

Agenda Item	14.
Report No	CPPB/25/26



Highland
Community
Planning
Partnership

Com-pàirteachas
Dealbhadh
Coimhearsnachd

na Gàidhealtachd

Highland Community Planning Partnership Board – 11 September 2026

Title of report – Highland Community Justice Partnership Annual Return 2025 - 2026

Report by – James Maybee (HCJP Independent Chair), Kevin Flett (HCJP Manager)

Report Classification (tick as appropriate):

Strategic Priority: ☒ People ☐ Place ☐ Prosperity

Cross-Cutting Theme (tick all that apply):

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Connecting People and Places | ☒ Employment / Employability |
| ☒ Whole Family and Community-Based Approaches | ☒ Housing |
| ☐ Shared Approaches to Commissioning | ☐ Community Wealth Building |
| ☒ Aligning Partnership Practices | |

Report Purpose (tick as appropriate):

☒ For Noting ☒ For Approval ☐ For Decision ☐ For Comment

Recommendation(s)

The Board is asked to:

- i) Note the contents of the Annual Return, and
- ii) Approve its submission to Community Justice Scotland

Executive Summary

The Annual Return 2025 - 2026 has been completed by the Highland Community Justice Partnership (HCJP) using the template prepared by Community Justice Scotland (CJS). The purpose of the return is two-fold. First to ensure that the HCJP complies with local reporting requirements as set out in Section 23 of the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 and second, to support CJS in developing the evidence base for local community justice activity and progress across Scotland within the reporting year, and to comply with their duties set out in the Act, Sections 26-30.

The return does not contain any performance information, which will be included in the Annual Report, due for publication in December 2026.

The Board are asked to note the contents of the return and approve its submission to Community Justice Scotland following approval by the HCJP.

1.	Annual Return Structure
1.1	The annual return is structured around the four aims of the National Strategy, with a narrative report on each of the thirteen associated priority actions, describing partnership activities and the impact of those activities. Aim 1 (Optimise the use of diversion and intervention at the earliest opportunity) focusses on two key areas of activity. i. <i>Diversion from Prosecution (DfP)</i>, which allows prosecutors to refer individuals to support or treatment to address underlying causes of offending. In practice this will normally involve Procurators Fiscal referring an accused person to Justice Social Work (JSW), if they believe this is in the public interest. ii. The <i>provision of person-centred care within police custody</i>, which is well developed in Highland. Nationally, the Custody Link Worker Project is considered to be an exemplar for arrest referral.
1.2	Aim 2 (Ensure that robust ... community interventions and public protection arrangements are consistently available) covers four areas. i. The <i>use of bail as an alternative to remand</i> has been identified as a challenging area in Highland. Working towards a clearer understanding of the use of bail in Highland and identifying solutions has been agreed as a priority for the HCJP and the Diversions Group in the coming year, seeking to understand local processes and weaknesses and where possible drawing on learning from elsewhere. ii. There is continuing frustration that <i>Electronic Monitoring</i> is not utilised to its fullest effect in Highland. Knowing that EM technologies are available including the use of GPS systems and remote alcohol monitoring, adds to the sense that there could be significant benefit across Highland if use of EM was expanded through the extending of the national EM contract. iii. In Highland a wide range of options is consistently offered for <i>community sentencing</i>, delivered by JSW, at times in partnership with third sector providers. Over the year JSW have continued to fund a Senior Development Officer (SDO) to raise awareness of community sentencing and to develop stronger links with third sector and community organisations, which creates more opportunities for collaborative approaches. iv. HCJP agreed that time would be given to explore potential options for delivering <i>Restorative Justice</i> in Highland, believing that such a provision could bring benefit to those who had been harmed by crime, as well as those who had caused harm. A Restorative Justice event was planned and delivered in September 2025 in partnership with UHI Inverness, bringing together national and local speakers. Collaborative work continues to develop a potential Highland model, and it is anticipated that delivery will commence in January 2027.

1.3	Aim 3 (Ensure that services are available and accessible to address the needs of those accused or convicted of an offence) addresses four further areas of activity. i. HMP Inverness seeks to take a coordinated approach to addressing the needs of those preparing for liberation through the use of the Highland Community Integration Plan. There are challenges in ensuring <i>continuity of health care</i> because of the challenge of accessing GP services. The revised guidance on GP registration was welcome, but it was envisaged that challenges may continue around access to rural community health services. There are also challenges around meeting the needs of those transferring to community based drug and alcohol treatment services, and steps were taken with partners to strengthen collaboration. ii. As part of an HCJP self-evaluation exercise in February, <i>housing</i> was identified as a challenging aspect of the transition process, and a number of steps were agreed to address this, including ensuring that both housing providers and housing support providers are fully included in the pre-liberation processes. iii. There have always been positive links with Skills Development Scotland (SDS), who continue to contribute to joint working at strategic and operational levels. The Transitions and Communities Group has offered a productive space in which a range of partners with a focus on <i>employment and employability</i> have come together, developing stronger ties between prison based activities and those in the community, and between statutory, private and third sectors. iv. One of the most impactful developments over the year was the introduction of Upside, the National <i>Voluntary Throughcare</i> service, commissioned by CJS on behalf of the Scottish Government. SACRO coordinates the service nationally, which is a partnership between a number of third sector organisations. In Highland (which is part of the North 'Pod') the service is delivered by Turning Point Scotland, with team members based both in the prison and in the community.
1.4	Aim 4 (Strengthen leadership, engagement and partnership working) considers three broad areas of work. i. The <i>leadership</i> of the HCJP and delivery of improvement have been strengthened through the restructuring of the HCJP to create a Strategic Group and two delivery groups. This has strengthened strategic planning, reporting and accountability, as well as better supporting a clearer partnership approach to the delivery of justice services. This clarity will also support the Partnership in reviewing the Highland Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (HCJOIP). ii. Identified gaps in our <i>engagement</i> with both victims (survivors) of crime and with those who have lived experience of the justice system have begun to be addressed. This included engagement with colleagues from Inverness Women's Aid, and from Victim Support Scotland as well as facilitating a meeting between JSW managers and VSS team members to

	share insights and perspectives around such things as community sentencing, diversion from prosecution and victims' experiences of the court system. Work to develop engagement with those who have lived experience of the justice system began in January, supported by JSW, and it is envisaged that 'lived experience' engagement structures will be fully in place from January 2027. iii. In addressing <i>stigma and improving public understanding</i> of and confidence in community justice, there are two initiatives to note from the year. The SDO has continued to engage with partners and with the wider public through extensive use of social media and ongoing involvement with community groups, local development trusts and others. The second initiative has been undertaken by colleagues in JSW who planned and delivered several open days. The first was in Wick in September, followed by others across Highland. Though significant work has been done over the year to promote community justice, public awareness and understanding is often shaped by negative stereotypes, reinforced by an unsympathetic media, and leaves much work still to be done.
2.	Risks and Mitigations
2.1	Across all the justice system there are operational risks which are managed on a daily basis, and partners are well placed individually and through shared systems and approaches to manage those risks. However there are two areas of significant risk testing the resilience of justice services at this time. i. On 7 August the prison population in Scotland hit 8,525 which includes an acute remand population of around 30%. This places SPS in a '<i>negative space</i>' position, resulting in a real and imminent risk to people within their care and the staff who support them. This risk is likely to manifest as increased violence, substance misuse, mental health needs and a lack of ability to meet the legislative obligations of those in custody. To help mitigate this risk, the HCJP continues to promote a community-first approach, with research evidence that this is more effective than prison, particularly for short-term prisoners. ii. Whilst it is acknowledged that all services face financial risks, the imminence of this risk is almost always greater for Third Sector partners. In the course of the reporting year a number of third sector partners have come close to the point of closure, and into the future there is a real risk that some services may cease. The ongoing financial challenge faced by the Custody Link Worker Project is a clear example. To mitigate, The HCJP have established a development group and commissioned an external evaluation of the service to inform future planning.
3.	Resource Implications
3.1	None

Impact Assessment

The impacts of the work of the HCJP are viewed to be generally positive, namely:

- Better health and social outcomes for those on justice pathways
- Improved, evidence led partnership working, focused on reducing offending and reoffending
- Greater accountability of justice partners in delivering on the actions and outcomes of the National Strategy and local priorities
- Enhanced understanding of community justice across wider Highland communities

In the future revision of the HCJOIP, it is anticipated that a full Impact Assessment will be required, particularly around the impact of developments on those who access services and the impact on equality and human rights for residents of Highland.

