

Agenda Item	7
Report No	HCW-04-26

The Highland Council

Committee: **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee**

Date: **4 February 2026**

Report Title: **Justice Service Highland Council Update**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive - People**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update to Committee in relation to Justice Social Work developments:

- Provision of the Community Payback Order Annual Review for the year 2024/2025.
- Provision of the Highland Community Justice Partnership Annual Report 2024/2025; and
- Provision of Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Annual Report 2024/2025.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. **Note** the contents of the report.

3. Implications

3.1 **Resource** - Justice Social Work receives ring fenced funding from the Scottish Government. Highland Council received £4,654,980 as part of the S27 grant allocation and an additional £517,680 to aid in the recovery from the pandemic and expand Bail Supervision provision.

3.2 **Legal** - No identified Implications.

3.3 **Risk** – We are experiencing increasing numbers of clients being sentenced for Sexual and Domestic Offences. The increase in numbers creates a pressure in the service delivery as Social Workers in the Justice Service need to receive specialised training and demonstrate competency prior to being able to supervise clients who have committed these types of offences.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)**- No identified implications.

3.5 **Gaelic** - No identified implications.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5. Community Payback Order Annual Review Report 2024/2025 (Appendix 1)

5.1 Under the Community Justice (Scotland) Act (2016), local authorities have a statutory duty to report on the operations of Community Payback Orders (CPO) within their area on an annual basis to Community Justice Scotland (CJS). CJS collates these returns and summarises them in a report which is laid before Scottish Parliament. Please see attached report **Appendix 1**.

6. Community Justice Partnership Annual Report 2024/2025 (Appendix 2)

6.1 The Highland Council receives annual funding from Scottish Government for the provision of the Community Justice Partnership (CJP). In Highland, this is co-ordinated by the Highland Third Sector Interface. The Annual Report is submitted for information purposes only; the following summary has been provided by James Maybee, the CJP's Independent Chair.

6.2 The CJP published its public-facing 2024/2025 Annual Report **Appendix 2** in January. Community Justice in Highland is a collaborative, community-first approach to justice that focuses on rehabilitation, prevention, and reintegration, supporting better outcomes for individual victims and communities affected by crime. The overarching aim is to reduce reoffending and thereby contribute to the 5-year Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HCJOIP) 2024/2029 priorities of enabling people '*to live independently, safe and well within their community*,' and '*to develop sustainable and resilient local communities*'. The CJP is accountable to the Highland Community Planning Partnership Board. The Independent Chair attends and reports to the Board, offering assurance on the implementation of the HCJOIP and the 4 National Aims and 13 Priority Actions set out in the Scottish Government's National Strategy for Community Justice 2022 (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-strategy-community-justice-2/pages/3/>).

Amongst several highlights during 2024/2025 were:

- Community Justice Scotland produce an annual Local Improvement Report for each CJP comprising data drawn from a range of sources which local partners have inputted to. These relate to each of the national indicators and provide a broad perspective on progress. For 2024/2025 the data shows improvement in a number of areas, e.g. increased use of Diversion from Prosecution; more

people in police custody receiving support to address their needs; an increase in the successful completion of Community Payback Orders (CPOs) and Drug Testing & Treatment Orders; and more people with convictions accessing support to enhance their readiness for employment.

- Revised governance structures, establishing two sub-groups – Diversions & Interventions and Transitions & Communities – to support a clearer focus on delivering agreed actions, aligning with the national aims and priorities, as well as enabling wider participation from partners.
- The Senior Development Officer post focusing on developing CPOs with an unpaid work requirement especially in more remote parts of Highland and improving communication with the wider public through engagement with local communities ensuring that factual, positive messages were shared through press articles in local newspapers, supplemented by increased use of social media, especially Facebook, e.g. on Raasay, a community project to develop a historic but long-disused meal mill was supported by individuals completing their CPOs through unpaid work.
- The Stay on Side and Fireskills programmes delivered across Highland, led by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. The programmes are designed to support young people, aged between 12 and 18 who are currently engaged with partner agencies to develop practical core skills, e.g. problem solving, basic 1st Aid and CPR, team working.
- The continuing success of the Custody Link Worker (CLink) project, which is managed by the Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI). The project, based in Police Scotland's custody suite, links people into local services (e.g. alcohol, drug and mental health services).
- Justice social work continues to be a key partner delivering, for example, a Diversion from Prosecution scheme and community sentences such as CPOs, including the Caledonian Programme for people convicted of domestic abuse offences and Moving Forward to Change (MF2C) for people who have committed sexual offences.

6.3 During 2025/2026 the CJP will explore the potential of establishing a restorative justice scheme, built on the research into women's experiences of justice in Highland, develop processes to gather the views and experiences of those who have experience of the Justice System (including narratives, case studies etc.) and support improved engagement with victims of crime and victim support organisations. The CJP will also address challenges in the use of bail supervision and support the establishment of the new voluntary throughcare service, Upside.

Further information about the CJP can be found at <https://highlandcjp.org.uk/>.

7. MAPPA Annual Report 2024/25 (Appendix 3)

7.1 The completion of the annual MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) report is a requirement under Section 11(2) of the Management of Offenders. (Scotland) Act 2005. The current report was published at the end of 2025.

7.2 The responsible authorities within the Highland & Islands covered in the MAPPA Annual Report are Highland Council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Isles Council, Shetland Islands Council, Police Scotland, Scottish Prison Service, NHS Highland, NHS Orkney, NHS Eilean Siar, NHS Shetland and the State Hospital for Scotland.

7.3 MAPPA continues to exceed performance indicators outlined within the National MAPPA Guidance (2022). Performance within MAPPA continues to be reviewed by the Strategic Oversight Group (SOG).

7.4 As of 31 March 2025, there were a total of 380 Registered Sex Offenders (RSO) in the Highland and Islands area: community (279) and custody (101). This compares to 342 as of 31 March 2024 and constitutes just over 10% increase and over 70% increase in the last 10 years. Therefore, although the number of registered sex offenders (RSOs) per 100,000 population still remains within a comparative range across Scotland, the area is seeing an increase year by year.

7.5 During 2023–2024, 7 offenders were managed as 'Other Risk of Serious Harm Offenders' in addition to 6 Restricted Patients. Most offenders subject to MAPPA were managed at Level 1 with 17 managed at Level 2 and only 7 individuals meeting the criteria for Level 3 although all of these individuals are currently serving custodial sentences. Level 3 is generally reserved for those individuals where there is an imminent risk of serious harm, and the potential event is more likely than not to happen imminently, and the impact would be serious.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 9 January 2026

Author: Maria Cano, Principal Officer, Justice Social Work Service

Background Papers: N/A

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Community Payback Order Annual Review 2024/2025
Appendix 2 - Community Justice Partnership Annual Report 2024/2025
Appendix 3 - MAPPA Annual Report 2024/2025

Appendix 1

COMMUNITY PAYBACK ORDER (CPO)

ANNUAL RETURNS TEMPLATE

FINANCIAL YEAR: **2024/25**

LOCAL AUTHORITY: **Highland**

TEMPLATE RETURN DATE: **Friday 31 October 2025**

Please return all completed templates to
CJS at CJSImprovement@communityjustice.scot and copy
the Scottish Government at cpo@gov.scot

1. Background

Under the Community Justice (Scotland) Act (2016), local authorities have a statutory duty to report on the operations of Community Payback Orders (CPO) within their area on an annual basis to Community Justice Scotland (CJS). CJS will then collate these returns and summarise them in a report which is laid before Scottish Parliament.

To assist with this reporting duty, CJS, in collaboration with representatives from Justice Social Work, the Scottish Government, and Social Work Scotland, has developed a template of questions for local areas to complete. This template is designed to support the reporting requirement.

2. Completing the template

Please answer the following questions contained in this year's CPO template. When answering the questions, please ensure that all case studies and feedback are anonymised. We understand that maintaining anonymity may be more challenging for some local authorities. If this applies to your area, you may provide a more general response to the questions.

Please ensure all answers are relevant to your local area within the 2024 to 2025 reporting year.

If you need any support in completing this template and or have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in contact with CJS. Contact details can be found on the title page of this form.

Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions in this template.

3. Questions to answer

1) Reducing risk of reoffending

Please provide a case study or examples of your work with people subject to a Community Payback Order (CPO), focusing on how you work to address their offending behaviours and reduce the risk of reoffending.

The following is an example provided by an experienced Social Worker working in a rural setting:

The Client was placed on a Community Payback Order (CPO) with two-year supervision and a further requirement that he undertake 300 hours of UPW within a 12-month period. The offences were for stalking and threatening and abusive behaviour.

Initial meetings with the client focussed on self-evaluation - where he was in life using a strengths-based approach, helping him reflect on what he felt his difficulties were, and updating his history. He had previously been a client of the service several years. This process helped in building rapport with a view to developing a trusting relationship and a therapeutic alliance.

Motivational interviewing techniques and active listening skills were used to encourage the sharing of information. During this period, his LSCMI was completed. This indicated a medium risk/need profile.

The needs identified in the case management plan were:

Family/Marital: Looking at how his long-term single status impacts on his view of self and his interaction with others. This involved him reflecting on how he saw himself as someone approaching state pension age and what he might want in terms of future relationships, listing potential benefits and drawbacks of being in a relationship as opposed to being single.

Leisure/Recreation: Helping the client to reflect on how a surfeit of free time can lead to social isolation and the possible impacts of this on himself and others. Helping the client identify his strengths and interests and the impediments to him realising these. Encouraging him to identify what opportunities might be available locally and how to access them, including overcoming potential barriers.

Other: Victim awareness and perspective taking – supporting the client to understand the potential impact his actions might have had upon the victim and how he felt about this.

To address the main issues of risk and need, the client worked closely with the social worker during regular appointments; this touched on how being single could be considered a form of grief, if it was involuntary, why he might be resistant to exploring opportunities to fill his time, focussing on rejection, and how he felt when he retreated into himself and the maladaptive coping strategies he employed to help him feel better/ self-soothe, such as drinking too much.

Due to the lack of services in the local (rural) area, there is little in the way of outside agencies to draw on for support so there is a heavy reliance on one-to-one work. Motivational interviewing skills were used to work with the client employing an empowering compassionate, empathetic, and strengths-based approach. We tried to identify what 'happiness' looked like for the client, utilising the Good Lives Model, and how he could spend more time with people he liked doing things he enjoyed, thus feeling more fulfilled.

The order is ongoing, and work continues to focus on the above areas but has also expanded to look at how the client uses alcohol and the reasons he might want to moderate his drinking – using a cost/benefit analysis has proven to be particularly useful. This has helped identify the health benefits of alcohol-free days, how alcohol act as a depressant and can impact upon mood, and how it clouds judgment and can lead to poor decisions.

UPW has been a significant benefit for the client as it has helped provide him with structure and routine, social interaction, and a sense of worth by virtue of the work helping others. In the longer term this may help community reintegration, as the client is able to see the impact his positive behaviours can have upon the community, and how helping others can improve his view of self.

2) Support for underlying needs

Please provide a case study or example of your work with people subject to a CPO, which demonstrates how their underlying needs (e.g. mental health, substance use) are identified, and how you work to address those.

The following is an example provided by an experienced Social Worker working in a rural setting, for a client with chronic alcohol problem:

At the point of interview for a Criminal Justice Social Work Report (CJSWR) it was apparent that the client, a man in his mid-thirties had a chronic alcohol problem.

The social worker undertaking the report was very experienced with a background as an alcohol counsellor who had spent many years working with homeless people and who had also had training in, and had worked for many years as, a Mental Health officer. This assisted with the assessment process.

The client had fourteen previous convictions all of which he acknowledged were alcohol related. The offence for which the report had been requested, was his fourth in the previous year, and this represented a considerable escalation in his offending. On this basis, the recommendation within the CJSWR, that a CPO should be imposed, was an obvious course of action.

Identification of a problem at report writing stage and a shared agreement with the client as to what are the areas of risk and need, provides a sound base for the commencement of work.

In this case, at the report preparation stage, the client was advised to refer himself to the local DARS (Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service) Team, which he had done by the commencement of the order, a 12-month CPO with a single supervision requirement. Unpaid Work was not specifically recommended as it was agreed with the client that the likelihood of him being able to comply with that aspect of an order, at a time when his lifestyle was chaotic, were so remote it would inevitably lead to a breach.

Unfortunately, there is a significant waiting list for alcohol treatment services in the local area, and an individual can go many weeks without an appointment. When a letter was sent to the client asking whether he wished to remain on the waiting list, he did not open it or respond and was subsequently taken off the waiting list. This is an ongoing frustration as people with alcohol problems frequently avoid opening mail and this is a recurring issue. With the client's permission, the social worker contacted the DARS team and asked to be copied into correspondence, which was agreed. The client has though missed two further appointments, on the first occasion due to him being on remand, and on the second occasion due to him having relapsed. He remains on the waiting list.

As well as the client's alcohol use causing issues with offending and his attendance at supervision appointments, he also finds it difficult to maintain his tenancy. People frequently visit and use his property as a place to drink. This has resulted in extensive damage.

Over the years the Housing department have become frustrated at not being able to gain access to the property to effect repairs and when he commenced his order, they were refusing him access to housing support (whose job it is to offer support and help remedy such challenging situations).

When made subject to his Community Payback Order, the social worker advocated on the client's behalf to ensure he was referred for Housing support. This involved appealing the reason for the initial refusal.

This support, when initiated, was a great benefit to the client, and a lot of work has been done to affect the required repairs, including replacing boarded up windows and fitting a new front door as well as the purchase of a new bed, white goods along with carpets and curtains.

There is a well-established body of evidence showing that people are more likely to want to change their behaviours when they start to see the benefits of change and that a settled environment is hugely beneficial to re-establishing self-respect. With support from his social worker and from housing support, the client has worked to develop better door keeping skills and his home is now a safer place for him.

With regards to responsivity and working collaboratively, the client has been offered weekly supervision appointments, offered in the afternoons, at a time of his choosing, with confirmation given through text messages, and reminders sent by text on the day of the appointment. In addition, with the permission of the client, contact is maintained by the social worker with a friend of his. If he misses an appointment, contact is made with the friend in a bid to ensure attendance and compliance with the terms of the order.

3) Unpaid work

Please describe a case study or provide examples of unpaid work activity.

The following is an example provided by Caithness Team based in Wick and highlights the importance of the job often done by Unpaid Work groups in community halls:

Staxigoe is a small village approximately 2 miles east of Wick. Staxigoe hall is a hub for events for the local community, hosting such things as badminton, local dances, community groups etc and is an important centre where all aspects of the community come together. The hall is run by a volunteer hall committee whose funds comprise of either self-funding through organised events or occasionally community grants from the offshore windfarm.

The Chairperson of the Staxigoe Hall Board approached Caithness Community Payback Officer, with a view to making application for the Community Payback team to clear away rubbish from the hall following recent refurbishment to the toilet area and to consider re-decoration the hall and several rooms off the main hall. The job was assessed in terms of capability and risk and work commenced in November 2024 headed up by a local Community Payback Supervisor.

