidence gathered.

Almost all those interviewed cited joblessness and lack of money as a key factor in their offending. Drug and alcohol use also featured strongly. When asked what would help them not to re-offend, almost three-quarters of those being interviewed said training and help to find employment. Many of the service users also felt stigmatised by their offending history and felt this impacted on how they and their families were treated.

2. Results of the consultation and involvement activities undertaken with customers/service users including protected characteristics.

In response to the key issues raised by our service users, Community Justice Renfrewshire have identified employability as a key priority for action in our Local Outcomes Improvement Plan. We have established a Renfrewshire Employability Network through multi-agency working with Recruit with Conviction to provide staff training to support people with convictions into work or volunteering or those staff who work with companies and support them with their local recruitment.

We have also been working with Families Outside to provide a number of Out of the Shadows training days to include;

- Children and families social work staff
- Criminal justice social workers
- Home link workers
- Families First Staff
- Education staff

In order to raise awareness of the issues facing families and children with a family member in prison.

2. Monitoring and review arrangements relevant to the implementation of policy and service delivery.

Monitoring arrangements are in place for the associated action plan and once the plan comes to the end of its life, it will be reviewed with the monitoring data gathered.