Author(s): James Maybee (HCJP Independent Chair), Kevin Flett (HCJP Manager)

Date: 26 August 2026

Appendices:

Appendix 1

Annual Return, Highland Community Justice Partnership 2025 - 2026

Appendix 1

Community Justice Scotland **Ceartas Coimhearsnachd Alba**

**Community justice outcome activity across Scotland:
Local area annual return template
Reporting year April 2025 – March 2026**

April 2026



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

1. Background

This reporting template has been developed in discussion with community justice representatives from local areas. This template is designed to enable local areas to gather information and report on progress towards the community justice outcomes.

2. Statement of Assurance and Data Usage

The information submitted to CJS using this template will be used by CJS in its role to monitor, promote and support improvement in, and keep the Scottish Ministers informed about, performance in the provision of community justice.

In line with provisions in the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), CJS will use appropriate data to ensure that there is continuous reporting, development and progress towards the national outcomes. By providing data to CJS you are consenting to its use by CJS as indicated. Community Justice Partnerships should be aware that any information held by CJS is subject to statutory Freedom of Information obligations.

Completion of the template can help local partnerships to fulfil their requirements under s23 (1b) of the Act by using the developed content to inform the production of the publicly facing summary statement of annual progress.

3. General principles of the template

The template and guidance have been developed using the following principles:

- Support CJS in developing the evidence base for local community justice activity and progress across Scotland within the reporting year
- Support CJS to comply with their duties set out in the Act, Sections 26-30
- Support local partners to comply with their local reporting requirements set out in section 23 of the Act.



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

4. How to fill in the template

The return should be completed and consulted on with partners involved in community justice in your local area. In line with the Act this includes statutory partners, third sector bodies involved in community justice in the area, and such community bodies or other persons as partners consider appropriate. CJS expects that completion of this template will be a collaborative effort.

This template incorporates guidance to support completion, with the text *(in blue)* providing reflective prompts to consider when developing your answer, which can be deleted and replaced with your response. These should be considered together through the development of your answer rather than addressed individually.

There is no expectation that areas will return substantial numerical data. It is likely that local areas will not have the national data indicators set out by the Community Justice Performance Framework at the time they are completing this template. **It is not anticipated that CJS will routinely use or refer to local level national indicator data in the context of the national outcome activity annual report.** If in developing the national report it becomes apparent that local-level data may support further analysis of particular outcomes, for example in identifying potential recommendations, exploring data outliers, or areas for further development, we expect this to be taken forward in discussion with the relevant local areas and partners.

Instead, we want partners to focus on the qualitative evidence drawn from their activity and insights about impact. Relevant local supporting evidence from the [CJS improvement tool](#) that will supplement the national indicator data has been specified under each national outcome in this template. We would encourage partners to develop the response to this template in conversation with each other and view it as an opportunity to reflect on your strengths and needs in partnership.

Where the template asks for evidence, a written response will suffice and there is no expectation that you send additional supporting documentation – if there are any aspects CJS is unclear on, it will be our responsibility to request clarification where necessary.

If any response or evidence requires details about people with lived experience (e.g. evidence in respect of someone's life story) please DO NOT include any identifiable personal or sensitive information (as outlined in Schedules 2 & 3 of the Data Protection Act 1998) as CJS does not require such information. If this is unavoidable then please ensure that the data is fully anonymised.

If you have any queries about completing the template, then please email CJSImprovement@communityjustice.scot.



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

1. Community Justice Partnership / Group Details

Name of local authority area/s	Highland
Name and contact details of the partnership Chair	Name: James Maybee Email: CJPChair@highlandtsi.org.uk Telephone: 01349 864289
Contact for queries about this report	Name: Kevin Flett Email: kevin.flett@highlandtsi.org.uk Telephone: 07454983516

2. Template Sign-off from Community Justice Partnership / Group Chair

I can confirm that this is an accurate record of the activity of the Highland Community Justice Partnership over this reporting period, and confirm that it has been ratified by the partnership members, and the wider Highland Community Planning Partnership Board.

Date: XX September 2026

Name: James Maybee



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

3. Governance Arrangements

Last year, we asked partnerships to describe their governance structure for community justice arrangements and include links to wider community planning. Please describe any substantive changes since your previous answer.

Governance

Revised structures outlined last year are now in place, with the completion of the reconfiguration of our governance and partnership arrangements. The Highland Community Planning Partnership (HCPP) Board provides oversight and scrutiny of partnership activities.

The year 2025 - 2026 has been a period of consolidation for Highland Community Justice Partnership (HCJP) as our new structures bedded in. There was stable leadership (following significant change in the previous year) which underpinned a commitment to improvement both strategically and in delivery by partners. The restructuring of the HCJP was formalised with revised Terms of Reference, agreed by the HCPP Board. These terms define our place within wider CPP structures and processes, with clarity around lines of accountability, supporting more active participation in local planning and development processes.

It is anticipated that this local alignment will support the HCJP in the short to medium term as it reviews the Highland Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan, ensuring that national priorities are better translated into the Highland context, but also reflect local priorities within this wider context.

The HCJP Independent Chair attends and reports to the Highland CPP Board, providing assurance on the implementation of the Highland CJOIP. Functionally, the HCJP continues to be hosted by the Highland Third Sector Interface, which supports the HCJP staff and independent chair in fulfilling their responsibilities.

4. The year overall

This section should be used to reflect some of the a) challenges/negative implications and b) opportunities/positive implications from the reporting year on the community justice partnership. This can include impact on the improvement activity, partner collaboration, delivery of services, or other as relevant.

Challenges / Negatives

The challenges faced within the Highland setting remain largely unchanged from year to year in terms of geography and rurality. These features can exacerbate the challenges that are faced by partnerships across the country.

Recruitment

For example, although Upside has established its presence in Highland, there were challenges faced in the early weeks in recruiting to the Highland-based posts. In



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

general, the further delivery gets away from the centre (in Inverness), the more difficult it can be to recruit and support staff. It is testimony to the tenacity and creativity of statutory and third sector partners that services are sustained across Highland.

Funding

Issues of funding are not unique to Highland, and impact both statutory and third sector partners. There have been uncertainties over changes in funding formulae, and a number of third sector providers have been taken to the brink of instigating redundancy processes in the course of the year. National providers with a locus in the central belt can often underestimate the additional resource required to deliver in sparsely populated areas where it is impossible to engage with the volumes which are possible in more urban settings. A diminution of Highland services can be a tempting course of action when rural delivery appears to be less 'productive'. It is to be noted that the recognition of these factors when commissioning the National Voluntary Throughcare service was welcomed.

Positives / Opportunities

Participation

If attendance at meetings of the partnership is the only barometer to gauge participation, then the results would be mixed. However, we have sought to take a broader view of participation, with a commitment to flexibility which recognises the challenges that partners can face in attending formal meetings. Effort has been made to engage with partners when opportunities arise, and where possible to create opportunities for participation. For example, the HCJP Independent Chair attends the quarterly Court Advisory Group with the specific intention of ensuring links between the judiciary, other court-based partners and the HCJP.

There are two examples of participation in the partnership broadening.

The first has been around the development of a vision for Restorative Justice in Highland. The working group established to explore options and possible approaches drew in partners from across the spectrum. Following the RJ event in September (refer to Priority Action Six below) this interest continued to expand, and conversations opened up with colleagues from the PDSO, NHS Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol services and the Judiciary, as well as wider participation from Police Scotland, Justice Social Work (JSW) and the third sector.

The second example is the consolidation of attendance at the main groups of the Partnership. The combined attendance at the two delivery groups and the Strategic Group is significantly greater than previously. Most notable is our Transitions and Communities Delivery Group, in particular participation around employability and employment, with representation and input from statutory and third sectors, education providers and a number of private sector businesses.



Community Justice Outcome Activity Across Scotland Local Area Annual Return Template

Priority Action One

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

Nationally determined outcome:

More people successfully complete diversion from prosecution¹

Local Evidence

- Mechanisms are in place to understand the views of people undertaking diversion from prosecution and are used to support improvement.
- Mechanisms are in place to understand the views of people supporting the delivery of diversion from prosecution and are used to support improvement.

5. What activity has taken place to increase successful completion of diversion? What impact has there been as a result?

In developing your answer to this question, you should engage with the relevant local partners involved in the planning, development, delivery and monitoring of activity. We would encourage you to reflect on engagement and collaborative activity rather than solely single service delivery.

For this Priority Action, you may wish to consider involvement from the following partners and stakeholders:

- *Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)*
- *Police Scotland*
- *Justice Social Work*
- *Third Sector*
- *Health*
- *Skills Development Scotland*
- *Scottish Fire and Rescue Service*
- *Any other partners as relevant*

Activity

¹ National Indicator:

Number of diversion from prosecution:

- assessments undertaken
- cases commenced
- cases successfully completed



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In spite of the challenges, the trend data indicates continuing improvement in the assessment, commencement and completion of DfP in Highland.