As that Supervisor is a time served painter and decorator and has previously worked on Staxigoe hall and other village hall projects, he was ideally placed to undertake this task. A complete re-decoration was carried out over several months whereby many of the clients were given tasks teaching them valuable skills in painting and decorating of which they could take and use elsewhere in their lives.

As per the National Guidelines, the beneficiary provided all the materials required which was overseen and advised on by the Supervisor. Following several months of hard but albeit enjoyable work, the project was completed in February 2025.

Staxigoe Chairperson commented on its completion: "I am delighted with the ongoing support from the Justice Service over many years. Our most recent project being the refurbishing of Staxigoe Village Hall has been fantastic! The Hall has had a completely new heating system installed plus internal and external insulation along with LED lighting throughout. The Justice Team has cleared the place of rubbish and then completed a programme of painting ... the main hall being the largest aspect. It's a complete transformation with a new contemporary colour scheme. The team have been so flexible in their timescale allowing us to run a few events before our official reopening soon. We have appreciated the regular communication and weekly updates which have been vital. The team are also working on the picnic benches at the Harbour, ready for the sunny days. They will also continue with their summer programme of grass cutting at the Harbour plus the Hall. They are an invaluable resource in our area, and their work is appreciated by our community"

The satisfaction and worth that the clients achieved from this project can be summed up in the following quote: - An un-named Client said: "I have been working on this project as part of my unpaid work for a couple of weeks now. It is good to learn new things about painting and decorating which the supervisor showed us and knowing that we are doing some good in the community makes it all worthwhile. Since starting this job, I can even say that I look forward to my unpaid workday and have even come out doing extra days."

The Staxigoe Hall project featured in a subsequent Highland Community Justice Partnership press release receiving favourable comment.

To date, Community Payback in Caithness regularly assist Staxigoe Hall among many other Community organisations in relation to grass cutting, landscaping and the renovation of picnic benches and other garden items.

During the winter months, the Community Payback team based in Wick has also renovated a great deal of benches and picnic tables, providing a service for such organisations as Thurso Community Council, Bower primary school, Wick Town and County hospital, Keiss playpark and Halkirk Community council.

Another example of community-led activity in the Fort William area is the case of Caol Lunch Club supporting elderly and vulnerable people by providing affordable lunches and transport. A client with 120 hours of Unpaid Work, who was a trained chef, completed his placement in six weeks and continued volunteering until he secured full-time employment. The Club remains active in offering individual Unpaid Work placements.

Garden maintenance is another successful project throughout sheltered housing schemes in various part of Ross-Shire, where the UW team was approached by Sheltered Housing Wardens who are responsible for the tenants living in these schemes, requesting help with grass cutting, weeding and clearing of communal paths throughout several sheltered housing schemes in different parts of Ross-Shire. Alness Community Payback team agreed to take on a total of 6 schemes. The work is carried out, on a regular basis, during summer months. This is a great benefit to the elderly residents who would otherwise be without a service.

Another team was approached by Saltburn Community Council who were seeking assistance from Community Payback team to, create raised bed and footpaths with the Saltburn Community Gardens. Following assessment, the project was deemed suitable and team agreed to help. The work involved dividing the original garden space into several raised bed with footpaths in-between, allowing easy access for the users. This required digging out separate areas for the bed, constructing the beds from old scaffold boards and securing them by using wooden stakes. Following the construction of the bed, they were filled with soil ready for planting. Finally, the paths between each bed were lined with weed control fabric and laid with stone chips. 156 hours were spent on this project.

The West Edge, Ullapool is an off-grid smallholding located at one corner of Leckmeelm Wood. It is home to a pioneering forest garden and a herb, tree and wildflower nursery and is a place where things are constantly being fixed, rescued and repaired, helping to reduce consumption and waste. Clients attending this placement moved timber, carried out chainsaw maintenance, repaired road for community access, cleared tracks and ditches, prepared materials for go-cart and wood processing.

4) Other activity

Please describe the main types of "other activity" carried out as part of unpaid work or other activity requirement.

- *Aurora Training Services Ltd – Rope Access training*
- *Road to Recovery – as well as attending group sessions for drug problems, clients undertake tasks such as preparing and cooking meals for the group*
- *ISM Psychological Services – Drink driving rehabilitation Scheme*
- *Highlife Highland – Adult Learning Literacy Classes & English Language classes*

- AA Sessions - *Alcoholics Anonymous provides peer-led support meetings for individuals experiencing alcohol dependency. These sessions are scheduled during evenings and weekends to ensure accessibility for clients who may be unable to attend during standard working hours*
- Drug and Alcohol Intervention Team- *Individuals with drug misuse issues referred through Unpaid Work can be further supported by the DAIT Team in Inverness, who provide tailored sessions for clients seeking additional help with substance misuse.*
- Nigg Skills Academy – Forklift courses
- CPO Connect – *CPO Connect is an online service delivered by the Wise Group, designed to provide a secure and flexible platform for the completion of Other Activity hours. Clients can participate in a variety of two-hour virtual sessions facilitated by trained professionals, covering a broad range of topics, many of which focus on mental health and personal development. The Highland Justice Service has referred a number of individuals subject to unpaid work requirements to CPO Connect, and the service has received consistently positive feedback. The Wise Group provides weekly attendance updates directly to the relevant Community Justice Officers, ensuring effective monitoring and accountability. A suite of 26 online courses is delivered securely via Microsoft Teams by trained facilitators. Topics span Employability digital skills, mental health, wellbeing, and personal development - including CV preparation, interview skills, neurodiversity, budgeting, conflict resolution, and addiction awareness- offering clients a broad and flexible learning experience.*
- SMART Recovery – *The Highland Justice Service has facilitated SMART Recovery groups, offering a structured and non-judgmental environment in which participants can engage in discussions around addiction-related issues. Individuals subject to unpaid work requirements have also been supported to attend these sessions, with attendance time credited towards their unpaid work hours. The primary objective of these groups is to promote greater self-awareness and insight into behavioural patterns that may contribute to offending, thereby supporting efforts to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Clients complete 4 modules on: Building and maintaining motivation to change, Coping with Urges, Managing thoughts feeling and behaviours, Living a balanced life free of addiction, in order to help them with their addiction issues in the community.*
- *The Community Payback teams have facilitated clients taking part in Decider Skills classes, to support clients in recognising and understanding their own feeling and behaviours. These sessions aim to equip individuals with practical tools to monitor and manage their emotions and mental wellbeing.*

5) Feedback

Please provide a summary of quotes or feedback on the impact of supervision requirements and or unpaid work or other activity requirements from the following perspectives:

- People subject to a supervision requirement

'I found the social worker very easy to talk to. In no way patronising, given me a different outlook on different subjects. I will miss my appointments'.

'I feel my behaviour has changed for the better and now have much better understanding of the impacts of my behaviour.'

'My confidence is returning. I have a positive view on my future and where I need to go in life'.

'My outlook on my role and responsibility has completely changed. I now feel I have a much better understanding of my own responsibilities'.

'Thinking more about goals and how to accomplish them'.

'Thinking more positive'.

'It's helped me become a better person again for me and my son'.

'In a lot more positive mindset'

'Feel more relaxed.'

'- more positive outlook - a lot calmer'

'I think about my lifestyle choices now before acting upon them.'

'Reflective and now acknowledge my behaviour'.

'That I can be a better person'.

'Good chance to reflect on my mistakes and help me see what i can do in the future to avoid offending again.'

'There was someone there if needed'.

'Learning about myself in a way I have not thought.'

'Made me see things in bigger picture and helped me get over my fears,'

'It's been helping me stay on track'.

'Good Advice, Help, to look forward not back'.

'Feeling free and able to chat and talk about different issues'.

'Lots of help and people being kind'.

'a chance to speak to someone without judgement'.

'They listened to what I said and helped in many ways.'

'I was a bit dubious at first but found your colleague, very helpful and has done so much for my way of thinking. saying thank you doesn't seem enough'.

'Was difficult at first due to probing questions being asked. was difficult to open up fully to a female social worker. all workers have been positive, no judgement and focused on positive changes i have made'.

- People undertaking unpaid work or other activity requirement

'Sense of purpose'

'Learning general skills'.

'Painting, utilising this as a way to release emotions'.

'I learned i was guilty of making judgements on people, I am now ashamed of this and have adapted my thought process'.

'Learned new things while painting from the supervisor that I didn't know how to do before and new knowledge while doing painting and glossing.'

'I feel I work better as part of a team. The supervisors are great'.

'I thoroughly enjoyed working in the workshop building planters and bird tables'

'I learned about so many everyday items, as my supervisor was so knowledgeable and was never anything except positive in answering my questions. Brilliant.'

'I enjoyed working with the supervisors very much, they all deserve an Oscar for everything they do - they have an incredible amount of patience and put up with so much.'

'Supervisors muck in and lead by example rather than just "supervising" makes me feel less of a criminal than just being constantly watched and micromanaged'.

'I feel the staff are integral to the development of all the people here. They conduct themselves with kindness, direction and support, they are not judgemental. The discretion they used for me has restored my faith in people. I truly value them, they are an asset to HJS'

'The supervisors clearly have limited resources to do their job but manage well to balance the outcomes with the needs and abilities of their clients and react well to challenging situations.'

'It was good giving something back to the community'.

'Found it helpful, good to help the elderly'.

'The supervisor was always good to us and helpful. I believe they are a credit to the community and the rehabilitation system.'

- The community and beneficiaries of unpaid work

'We would be grateful if you could pass on our thanks to the whole team for the work they did in helping to improve our garden.'

'We were very happy with the work carried out and appreciated the before and after photos. The service delivery was very professional and exceeded our expectations'.

'We are very happy with the work and effort made for us. Very quick to get the job done and very happy to help any way they can. Big thanks.'

'I have an excellent fence and one less thing to worry about. Thank you'

'This is a very valuable service and greatly appreciated by our small charity.'

'It's an excellent service and one that more people should be aware of'.

'I would have no hesitation in informing my friends (all pensioners) about the good work of the scheme and how to contact you if they need your services.'

'The people who completed this work were very quiet and clean and tidy. Over the moon with the shed.'

'Brilliant! Thank you. I am very grateful for the help. The area looks so much better with a neat 'wall' along the edge and I could never have managed it.'

'We were so accommodating with the team he had and they did us a great service that we really appreciate.'

'They did a good job. My garden looks wonderful and safer. There were no issues with anyone. They all were a pleasure.'

'The team from CPO have helped us with a number of tasks around the village over a number of years and they have brought a lot of benefit to the village as a result.'

'It was good that the team was able to help this lady. When I met her, she was weeding outside her house, but the bushes were well out of reach.'

'Honestly can't thank them enough for all the help and support with the garden.'

'Very grateful for all the help we got from the team.'

'I have been stopped by a several residents in Cromarty who have commented on how fantastic a job was done.'

'The Knockbain CC are extremely grateful for the assistance of the Service throughout the season.'

'We are so grateful for the help from the Community service teams. They are always helpful, polite and cheerful. The Sort Out Saturday programme helps people to get rid of unwanted items and prevents 'fly tipping' keeping the Estate tidy.'

'We are extremely grateful to the community payback team for clearing the work to the rear of the Polnicol hall'

'I have worked in the library here in Cromarty for several years and have never seen the outside area looking so neat. Many of the library users and members of the local community have also commented on what a wonderful job has been done keeping the area looking so smart. I would like to thank all the team for their fantastic work this summer'.

'We are very happy with the work carried out and it will now make it easier for children making their way to and from primary school'.

'The work carried out was of benefit to the community which I feel is the purpose of community payback'.

'Everyone worked hard - they were friendly and helpful - the boys changed a horrible eyesore into something fresh and clean'.

'We are sincerely grateful to the team - they are consistently helpful and manage their crew with professionalism and kindness'.

'Thanks, I had attempted to help the tenant by removing some of the hedge, but two trips with my small van still left a lot. The unpaid work team have completely transformed the look of the garden'.

'We really appreciate the hard work and support given to this service. your help enable us to keep areas safe and usable for the people we care for'.

'I would like to work more with the unpaid work scheme as the green wellie creates a working environment that enhances people's lives when they are given a rewarding working opportunity'.

'The work requested is always carried out to a high standard and efficiently'.

6) Benefits and challenges of other CPO requirements

Please mark with a cross the requirements that were imposed by courts in 2024 to 2025.

Compensation requirement

Programme requirement

- Residence requirement
- Restricted movement requirement
- Conduct requirement
- Alcohol treatment requirement
- Drug treatment requirement
- Mental health treatment requirement

For each of the requirements that were imposed (up to a maximum of 300 words) please describe innovative and practice examples, challenges, and impact associated with each.

In 2025, two individuals were made subject to Mental Health Treatment Requirements, compared to one in 2024. This type of requirement remains among the most complex and challenging to recommend and supervise.

There has been also a notable rise in the use of Restricted movement requirements in 2025, with 5 cases compared to 0 from previous financial Year.

The number of individuals subject to specific requirements—namely Alcohol Treatment, Drug Treatment, Residence, Compensation, Conduct, and Mental Health Treatment—remained consistently low during the current financial year, mirroring the figures reported in the previous period.

With regard to the Alcohol Treatment Requirement, supervising officers typically engage with individuals and, where appropriate, refer them to relevant support services when alcohol-related needs or risks are identified. In practice, individuals often demonstrate a willingness to engage constructively with their supervising officers, which may reduce the necessity for imposing an additional formal requirement. As a result, the Alcohol Treatment Requirement is not routinely

applied, reflecting a preference for integrated support approaches within supervision.

The Alcohol and Drug Partnership-funded DTTO2 service operating across Highland, provides targeted support to individuals—particularly young people, women, and others—who present with significant drug-related issues but do not meet the criteria for a Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO). The availability of this specialised intervention has likely contributed to the limited use of formal Drug Treatment Requirements, as the DTTO2 model offers a more flexible and responsive approach to addressing substance misuse within this population.

The number of individuals engaged in the Caledonian Programme and the Moving Forward 2 Changes (MF2C) Programme has remained broadly consistent with figures from the previous financial year. Although engagement levels in both programmes have remained stable, there is an emphasis by our service on ensuring that interventions are proportionate to identified risks, due increased levels of domestic and sex offences in the last year.

7) Organisational improvements and ongoing challenges

Looking back at last year (2023-24), have there been any improvements to the challenges you noted? Are there any challenges you are still facing this year (2024-25)?

Recruitment:

Recruitment challenges identified in previous financial years continue to persist, particularly in remote areas and for specialised roles such as Prison-Based Social Work.

Despite these efforts, recruitment for prison-based social work continues to be a significant challenge.

While these issues remain, there has been a positive development this year with the introduction of a Social Work Traineeship in Inverness. This initiative is proving to be highly successful and reflects the service's strong commitment to supporting students and trainee social workers through temporary placements.