Across Highland the various local JSW teams continue to undertake diversion suitability reports and prepare individualised programmes which may include elements such as Decider Skills, SMART or other community-based interventions.

Locally, DfP involves a range of professionals in the process. For young people, assessment is normally undertaken by the Youth Action Team and involves the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA). The Diversions and Interventions Delivery Group identified the implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024, as presenting challenges which will need to be addressed particularly around the impact at the interface of Youth Action and JSW activities, and collaborative work is ongoing in this respect. SCRA is also involved in this discussion in terms of the potential impact on the Children's Hearings system. Picked up under 'care in police custody' below is the challenge of young people (16-17 year olds) within the justice system, especially within a vast rural area.

Over the year, DfP was one area of focus for the Diversions and Interventions Delivery Group. Amongst the challenges addressed by the group have been:

- The length of time for diversions to come through to JSW.
- The suitability of referrals (there is evidence that diversion is more effective for young people and for those with less offending history).
- The need for clarification as to how central marking of cases impacts on the type of referral made for assessment.

The group has also considered the use of alternatives to prosecution in accordance with the Lord Advocate's guidance by Police.

It is also helpful to note that HCJP partners are mindful of the negative perceptions that the use of DfP can engender amongst victims and survivors of crime and the reality of their experiences of the justice system. Over the year JSW colleagues met with colleagues from Victim Support Scotland (VSS) to discuss the use of diversions and of community sentencing more generally in order to mutually enhance understanding.

Impact

The development of the Diversions and Interventions Group has provided a forum for discussion to take place between partners. There are still real challenges in bringing partners together, but clear benefit in terms of shared understanding and appreciation of other perspectives. In particular the conversations with Victims organisations were challenging, but helpful in reminding colleagues, within the statutory sector in particular of the impact that their decisions have on those impacted by crime.

Whilst partners are broadly agreed that continued development of DfP is positive, there are challenges in the suitability of cases being considered, such as sexual offending and domestic abuse, and especially for individuals with a longstanding



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involvement with the justice system, which can include a history of non-engagement with services or preparation of reports for individuals already sentenced to Community Payback Orders or even custodial sentences as well as individuals with significant offending histories. It is hoped that the publication of new DfP national guidance in 2026 – 2027 will provide some clarity.

Police comment?

JSW comment?

Fiscal comment?

Priority Action Two

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

Nationally determined outcome:

More people in police custody receive support to address their needs²

Local Evidence:

- There is an effective relationship between community justice partners, Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs) and police custody centre for local population.
- Referral pathways and support are in place from police custody centre for local population

6. What activity has taken place to support people in police custody to access support? What impact has there been as a result?

In developing your answer to this question, you should engage with the relevant local partners involved in the planning, development, delivery and monitoring of activity. We would encourage you to reflect on engagement and collaborative activity rather than solely single service delivery.

For this Priority Action, you may wish to consider involvement from the following partners and stakeholders:

- *Police Scotland*
- *Local Authority*
- *Justice Social Work*

² National Indicator:

- Number of referrals from custody centres



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- *Third Sector*
- *Health*
- *Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service*
- *Any other partners as relevant*

Activity

The provision of person-centred care within police custody is well developed in Highland. Whilst it is understood that data collection processes are still in development, in 2024 - 2025, the 121 referrals made from police custody settings across Highland for support for individuals, amounted to 12% of all such referrals across Scotland.

Within the custody suite at Burnett Road in Inverness, there is effective partnership working between Police custody staff, the NHS custody nursing team and the third-sector Custody Link Worker project (CLink).

This interaction between partners offers an opportunity to begin addressing issues such as drug and alcohol use, mental health, physical health, housing and homelessness, finance and poverty (including food poverty) and family circumstances (including the needs of children and others being cared for).

Police Scotland invested in upgrading the facilities in the custody suite in 2024 - 2025. The upgrade work caused some disruption during the year, but the benefits of the improvements are now being felt.

NHS Highland reviewed their provision within the custody setting and introduced changes in structure and personnel with the service now delivered by advanced nurse practitioners. The review included service delivery in Wick, where the context requires a different model based on the use of a trigger checklist and screening tool.

Another challenge raised over the year was the impact of custody on young people (16-17 year olds), especially within more remote settings. There were concerns over the delay in cases being dealt with by courts, which coupled with issues of transport and supervision of vulnerable young people in custody, places great strain on the young people themselves, and the professionals tasked with supporting and supervising them. The numbers are low (averaging an estimated six young people a year) but the impact is severe. Whilst the National Strategy does not focus on youth justice there has been a commitment to work collaboratively amongst partners, especially regarding the needs of 16-17 year olds in the context of the implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024.

CLink continued to support individuals throughout the year, often addressing issues which are complex and multi-layered. A workshop was held in April 2025 to review CLink referral criteria and the operational boundaries of the project within the wider context of partnership working in the custody setting. This reaffirmed the existing operational criteria, though with an openness to make changes in the light of legislative developments (e.g. including working with 16-17 year olds). The CLink



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manager has also contributed to the national initiative by Police Scotland to promote and develop arrest referral services across the country.

A perennial challenge for the project has been to secure funding to continue its work. Resource has been found on an ad hoc year to year basis, primarily from JSW budgets, as well as from the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP). The situation became critical in January 2026, where preliminary steps were taken to run-down the project, however funding was once again secured, but with the expectation that a review and evaluation process be undertaken to underpin future planning and ongoing funding.

This review process was commenced in April 2026, and will be reported in next year's return.

The HADP fund a Harm Prevention Officer post, the aim of which is 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. Whilst primarily the post supports delivery of HADP outcomes, there is additional benefit from having an officer dedicated to reaching out to vulnerable individuals in contact with the justice system, many of whom will not have engaged positively in the past. This has included support for those who are vulnerable due to being cuckooed by County Lines groups. Taking a proactive, outreach approach presents opportunities for signposting to support services and for taking steps to reduce risk to individuals and others.

Impact

During the year CLink has worked with 154 individuals (68 female, 86 male), with 91 cases having been successfully completed (addressing individuals' priorities which often include drugs and alcohol, mental health, housing and financial issues). In their annual report, the service has reported progress towards:

- Reducing the instances that someone comes into custody, including reducing the chances that the pattern of behaviour that could become escalated and lead to eventual custodial sentencing is reduced.
- Increasing the chances that someone is able to make changes to their life circumstances that they feel will make a positive change in their life chances and choices i.e. reducing or stopping the use of drugs or alcohol.
- Reducing the chaos or crisis which led to the individual coming into custody from occurring again and to support them to seek ways of protecting themselves and reducing chances of possible harm in the future i.e. suicidal idea on, overdosing etc.

The partnership approach contributes to the ongoing growth in mutual trust, understanding and respect. Police colleagues report the positive effects within the wider custody setting as well as perceived improvement in the experience of custody for individuals following their arrest, which improves practice and informs decision making. Nationally, CLink is considered to be an exemplar for arrest referral and it is hoped will inform a strategy to develop a national approach.



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Police comment?

CLink comment?

Alcohol & Drug services / Health comment?

Priority Action Three

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

Nationally determined outcome:

More people are assessed for and successfully complete bail supervision³

Local Evidence

- Mechanisms are in place to support a high quality bail assessment.
- Referral pathways are in place that support identified needs of people on bail supervision.

7. What activity has taken place to increase the use of bail, and support people to access services to address needs while on bail? What impact has there been as a result?

In developing your answer to this question, you should engage with the relevant local partners involved in the planning, development, delivery and monitoring of activity. We would encourage you to reflect on engagement and collaborative activity rather than solely single service delivery.

For this Priority Action, you may wish to consider involvement from the following partners and stakeholders:

- *Defence Agents*
- *Police Scotland*
- *Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service*
- *Third Sector*
- *Justice Social Work*
- *Crown Office and Procurators Fiscal Service*
- *Judiciary*
- *Employability, Education and Training services*

³ National Indicator:

Number of:

- assessment reports for bail suitability
- bail supervision cases commenced
- bail supervision cases completed



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- *Housing*
- *Health*
- *Any other partners as relevant*

Activity

The use of bail as an alternative to remand has been identified as a challenging area in Highland. The trend data, particularly around completion, is very limited, but comparison with national figures indicates that whilst the number of assessment reports in Highland are comparable, the number of commencements is very low (6% of assessments in Highland become commencements compared to 26% nationally) and it follows that the number of completions compared to assessments is also low.

Within the Diversions and Interventions group there was a sense that partners didn't always understand each other's part in the processes and that there was a need for greater clarity and better communication. Conversations took place at a senior level between the Police and JSW, and one of the JSW managers has participated in the national group, and is able to feed in learning from elsewhere in Scotland.

Several steps were taken by members of the Diversions and Interventions Delivery Group to address concerns. These included:

- Improved communication between partners (JSW now have a named single point of contact within the Police).
- The Police reviewed their process for responding to breaches of bail, and communicating these to partners.
- JSW trialled a screening process of daily custody lists to reduce the risk of bail assessments being missed (however, it was concluded that this had no observable impact)

Working towards a clearer understanding of the use of bail in Highland and identifying solutions has been agreed as a priority for the HCJP and the Diversions Group in the coming year, seeking to understand local process and weaknesses and where possible drawing on learning from elsewhere.

Impact

Any improvement will not be evident until the statistics for the year are complete; however, there is recognition that this is an ongoing challenge requiring focused effort.

There were also some challenges identified around the reporting of data, for example in the previous year a discrepancy was identified in the reported number of completed Bail Supervision cases as a result of a technical anomaly which led to an incorrect figure being reported. This was subsequently corrected. JSWs recruitment of a new Information, Research and Quality Assurance Officer continues to bring



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significant improvement in this area and increased confidence in the robustness of reporting.

Whilst not in itself an impact or improvement, there is some reassurance in that the newly implemented processes and structures within the HCJP have supported better identification of issues, and offered a context in which these issues can be addressed.

Police comment?

JSW comment?

Fiscal comment?

PDSO comment?

Third Sector Comment?



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Priority Action Four

Strengthen options for safe and supported management in the community by increasing and widening the use of electronic monitoring technologies

No nationally determined outcome.

Progress in delivering this priority action should be evidenced with reference to any relevant local activity.

8. What activity has taken place in your area to increase the use electronic monitoring technologies? What impact has there been as a result?

This priority action was identified by Scottish Government as requiring nationally-driven actions as set out by the community justice strategy delivery plan. Given this is a developing area that does not have a national outcome set by the National Strategy and Performance Framework, there is no statutory obligation to report on progress and CJS do not expect many local areas to have driven priority activity in relation to progressing it as part of their community justice duties. However we recognise that some local areas, for example those involved with any pilot projects, may have information that is relevant and useful to share with CJS and others. If relevant, please use this question to inform us about any significant local activity to undertaken progress this area, and any associated impact.

There is continuing frustration that Electronic Monitoring is not utilised to its fullest effect in Highland. With the vast geography of Highland the careful use of EM could, for example, strengthen bail supervision by balancing the need for community safety with the benefits of individuals maintaining family/community connections, employment and housing. Knowing that EM technologies are available including the use of GPS systems and remote alcohol monitoring adds to the sense that there could be significant benefit across Highland if use of EM was expanded.

The HCJP welcomed Community Justice Scotland's issuing of an improvement notice to Scottish Government in this regard.

Partner comments?



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

Priority Action Five

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

Nationally determined outcome:

More people access services to support desistance and successfully complete community sentences⁴

Local Evidence

- Availability of local programmes to support desistance from domestic abuse and sexual offending.
- Availability of referral pathways to support the needs of local population on community disposals.
- Mechanisms are in place to understand the views of people with experience of community disposals to support improvement.
- Mechanisms are in place to understand the views of the community justice workforce with regard to supporting the needs of people subject to community disposals to support improvement.

9. What activity has taken place that will support people serving sentences in the community to desist from offending, address their needs, and help them successfully complete their sentence? What impact has there been as a result?

In developing your answer to this question, you should engage with the relevant local partners involved in the planning, development, delivery and monitoring of activity. We would encourage you to reflect on engagement and collaborative activity rather than solely single service delivery.

For this Priority Action, you may wish to consider involvement from the following partners and stakeholders:

- *Justice Social Work*
- *Police Scotland*
- *Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service*
- *Third Sector*
- *Health*
- *Any other partners as relevant*

⁴ National Indicator:

Percentage of:

- community payback orders successfully completed
- drug treatment and testing orders successfully completed



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

Activity

In Highland a wide range of options has been offered for community sentencing, delivered by JSW, at times in partnership with third sector partners. JSW delivers its services from offices across Highland, and endeavours to offer its full range of interventions in spite of the geographical challenges. This provision includes:

- Moving Forward 2 Change (MF2C)
- The Caledonian Project
- Drug Testing & Treatment Orders (DTTO) (and DTTO 2)
- SMART Recovery
- Decider Skills
- Community Payback Orders (CPOs)
- Management of Unpaid Work

In addition to DTTO, DTTO2 has also been offered in Highland, funded for a number of years by the HADP. It is offered to individuals aged 16 and older who may be facing their first drug offence, as well as to females with less established drug use. The intervention is aimed at people who are not dependent on substances, but are assessed as being motivated to address their drug use. An individualised treatment plan is overseen and reviewed by social work and healthcare staff, focussed on drug use, but also considering wider psycho-social issues such as housing, employment, health and relationships.

Mentioned previously was the engagement between JSW and VSS. This engagement was around the delivery of community sentences, but there was a particular focus on the Caledonian Project and the MF2C programme. These themes were also covered by HCJP team members in an engagement session with Inverness Women's Aid. These programmes were amongst the initiatives highlighted in the HCJP annual report 2024 - 2025, published in December 2025 as part of an effort to raise awareness and understanding of the work that is ongoing to address violence against women and domestic abuse.

The national indicator linked to the delivery and completion of CPOs, indicates consistently high levels of completion as well as a steady return to pre-covid levels of the number of CPOs ended.

It was confirmed in February 2026 that Highland will participate in a UK wide trial being undertaken by the University of Edinburgh's Department of Clinical Psychology of the Advance D intervention. The intervention targets men with substance use issues who perpetrate intimate partner abuse, using a blended delivery model of group sessions, individual goal setting, and coaching calls over 14 weeks.

In Highland, work will be done to reflect on how the programme can integrate within local justice structures, for example as a requirement for CPOs. Further conversations are to take place with sheriffs, and other key partners.



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

Impact

Over the year there has been ongoing work done by the CPO teams along with the Senior Development Officer (SDO) to raise awareness of community sentencing (for example through a steady stream of positive media reports), increase the opportunities to work in partnership with community groups (including with local development trusts). With the SDO role being based within the HTSI there are strong links with third sector and community organisations, which opens up doors and supports more collaborative approaches.

The increased need for community sentences can mean that Community Payback teams are stretched and it can be a challenge to find suitable placements and projects where clients can complete their orders. Some work has been done to explore improved moving on opportunities for individuals completing their orders. Partnership work with Balfour Beatty means that there are training and potentially employment opportunities emerging for people who have been involved with the justice system, however such opportunities remain limited.

The impact of DTTOs can vary, with the DTTO team highlighting a reduction in drug use and offending and improved health and wellbeing for most, if not all, clients. Seven DTTO2 orders were completed during the year, aimed at reducing drug use, addressing risk behaviours (including BBV testing and overdose awareness) and developing resilience through relapse prevention work, all of which is recovery focussed. A unique feature of the programme was the offer of a music group, as a safe space to address emotions through peer support. Feedback from one participant highlights the benefit of the programme:

"I don't think there was one key thing – it was just the combination of everything that every member of the team did for me, it felt like teamwork. Although I obviously had to comply with the order, it always felt that the focus was on what I needed for my recovery."

JSW comment?

Police comment?

SDO comment?

Third Sector Comment?

Priority Action Six

Ensure restorative justice is available across Scotland to all those who wish to access it by promoting and supporting the appropriate and safe provision of available services



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

No nationally determined outcome.

Progress in delivering this priority action should be evidenced with reference to any relevant local activity.

10. What activity has taken place to make restorative justice available to people and support them to access it, and what impact has there been as a result?

This priority action was identified by Scottish Government as requiring nationally-driven actions as set out by the community justice strategy delivery plan. Given this is a developing area that does not have a national outcome set by the National Strategy and Performance Framework, there is no statutory obligation to report on progress. CJS do not expect many local areas to have driven priority activity in relation to progressing it as part of their community justice duties. However we recognise that some local areas, for example those involved with RJ pilot projects or who commission their own RJ services locally, may have information that is relevant and useful to share with CJS and others. If relevant, please use this question to inform us about any significant local activity to undertaken progress this area, and any associated impact.

Activity & Impact

It was agreed by the CJP that as part of the remit of the SDO, time would be given to explore potential options for delivering RJ here, believing that such a provision could bring benefit to those who had been harmed by crime, as well as those who had caused harm.

A Working Group was formed in the Spring of 2025, bringing together partners with an interest in exploring models for the delivery of RJ across Highland, recognising the contextual variety that exists in Highland from large urban settings to small, and often closely knit communities, with unique relationships which can potentially support restorative practice or be a barrier to restorative practice.