Recruitment challenges have persisted, compounded by a notable shortage of experienced social workers applying for vacant posts. This has had a direct impact on the delivery of specialist programmes, particularly in areas requiring advanced training and expertise which is national led and oversubscribed.

During the reporting period, the Unpaid Work teams also experienced a reduction in staffing due to several Community Payback Officers and Supervisors transitioning to other roles.

These departures have resulted in vacancies that may impact service delivery and capacity within the teams.

Caledonian and MF2C Programmes

The service continues to experience increasing demand in key areas, notably in the management of individuals subject to MF2C Requirements and those assessed as requiring a Caledonian Treatment Programme. This rise in demand has placed additional pressure on existing resources.

Unfortunately, the funding currently available is insufficient to support consistent and equitable service delivery across the Highland region. In particular, rural and remote communities face significant barriers to accessing these essential programmes. It is not considered appropriate to restrict access based on geographic location, and as such, the service has taken steps to uphold minimum standards of provision across all areas.

In response to increasing demand and the need to maintain consistent service standards across the region, we have successfully expanded the number of practitioners contributing to both the MF2C and Caledonian Treatment Programmes.

One of the key difficulties encountered during this period was the limited availability of training for the Moving Forward: Making Changes (MFMC) programme. This was further complicated by the national rollout of its successor, Moving Forward to Change (MF2C), which diverted training resources and capacity. As a result, access to MFMC training was significantly constrained, affecting the ability of practitioners to deliver the programme consistently across the region. Despite these challenges, the MFMC programme is now nearing completion.

Progress Reports workload:

A substantial portion of social workers' annual workload is devoted to the preparation of Community Progress Reports and other forms of progress documentation. These activities demand significant time and resources, yet they remain unaccounted for in current national statistical outputs. The absence of this data contributes to an incomplete representation of the breadth and intensity of social work practice and adds further pressure to an already stretched system. It is therefore recommended that future reporting frameworks incorporate these contributions to ensure a more accurate and comprehensive reflection of the profession's operational demands.

8) Collaborative working across justice partnerships

Please provide any examples of work with community justice partners, including the third sector, to effectively deliver CPOs.

Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service:

The local Alcohol and Drug Partnership continue to fund Justice Social Work and the Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service to deliver DTTO 2 (Drug Treatment and Testing Order 2), which is currently being implemented across Highland. The group in the North remains active and is operating successfully.

In 2023, the Caithness Alcohol and Drugs Recovery Service, in collaboration with the Justice Social Work Team, launched a SMART Recovery group in Wick. Prior to this, no local group-based support was available in the area. The group is open to both Justice Social Work clients and NHS patients, providing a valuable new resource for individuals seeking structured recovery support.

Highland Third Sector Interface:

Our service has been successfully collaborating with the Highland Third Sector Interface, which recruited successfully a Senior Community Development Officer for a two-year post starting in December 2023.

The Officer was working closely with our Community Payback Officers to support unpaid work placements with volunteer groups and third sector organisations throughout Highland, with a particular focus on remote and rural communities.

Over the past year, Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI) has developed strong working relationships with our Community Payback Officers (CPO), Justice Social Work colleagues, the Community Justice Partnership, and a wide range of third sector organisations.

Visits to CPO workshops and projects, combined with Facebook posts and press coverage, have generated significant local interest. These efforts have helped raise awareness, build trust, and create new CPO projects and placement opportunities for the teams.

Beneficiaries have also expressed appreciation for the increased visibility, which contributes positively to their sense of inclusion and recognition.

The efforts made on social media engagement, particularly through Facebook, has proven to be an effective tool for sharing positive community justice stories and fostering public interest across Highland.

Direct outreach to community groups about potential CPO projects and placements has yielded a 40% success rate. This work is guided by the needs identified by Community Payback Officers, with a particular focus on supporting rural areas.

9) Additional information

Is there any other relevant information you wish to highlight? This may include:

- Any new and/or notable trends in the CPO cohort (e.g. changing needs, offence types, demographics)
- Areas for improvement and planned next steps.
- New ways of working and benefits achieved from these.

Women's service:

We are currently engaging with third sector agencies and statutory partners to develop a dedicated Women's Service. This initiative aims to provide tailored support to women subject to Court Orders, Licence conditions, Voluntary Throughcare, Diversion, and Bail Supervision.

A similar project was in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had demonstrated positive outcomes by combining outdoor activities with cognitive behavioural interventions and additional support. However, due to staffing challenges and organisational changes, it has been difficult to restart the service.

There is broad consensus that women often present with complex and interrelated needs, and that traditional justice interventions can inadvertently set them up to fail. A more effective approach involves recommending, within Social Work reports to the Sheriff, that women subject to a Community Payback Order (CPO) be referred to a dedicated women's programme. This allows for continuity of care and relationship-building with a single allocated social worker.

Our intention is to build on the elements that previously worked well, while expanding the model to include wider agency involvement. This will help ensure that women continue to receive support beyond their formal engagement with Justice Social Work



Highland
Community
Justice Partnership

ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025

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Foreword

Welcome to the Highland Community Justice Partnership's Annual Report 2024-2025.

During the last year, the prison population has continued to grow and remains well over 8,000. The reasons for this are complex and include an increase in people serving long-term sentences, an increase in the number of people serving sentences for sexual offences, longer time spent on remand and higher court caseloads.



In responding to this crisis, the Partnership continues to argue for a community-first approach and one that focuses on reserving prison for those individuals who pose a risk of serious harm. There are around 500 individuals in custody at any one time who will not pose a risk of serious harm and that have either a very low or low risk/need level. This is disproportionate, counter-productive, and does not align with the effective principles of risk management.

There are cases where justice social work reports to court assess and recommend a community disposal, but a prison sentence is imposed. Ensuring that, wherever possible, community-based sentences are imposed, particularly for sentences of 12 months imprisonment or less, where there are no indicators of a risk of serious harm and risk is assessed as manageable, would also be more effective and reduce reoffending. The successful completion rate for community payback orders in 2023-2024 was 71 percent; and since their introduction in 2011, 11.6 million hours of unpaid work or other activity have been carried out as part of successful unpaid work requirements.

In 2021, the Scottish Sentencing Council paper, *Judicial perspectives of community-based disposals*, found that although sentencers generally regarded community-based disposals as more conducive to rehabilitation than imprisonment, they noted that provision was inconsistent across the country. Moreover, judicial confidence in community sentences was undermined by concerns about lack of resourcing having a knock-on impact on management and delivery.

If we are to truly transform the justice system and are committed to further enhancing the effectiveness of community sentences, bold choices must be made about the future allocation of resources and better use made of the available tools at our disposal, e.g. increasing the use of electronic monitoring for bail and bail supervision, and speeding up the implementation of restorative justice, GPS tracking and alcohol bracelets (which use transdermal sensors to detect alcohol use and ensure compliance with court orders). Reducing the use of custody reduces expenditure on prisons and frees up resource for re-allocation. Too often, evidence-led community-based practice that would enhance a community-first approach is undermined by slow implementation linked to under-resourcing.

In 2025-2026, the partnership will continue to work collaboratively with justice agencies locally and nationally to argue for and promote the evidence that a community-first approach is the right way forward for our justice system.

James Maybee

Independent Chair, Highland Community Justice Partnership

The Community Justice Landscape

Community Justice in Highland is an increasingly collaborative, community-first approach to justice that focuses on rehabilitation, prevention, and reintegration, supporting better outcomes for individual victims and communities affected by crime. The overarching aim is to reduce reoffending and thereby contribute to the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan priorities of enabling people 'to live independently, safe and well within their community,' and 'to develop sustainable and resilient local communities.'

Highland's vast geography presents logistical challenges, but it is worth noting that Highland is the seventh largest local authority in Scotland by population, living in a range of communities from very small, remote localities through to the large urban population of Inverness and its surrounding area. However, the region benefits from strong traditions of collaborative working, with many smaller communities in particular identifying local solutions to the challenges they face. Often this is through community groups and Third Sector organisations working alongside statutory services to achieve improvement.

Highland Community Justice Partnership (HCJP) is committed to delivering innovative, locally responsive justice services that reflect the needs of its communities, and a feature of our work in the course of the year has been reaching into, and listening to communities right across Highland.

Among the underpinning principles of a community-first approach to justice are:

- *Accountability and Support:* People who have offended are held accountable while being supported to address the root causes of their behaviour and its impact on victims and communities.
- *Community-Based Sentences:* Following risk assessment, safe and appropriate alternatives to short-term prison sentences are promoted to encourage rehabilitation and community reintegration.
- *Early Intervention and Prevention:* Emphasis is placed on identifying and addressing issues early to prevent offending and reoffending.

Governance Arrangements

The HCJP is a distinct partnership within the Highland Community Planning Partnership (HCPP), and is locally accountable to the HCPP Board. The HCPP Board take an active interest in the work of the HCJP, with clear channels for communication in place providing opportunities to update on progress. The HCJP Independent Chair attends and reports to the Board, offering assurance on the implementation of the Highland Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (HCJOIP). Operationally, the HCJP continues to be hosted by the Highland Third Sector Interface, which supports the HCJP staff and independent chair in fulfilling their responsibilities.

In the course of 2024-2025, the HCJP revised its governance structures, establishing two sub-groups to support a clearer focus on delivering agreed actions, as well as enabling wider participation from partners, especially those with an operational focus.



The Strategic Group membership consists of representatives nominated by those bodies which are statutorily responsible under the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016, namely:

Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service
NHS Highland
Police Scotland
Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Scottish Prison Service
Skills Development Scotland
The Highland Council – Elected Member
The Highland Council – Housing Services
The Highland Council – Justice Social Work

In addition, the HCJP invites representation from:

Department of Work and Pensions
Highland Alcohol & Drugs Partnership
Highland Violence against Women and Girls Partnership
Victim Support Scotland

The Diversions and Interventions Group takes forward the delivery of diversion from prosecution, early interventions, community interventions and public protection arrangements. The Transitions and Communities Group focuses on the delivery of services which address the needs of individuals accused of or convicted of an offence, in particular those who are moving back to their communities having completed a sentence. In addition to the two sub-groups, short-life working groups are created as required to carry out defined pieces of work on behalf of the Strategic Group.

The two sub-groups met for the first time in February / March 2025, with the original HCJP meeting for the last time in its then current form in March 2025, before convening as a Strategic Group in June 2025.

Community-first in context

Across Highland, partners are working ever more closely together to deliver justice services which address the differing needs of those affected by crime and by the justice system.

The use of prison continues to play a vital role both in protecting the public and ensuring that those found guilty of some crimes face consequences for their actions, and are held accountable for those. Prison can be a place where individuals address the causes of their offending and prepare for a return to society. However, the effectiveness of prison-based programmes diminishes as the higher prisoner numbers become. Many complex factors have contributed to increased prison numbers including, for example, the number of prisoners held on remand awaiting trial and the increase in the proportion of serious crimes passing through the court system coupled with the length of sentences imposed.

The overarching outcome, shared by all partners, is to reduce crime and its impact on individuals and communities. There is strong evidence that community-first approaches are more effective in reducing reoffending than short-term custodial sentences. However, partners are keenly aware that pursuing this approach can be particularly challenging for the victims of crime, for whom the impact can be direct and personal, and the trauma profound and long lasting.

Further into this report, there is reference to the priorities for the following year, which indicates a desire to shift towards greater inclusion of victims' perspectives in our planning and development. This is most clearly seen in the work being undertaken to develop approaches to Restorative Justice which are victim led and trauma informed.

Ideally, the prevention of crime should be prominent in our strategies and priorities, however, the National Strategy for Community Justice and the Priority Actions which frame the work of Community Justice Partnerships do not include outcomes around prevention and early intervention with young people.

In Highland we have recognised this can be a limitation, and have sought to support partners in addressing this. There continue to be active links with the Highland Community Safety and Resilience Group, identifying areas of shared concern and supporting emerging priorities throughout the year. Also, within the newly developed HCJP structures, the multi-agency Youth Action Service have become participants in the Diversions and Interventions Delivery Group, where there is a focus on the implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024 and the wider implications for the interface between youth and adult justice services.

Community-first approaches take many different forms, and the following examples offer a flavour of some of the work done by partners over the year.

Community-first in practice

Stay on Side and Fireskills

The Stay on Side and Fireskills programmes have been delivered across Highland, led by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). These courses have been possible due to the funding received from The Bairns Hoose and Police Scotland. The courses offer a collaborative programme involving partners from Education, Social Work, Police Scotland, Community Learning and Development and others.

FireSkills is SFRS's core course, where referrals mainly come through schools, with funding often supported by the schools themselves. *Stay on Side* runs as a partnership programme with The Highland Council Home to Highland Care Experienced Education Team and Police Scotland Children and Young Peoples Safeguarding team, aimed at young people who may need some direction and guidance.

The programmes are designed to support young people, aged between the ages of twelve and eighteen who are currently engaged with partner agencies, to develop practical core skills. Its flexibility means that it can be suitable for a range of learners who will experience a variety of individual sessions that can be linked together to provide a course ranging from a few hours to forty hours.

The programmes are modelled on firefighter drills, building skills in:

- problem solving
- basic first aid and CPR
- team working and team leading
- confidence and communication
- citizenship
- understanding the contribution that agencies make to communities

Over the year three courses were delivered. One in Inverness, one in Dingwall and one in Nairn. Each course had a maximum of 12 young people with up to 60 referrals received each time. The courses were delivered over a week by SFRS supported by colleagues from Home to Highland, Police Scotland and other key partners. Due to the popularity and success of the courses, there is a waiting list and there are plans to deliver a further two courses in Fort William and again in Inverness.

Community Payback Orders with Unpaid Work

In recent years there has been an increase in the use of community-based interventions within the justice system. This has developed against a backdrop of other changes across the system, including an extension of the presumption against short-term sentences and the potential for the use of technology to support the system (including electronic monitoring).

Community sentences offer an alternative to short-term imprisonment, and underpin the dual aims of addressing the root causes of offending behaviour and supporting rehabilitation. Highland Council's Justice Social Work team play a pivotal role in the delivery of a range of community-first initiatives and programmes, the most widely used community sentence being the Community Payback Order (CPO) which can include up to ten different requirements (e.g. unpaid work, treatment for alcohol or drug use, restriction of movement or programme requirements). All CPOs are risk assessed and tailored to individual circumstances.

Community Payback Placements & Projects



Fort William: New Connections - Lochaber Hope

Morna, volunteer said: "It's so great to have community payback placements, they've all been really helpful and nice to have around. Great friendships are also made along the way."



Thurso: Thurso Community Development Trust

Sharon, Development Officer said: "We greatly value our collaboration with the payback team, finding every placement they send to us to be meaningful in its own way. Participants not only become part of a team but also benefit from the chance to work and to witness the tangible results of their efforts, and engage in the therapeutic process of nurturing



Nairn: Green Hive

Matthew CEO, said: "We've had very positive experiences where one guy had great joinery and painting skills, he did lots of jobs for us for a few months until he'd completed his sentence. We gave him a good reference and he was successfully employed by a reputable local firm."