Following a period of reflection and planning, a Restorative Justice event was planned and delivered in September 2025 in partnership with UHI Inverness (UHI). The event brought together national and local speakers as well as participation from Space2Face, a Shetland based RJ service. The focal point for the event was the delivery of a bespoke presentation by the highly acclaimed GEESE theatre company which had a profound impact on event participants.

The event generated a huge amount of interest across Highland. A number of follow-up meetings took place (for example with the PDSO, the Judiciary, SACRO and others) and the reference group expanded to include input from a JSW colleague with experience of delivering RJ in a prison setting, a Police Scotland colleague, newly relocated to Highland who had experience of running a county-wide RJ service in Gloucestershire and colleagues from the Youth Justice service. There was



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

also invaluable input and insight from Sheriff David Mackie from the sentencer's perspective, acknowledging that if RJ approaches were to be established, confidence and understanding throughout the justice system were vital.

Following the September event, a small cohort of local justice practitioners undertook the RJ training offered by CJS in Edinburgh.

Initially a model was explored which built on the experience of Space2Face, which had extended its work into Orkney. However, after discussions with colleagues in Orkney and Shetland it was agreed that we explore other models. A key driver in this change in focus was the lack of any identifiable financial resource, and hesitance to establish a 'service' which couldn't be sustained into the future.

Further development work has been undertaken by the RJ working group, and a fresh proposal to create a limited pilot project to test models and approaches which can effectively deliver RJ within the Highland context. This would seek to offer RJ opportunities within a range of settings (adult justice, youth justice, prison and community) which would be geographically spread, and delivered by trained practitioners drawn from a range of partners who offer the capacity for practitioners to absorb limited RJ focussed work into their workload. The pilot would be underpinned by an operating framework, with agreed processes, and coordinated by a third sector partner.

Collaborative work continues to develop the model, and it is anticipated that delivery will commence in January 2027.

Partners' comments?

SDO comments?

Priority Action Seven

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

Nationally determined outcome:



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

More people have access to, and continuity of, health and social care following release from a prison sentence⁵

Local Evidence

- Health and social care circumstances/care plans are reflected in collaborative plans for release.
- Referral pathways and information sharing arrangements are in place to support timely access to health and social care supports upon release.

11. What activity has taken place to support people to access health and social care support after release from prison, and what impact had there been as a result?

In developing your answer to this question, you should engage with the relevant local partners involved in the planning, development, delivery and monitoring of activity. We would encourage you to reflect on engagement and collaborative activity rather than solely single service delivery.

For this Priority Action, you may wish to consider involvement from the following partners and stakeholders:

- *Police Scotland*
- *Scottish Prison Service*
- *Health*
- *Skills Development Scotland*
- *Local authority*
- *Third Sector*
- *Any other partners as relevant*

Activity

Support for individuals who are preparing for transition back to their communities from HMP Inverness continues to be coordinated through use of the Highland Community Integration Plan (HCIP) which has been in use since December 2020. The multi-agency model seeks to be person-centred in offering those who wish to engage, 6-8 weeks of pre-liberation support and up to one year post liberation in the community through JSW and third sector partners.

The HCIP has continued to be delivered as a partnership involving Scottish Prison Service, NHS Highland, Housing and JSW (prison and community based) and third sector agencies offering community support. Use of the tool is focussed on those living in the inner Moray Firth area who have known drug and alcohol issues. It

⁵ National Indicator:

Number of transfers in drug/alcohol treatments from:

- custody to community



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

continues to be successful in terms of supporting those who are returning to the community from prison to assess their needs and tailor plans to support them on liberation.

An ongoing problem highlighted for people leaving prison with health and care needs was the difficulty in achieving continuity of care because of the challenge of accessing GP services. The change in the guidance on GP registration was welcome, but it was envisaged that challenges may continue around access to rural community health services.

Within the prison context, but with a bearing on community services, there were negotiations with NHS partners about commissioning care and support provision within the prison, including the delivery of end of life and palliative care, especially with regard to the expectations and understanding of external NHS services. This is in response to the changing age profile of the prison population. Linked with this is the challenge in the current facility of the lack of availability of accessible accommodation. Until the opening of HMP Highland the prevailing situation continues to be managed according to prioritisation based on assessment of need.

The S26 report provided for the HCJP indicated that the number of transfers from custody to community drug and alcohol treatments remained stable, albeit with a reduction of 1 for the year. Discussion prompted actions in the form of strengthening links between alcohol and drug services and Upside, arranging conversations with Crossreach about local pathways from Prison to Rehab (including exploring collaboration between Crossreach and prison during the weeks prior to liberation with those preparing for a residential place).

It was also reported that the recovery wing at Inverness prison was reestablished during the year, with a dedicated recovery officer and support from Scottish Recovery Consortium and Scottish Drugs Forum, underpinned by new training initiatives to upskill the staff team.

The introduction of Upside offered an opportunity to reset throughcare provision in Highland. This has helped to strengthen relationships across partners, including in relation to health and social care outcomes. For broader reflection, please refer to Priority Action Ten.

Impact

The formation of the Transitions and Communities Delivery Group has supported ongoing development in this area, by bringing partners together on a regular basis to discuss issues and identify solutions. A particular focus has been on improving liberation planning and processes. Use of the HCIP tool and the *My Compass* outcomes assessment tool has underpinned strong collaborative working which is person centred and seeks to provide a comprehensive network of support for those leaving prison.



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Identified weaknesses have been addressed (for example through the development of stronger links with housing partners and looking at the development of improved Prison to Rehab pathways). The input of Upside has enhanced existing processes and added much needed capacity to what is offered.

Unfortunately, our partner, Albyn Housing Society withdrew from the provision of FitHome technology, which previously had demonstrated positive benefits for those leaving prison with additional challenges. It is yet to be ascertained what the impact of this will be.

In common with other establishments, HMP Inverness has regularly exceeded capacity, at one point admissions reached 143 (against a capacity of 93). This presents real challenges for managing the provision of programmes of support within the prison (including support with mental health, alcohol and drug use and transition into community services on liberation). For individuals from Highland who are in prison this is exacerbated with the frequency of transfers elsewhere which makes service continuity and engagement difficult, as well as adding to the burdens and costs faced by families in visiting and maintaining contact with family members in prison.

SPS comments?

Upside comments?

JSW comments?

NHS comments?

Priority Action Eight

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

Nationally determined outcome:

More people have access to suitable accommodation following release from a prison sentence⁶

Local Evidence

- SPS admissions and liberations information is shared with relevant partners to support suitable accommodation planning.

⁶ National Indicator:

Number of:

- homelessness applications where prison was the property the main applicant became homeless from



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- Proportion of admissions where housing advice was provided.
- Percentage of people leaving prison who have been housed by the local authority and have maintained tenancy for more than 1 year

12. What activity has taken place to support people to access suitable accommodation following release from prison, and what impact had there been as a result?

In developing your answer to this question, you should engage with the relevant local partners involved in the planning, development, delivery and monitoring of activity. We would encourage you to reflect on engagement and collaborative activity rather than solely single service delivery.

For this Priority Action, you may wish to consider involvement from the following partners and stakeholders:

- *Scottish Prison Service*
- *Housing Services*
- *Other housing providers/landlords*
- *Justice Social Work*
- *Health*
- *Third Sector*
- *Any other partners as relevant*

Activity

Use of the *My Compass* outcomes assessment tool in HMP Inverness has helped to identify housing issues at an early stage, and how to address these. However, on being considered as part of the self-evaluation exercise it was recognised that links between the prison and housing partners needed to be strengthened, and housing partners had to become more integrated into the HCIP processes. The high level outcome relating to access to suitable accommodation following release from a prison sentence continues in a negative direction. After a reduction in the previous year, there was a 25% increase in 2024 - 2025 from the baseline year (2017 - 2018). Amongst the actions agreed were:

- Better integration of both housing **and** housing support providers into the liberation planning processes, including improved links between these providers and Upside.
- Training needs to be addressed (even if only around improving understanding of the range of services/ options available) and training around SHORE would be helpful.
- an information leaflet for individuals liberated back to Moray should be replicated for Highland.



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There was evidence of better engagement with housing partners around the needs of people on licences where JSW and the Highland Council's Housing team work closely together. In planning for liberation understanding where the person is likely to present as homeless is particularly crucial. For cases where the individual is a Registered Sex Offender, Police, Housing and JSW, work together in completing Environmental Risk Assessments. Upcoming planned liberations (Home Detention Curfew, parole etc) are communicated to relevant partner agencies to support suitable accommodation planning. HMP Inverness has ongoing positive links with the local CAB which supports planning for liberation.