Inverness: Inverness Foodstuff

Pam, Manager, said: "We are delighted to offer placements for community payback clients. It has worked really well over the years with some very positive experiences. Some clients have offered their skills to support the homeless people in different ways, had further training and continued on as regular volunteers."

It is always important to note that contrary to the misconceptions often perpetuated in the media and in political discourse, community sentences are not 'soft options'. All are based on rigorous assessment (including risk assessment) prior to consideration by the judiciary, and all sentences are subject to ongoing supervision and compliance with clear conditions, including clear implications for the individual if there is a breach.

The post of Community Justice Senior Development Officer was established in 2024, with part of the role being to raise public awareness of community justice throughout Highland as well as to support the development of CPOs with opportunities for unpaid work particularly beyond the inner Moray Firth area. CPO teams are based all around Highland, often working closely with third sector organisations and community groups which offer a range of placements. From Thurso Grows in the North to New Connections in the South, Green Hive in the East to St Columba Church in the West, as well as those more centrally based in Inverness, such as New Start Highland and Inverness Food Stuff, and many more.

Building on the work of the teams there was also engagement with local communities ensuring that factual, positive messages were shared through press articles in local newspapers, supplemented by increased use of social media, especially Facebook.

In addition to the development of ongoing placement opportunities, there was support for more involved projects with community groups which strengthened partnerships and were appreciated by local communities.

For example, in Caithness the John O'Groats Journal carried an article on the work done to upgrade the facilities at the Staxigoe village hall overlooking the historic harbour, where the Scottish herring industry had its earliest roots. The hall was built over a century ago by the young men of the village. Young men completing their CPO requirements contributed to the recent refurbishment of the hall. The team supervisor said, "Undertaking such a sizeable project as Staxigoe Hall is very satisfying knowing that if we weren't here to help, it just wouldn't get done." The supervisor, a time-served painter and decorator, takes pride in working with clients and teaching new skills which result in the completion of the job to a high standard – skills which individuals can

Caithness CPO Team



carry with them after they have completed their orders that hopefully they can use to make their lives better in the long term.

On Raasay a community project to develop a historic, but long-disused meal mill was supported by individuals completing their CPOs through unpaid work. The West Highland Free Press reported on the community's vision to create *Muileann Àrais*, an eco-Heritage Centre for Raasay with a café, library, display areas and much more. The leader of the project summed up her experience of working with the local

Developments at Raasay Mill



community payback team, saying "it's a prime example of how well the scheme works. We've had great workers who want to see the job done. One lad with excellent skills will get some paid work with us after his sentence is completed."

Highlighting these, and many other positive news stories of the work carried out by the different community payback teams has generated a great deal of local interest through social media and created a lot of positive community engagement and dialogue.

Beneficiaries are always delighted to be recognised and given the chance to share their experiences, and to express their appreciation of an often unseen group of people. The use of social media has been particularly helpful, with follower numbers almost doubling to over 700 in the course of the year, and the reach going beyond Inverness and Easter Ross to include engagement across all of Highland.

The Senior Development Officer writes in one of her articles, "The chances of someone reoffending are reduced significantly when they can maintain their contact with family, their accommodation and their work. Community justice is about finding ways for offenders to serve a sentence from home, while getting support to rehabilitate and the opportunity to give back to the community. There is of course a place for prisons, but like James Timpson (UK Prisons Minister and businessman) suggests, only one third of offenders need to be behind bars. This does call for a degree of tolerance from our communities, along with the willingness to actively offer meaningful jobs, as well as individual placements especially in remote parts of Highland."

Community Payback Orders, with Programme Requirements

Whilst the CPO with unpaid work is the most commonly used community sentence, there is a wide range of alternative community sentences available in Highland. Primarily these are delivered by Justice Social Workers with significant experience and additional training. These sentences aim to address either particular types of offence and offending behaviour or underlying causes of offending behaviour. In Highland we are fortunate to be able to offer a wide range of highly specialised interventions.

These specialist interventions are referred to as 'programme requirements' which have been developed and accredited through national boards to ensure consistency and that they are based on evidence of what works. They require individuals to participate in structured activities aimed at rehabilitation.

The Caledonian System works with men convicted of domestic abuse offences, whilst Moving Forward 2 Change (MF2C) works with men (aged 18+) who have been convicted of a sexual offence. Both these programmes are delivered by specialist teams within the Justice Social Work team, led by experienced social workers who have undergone enhanced training.

Working together with the whole family and taking a 'systems' approach (with a combination of services for men, women and children) is central to the Caledonian System's ultimate aim of reducing the risk of harm to women and children. In order to keep women and children safe there is close cooperation with partners in Police Scotland and Women's Aid as well as other agencies represented in the Highland Violence against Women and Girls Partnership.

Key features of the system include:

The **Men's Programme** which lasts a minimum of two years and comprises at least 14 one-to-one preparatory sessions (Pre-Group stage) followed by a Group Work stage of at least 26 weekly two-hour sessions, and further post group one-to-one work (Maintenance stage).

The Men's Programme is highly structured and participation is a mandatory requirement of a statutory order or licence. Men are referred by court order if they have been convicted of offences involving domestic abuse and are assessed as suitable candidates in terms of risk and readiness to change. The programme is designed to help men understand the links between their thoughts, feelings and abusive behaviour, and to invite and challenge them to rethink the attitudes and beliefs which have underpinned their behaviour.

The **Women's Service** provides safety planning, information and advice as well as emotional support to women partners and ex-partners of men referred to the Men's Programme. It is provided by dedicated women's workers, who aim to reduce the risk to women and their children and to improve women's wellbeing. In contrast with the Men's Programme, the Women's Service is voluntary – women are not required to accept the support they are offered.

The **Children's Service** seeks to ensure that the needs of children affected by domestic abuse are met and their rights upheld, and the impact that domestic abuse has on their lives is reduced.

This integrated model has been shown to be effective. An independent evaluation undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Government found that women reported feeling safer due to improved safety planning and support to contact police about breaches. Men who completed the programme were judged by case workers as posing a lower risk to partners and children.

In Highland groups for the men are delivered over a number of sites including Inverness, Dingwall and in the coming year additional sites will include Wick and Skye. Over the last twelve months the group has also been delivered in Fort William. The Caledonian Team is responsive to the needs of the clients and services are delivered to, and strive to ensure that more remote areas are as well serviced as more densely populated areas. The number of men across Highland that are currently subject to a requirement for the Caledonian Programme is 49. There are approximately 30 women who are actively engaged in the Women's Services with the numbers of individual children receiving a service standing at 10. Indirect work is undertaken with caregivers, both in Highland and other countries. Additionally, the Children's Workers contribute to increasing parenting capacity through the co-facilitation of groups, particularly the Children and Fathering module.

Moving Forward 2 Change (MF2C) is an updated version of a previous intervention, Moving Forward Making Changes which works with adult males convicted of sexual offences or offences with a sexual element who have been assessed as being medium to high risk.

The re-designed programme draws on the latest available evidence and builds on earlier independent evaluation and consultation with those who had experienced the programme. It is designed to be delivered by trained facilitators as part of a community payback order programme requirement or prison licence condition. MF2C consists of pre-programme work and a combination of essential and optional modules in a group setting followed by maintenance sessions.

The main aims are to:

- help the individual to understand and reflect on the risk factors relevant to their offending behaviour;
- provide an opportunity to address the factors relevant to their offending;
- assist individuals to develop the skills to make changes in their thinking and behaviour that will increase confidence, wellbeing and the ability to cope with life stresses and problems;
- help individuals to develop plans to reduce the risk of them causing sexual harm to others, and

- work in partnership with other agencies in the management and assessment of risk, including the UK-wide Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

There are currently 53 men subject to MF2C requirements across Highland. Groups are currently running in Fort William and Dingwall, which includes men from the Inverness area. A group will also be starting in January 2026 in Wick. As with the Caledonian Programme the MF2C Programme is delivered as closely as possible to the areas that the men reside in. Recently, one participant has just completed the Programme, this is the first completion of MF2C in Highland with more to follow over the next few months.

2024-2025 Improvement Report

Community Justice Scotland (CJS) produce an annual *Local Improvement Report* for each Community Justice Partnership. The report presents centrally analysed data drawn from a range of sources which local partners have inputted to. These relate to each of the national indicators and provide a broad perspective on progress. CJPAs are encouraged to use this data to identify areas of activity which require further analysis and reflection.

As part of the restructuring of HCJP planning and delivery processes, 2024-2025 was a transitional period where local and national priorities became more closely aligned, with frameworks developed to support better reporting. The following tables bring together national and local information, with a simple RAG tool applied as a first step towards further analysis.

	Improvement indicated by clear emerging pattern of increase/decrease in relation to desired direction
	No notable change
	Deterioration indicated by clear emerging pattern of increase/decrease in relation to desired direction
	Data is not valid (e.g. insufficient, incomplete or in development)

The Local Improvement Report is a vital part of the HCJP review process. Whilst the information is high level and specific to the national indicators it does present HCJP with a snapshot of the Partnership's strengths and weaknesses. In particular, where deterioration is indicated this alerts the Partnership to areas of activity which require further examination and a response going forward. This informs prioritisation for the coming year, and is reflected in the delivery plans of the Strategic and Delivery Groups.

It must be noted that Community Payback Order information and Drug Treatment and Testing Order information are not normally available until the spring of the following year, so there is always a delay in reporting these.

A baseline of 2017-18 has been used in most instances, primarily because it avoids the skewing of data which resulted during the period of COVID19 restrictions. Exceptions to this are noted individually.

The improvement indicators included are those stated by CJS in their Local Improvement Report for Highland 2024-2025.

NATIONAL AIM 1

Optimise the use of diversion and intervention at the earliest opportunity

Priority Action 1: Enhance intervention at the earliest opportunity by ensuring greater consistency, confidence in and awareness of services which support the use of direct measures and diversion from prosecution

National Outcome: More people successfully complete diversion from prosecution

National (Performance) Indicators

Number of diversion from prosecution:	Baseline 2017-18	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
i. assessments undertaken	76	279	356	
ii. cases commenced	43	112	179	
iii. cases successfully completed	34	79	107	

Note: desired direction for all – increase

Local Activity

Justice Social Work (JSW) offers a range of interventions to support the successful completion of Diversions from Prosecution, including Decider Skills and SMART (Self-Management and Recovery Training) which people can access as required. Individuals residing in the inner Moray Firth area can also complete their diversion while continuing to work and receive support from third sector organisations where appropriate. Young people aged 16 - 17 would normally complete their diversion with Highland Council's Youth Action Service using their expertise in provision of interventions for young people.

The Diversions and Interventions Delivery Group have identified the implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024, as presenting issues which will need to be addressed particularly around the impact upon the interface of Youth Action and JSW. The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration is also involved in this discussion in terms of the potential impact on the Children's Hearing system.

The Diversions and Interventions Delivery Group has also taken the opportunity to reflect on the way that Diversion from Prosecution works within the Highland context, including discussion about the length of time it can take for diversions to come through to JSW and the use of diversions for people with a significant history of offending or non-compliance with previous orders.

Police Scotland report continued use by officers of alternatives to prosecution and direct measures as disposals for offences and monitors the use of these regularly. The publication of the Lord Advocate's guidance on the use of direct measures for adult offenders was particularly welcomed by Police Scotland colleagues.

As a result of the wider range of interventions aimed at addressing individual needs more effectively delivery has been much more person centred and focused. JSW continue to find that diversion works best for individuals who have some or no prior convictions, especially young people and women.

Priority Action 2: Improve the identification of underlying needs and the delivery of support following arrest by ensuring the provision of person-centred care within police custody and building upon referral opportunities to services including substance use and mental health services

National Outcome: More people in police custody receive support to address their needs

National (Performance) Indicators

Proportion of people in police custody that were:	Data under development			Improvement indicator
i. offered support and declined				
ii. offered support and accepted				
iii. recorded as n/a				
Referrals from custody centres	No baseline	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
		82	121	

Local Activity

There has been an ongoing, well-developed approach to custody-based services in Highland. Partnership working between Police Scotland, NHS Highland and the Third Sector Custody Link Worker Project (CLink) continues to be strong. The presence of the Third Sector within the custody setting facilitates improved access to support for individuals who present with a range of vulnerabilities.

The partnership approach presents unique opportunities to engage with individuals who find themselves in police custody. This is focused in the custody suite at Burnett Road in Inverness, which has the additional benefit of proximity to the Inverness Justice Centre.

During the year the CLink project worked with 144 individuals to understand what is going on in their lives from their own perspectives, seeking to ensure safety and stabilisation, and supporting onward referral where necessary.

Amongst the desired outcomes are a reduction in patterns of behaviour that could become escalated and lead to custodial sentences; supporting individuals to make positive changes to their life circumstances and signposting/referring to support services that individuals would otherwise not be aware of or inclined/confident to engage with as a result of social inequality of opportunity, stigma or lack of trust in statutory services.

Within the custody setting, NHS nursing staff continued the development and implementation of the MATPACT (Medication Assisted Treatment Prevention and Care Toolkit), supported by the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP). The aims were to increase the number of referrals to appropriate health services, support a reduction in the number of drug related deaths for those who have been in custody within 6 months, increase the number of referrals to outreach teams, increase number of take-home naloxone kits distributed and increase the volume of blood borne virus testing. These aims sit within the vision of the national MAT (Medication Assisted Treatment) standards to tackle drug-related deaths. This approach takes the opportunity presented in the custody setting to improve user experience and create a person-centred focus, and ultimately contribute to a reduction in the number of drug related deaths (which in Highland during the period reduced from 26 deaths to 21 deaths).

In addition to the assessment tools used in Inverness, different approaches have been used elsewhere. For example, the NHS team have developed a 'Trigger Checklist' which is used as a form of initial screening for substance use in the custody setting in Caithness.

Police Custody staff continue to value the close cooperation and partnership working with the CLink project, as well as the positive relationship that exists with NHS colleagues in the custody setting, where there is a high degree of trust and mutual respect underpinning close working practices and improved outcomes for individuals.

In addition to the work in the custody settings, the HADP funded a community focussed Harm Prevention Officer (HPO) post covering mainland Highland. The aim of the HPO role has been to identify those deemed to be at substantial risk of death due to alcohol or drug use and to collaborate with relevant partners and individuals to reduce this risk. The target population is adults, although young people have been supported when appropriate. During the year the HPO engaged with 97 individuals, as well as developing links with partner agencies across the community.

It is worth noting that the number of custody referrals from Highland accounts for over 12% of all such referrals for the whole of Scotland (121 out of a total of 976).

NATIONAL AIM 2

Ensure that robust and high quality community interventions and public protection arrangements are consistently in place

Priority Action 3: Support the use of robust alternatives to remand by ensuring high quality bail services are consistently available and delivered effectively

National Outcome: More people are assessed for and successfully complete bail supervision

National (Performance) Indicators

Number of:	No baseline	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
i. assessment reports for bail suitability		386	358	
ii. bail supervision cases commenced		31	22	
iii. bail supervision cases completed		28	4 (23) See note (ii)	

Note: (i) desired direction for all – increase; (ii) the completion figure has been revised following a review of reported numbers. Updated information has been submitted to Justice Analytic Services.

Local Activity

Having a dedicated team of Justice Social Work Officers and a Social Worker means that completing assessments and providing Bail Supervision Services has been more consistent over the year.

However, a number of challenges around the use of Bail Supervision have been identified by the Divisions and Interventions Delivery Group as needing to be addressed in the coming year. Also, the lack of clear risk assessment and the potential impact on victims of individuals

being released on bail need to be better understood as well as the perception that breaches are not always responded to timeously.

JSW team members continue to find that Bail Supervision works very well for young people and for women. However, the issues identified above will be a focus for this coming year.

Priority Action 4: Strengthen options for safe and supported management in the community by increasing and widening the use of electronic monitoring technologies
(No National Outcome)

Local Activity

A range of court disposals and forms of licence can be electronically monitored or 'tagged'. These arrangements are managed by G4S, under contract to the Scottish Government. In their statistical bulletin for 2024-2025, G4S report that in Highland electronic monitoring was imposed as part of a Restriction of Liberty Order 36 times, used as a Condition of Bail 35 times and twice to support a Movement Restriction Condition for young people.

Currently Electronic Monitoring (EM) uses radio frequency technology which is independent of mobile signal, and available across the whole country, including remote and island areas. New technologies are available utilising GPS and alcohol monitoring technologies, but these remain to be rolled out by the Scottish Government.

Priority Action 5: Ensure that those given community sentences are supervised and supported appropriately to protect the public, promote desistence from offending and enable rehabilitation by delivering high quality, consistently available, trauma-informed services, and programmes

National Outcome: More people access services to support desistence and successfully complete community sentences

National (Performance) Indicators

Percentage of:	Baseline 2017-18	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
i. CPOs successfully completed	73%	74%		
ii. DTTOs successfully completed	43%	78%		
Number of community sentences compared to other disposals	11.8%	12%		

Note: (i) desired direction for all – increase; (ii) verified information for 2024-25 not available until April 2026

Local Activity

Justice Social Work continues to deliver a wide range of specialist interventions across the Highland area as part of a Community Payback Order, including unpaid work, and Drug Testing & Treatment Order (DTTO and DTTO2). In the course of the year the following programmes have been offered, including:

Moving Forward 2 Change
The Caledonian System
SMART Recovery
Decider Skills

Justice Social Work operates across Highland, seeking to offer the full range of interventions regardless of the geographical challenges. For example, though the team delivering the Caledonian and MF2C programmes (highlighted elsewhere in this report) is based in Dingwall, these interventions have been offered at a number of locations from Caithness in the far north to Lochaber and Skye in the south and west.

Awareness raising efforts have increased the community uptake of the unpaid work squads. Communities have responded very positively and tangibly to the news stories that have been published on social media and the local press. The increase in demand has at times stretched the Community Payback teams especially when coupled with the increase in numbers of clients, also with higher tariffs.

Questions have been raised about offering opportunities for personal development to individuals completing unpaid work requirements, but there seems to be a lack of clarity about how this might be achieved within current processes and constraints. Over the year there was investment in training for Community Payback Supervisors, and a Senior CPO role was created to strengthen the delivery of the service across Highland.

A desktop study compiled examples of Women's Programmes around Scotland. This was circulated to a range of partners, locally and nationally, and is being used to support the design of a women's programme in Highland.

The Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO) team is based at the Justice Centre in Inverness, however, as with other services the intervention and accompanying support is offered across Highland. The central DTTO criteria is that the individual has a history of offending linked to drug use and is also at risk of receiving a custodial sentence. The DTTO2 (funded by HADP) is a form of early intervention, aimed at people who are not dependent on drugs and are more likely to respond to intervention, for example, individuals aged 16 and older who may be facing their first drug charge and females with less entrenched drug use.

Priority Action 6: Ensure restorative justice is available to all those who wish to access it by promoting and supporting the appropriate and safe provision of services
(No National Outcome)

Local Activity

During the year exploratory work was undertaken by the Senior Development Officer to assess the level of interest across Highland for the provision of Restorative Justice (RJ).

Real interest was identified across a range of statutory and third sector partners resulting in a working group being established including Justice Social Work, Action for Children, Victim Support Scotland, Custody Link Worker Project and HCJP with the aim to research, raise awareness, train up and collaborate with partners to explore what model of provision might be achievable and sustainable in the Highland context. Support has been received from CJS and from Space to Face, a RJ organisation based in Shetland.

Both HMP Inverness and Action for Children have, in the past, explored RJ with some of their clients. A number of organisations committed to fund a staff member to attend RJ training in 2025, and a unique event was delivered in autumn 2025 at University of Highlands & Islands which will be reported on next year.

NATIONAL AIM 3

Ensure that services are accessible and available to address the needs of individuals accused or convicted of an offence

Priority Action 7: Enhance individuals' access to health and social care and continuity of care following release from prison by improving the sharing of information and partnership-working between relevant partners

National Outcome: More people have access to, and continuity of, health and social care following release from a prison sentence

National (Performance) Indicators

Number of transfers in drug/alcohol treatments from:	Baseline 2021-22	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
i. custody to community	31	30	29	
ii. community to custody				

Note: desired direction – increase

Local Activity

Throughout the year the Highland Community Integration Plan (HCIP) continued to be delivered using a partnership approach involving Scottish Prison Service, NHS Highland, Justice Social Work and a number of third sector agencies providing community support. The focus is on those living in the inner Moray Firth area who have known drug and alcohol issues. It continues to be successful in terms of supporting those who are returning to the community from prison in assessing their needs and tailoring plans to support them on their release. For those opting to engage with the HCIP, planning normally begins at 6 weeks prior to release.

As part of the assessment process, there is particular attention to the risk of suicide. Should such a risk be identified a case conference will be held to clarify the relevant factors relating to the release that need to be addressed. The case conference will involve relevant partners to shape the direction of the plan and the support required.

Also used within HMP Inverness is the locally developed assessment and outcomes tool, My Compass broadly similar to the Justice Outcomes Star.

Throughout the year Families Outside have highlighted the issues faced by the families of those who are imprisoned. These are particularly acute in Highland, especially in more remote parts of Highland where transport to visit family members in prison can be difficult. There is also a significant impact on the families of women from Highland who are imprisoned, who face long journeys to visit and to maintain family contact.

The creation of the Transitions and Communities Delivery Group has provided a forum for partners to come together to share thinking, explore opportunities for collaboration and support the transition to the new national Voluntary Throughcare service, Upside.

One innovation developed in Highland is the provision of FitHome technology by Albyn Housing Society. With the use of non-intrusive technology in peoples' homes there is evidence of:

- A significant drop in substance use related ICU visits.

- Early detection of overdose via the use of FitHome sensor monitoring by a client's drug & alcohol nurse.
- No clients returning to prison on charges brought against them during their stay in a FitHome equipped property.

Research into the impact of the FitHome technology is being undertaken by Napier University, with a focus on the rehabilitation of those leaving prison and on the prevention of reoffending.

Priority Action 8: Ensure that the housing needs of individuals in prison are addressed consistently and at an early stage by fully implementing and embedding the Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE) standards across all local authority areas

National Outcome: More people have access to suitable accommodation following release from a prison sentence

National (Performance) Indicators

Number of homelessness applications where prison is last known address.	Baseline 2017-18	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
	40	35	50	

Note: (i) desired direction – decrease; (ii) These figures are rounded to nearest 5

Local Activity

Housing partners (including local authority housing) play a central role in the delivery of the Highland Community Integration Plan (HCIP). For people on licences, Justice Social Work and the Highland Council's Housing work together when liberations are taking place. Both services normally plan ahead of time where the person is likely to present as homeless, and for cases where the individual is a Registered Sex Offender, Police, Housing and Justice Social Work work together to complete Environmental Risk Assessments.

Also, the My Compass assessment tool used in HMP Inverness identifies housing issues at an early stage, and how to address these. HMP Inverness has good links with housing providers and with the local CAB which supports planning for liberation. Upcoming planned liberations (Home Detention Curfew, parole etc.) are communicated to relevant partner agencies to support suitable accommodation planning. However, the lack of available housing in parts of Highland make improvement difficult in this area.

In addition to the health benefits offered by the use of FitHome technology outlined above, there are wider housing support benefits which have been identified.

The non-intrusive technology includes a ring doorbell camera that enables individuals to manage their door, minimising the risk of unwanted visitors. The FitHome technology requires a minimum housing support package to be agreed prior to release. This comprehensive approach leads to:

- improved tenancy sustainment;
- increased partnership working has benefitted the tenants through an enhanced housing allocation partnership and more coordinated support practices, and
- a greater sense of safety and stability for clients that normal properties/tenancies lack.

Priority Action 9: Enhance individual's life skills and readiness for employment by ensuring increased access to employability support through effective education, learning, training, career services and relevant benefit services

National Outcome: More people with convictions access support to enhance their readiness for employment

National (Performance) Indicators

Participation in an employment programme: percentage of people with convictions	No baseline	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
		5%	6%	

Note: (i) desired direction – increase; (ii) This data relates to NOLB (no-one left behind) programmes. Other employability programmes exist and support people with convictions through national and locally commissioned services

Local Activity

HMP Inverness has a strong relationship with the local DWP team and Job Centre+. This includes the provision of a prison work-based coach, who attends the Links Centre on a regular basis and organises scheduled quarterly employability events.

Café 1668 is a social café in central Inverness operated by the Highland Third Sector Interface to provide healthy food and a safe space for all. The Café offers hot food and drinks free of charge to those in need three days a week and has staff who can support, identify and signpost people to services which are relevant to their needs. The Café has hosted individuals who are fulfilling their Community Payback Orders unpaid work requirements providing opportunities to learn hospitality and other skills.

One Highland GP writes: “Cafe 1668 is an invaluable resource for those who are vulnerable for a variety of reasons. For those attending the Homeless Healthcare Service, and those attending the DARS (Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service) in Inverness, Cafe 1668 forms part of our signposting and also a location for outreach services to make contact with people. Aside from the provision of food, which is a core need for people who are struggling with poverty, there is also the opportunity of social connection, which is vital to the mental health and wellbeing of those who experience severe and multiple disadvantage.”

With regard to employability, HMP Inverness and the Scottish Drugs Forum (SDF) have worked together during the year to develop a pilot for the SDF National Traineeship programme to be offered within the prison setting. The programme will run into year 2025-2026, and evaluation will take place on completion of the pilot.

2024-2025 has been a developmental year as regards employability. Working towards the creation of the new Transitions and Communities Delivery Group has stimulated renewed engagement with employment / employability partners. Since the formation of the group there has been active participation from DWP, Skills Development Scotland, Highland Council Employability Service, Justice Social Work, Highland Council Economy and Regeneration, Highland Council Adult Learning, University of the Highlands and Islands, the Scottish Drugs Forum and from industry partners, Amey and Balfour Beatty. Also, the DWP has continued to

focus on work coaching, with a number of larger employers (e.g. Balfour Beatty and G&A Barnie Group) offering placements for individuals.

Priority Action 10: Enhance community integration and support by increasing and promoting greater use of voluntary throughcare and third sector services

National Outcome: More people access voluntary throughcare following a short-term prison sentence

National (Performance) Indicators

	Baseline 2017-18	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
Number of voluntary throughcare cases commenced	87	1	6	

Note: desired direction – increase

Local Activity

It is recognised that the provision of statutory voluntary throughcare in Highland by Justice Social Work has been limited and preparation for the delivery of the new National Voluntary Throughcare service by Upside is anticipated to significantly improve outcomes in this area of activity. Available from April 2025, Upside will provide people in short-term custody, or remand with the practical and emotional support they need to transition to community life. The service is voluntary and will address any issues they may have as an individual on release like health, housing, finance, skills and employment.

Some statutory Throughcare has been offered by JSW, but provision has been constrained by recruitment challenges in the course of the reporting year, which have been addressed. Although the indicator shows improvement, this is modest, and there is some way to go to return to previous levels of delivery.

HMP Inverness continued to work in partnership with APEX offering specialist Disclosure advice for participants with an offending background, as well as Throughcare Mentoring services, Drug & Alcohol recovery provision through SMART Recovery, SMART Family & Friends and Mental Health provision through Decider Skills and outdoor Greenspace Regeneration projects and Employability upskilling through training courses and job focused practice.

NATIONAL AIM 4

Strengthen the leadership, engagement and partnership working of local and national community justice partners

Priority Action 11 (Governance and collaboration): Deliver improved community justice outcomes by ensuring that effective leadership and governance arrangements are in place and working well, collaborating with partners and planning strategically.

National Outcome: Improved Collective Leadership and engagement supports achievement of shared community justice outcomes

Local Activity

Reference to the changes in governance have been highlighted elsewhere in this report. The overarching purpose of the exercise was to align the work of the HCJP to the Aims and Actions of the National Strategy for Community Justice so as to support delivery improvement and clearer accountability in reporting, whilst still recognising the place of the HCJP within local planning and delivery structures.

There was also value in broadening the reach of the partnership. With focus moving beyond a single group, to include the delivery groups for partners who wish to proactively engage with the HCJP, there is opportunity to widen representation, especially at an operational level. For comparison, the invitation list to the original HCJP meeting sat at around 22 (with an average of 14 attending each meeting), now the combined lists for the strategic and delivery groups sits at over 30 (with an average combined attendance of 26 [omitting duplicate attendance] at the three group meetings). Included in this broader attendance is representation from NHS (custody and prison-based services), housing and employability services (including Housing association provider and large employers) and third sector organisations involved in a range of justice focussed activities.

We have always been fortunate to have positive and supportive links with the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP). Not only do the HADP commission or fund justice focussed services (for example the Custody Link Project and the Harm Prevention Officer post within Police Scotland), there are well developed strategic links between the HADP and the HCJP.

There are clear links with the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). The HCJP independent chair is also the independent chair of the MAPPA Strategic Oversight Group in Highlands and Islands. There is cross representation on the HCJP and Highland Community Safety and Resilience Delivery group, and the independent chairs of the Highland Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership and the HCJP are members of each other's partnerships. Links have also developed with the Adult Support and Protection service.

Priority Action 12: Enhance partnership planning and implementation by ensuring the voices of victims of crime, survivors, those with lived experience and their families are effectively incorporated and embedded

(No National Outcome)

Local Activity

HCJP has struggled over a number of years to meaningfully engage with victims' organisations and to ensure participation in HCJP structures and activities.

As part of the restructuring of the HCJP, it was central to the planning process that engagement with victims' organisations would be a priority, and that Victim Support Scotland would be named as a strategic partner within the new structures.