Impact

The impact of seeking to address the issues raised will be assessed in the coming year through the oversight of the Partnership's strategic and delivery groups. Whilst it will be discussed more fully under Priority Action 10, the positive impact of Upside's contribution to partnership working and developing stronger networks in Highland has been very welcome. Not just in terms of delivery of its own service, but also as a catalyst for closer cooperation and collaboration amongst partners involved in delivering statutory throughcare.

It is also worth noting the positive links that exist 'upstream' in the justice system, where, for example, the Custody Link Project has made over 250 referrals to housing and housing support providers over a five year period. This has addressed many scenarios from sustaining individuals' tenancies following arrest through to accessing emergency housing and addressing wider housing support needs.

SPS comments?

Upside comments?

JSW comments?

Clink comments?

Priority Action Nine

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

Nationally determined outcome:



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

More people with convictions access support to enhance their readiness for employment⁷

Local Evidence

- Effective links between the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) and Community Justice Partnership supports:
 - i. local employment, education and training providers to respond to the needs of those with convictions
 - ii. local employment, education and training providers are confident and competent in providing effective conviction disclosure support
 - iii. local employers to develop more inclusive recruitment processes and employ people with convictions.
- Referral pathways are in place to connect people to appropriate services and support:
 - i. at commencement of, during and at the end of a CPO
 - ii. following release from custody.

13. What activity has taken place to support people to access employability support, and what impact had there been as a result?

In developing your answer to this question, you should engage with the relevant local partners involved in the planning, development, delivery and monitoring of activity. We would encourage you to reflect on engagement and collaborative activity rather than solely single service delivery.

For this Priority Action, you may wish to consider involvement from the following partners and stakeholders:

- *Local Authority employability services*
- *Skills Development Scotland*
- *Third Sector*
- *Scottish Prison Service*
- *Scottish Courts and Tribunals Services*
- *Any other partners as relevant*

Activity

Since the Partnership's inception, there have always been positive links with Skills Development Scotland (SDS), who continue to contribute to joint working at strategic and operational levels. The Transitions and Communities Group has offered a

⁷ National Indicator:

Percentage of:

- those in employability services with convictions



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conduit through which a range of partners with a focus on employment and employability have come together, developing stronger ties between prison based activities and those in the community, and between statutory, private and third sectors. Activities over the period have included:

- The DWP held regular (quarterly) employability events in the Prison. These tended to be themed around particular employment categories. The ongoing challenge has been seeking to link the right people to the right employer and there is a continuing need to develop fresh options and extend the range of providers engaged with.
- SPS reported that Learning provision by Fife College was to be replaced by People Plus. The focus of the provision is to be trauma informed, take greater cognisance of neurodivergence and learning difficulties, and develop a wider community vision. In Highland with the opening of HMP Highland in early 2027, there are additional opportunities to build new approaches into the improved facilities.
- UHI continued to offer vocational training opportunities, with job interviews at the end. This builds on partnership working with the Scottish Drugs Forum (SDF) who have also been working proactively within the prison developing a prison pilot of the SDF national traineeship. This offers SVQ training to prisoners who have a history of drug use to prepare them for work as professionals within drug and wider care services.
- There was ongoing engagement with third sector partners (SDF, Next Chapter Scotland and (towards the end of the year) APEX) to address the barriers faced by people with a record of convictions seeking to access employment.
- There was ongoing commitment from private sector partners, most notably Balfour Beatty and Amey to identify and engage with people in prison who may wish to consider careers in construction. Partnership working has helped to identify barriers that people face (for example one of the challenges in terms of project based opportunities is the time it can take to identify and prepare individuals before time-limited projects near completion). The partners have been proactive in seeking practical solutions to these challenges.

Impact

2025 - 2026 saw a consolidation of the work done in the previous year to bring partners together more closely.

Innovative approaches such as those taken by UHI and SDF demand a long term commitment to work with individuals who face multiple barriers. Private partners working in cooperation has been productive. Balfour Beatty and Amey delivered an event mid-way through the year which resulted in two job offers being made to individuals currently serving sentences. This collaboration has also included the



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DWP who have been supportive of efforts to provide construction/highways/site training.

Work was done with People Plus to provide pre employment training for individuals who had been in custody, or were at risk of this (including people on CPOs). 8 places are offered, including 2 for young people. Additional support was available through the Highland Council employability service, including support to address some of the barriers to training and employment such as transport which can be a real issue for individuals required to travel to sites outwith current transport provision.

Priority Action Ten

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

Nationally determined outcome:

More people access voluntary throughcare following a short term prison sentence⁸

Local Evidence

- Mechanisms are in place for partners to support people serving short term sentences.
- Proportion of people liberated from short term custody:
 - i. made aware of support
 - ii. accepting support offer
 - iii. with a co-ordinated pre-release plan in place.
- Mechanisms are in place to understand the views of people accessing voluntary throughcare to support improvement.
- Mechanisms are in place to understand the views of community justice partners in delivering voluntary throughcare to support the needs of people leaving short term custody.

14. What activity has taken place to support people to access voluntary throughcare? What impact had there been as a result?

In developing your answer to this question, you should engage with the relevant local partners involved in the planning, development, delivery and monitoring of activity. We would encourage you to reflect on engagement and collaborative activity rather than solely single service delivery.

For this Priority Action, you may wish to consider involvement from the following partners and stakeholders:

- *Police Scotland*

⁸ National Indicator:

Number of:

- voluntary throughcare cases commenced



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- *Justice Social Work*
- *Scottish Prison Service*
- *Third Sector*
- *Health*
- *Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service*
- *Integration Joint Boards*
- *Any other partners as relevant*

Activity

The roll out of Upside in Highland was welcomed by partners, and proved to be hugely beneficial in developing the Highland offer of voluntary throughcare. It has also encouraged partners to reflect on the provision of statutory throughcare, which has delivered very low numbers in recent years.

Turning Point Scotland manage the North Pod. They had an existing presence in Grampian local authority areas, but establishing their Highland presence was more challenging. As is often the case in the area, recruitment was far from straightforward both for prison and community based staff. Primarily for this reason things got off to a slower start. However, the Highland part of the service has settled well and has delivered its service effectively.

The Upside service covers the entire Highland area and has taken a flexible approach, supplementing face-to-face support with telephone and digital contact. There was evidence of a steady growth in caseloads as the year progressed.

A throughcare event took place on 2 September 2025 in HMP Inverness, and over the year the manager and team members have become more integrated with the planning and delivery structures that exist within the partnership. As part of establishing the new service in Highland there was a strong emphasis on creating strong links with other third sector partners as well as with JSW so as to avoid duplication of support and ensure clear plans for individuals receiving assistance from both services.

The introduction of a new provider offered an opportunity to reflect on how liberation planning worked, and amongst partners there was a willingness to approach new opportunities openly and collaboratively.

The *My Compass* assessment and outcomes tool mentioned previously was developed in HMP Inverness, and during 2025 - 2026 was undergoing evaluation by UHI with a view to being more widely available across the SPS. Locally there were discussions between the Prison and JSW about potential use of the tool in the wider justice setting, and it has been adopted for use by Upside in Highland, which supports better integration of services and monitoring of outcomes. It is understood



Community justice outcome activity across Scotland: Local Area Annual Return Template

My Compass is being considered for adoption by SPS nationally as part of their ongoing revision of progression pathways for prisoners.

Impact

The indicator report highlighted a modest improvement in the number of voluntary throughcare cases commenced but from a very low base. It is anticipated that the work of Upside will contribute to a significant improvement in this area.

Very quickly after becoming fully established, Upside were running at capacity in Highland, though there wasn't the need to implement a waiting list.

50% of supported individuals have tended to be accommodated in prisons outside the Highland area, which impacts pre-release relationship-building and resource allocation as well as presenting travel challenges (both for team members attempting to visit those who are approaching liberation, and for individuals themselves who have to return to Highland and resettle). Since 1 April 2025, the Upside service in Highland received 101 referrals, with 75% males and 25% females.

One notable area of success was the ongoing collaboration with housing colleagues, meaning that a significant number of homeless individuals supported by Upside who were released from custody were successfully accommodated on release.

The varying tranches of early releases from custody were really challenging, especially for individuals returning to Highland from elsewhere in Scotland, where there was reduced time and opportunity to make adequate preparations. This shifting situation since the inception of Upside had an impact on the original vision to offer a full service to prisoners on remand. It is recognised that this wasn't just a Highland issue.

Priority Action Eleven

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

No nationally determined outcome.

Progress in delivering this priority action should be evidenced with reference to any relevant local activity.