It has also been evident that the partnership has struggled to gather the views and perspectives of individuals and their families.

Two strands of work have been undertaken to seek to address this deficit. Our quarterly Community Justice Forums have sought to ensure that organisations and individuals with lived or living experience are encouraged to attend and contribute. For example, the in-person forum held in November 2024 included lively discussion from a number of people with lived experience (mainly as family members) around the issues of justice, antisocial behaviour and support for individuals who have used drugs and have been in contact with the justice system.

During the year we also engaged with organisations who have an understanding of working with people with lived experience. There has been limited contact with Next Chapter Scotland (who were then invited to speak at our May 2025 Third Sector Forum) and also with the Scottish Drugs Forum, who have a strong track record in engaging with those with lived experience of using drug services, and who already have a presence in Highland through a contract with the HADP.

Engagement with victims, families affected by the justice system and those who have lived experience of the system has been identified as a HCJP priority going forward.

Priority Action 13: Support integration and reduce stigma by ensuring the community and workforce have an improved understanding of and confidence in community justice

National Outcome: More people across the workforce and in the community understand, and have confidence in, community justice

Local Activity

As a consequence of the initiative to widen opportunities for unpaid work and support the continued development of Community Payback Orders in more distant parts of Highland, opportunities emerged during the year to develop positive links with local press which has progressed alongside the wider use of social media to inform public understanding and present positive stories of the benefits brought to local communities through unpaid work. This has been of tremendous benefit, but sits against wider societal perceptions that remain largely negative towards any form of 'punishment' which is not custodial and therefore perceived to be 'soft'.

The HCJP Senior Development Officer has undertaken a range of activities to raise public awareness and address issues of stigma and raise awareness of community-first approaches.

The HCJP 'Highland Justice Services and Interventions' website continued to expand during 2024-2025. It signposts people to organisations who can assist them at whatever stage of the justice journey they are at. It is intended as a place holder for justice services and interventions that can assist those who have offended, those affected by crime and families of either. Click [here](#) to visit the site.

A Highland Community Justice information campaign went out on both Facebook and X raising awareness of community justice and highlighting various justice related themes. Click [here](#) to view PDF.

The HCJP Facebook presence continues to effectively engage with communities around Highland exceeding 700 followers at the end of the 2024-2025. For example, in March 2025 after a visit to the CPO team and local beneficiaries in Fort William, the town moved from 9th up to 3rd place in terms of numbers of followers. Partner visits around Highland and coverage of local stories have also added localities to the demographics data which were not previously listed. Only Inverness and Dingwall were listed at the start of 2024 and now there are eight additional places listed.

Following planned visits to CPO teams and other partners around Highland, press articles were prepared and a number were taken up and published in local papers as well as appearing online. These included: West Highland Free Press, John O'Groats Journal & Caithness Courier, Ross-Shire Journal, Lochaber Times and Inverness Courier.

In addition, there have been numerous visits to and contacts with community groups, men's sheds, churches and others right across Highland, all of them presenting opportunities to speak about the community-first approach to justice.

National (Performance) Indicators

Percentage of individuals who agree that: i. people should help their community as part of a community sentence rather than spend a few months in prison for a minor offence	Baseline 2018-19	23-24	24-25	Improvement indicator
	84%	82%	Data not available	Note: This data is available only at a Scotland level

Looking Forward

As part of the restructuring exercise there was the creation of delivery plans for the Strategic and Delivery Groups. As indicated above, the annual review process is informed by the Local Improvement Report and the RAG tool. Identified priorities are reflected in each group's delivery plans going forward. In summary, the priorities for 2025-2026 are:

Strategic Group Actions

1. Fully implement new HCJP structures and update Terms of Reference.
2. Prepare for a self-evaluation exercise, including review of data and information gathered.
3. Support improved engagement with Victims of Crime, and victim support organisations.
4. Support the potential roll out of restorative justice.
5. Continue to build on the research into women's experiences of justice in Highland.
6. Develop processes to gather the views and experiences of those who have experience of the Justice System (including narratives, case studies etc).
7. Create a HCJP Communications Plan.

Diversion and Interventions Delivery Group Actions

8. Develop agreed local processes to support the use of Diversion from Prosecution and Direct Measures within Highland.
9. Monitor and support developments in Youth Justice (particularly the interface between Youth and Adult Justice services).
10. Review existing processes and pathways for individuals from arrest to potential court appearance.
11. Address perceived challenges in the use of bail in Highland.
12. Build on existing pathways and opportunities for community sentences.

Transitions and Communities Delivery Group Actions

13. Review current use of Highland Community Integration Planning processes to ensure:
 - a. pathways are in place which support continuity of health and social care provision for individuals on liberation;
 - b. better collaboration between housing providers to support better housing outcomes, and
 - c. opportunities are maximised for Employability and Training.
14. Support the establishment of the Upside Service in Highland.

15. Deliver improved engagement with families and dependents affected by imprisonment.

Identified Risks

There are two main risks identified to the implementation of the actions outlined above.

The first relates to lack of buy in from partners. Resource constraints can mean that not all partners fully engage with the activities of the HCJP. This appears to be a problem across many CJP's, and perhaps the solution partially lies in action and leadership on a national basis to ensure fuller participation. However, we have sought to extend our engagement across the partnership by taking a more flexible and nuanced approach that reaches beyond formal meetings and structures so as to support wider forms of participation.

The second relates to resources, particularly the availability of funding.

Every year the HCJP highlights the precarious financial position of many Third Sector partners and services. There is also recognition of the budgetary and resource challenges faced by our statutory partners. This clearly can constrain development of fresh initiatives which are vital for the delivery of improvement within the justice system. Examples of this limitation include initiatives to develop Restorative Justice across Highland, and also the imperative to significantly improve our engagement with those who have lived experience.

However, there is much evidence that the old adage "the sum of the parts is bigger than the whole" is true when reviewing the work of the Highland Community Justice Partnership. We are more effective the more closely we work together.

Acronyms Used

CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CJS	Community Justice Scotland
CLink	Custody Link Worker Project
CPO	Community Payback Order
DARS	Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service
DfP	Diversion from Prosecution
DTTO	Drug Treatment and Testing Order
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
EM	Electronic Monitoring
HADP	Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership
HCIP	Highland Community Integration Plan
HCJP	Highland Community Justice Partnership
HCJOIP	Highland Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan
HCPP	Highland Community Planning Partnership
HPO	Harm Prevention Officer
HTSI	Highland Third Sector Interface
JSW	Justice Social Work
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MATPACT	Medication Assisted Treatment Prevention and Care Toolkit
MF2C	Moving Forward 2 Change
NOLB	No-one left behind
RJ	Restorative Justice
SDF	Scottish Drugs Forum
SFRS	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
SHORE	Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone
SMART	Self-Management and Recovery Training
UHI	University of the Highlands and Islands

If you would like to find out more about the Highland Community Justice Partnership, then please visit:

[Community Justice Partnership | HTSI main \(highlandtsi.org.uk\)](http://highlandtsi.org.uk)

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HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS
MULTI-AGENCY PUBLIC PROTECTION
ARRANGEMENTS

2024/25

MAPPA ANNUAL REPORT

Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements

We are pleased to present the Annual Report 2024/25 on the operation of the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) in the Highlands & Islands area.



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Foreword

Welcome to the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Annual Report for the Highland and Islands area for 2024-25.

The fundamental purpose of MAPPA is public protection and managing the risk of serious harm posed by certain individuals who have committed sexual and violent offences. This is what everyone involved in MAPPA is striving to achieve.

This year has seen several developments designed to improve the delivery and outcomes of MAPPA. Following a development day, the Strategic Oversight Group completed a self-assessment of its performance which demonstrated significant strengths and some areas for improvement. This led to the development of a 3-year Improvement Strategy 2025-2027 which will be the focus for the group. A separate Operational Oversight Group was established, and this will lead to further improvements in training, performance and quality assurance. Additionally, training events – e.g. for police officers and social work managers chairing MAPPA meetings and on understanding online child sexual abuse – have improved the knowledge and skills of those managing the risk posed by offenders.

There are challenges, not least due to budgetary restraints and the housing crisis. This is in the context of a significant increase in the number of Registered Sex Offenders – In Police Scotland's N Division, which covers Highland & Islands, there has been a 30% increase over the past five years in the number of RSOs, slightly higher than the increase across Scotland (27%/c. 8,000). There has not been a concomitant increase in resources allocated to the Responsible Authorities (RAs) to manage this increase. In response, the RAs are continually evaluating performance to ensure that services are provided efficiently whilst continuing to maintain public safety.

However, I remain very confident that the collaborative efforts of all those involved in MAPPA continue to keep our communities safe.



Thank you

James Maybee

Independent Chair

Highland & Islands Strategic Oversight Group

What is MAPPA?

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) are a set of statutory arrangements of which the primary purpose is to maintain public protection and the reduction of serious harm. The protection of children, adults at risk and other members of the public are paramount. It is a structure by which registered sex offenders, mentally disordered restricted patients and other offenders who, by reason of their conviction, pose a risk of serious harm to the public are managed through the effective sharing of relevant information, and the assessment and management of that risk.

MAPPA was introduced in 2007 under the requirements of the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Act 2005 and is delivered under National Guidance. Legislation defines the Responsible Authorities and those with a Duty to Cooperate (DTC).

The MAPPA Guidance was updated and published on the 31st March 2022.



The Responsible Authorities within the Highlands & Islands are:

- The Highland Council
- Orkney Islands Council
- Western Isles Council
- Shetland Islands Council
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Prison Service
- NHS Highland
- NHS Orkney
- NHS Eilean Siar
- NHS Shetland
- The State Hospital for Scotland

These agencies are responsible for the assessment and management of risk presented by offenders who are subject to MAPPA. The NHS Boards and The State Hospital are Responsible Authorities in respect of Restricted Patients only and are deemed Duty to Cooperate Agencies in respect of Registered Sex Offenders.

The National Duty to Co-operate (DTC) agencies include:

- Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
- Department of Works & Pensions
- Electronic Monitoring Providers, e.g. G4S
- Registered Social Landlords
- any person/organisation providing services to, or on behalf of a Responsible Authority.

The DTC agencies are required to accept, provide and reciprocally share appropriate information to support the risk management planning of any offender subject of MAPPA.

Who are the MAPPA offenders?

There are 3 categories of offender eligible for MAPPA:

Registered sexual offenders (RSO) (Category 1)	Violent offenders (Category 2)	Other Offenders (Category 3)
Sexual offenders who are required to notify the police of their name, address and other personal details and notify any changes subsequently under the Sex Offender Notification Requirements (SONR).	Offenders convicted on indictment of a crime inferring personal violence and who are on a community order or subject to licence following release. This Category is not enacted by the Scottish Government at this time.	Individuals who are not required to comply with the SONR or those who are not restricted patients. Those might be individuals who have been convicted of an offence, and by reason of that conviction are required to be subject to supervision in the community by any enactment, order or licence. Individuals who are assessed by the Responsible Authorities as posing a high or very high risk of serious harm to the public at large. Individuals whose risk is assessed as requiring active multi-agency management at MAPPA Level 2 or 3.

Mentally disordered restricted patients (Category 3)

This category of offender comprises those subject to any of the following orders or directions:

- Patients who are detained following conviction under section 57A and section 59 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995.
- Patients who are detained under section 57(2)(a) and (b) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 Compulsion Order with a Restriction Order (CORO) following a finding of unfitness for trial or acquittal by reason of mental disorder.
- Prisoners detained in hospital on a Hospital Direction under section 59A of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 or a transferred prisoner on a Transfer for Treatment Direction under section 136 of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003.

How do the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements work?

MAPPA in Scotland has always been utilised to coordinate the management of those offenders in the community required to notify under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, commonly referred to as Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs), and those offenders deemed Restricted Patients under Mental Health legislation.

Offenders eligible for MAPPA are identified and relevant information is shared across those agencies involved, or likely to have a contribution in their management. The nature and level of the risk of harm they pose is assessed and actions are raised within a multi-agency risk management plan in order that those risks can be monitored and minimised to protect the public. Convicted sex offenders are now subject to more checks than ever before. The sex offenders register ensures monitoring is in place and agencies can continue to work together to protect the public from known sex offenders living in the community.

The practical operation of MAPPA is performed within pre-set meeting structures at local authority level. Offenders subject to MAPPA will be managed at one of the following 3 MAPPA Management Levels.

MAPPA Level 1: Routine Risk Management

In the vast majority of cases, the offender will be managed under the routine arrangements applied by the agency or agencies with supervisory responsibility, i.e. by Police Scotland alone, or jointly with Justice Social Work Services. In the case of a Restricted Patient, the NHS will be lead agency. Level 1 is not applicable to MAPPA Category 3 Offenders, who once identified will only be managed under Level 2 or 3 Review processes.

MAPPA Level 2: Multi Agency Risk Management

This process is implemented where Risk Management Planning requires the active involvement of multiple agencies required to manage and actively reduce the risk of serious harm posed by an offender or where that management is complex and resource intensive. A number of factors will be considered in determining if an offender requires Level 2 management, this decision being the responsibility of the MAPPA Coordinator on receipt of a Referral and in consultation with the Responsible Authorities who consider the risk of serious harm thresholds are met. Those managed at Level 2 will be the subject of regular MAPPA review meetings through which a Multi-Agency Risk Management Plan is formulated, implemented and monitored.

MAPPA Level 3: Multi Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPPP)

From time to time, as with offenders managed at level 2, cases arise that present such a high level of risk to the public, or where the level of resources required to effectively manage the offender in the community are substantially beyond what could be considered normal. These offenders are often referred to as 'the critical few'. Although they are managed under the same processes as Level 2 cases, they require more frequent oversight and the active involvement of senior representatives from the relevant agencies in the development, implementation, and monitoring of risk management plans.

All prisoners released from prison subject to MAPPA will have an agreed and robust risk management plan to resettle, monitor and supervise them back into the community safely.

We work closely with offenders to ensure they gain access to help and support to tackle their criminal behaviours and the reasons and underlying causes why they have offended. This might be providing assistance with finding accommodation, helping with employment or offering treatment for drug, alcohol or mental health problems, including sex offender programmes to address their offending behaviour. This also means imposing tough controls. Offenders who are assessed as presenting a high risk of harm to the public are subject to very strict supervision and monitoring to help reduce that risk. This will inevitably mean that they have to

live in approved and manageable accommodation and may be subject to Electronic Monitoring (Tagging) for a period of time. They may also be restricted from visiting certain places, having contact with certain people and must report regularly to the Police Scotland Sex Offender Policing Unit (SOPU) or their supervising Justice Services Social Worker as well as receiving random unannounced visits to their home address. However, it is recognised that the vast majority of offenders do not receive custodial sentences and are instead dealt with through the court system by way of a community-based disposal/order under the supervision of Justice Social Work Services (JSWS).

MAPPA will strive to manage offenders at the lowest possible level relating to assessed risk; therefore, to reflect change in this level of risk offenders can move either up or down levels in order that resources are commensurate with that perceived risk.



The oversight of MAPPA

The operation of MAPPA is directed and overseen by the Highlands & Islands MAPPA Strategic Oversight Group (HIMSOG). This Group consists of senior representatives from each of the Responsible Authorities, with representatives of the Duty to Co-operate agencies attending as appropriate or necessary. The group meets four times each year (or on an emergency basis) and has updated its Terms of Reference for the period 2024-2025. This has served to reinforce the remit of the group and provides a business structure, the key areas being:

- **Business Planning, management and resource allocation**
- **The Publication of an Annual Report**
- **Significant Case Review**
- **Training**
- **Adherence to updated National MAPPA Guidance and other relevant protocols**
- **Quality assurance and the Review of the Performance of MAPPA**
- **Oversight and monitoring of the Risk Register**

MAPPA remains well established across the Highlands & Islands area with the reporting year seeing continued refinement of the operation of MAPPA, with ongoing review of practice and process locally and nationally in an effort to improve our ways of working.

Initial Case Reviews

The HIMSOG continues to build on national guidance and local review findings in its process for reviewing all Initial Case Reviews (ICRs). An ICR takes place when the following occur:

- When an offender managed under MAPPA at any level is charged with an offence that has resulted in the death or serious harm to another person, or an offence listed in Schedule 3 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003;
- Significant concern has been raised about professional and/or service involvement, or lack of involvement, in respect of the management of an offender under MAPPA at any level;
- Where it appears that a registered sex offender being managed under MAPPA is killed or seriously injured as a direct result of his/her status as a RSO; and
- Where an offender currently being managed under MAPPA has died or been seriously injured in circumstances likely to generate significant public concern.

Environmental Risk Assessments (ERA)

The 2019 Role of Public Protection (Housing) The National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders (NASSO) sets out parameters and minimum standards for conducting Environmental Risk Assessments. An Environmental Risk Assessment is carried out to ensure that an address is manageable for an individual to reside at and safe for those persons residing in the vicinity. The following are the various aspects of the work undertaken by Housing Services to keep the public safe as part of their remit:

- Housing advice is provided ensuring the individual's health and support needs are met. Any accommodation identified will have been assessed and approved or deemed manageable by the Lead Agency.
- Support required can either be provided on a short-term basis from the Public Protection Sex Offender Liaison Officer (Housing Services) or from Area Housing Teams or by commissioning support from external providers where long-term support is required.

- Temporary accommodation can also be provided where an individual is leaving custody and has no safe, secure, or appropriate accommodation to return to. Temporary accommodation locations are subject to regular change to ensure public safety and the needs of the individual's safety, and to ensure the safeguarding of the surrounding community.
- Home Leave facilities to reintegrate individuals back into the community in some areas are also available but very limited.
- Environmental Risk Assessments are completed and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the accommodation continues to be manageable within the relevant neighbourhood and remain assessed as being approved and manageable by the lead agency.

The Parole Board for Scotland

The parole process is a system that enables some offenders to be released on licence in the community under the supervision of a community-based social worker. If an offender is released on parole, they can be recalled to prison at any time if they breach the terms of their licence. Parole is only granted where the Parole Board is satisfied that the risk presented by the offender can be managed safely in the community.

The Parole Board for Scotland is a Non-Departmental Public Body whose members are appointed by the Scottish Ministers. The Board has a number of statutory functions but operates independently from the Scottish Government. Directions made to Scottish Ministers by the Board about early release of an offender are binding, with the exception of deportation cases and applications for compassionate release where the Board will offer advice only. The MAPPA process takes account of the parole position and plans for the potential release of "High Risk" offenders within our area by means of contingency planning should liberations occur.



Case Study 1 - A real-life example of MAPPA in action

Mr R was convicted of voyeurism in 2022 and sentenced to a 3-year community payback order consisting of a supervision requirement and a Moving Forward Making Changes programme requirement. Furthermore, he was also placed on the Sex Offender Notification Requirements for the duration of his order.

While being placed on his community payback order (CPO), a MAPPA level 1 referral was submitted and a MAPPA level 1 meeting was convened to share information, assess the risks that Mr R posed and to develop a comprehensive multi-agency risk management plan to manage his identified presenting risks. Due to Mr R's chaotic lifestyle, health related concerns, sexual preoccupation and stress it was agreed after extensive debate that Mr R's level should increase, and he was placed under MAPPA level 2. Furthermore, Health representation was required to assist with MAPPA partners' concerns about Mr R's health related issues and learning disabilities and to assess if this had any impact on his risk of sexual harm.

Mr R had many written instructions to comply with as part of his risk management plan and MAPPA partners were in contact out with MAPPA meetings to discuss his case regularly. The MAPPA Coordinator contacted Health to highlight the need for health and Adult Social Work representation. A referral and discussions also took place with forensic psychology to discuss Mr R's case, and it was highlighted that the most effective practice was to provide techniques to assist with case management.

In 2024 Mr R was placed on a further CPO for Voyeurism offending, again to participate in a further sex offender programme, Moving Forward 2 Change. He case continued to be monitored by MAPPA. The views of Health representatives remained paramount in respect of decision making and the overall management of his case and his risk of sexual harm.

In early 2025 Mr R's MAPPA level was reduced to Level 1, after partners came to an agreement that Mr R no longer met the criteria for level 2. This decision was made on the basis that he could be managed under the 'routine' arrangements by those with supervisory responsibility, i.e. Police Scotland and Justice Social Work Services. He was assessed as a medium risk, to be reviewed on a 6 monthly basis.

There continues to be times where Mr R remains difficult to manage, and questions remain in relation to his health and support available and how or if this impacts on his risk of sexual offending. He continues to be discussed, monitored and concerns raised with the MAPPA Coordinator when further assistance is required to seek advice from partner agencies, especially in terms of his health. Mr R has many written instructions in place to manage and lower his likelihood of reoffending, taking into account his level of cognition. Any necessary steps to manage his risks will continue to be taken by the Responsible Authorities and duty to co-operate agencies while he is subject to MAPPA and residing in the community.

Progress and Achievements 2024/25

- For the first time, an experienced Independent Chair was appointed by the Highland & Islands Strategic Oversight Group (HIMSOG) in 2024.
- A self-assessment exercise was completed by HIMSOG in January 2025 using an adapted Quality Indicator Framework model from the HMIPS/Care Inspectorate 2015 joint inspection of MAPPA.
- A HIMSOG development day was hosted by Emeritus Professor Hazel Kemshall in September 2024.
- An Improvement Strategy 2025–2027 was agreed by HIMSOG in spring 2025.
- A Highland & Islands Operational Group (HIMO) was established in May 2024.
- Training for police officers and justice social work managers chairing MAPPA meetings was delivered by Professor Kemshall in November 2024 and by the Risk Management Authority in February 2025.
- Terms of Reference were agreed for both the strategic and operational groups in 2024.
- Training on Understanding Online Child Sexual Abuse & Child Sexual Abuse Material was delivered by Professor Kieran McCartan in February 2025.
- An Annual Report 2023/24 was completed and submitted to Scottish Government in October 2024 as required under the 2005 Act.
- Two new orders, the Sexual Harm Prevention Order (SHPO) and Sexual Risk Order (SRO) have been introduced.
- The revised nationally accredited Moving Forward 2 Change (MF2C) sex offender programme has been implemented.
- On 31st March 2025 there were 288 offenders in the community being managed under MAPPA (Level 1 – 274, Level 2 – 8, Level 3 – 0, restricted patients – 6).
- In the period 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025, all MAPPA key performance indicators were met 100%. Case file and MAPPA meeting audits supported the effective operation of MAPPA.
- In the same period, the number of registered sex offenders returned to custody for breaching their statutory conditions remains very low at 2.1% (8 offenders).
- No Significant Case Reviews were identified; 1 Initial Case Review was completed in March 2024 – key learning was identified and an action plan implemented and completed.
- A MAPPA Risk Register was agreed by HIMSOG and revised in June 2025.
- The MAPPA office has relocated from Police Scotland's regional headquarters to local authority accommodation. This establishes independence and a localised hub for representatives of the Responsible Authorities to connect, share information and address ongoing concerns.

Impact

- The appointment of an independent chair recognised the significant competing demands on the Responsible Authorities. Strategic direction and improvement have been agreed and key strategic and operational risks identified.
- The separation of strategic and operational business has strengthened the oversight and delivery of MAPPA.
- The performance and quality assurance of MAPPA provides confidence that offenders are being effectively managed and held to account for their actions and that communities are being kept safe.
- The new SHPO and SRO strengthen the management of risk as they have a lower risk threshold than the previous orders, allowing both orders to be used to manage risk against adults and vulnerable adults abroad, as well as children.
- Training has improved the confidence of MAPPA chairs and provided insight into assessing the risk of contact and non-contact offenders – in very broad terms, approximately 10–13% of non-contact offenders will either be both or will move from non-contact to contact offending. This has implications for risk management and deploying scarce resources.

Next Steps

- The focus in 2025/26 will be the implementation of the new Improvement Strategy. This will, for example, focus on the provision of forensic psychology, raising awareness of MAPPA and developing a more advanced Performance and Quality Assurance Framework to evidence the fundamental purpose of MAPPA in contributing to public protection and managing the risk of serious harm.
- Reviewing the HIMOG – it was agreed to undertake a thorough review 12 months after it was established.
- Considering the implications and planning for the likely inclusion of Registered Terrorism Offenders (RTOs) into MAPPA in 2027.
- Continuing to monitor the development and implications for the Responsible Authorities of the Multi-Agency Public Protection System (MAPPS) which will replace ViSOR (Violent and Sex Offender Register) c. 2027.
- A review of the Level 1 process for managing offenders subject to MAPPA – a revised, more streamlined process is being trialled in 2025 which it is hoped will lead to a more efficient process.
- Completion and submission of the Annual Report 2024/25 to Scottish Government in Autumn 2025.
- The MAPPA National Strategic Group will further consider the short-life working group's findings suggesting improvement in the way Significant Case Reviews (SCRs) are conducted. The findings cover: identification and

selection of lead reviewers, minimum baseline standards for what is included in a SCR, self-evaluation and implementation of recommendations and revision of the MAPPA National Guidance 2022 SCR Chapter.

- The Scottish Government's Electronic Monitoring (EM) Working Group (EMWG) published its recommendations in 2016. To date, only some of the recommendations have been implemented (e.g. EM bail). Currently, only radio frequency EM is available (typically, this means an offender is 'tagged' within their home for up to 12 hours/day). GPS tracking will shortly (likely early 2026) be trialled by Scottish Prison Service (SPS) for prisoners released subject to a Home Detention Curfew (HDC). This will enable SPS staff to include specific location monitoring as part of licence conditions. This trial will be evaluated by Scottish Government and inform the wider roll-out of GPS tracking which has significant potential to improve risk management of high-risk offenders. In addition, the EMWG recommended alcohol (sobriety) bracelets that detect alcohol use, and these will also be a useful tool in managing risk once available (no timescale).

The UK Crime and Policing Bill contains a number of legislative changes regarding the management of sex offenders, which will also apply to Scotland. The Bill is due to be introduced to the UK Parliament 2025 (date to be confirmed), although the coming into force date is not expected until towards the end of 2025 (date to be confirmed). The main provisions are:

1. Lowering the rank of authorisation for warrants – allows for an application for a warrant to search an RSO's home to be made by any Constable, once they have been authorised by an officer of Inspector rank or above.
2. Virtual notification - allows sex offenders to provide virtual notification to the police (other than initial notifications). Virtual notification can only take place once an invitation has been issued by a police officer.
3. Staying away from their residence for a period of 5 days or more – this requires RSOs to notify the police in advance if they intend to be absent from their home address for 5 days or more. The notification must be given no later than 12 hours in advance.
4. Advance notification of name change - this amendment provides that all RSOs must notify any new name to the police 7 days before using it or as far in advance as is reasonably practicable. If advance notification is not practicable, notification is required within 3 days of using the new name.
5. Restriction on applying for replacement identity documents in a new name – certain sex offenders will be

subject to a police notice which means that they cannot apply for official documents such as a passport or driving licence in a new name without first seeking authorisation from the police.

- 6.** Notice required if entering premises where children reside – RSOs convicted of child sex offences (to be defined) or those who in the police's view pose a risk of serious sexual harm to a particular child or children must give notice to the police if they are entering a premises where children reside.
- 7.** Police stations at which notifications may be given – this provision will enable the Chief Constable to update the list of police stations where RSOs can notify.

The MAPPA National Strategic Group will meet to consider the SLWG findings around suggested improvement in the way Significant Case Reviews are conducted within existing MAPPA guidance. The findings cover the broad topics of the following:

- Identification and selection of lead reviewers
- Minimum baseline standard for inclusion in all SCR reports
- Self-Evaluation and implementation of SCR
- Scottish Government (SG) MAPPA National Guidance 2022 SCR Chapter revisions.

Following the implementation of the Public Protection Accountability Assurance Framework (PPAAF) within NHS Highland in May 2024, a range of key areas of work were identified.

Specific to MAPPA was the decision to further enhance the Adult Support and Protection (ASP) capability and replace the interim MAPPA Health Lead with substantive appointments. The additions will comprise of 3 whole time equivalents, an ASP Lead and two ASP Advisors.

All three appointments will have MAPPA as part of their wider ASP remit providing sustainable cover although the prime responsibility for MAPPA policy and liaison will reside with the Lead. The recruitment for all three posts is underway with the appointment of the Lead role being complete by the end of August 2025.

Concurrently with this activity the Public Protection governance structure is under review including the internal reporting processes for MAPPA. The attendance at HIMOG and HIMSOG is also under review.

Other developments include the roll out of MAPPA notifications and safety alerts via the Medical Records Department (MRD) which has improved access for all staff. The notifications and alerts are also shared via Community Managers and Scottish Ambulance Service where required.

The MRD have also improved their targeted intelligence gathering of MAPPA nominals in support of the MAPPA reviews. The information is requested formally from within Medical Records and shared as appropriate with the MAPPA

review. The use of a dedicated team has greatly enhanced the turnaround and assures the security of information exchange and governance.

The provision of a forensic psychology service for MAPPA offenders in the Highland & Islands has been suspended. This is due to the pressures of funding from the MAPPA budget. MAPPA partners are actively engaged in discussions to identify a sustainable solution. The absence presents a significant gap, as this service is essential for delivering specialist risk assessments that inform both risk management plans and intervention strategies.

The NHS Highland Forensic Service continues to play a vital role in supporting the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) across the region. The team provides specialist input into the management of restricted patients and individuals who present a significant risk of sexual harm. Their work ensures robust risk assessment, therapeutic engagement, and ensuring safeguarding practices are in place. Working collaboratively with partner agencies—including Police Scotland, Social Work, and other statutory bodies—the team contributes to the development and delivery of coordinated care within comprehensive risk management plans. They are active participants in the HIMOG, and in addition are engaged in case discussions, contribute to the formulation of risk-reduction strategies, and share clinical insights to inform multi-agency decision-

making. Through this integrated and collaborative approach, the Highland Forensic Service helps uphold public protection while promoting recovery and rehabilitation for individuals within forensic care pathways.