Local evidence:

- Mechanisms are in place to support engagement in each local authority, specifically:
 - a community justice outcomes improvement plan (CJOIP)
 - a participation statement



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- an annual report on progress towards nationally and locally determined outcomes.
- Mechanisms are in place to support an effective interface between national partner organisations and their local representatives within Community Justice Partnerships.
- Evidence of mechanisms to engage non-statutory partners in strategic planning
- Use of the Care Inspectorate 'self-evaluation guide to support quality improvement for community justice in Scotland', with focus on Leadership and Direction

15. How has your partnership worked to develop local leadership and enhance strategic planning and collaboration? What impact had there been as a result?

Scottish Government have indicated that activity to delivery in relation to this priority action should be built into the work of partners to progress the 9 national outcomes.

We encourage partners to reflect on what local activity has taken place to develop engagement, collaboration, and demonstrate leadership in community justice partnership working. For example, this could include development as a partnership, engagement and joint working with other local strategic partnerships, or other relevant activity. If any self-evaluation activity has been undertaken, this may support development of this answer.

Activity & Impact

The restructuring of the HCJP was completed in Spring 2025, and the new structures are fully embedded. These structures were formed to mirror the aims of the National Strategy and National Outcomes, so as to provide focus and direction for improved planning and delivery.

The Partnership has been able to draw on the leadership and knowledge of an experienced independent chair. The independence of the chair is vital to our model in that it avoids any perception that the Partnership is driven by the agenda or priorities of any single partner. However, this independence is balanced by high levels of trust and respect, which facilitates the building of positive relationships and at times the difficult conversations that occasionally may be required.

The structures and leadership of the Partnership are underpinned by a sound understanding of the connection between strategy and delivery and between the high level vision and the operational. Being hosted within the HTSI also offers a degree of flexibility, although there can be challenges in being perceived to be sitting at a distance from statutory partners.



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As part of our evolving planning processes, delivery plans continued to be refined, seeking to be responsive to emerging evidence of strength and weakness.

Underpinning this was a self-evaluation exercise in February 2026. Focus was on those areas of delivery which our national indicators identified as being negative. The evaluation helped us to move beyond identification of the issues to begin to develop solutions. On reflection whilst the exercise was helpful, it was agreed that it was too narrow in focus, and not enough time was given to it. This will be reflected in a revised approach next year. This exercise was also an opportunity to start to consider Justice That Works: Report of the Scottish Sentencing and Penal Policy Commission (February 2026) and associated recommendations. These will be further considered by the Partnership both strategically and operationally during 2026.

The separating out of the strategic from delivery has enabled the partnership to step back and consider wider issues. During the year, it was agreed that we should explore the opportunities for delivery RJ in Highland (referred under Priority Action Six) as well as clarify our commitment to engagement with victims support organisations and to develop processes to gather the views and experiences of those with experience of the justice system.

The Highland Violence against Women and Girls Partnership is represented on the HCJP (with the HCJP chair participating in the HVAWGP). There are ongoing strong relationships strategically and operationally with the HADP, and with a range of local Alcohol and Drug service providers. During the year there has been representation on the Diversions and Interventions Group from Adult Support and Protection and from Youth Action (the Highland Youth Justice Service).

Priority Action Twelve

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 nationally determined outcome.

Progress in delivering this priority action should be evidenced with reference to any relevant local activity.



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16. How has your partnership worked to understand and incorporate the voices of victims of crime, survivors, those with lived experience and their families into partnership planning and implementation? *What impact has there been as a result?*

Scottish Government have indicated that activity to delivery in relation to this priority action should be built into the work of partners to progress the 9 national outcomes.

We encourage partners to reflect on what local activity has taken place to enable participation of people accused or convicted of offences, their families, victims of crime and other stakeholders in community justice strategic planning, delivery and impact monitoring.

As indicated in last year's return the Partnership has struggled to engage with victims and survivors of crime, with families of those involved with the justice system or meaningfully capture the views and experiences of those with lived experience of the justice system.

Regarding victims and survivors, there has been some contact with VSS, especially around the development of RJ in Highland, and meetings have taken place with the staff teams from VSS and from Inverness Women's Aid. VSS are formally included as a HCJP strategic partner, but time constraints can make attendance difficult. VSS have recently moved to new premises in central Inverness and are developing a new service to support male and trans people who have been impacted by domestic abuse.

During the year the HCJP made a small grant available to Police Scotland's Prevention and Intervention Team whose work focusses on communication and proactive engagement with communities and individuals. The team regularly identified individuals at risk of serious harm often due to domestic abuse or criminal exploitation. Whilst the team were able to advise these vulnerable people about security measures such as alarms and CCTV, it was always a source of frustration that they were not able to offer any immediate tangible support, having to rely on referring individuals to other agencies and organisations which led to delays and further risk.

The HCJP small grant allowed for the purchase a number of safeguarding kits which can be allocated to the most vulnerable members of the community based on assessments. Because they can be offered preventatively, these complement the provision offered by the Emergency Assistance Fund (EAF) managed by VSS which is designed to support individuals affected by crime who are in urgent need of financial assistance.

Each safeguarding kit contains a practical suite of security and communication tools tailored to enhance personal safety and deter perpetrators. The standard contents



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include a CCTV doorbell to monitor and record activity at the property entrance, a personal attack alarm for immediate use during a crisis, a pay-as-you-go (PAYG) mobile telephone to ensure an uninterrupted line of communication to emergency services, an alarmed door wedge to prevent entry while alerting the occupant, and a heavy-duty door bolt to reinforce physical home security.

Feedback on their use has been positive:

Officer Testimonials:

'I was banging my head off a brick wall in the early days of my career in Crime Prevention because the verbal advice and reassurance we were providing was just lip service at the end of the day. Now with the secured funding and introduction of safeguarding kits, we can carry out Home Security Surveys with high risk victims of crime and actually provide them with something worthwhile, especially, and more often than not, if the victim is struggling financially. CCTV camera doorbells, personal attack alarms, internal door locks and mobile phones are just a few of the safeguarding items we can now provide, which makes it worthwhile, provides a good service, and prepares the victim for any worst case scenario situations and hopefully makes them feel safe in their own home. The feedback we've had from this has also been really positive.'

'The safeguarding kits have been extremely useful and have allowed us to provide immediate, practical support to vulnerable individuals at the point of contact. Having something tangible to offer can make a significant difference in helping people feel safer and supported during what is often a difficult and distressing time. The kits have also improved our ability to safeguard effectively by allowing us to address immediate safety concerns rather than simply signposting individuals to other services. This can help reduce risk, build trust, and provide reassurances that support is available when it is needed most.'

Recipient Quotes:

"The kit arrived at a time when I couldn't afford to buy these items. It removed a barrier to improving my safety and helped me feel supported."

"I live alone and was worried about my security following a recent incident. The safeguarding kit helped me feel safer and more confident in my own home."

"The officer who visited me was able to leave practical safety equipment there and then, rather than telling me where to get help. It made a huge difference knowing something had been done straight away."

With regard to engagement with individuals and their families, we are fortunate to have the continued presence of Families Outside and of APEX Scotland. The visitor



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centre contract with HMP Inverness was taken over by APEX during the year, and Families Outside have continued with their programme of engagement and support for Highland family members affected by having a loved one in prison.

These are both mature third sector partners who work collaboratively where possible to achieve the best outcomes for those they support. For example, last summer there was an event jointly planned along with SPS to bring Dads and families together. Work is ongoing to develop information and materials which are more trauma-informed and address a range of support needs and for children with sensory needs. Linked with this approach, Balfour Beatty consulted with families about the development of a sensory garden at the new HMP Highland.

Families Outside are continuing to develop their work nationally around Travel to Prison, and the HCJP have inputted to this research so as to include the perspective of remote communities. Whilst the SPS scheme to support families from island communities to make visits to prison is very welcome, for some people living in very remote mainland communities, travel (especially by public transport) is extremely difficult, and expensive. The numbers affected are almost certainly low, but the impact on these families is significant.

Families Outside supported 21 families over the year, and at times had an 8-12 week waiting list, though the worker seeks to engage with families on a brief, opportunistic basis during the time they are waiting for support. They also seek to link in with other agencies such as Crossreach, who offer a family support service in Inverness (though this is not exclusively for families with loved ones in prison).

Initiatives to engage with those who have lived experience of the justice system has been more challenging.

On a community level, the HCJP organises quarterly Community Justice Forums. Attendance can vary widely from a handful to around 20 attendees. These tend to be themed (for example around employability or community sentences) and can draw interest from voluntary groups, individuals and third sector organisations. The Forum is seen as a positive environment where people can share information in the knowledge that it could be relevant to everyone within the group who are working with those involved/affected by community justice, and therefore it is important that what is being seen at grass roots is fed back in order that potential issues and improvements can be considered.