There has been a continued pattern of unplanned relocations of RSOs into the Highland & Islands region from England and Wales. This includes individuals both subject to statutory supervision and those post-completion of supervision. This trend places significant pressure on local resources, raises risk management concerns, and generally necessitates a reactive rather than proactive response from local agencies.

The current housing crisis continues to impact the availability of accommodation for RSOs. This is particularly problematic upon release from custody, where limited housing options can contribute to:

- Difficulties in securing appropriate placements
- Clustering of offenders in specific areas, which may elevate community risk
- Strain on local resources and planning

The H&I MAPPA Strategic Group is prioritising the development of real-time oversight mechanisms for accommodation options and locations to improve planning, reduce clustering, and support effective risk management.

Recently, Scotland's prison population reached 8,228, placing it among the highest in Western Europe. This sustained increase is having a significant impact on the preparedness of prisoners for release, particularly those convicted of sexual and violent offences. Due to the strain on resources, the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) has made the decision to suspend certain intervention programmes. As a result, some long-term prisoners are being released without completing key rehabilitative programmes, including Moving Forward 2 Change (MF2C) and the Self-Change Programme (SCP).

While these programmes continue to operate, capacity limitations mean not all eligible individuals are able to participate prior to release. The early release of individuals without completion of essential interventions presents clear challenges for risk management in the community. It increases the burden on local services and may elevate the risk to public safety. Efforts to address this issue have been initiated at a national level, including:

- Emergency release measures to alleviate overcrowding.
- Establishment of the Independent Commission on Sentencing and Penal Policy by the Scottish Government in February 2025. The Commission is tasked with reviewing Scotland's current approach to sentencing and penal policy and will make recommendations by the end of 2025 aimed at creating a more effective, rehabilitative justice system that reduces crime and victimisation. The escalating prison population is a key driver behind these developments and will remain a central focus for MAPPA strategic planning. Continued engagement with national

partners and integration of the Commission's forthcoming recommendations will be essential to support safer reintegration and long-term public protection.

The increasing number of offenders subject to MAPPA is a growing concern both locally and nationally. At the end of this reporting year there were in the region of 8,000 RSOs being managed across Scotland—this represents a 27% increase over the past five years. This rise has necessitated enforced changes in the management of RSOs, including:

- Prioritisation of resources based on risk by Police Scotland
- Streamlining of processes and procedures to maintain public protection
- Pilot implementation of a revised Level 1 process to improve efficiency.

The upward trend is expected to continue, driven by:

- Court backlogs
- Improved reporting mechanisms
- Increased support for and the willingness of victims to come forward
- Historical sex offending
- Enhanced media attention.

In addition to rising numbers, the aging demographic and complexity of the prison population are placing further strain

on community-based resources. This is particularly acute in the meeting of significant care needs of offenders post-release and accommodating high-risk offenders who require care home provision—an area facing extreme difficulty due to risk and resource constraints.

Despite the increasing number of offenders subject to MAPPA, there has been only one modest increase in the MAPPA budget since its introduction in Scotland in 2007. This funding—allocated to local authority justice social work services via the Scottish Government's annual grant—has not kept pace with the growing demands on the system. This issue has been formally raised at the MAPPA National Strategic Group (NSG) and is acknowledged by all 10 MAPPA areas across Scotland. The funding shortfall affects not only statutory services but also third sector providers, whose budgets are under increasing pressure. The cumulative effect is a system where agencies are expected to “do more with less” with a potential risk to public safety if this remains unaddressed, including the ability to effectively protect victims and communities. While the issue is often framed diplomatically, the reality is that resource limitations are directly impacting service delivery. Without a corresponding increase in funding, the sustainability of MAPPA operations—and the safety outcomes they are designed to achieve—may be compromised.

Some Core Statistics

The following tables display the levels at which offenders across the Highlands & Islands have been managed during the reporting year:

Registerable Sexual Offenders (RSOs)	In custody	At Liberty	Total
a) The number of RSOs living in your Area on 31/03/25	102	279	381

Civil Order Applied For and Granted in relation to RSOs	Number
a) Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPOs) in force on 31/03/25	13
b) SOPOs imposed by courts between 01/04/24 and 31/03/25	0
c) Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (SHPOs) in force on 31/03/25	39
d) SHPOs imposed by courts between 01/04/24 and 31/03/25	7
e) Number of Sexual Offenders convicted of breaching SOPO/SHPO conditions between 01/04/24 and 31/03/25	1
f) Risk of Sexual Harm Orders (RSHOs) in force on 31/03/25	2
g) Sexual Risk Orders (SROs) in force on 31/03/25	0
h) Number of people convicted of breaches of RSHO/SRO between 01/04/24 and 31/03/25	1
i) Foreign Travel Orders imposed by the courts between 01/04/24 and 31/03/25	0
j) Notification Orders imposed by the courts between 01/04/24 and 31/03/25	1

Statistical Information	In custody	At Liberty	Total
a) Number of RSOs managed by MAPPA Category as at 31/03/25			
Level 1 – Routine Risk Management	81	274	355
Level 2 – Multi-agency Risk Management	13	5	18
Level 3 – MAPPP	7	0	7
b) Number of RSOs convicted of a further Group 1 or 2 crime			
MAPPA Level 1	14	18	32
MAPPA Level 2	1	1	2
MAPPA Level 3	0	0	0
c) Number of RSOs returned to custody for a breach of statutory conditions (including those returned to custody because of a conviction of Group 1 or 2 crime)			
	5	3	8
d) Number of indefinite sexual offenders reviewed under the terms of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Remedial) (Scotland) Order 2011 between 01/04/24 and 31/03/25			
	0	0	0
e) Number of notification continuation orders issued under the terms of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Remedial) (Scotland) Order 2011 between 01/04/24 and 31/03/25			
	0	0	0
f) Number of notifications made to the Jobcentre Plus under the terms of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Remedial) (Scotland) Order 2011 between 01/04/24 and 31/03/25			
	4	31	35
g) Number of restricted patients accessing the community as at 31/3/25			
	n/a	6	6

Delineation of RSOs by Age on 31/03/25		Number	%
18 to 21		8	2.10
22 to 25		28	7.35
26 – 30		36	9.45
31 to 40		104	27.30
41 to 50		57	14.95
51 to 60		67	17.59
61 to 70		45	11.81
Older than 70		36	9.45
Data not held		0	0.00
Total		381	100.00

Delineation of RSOs by Sex on 31/03/25		Number	%
Male		376	98.69
Female		4	1.05
Data Not Held		1	0.26
Total		381	100.00

**Delineation of RSOs by Ethnicity on
31/03/25**

	Number	%
White – Scottish	260	68.24
White – Other British	83	21.78
White – Irish	1	0.26
White – Polish	1	0.26
White – Other White Mixed Group	6	1.57
Mixed – Any Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	1	0.26
Asian – Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British	1	0.26
Other Ethnic Group – Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British	1	0.26
Not Known	7	1.86
Data Not Held	20	5.25
Total	381	100.00

**Managed under Statutory
Supervision and/or Notification
Requirements on 31/03/25**

	Number	%
RSOs on Statutory Supervision	97	25.46
RSOs Subject to Notification Requirements only	284	74.54
Total	381	100.00

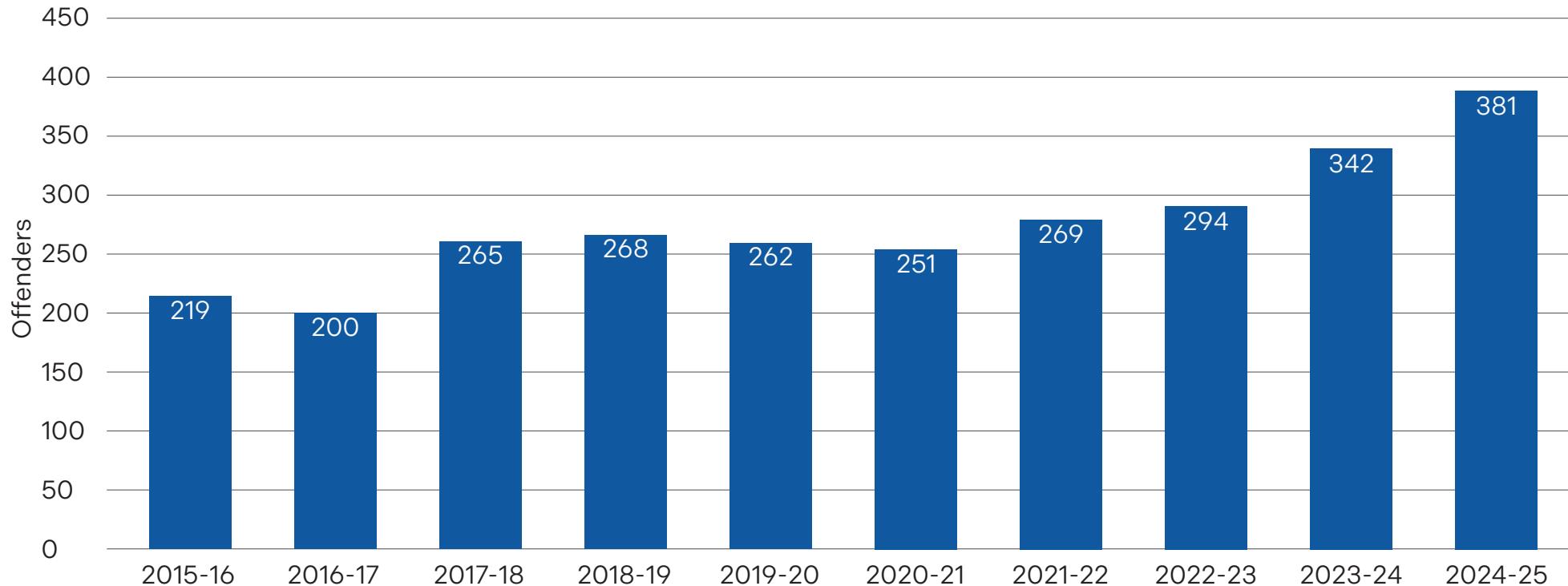


These statistics represent totals as of 31st March 2025 and/or within the reporting year and it should be noted that all MAPPA offenders are assessed and reviewed regularly throughout the year in relation to their potential risk to cause serious harm to others. One of the principles of MAPPA is that offenders are managed commensurate to the risk they pose. This is a dynamic environment where effective risk assessment and information sharing is vital.

- The number of registered sex offenders per 100,000 population still remains within a comparative range across Scotland.
- The proactive identification of internet offenders by authorities ranging from online child sexual exploitation, possession of and distribution of indecent images of children, online grooming and live streaming has predominately led to a successive year on year increase in RSOs both locally and nationally.
- The Highlands & Islands have an ageing MAPPA offender demographic and are alive to the impacts this may have on adult care services.
- Further statistics and national information on the subject of MAPPA can be found on the Scottish Government:

www.bit.ly/mappa-national-overview-report

SONR Trend Chart



The above chart shows the year-on-year increase in offenders subject to sex offender notification registration within the Highlands & Islands.

Explanations of terms used

Breach of licence: Offenders released into the community following a period of imprisonment for a registerable sexual offence will be subject to a licence with conditions (under Justice Services supervision). If these conditions are not complied with, breach action will be taken and the offender may be recalled to prison. It perhaps would be a mistake to see the number of breaches as "failed cases" – rather they reflect decisive action taken to protect the public when offenders are not complying with the requirements of their licence.

Foreign Travel Orders: Prevent offenders with convictions for sexual offences against children from travelling abroad where it is necessary to do so to protect children from the risk of sexual harm.

Formal Disclosure: If a decision is made to formally disclose, then a letter of disclosure will be drafted on behalf of the Divisional Commander of the relevant Police Division. This letter should be served by the police personally on the person to whom the disclosure is to be made. The disclosure should be limited to the information necessary to minimise the risk. Officers serving this letter should ensure that they do not disclose any further information other than what is stipulated in the letter. Although no further information should be disclosed, advice and guidance on how the individual should respond to the information in order to protect themselves or others and in particular whether any further action is

undertaken. This procedure will only be advanced as a last resort and will be completed in consultation with partner agencies. There are various other forms of disclosure available in the management of offenders.

MARAC: Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a local, multi-agency victim focused meeting where information is shared on the highest risk cases of domestic violence and abuse between different statutory and voluntary sector agencies.

Missing Offenders: An RSO should be considered as missing when the current whereabouts of the offender is unknown and police enquiries to establish their whereabouts have been unsuccessful and as a result the risk management process may not be achievable and there exists a requirement to trace the individual and address the risk he/she may pose and establish if further offences have been committed. Those offenders who have left the territorial jurisdiction of the United Kingdom and whose location abroad is known are not considered as missing. The requirement to comply with the registration process is suspended whilst offenders are out with the UK. Where appropriate, consideration should be given to establishing whether the offender has committed an offence relative to notification of his/her foreign travel. In this situation if an arrest warrant is issued relative to such an offence the offender should be regarded as Wanted.

Notification Order: Requires sexual offenders who have been convicted overseas to register with police, in order to protect the public in the UK from the risks that they pose. Police may apply to the court for the order in relation to offenders in or intending to come to the UK.

Order of Lifelong Restriction (OLR): Is a sentence introduced in Scotland in June 2006. The OLR provides for the lifelong supervision of high risk violent and sexual offenders and allows for a greater degree of intensive supervision to manage the risk that those individuals pose.

Registered Sexual Offenders (RSOs): Those who are required to notify the police of their name, address and other personal details and notify any changes subsequently. Failure to comply with the notification requirements is a criminal offence which can carry a term of imprisonment.

Restricted Patient: This is an offender defined under the Management of Offenders etc. (Scotland) Act 2005 Section 10, 11 (a-d). www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/14/contents

Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (SHPO): Sexual Harm prevention orders replaced sexual offences prevention orders (SOPOs) in March 2023. Under an SHPO, offenders convicted of a sexual crime can be required to follow certain rules and can be prohibited from doing anything specified in the order. These orders are imposed to protect the public, or a particular person, and apply for a minimum of five years. Under an order an offender might, for example, be prohibited from visiting a place which is likely to have children, or their internet activity might be restricted in some way. Breaching

an order without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence.

Wanted Offenders: Where it is known that an offender is actively avoiding police in response to police enquiries to trace that individual relative to offences they may have committed, or in relation to other matters for which it is required that they be interviewed. This may include those occasions where an offender is the subject of an arrest warrant.

Notes



A wide-angle photograph of a sunset over a calm sea. The sky is a gradient from deep blue at the top to warm orange and yellow near the horizon. The sun is a small, bright orange dot on the horizon line. The ocean is dark blue-grey, with gentle ripples. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic.

Thank You



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