Also in terms of community engagement, JSW began to deliver a series of open days. During the reporting year there were events in Wick and Dingwall, with others planned for different locations in the coming year. These drew in community groups, interested individuals, community council chairs and a range of professionals (e.g. from wider social work, community nursing, education) and were a great opportunity to get positive messages across about the benefits of community sentences.



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During the year the SDO worked with SW managers to explore how to engage with people with lived experience of the justice system (primarily those who have completed community orders) and SDF 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 supported this process. A client forum was arranged in Inverness, which two former clients attended. The feedback/insight was really positive, highlighting the importance of person-centred approaches, trust-building, and housing as a barrier to participation.

Towards the end of the reporting year, JSW agreed to continue to fund the SDO post, part of the remit being to take this area of work forward, and potentially extend beyond unpaid work clients. It was also recognised that the Justice That Works report highlighted the need for mentoring services, and this will feature in the planning and development work.

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 Community Justice Forum and also with SDF. Contact with Next Chapter Scotland appeared to highlight some resistance amongst professionals to engaging with organisations which themselves seek to engage with those who are registered sex offenders.

It is envisaged that SDF will continue to support the HCJP going forward as we seek to further develop processes to engage with stakeholders who have a range of experiences of the justice system.



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Priority Action Thirteen

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

Nationally determined outcome:

More people across the workforce and in the community understand, and have confidence in, community justice⁹

Local Evidence

- Community justice partner contribution to joint activity across policy areas to tackle stigma.

17. What partnership-driven activity has taken place to improve understanding of and confidence in community justice across the workforce and local community?

In developing your answer to this question, you should engage with the relevant local partners involved in the planning, development, delivery and monitoring of activity. We would encourage you to reflect on engagement and collaborative activity rather than solely single service delivery.

For this Priority Action, you may wish to consider involvement from the following partners and stakeholders:

- *Other local area strategic partnerships (e.g., Community planning, Alcohol and Drugs, Violence Against Women and Girls, Health Integration Joint Boards, etc.)*
- *Third Sector*
- *Any other local or national partners as relevant*

Activity

A number of the activities outlined in response to various Priority actions above have contribute to improved public and professional understanding and to tackling stigma, including:

- Engagement with victim's organisations to discuss Community Sentences and Diversion from Prosecution.
- Community Justice Forums, drawing in a range of community groups, interested individuals, third sector organisations.
- Open Days organised by JSW.

⁹ National Indicator:

Percentage of people who agree that:

- people should help their community as part of a community sentence rather than spend a few months in prison for a minor offence



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- Engagement with organisations focussed on working with people with lived experience (Next Chapter Scotland, SDF).
- Active partnership working with HADP, HVAWGP, CPP Board, Community Safety and Resilience Group, SFRS.
- Continued public engagement through use of social media.
- Participation in the work of the Scottish Sentencing and Penal Policy Commission – the Partnership arranged a series of consultation meetings in July 2025 with the chair of the commission to provide a Highland perspective.

18. Look ahead for your local area. Please tell us what the next steps are for your partnership.

Reflective questions to consider in developing your answer:

What are the next steps for your partnership?

What opportunities are there?

What barriers and/or risks?

A self-evaluation exercise was undertaken in February to review progress against the improvement indicators. The creation and ongoing development of our annual delivery plans is closely aligned to the Indicators report prepared for us in November, and uses a simple RAG system to enable identification of strengths and weaknesses and prioritisation for action. The self-evaluation exercise focussed on the areas which were marked as red in the indicator report. A number of clear actions were identified for action in 2026 - 2027 and these were further discussed and refined by the delivery groups.

It was agreed that the exercise had been helpful but that next year the exercise should be allocated a half-day session to allow for more in-depth discussion and coverage of key topics.

The next steps for the partnership are reflected in the delivery plans which have been developed for 2026 - 2027 for our Strategic and Delivery Groups, summarised as follows:

Diversions and Interventions Delivery Group Actions (National Aim 1 & 2)

1. Develop agreed local processes to support the use of DfP and Direct Measures within Highland, especially in regard to the implementation of new National Pathways.



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- a. Monitor and support developments in Youth Justice, particularly the interface between Youth and Adult Justice services.
2. Review existing processes and pathways for individuals from arrest to potential court appearance, including:
 - a. Develop on more stable basis for the Custody Link Project going forward:
 - i. Secure short-term funding for 2026-27.
 - ii. Identify longer-term funding to underpin commitment to procurement process.
 - iii. Initiate a service design process, followed by a commissioning/ procurement exercise.
3. Address perceived challenges in the use of (supervised) bail in Highland, to underpin:
 - a. Clarity in terms of expectations and responsibilities, seeking to create greater confidence in the use of Bail
 - b. Create single point of contact between JSW and police (eventually an email inbox) to improve communication between partners
 - c. Update forms/paperwork to strengthen the processes
 - d. Review approaches taken elsewhere, analyse stats, identify variations
4. Build on existing pathways and opportunities for community disposals, including:
 - a. Review the impact of the Senior Development Officer (SDO) role;
 - b. Continue to explore opportunities for women in Highland who are involved with the justice system.

Transitions and Communities Delivery Group Actions (National Aim 3 & part of 4)

5. Health and Social Care
 - a. Review liberation planning for individuals to community based treatments for alcohol and drug use (including engagement with support from throughcare)
 - b. Ensure that links between key parties (Drug and Alcohol services, housing, Upside and others) are as strong as possible
 - c. Explore opportunities to develop local prison to rehab pathways
 - d. Analyse indicator statistics to ensure clarity and understanding (possibly with support from the HADP)
6. Accommodation
 - a. Ensure housing services are fully integrated into induction and liberation planning processes, including for those liberated from out with Highland
 - b. Ensure housing support providers (The Salvation Army, New Start) and others (e.g. CAB) are involved in planning, and coordinate with Throughcare services



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- c. Arrange training around housing needs (and SHORE) for staff in prison and community settings
 - d. Analyse indicator statistics to ensure clarity and understanding
- 7. Employability and Training (including links with Employability Partnership and other forums)
 - a. Opportunities for learning (literacy and numeracy, adult education, further education)
 - b. Vocational training
 - c. Employment Opportunities (including links to industry)
 - d. Access to benefits and financial advice & support
- 8. Throughcare
 - a. Review current processes and relationships, particularly in relation to Highland community Integration Planning, focussing on improved collaboration supporting better planned outcomes for release.
 - b. Upside to continue to proactively engage with partners to establish stronger processes to support individuals in transition.
 - c. Senior Development Officer to work with SPS and other to develop better information on community services across Highland (looking at paper based and digital information)
- 9. Better engagement with families and dependents affected by imprisonment
 - a. Improved awareness of the needs of families and information for families
 - b. Identification of gaps in provision
 - c. Support improvement in families' experiences of travel to prison

Strategic Group Actions (National Aim 4)

- 10. Monitor the implementation of the HCJOIP
- 11. Prepare and submit Annual Return
- 12. Prepare and publish Annual Report
- 13. Prepare and Deliver Self-Evaluation Exercise
- 14. Support improved engagement with the Victims of Crime, and victim support organisations, including:
 - a. Ensuring that the views and perspectives of victims are present in planning and practice.
 - b. Improved awareness of the needs of victims.
 - c. Identification of gaps in provision.
 - d. Improved information for victims and others .
- 15. Monitor/Support roll out of restorative justice – the CJP will take cognisance of the work being done nationally around this with a view to implementation, if possible within Highland.
- 16. Follow up on research into women's experiences of the justice system (2023)



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- a. Support the development of specialist women's work by JSW and partners.
- 17. Review/Develop processes to gather the views and experiences of those who have experience of the Justice System (including narratives, case studies etc.)
- 18. Develop CJP Communications Plan
 - a. Community focus using media/social media
 - b. Internal communication across partners

Perceived Risks

There are three key areas of risk identified to the implementation of the actions outlined above.

The first relates to a lack national leadership in particular areas. Clear examples of this are around the wider use of Electronic Monitoring and the expansion of Restorative Justice, where in both cases the aspiration of the National Strategy is not supported by adequate resources.

Secondly there is the ongoing risk from lack of buy in from partners. Not all partners fully engage with the activities of the HCJP. In some cases this can be because there are barriers related to the timing and location of meetings. The HCJP is seeking to take a more flexible approach to meeting planning in the coming year to address some of these barriers.

The third risk is that of resources. Again there is a national dimension to this. Each year the HCJP and HTSI struggle to find funding to maintain delivery of what has become an integral local service, the Custody Link Worker Project. Its worth is well attested, and nationally there is recognition of the value of arrest referral services, but as with EM and RJ, there is a need for secure funding to support the strategic aspiration. Funding across the Third Sector is presently in a precarious and even chaotic state and there is a real risk that invaluable services are lost which will be to the detriment of those who experience the justice system in its many forms.

