

Justice Social Work

Annual Performance Report 2023-24

1) Introduction

The Justice Social Work (JSW) service continues to be diverse, complex and busy and consists of Caledonian, Community Payback Orders (CPO), Unpaid Work, Women's Service, Pre-Disposal team based at the Court, Throughcare, Support Work and Admin. teams. Its primary remit is to provide statutory supervision and support to individuals who have offended, using interventions which are proportionate to risk and need. This supervision ranges from low level for those on Diversion from Prosecution to very high level, and with support from Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) for the "critical few" who pose significant public protection concerns.

The individuals with whom the service works may have mental health problems, learning difficulties, personality disorders, drug and/or alcohol problems, behavioural/anger management problems, neurodiversity issues etc., often undiagnosed, and a poverty of aspiration for themselves. JSW staff are responsive to these increasingly complex needs and risks and accept their professional responsibilities to respond accordingly in a person-centred and trauma-informed manner in order to deliver individual and statutory outcomes.

Our Justice service experienced challenges in meeting the demand for increasing statutory supervision orders because of the court backlog following the COVID-19 pandemic, however we are now seeing this return to pre-pandemic levels. The increased prison population has reached crisis levels during this year with an increasing percentage of remand prisoners. Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service continue to endeavour to reduce numbers by promoting Supervised Bail as an appropriate alternative. There is evidence that the use of Bail Supervision, whilst not reducing the number of Aberdeen remand prisoners, is preventing an increase.

2023-24 has been a challenging year in many respects, with the Service continuing to see high levels of demand, in common with public sector services across the piece. Other challenges have included:

- the aftermath of the reinstatement of the national LSCMI risk/needs assessment database which had been withdrawn from March 2022 until August 2023 due to glitches. Paper based risk/needs assessments then had to be retrospectively input onto the system on a phased basis as agreed nationally;
- ongoing challenges relating to the relocation of our Unpaid Work Team during 2022-23 and associated issues for continued service delivery with minimal impact on individuals;

- the ongoing adjustments required to the social work D365 recording system, which was implemented in October 2022, in order to meet the needs of the Service, including in relation to national reporting requirements.

In spite of these challenges, the commitment of staff across the service has not faltered, and the report demonstrates our continued drive to fulfil the JSW Delivery Plan's vision that "Every person that we work with achieves the best possible individual and statutory outcomes". The Service does not operate in isolation, of course, and our relationships and collaborations with multi agency organisations and services, in delivering our functions, remain strong.

2) Strategic Context

Justice social work is delegated by Aberdeen City Council to the Integration Joint Board (IJB) as set out by the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. The Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership's Strategic Plan 2022-25 sets out the priority objectives for all of the delegated functions and services. In addition, the Scottish Government have outlined those [national health and wellbeing outcomes](#) which all partnerships must strive towards.

The community justice model in Scotland is underpinned by the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016, and ACHSCP is a statutory community justice partner under the Act. The national strategic context has changed during the course of the year, with an updated [Community Justice Performance Framework](#) being published in March 2023, followed by a refreshed [National Strategy for Community Justice](#) in December 2023.

At a local level, ACHSCP is also a statutory member of Community Planning Aberdeen. There is a strong alignment between the integration partnership's Strategic Plan and the community planning partnership's [Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26](#), which was refreshed in April 2024. The LOIP contains a number of improvement projects under Stretch Outcome 9 - *10% fewer adults (over 18) charged with more than one offence by 2026* - in which the JSW Service is playing a key part due to its central role within Community Justice.

3) Governance

The Service's Performance Management Board (PMB), chaired at Chief Officer level and with Senior representation from across the Service, has continued to meet on a quarterly basis and maintain oversight of progression of the Delivery Plan, performance management, learning and development, digital developments, and informed by findings from quality assurance, reviews and exit questionnaires, to drive forward continuous improvement across the Service.

The scheduled Service Quality Assurance programme has, for the most part, been progressed during the year, although service demands did impact on completions in some areas. This forms part of the JSW Performance Framework, and there are targets which Senior Social Workers should meet which are reported in to each meeting of the PMB. The

PMB also listens to the ‘voice’ of staff throughout the Service, through its ‘Best Practice’ sub group.

4) Headlines

Demands on Justice Social Work Service: Table 1 below gives an indication of the demands on some aspects of the JSW workload, with 2019/20 as the pre-Covid benchmark (see also Appendix 1 for the 2023-24 CPO Annual Report, which provides further information about impact and work undertaken as part of CPOs).

Table 1: Service Volumes

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Justice Social Work Reports	1,126	715	935	1271	1286
Community Payback Orders imposed	1,055	506	667	909	851
Diversion commenced	114	150	168	149	287
Bail Supervision commenced	45	4	26	117	126
Structured Deferred Sentence	25	11	30	40	34
Throughcare cases commenced in the community	32	38	40	39	47
Total no. of hours of Unpaid Work completed	52,854	32,153	36,683	33,857	36,460

*Not yet available.

As these figures indicate:

- the number of Justice Social Work Reports requested continues to surpass pre-pandemic levels;
- Community Payback Orders has reduced slightly from the previous year, albeit there has been an increase in terms of length and complexity;
- Diversions from Prosecution increased significantly, with Aberdeen City having the highest number of Diversions per 100,000 population of any area in Scotland in 2023-24;
- the number of Bail Supervision cases commenced also continued to increase, potentially reflecting the commitment to reducing the number of people remanded in custody; and
- the number of Structured Deferred Sentences remained consistent with the two prior years.

The Scottish Government’s allocated additional funding to JSW in May 2021 to address Covid backlogs and support recovery will continue until 2026, a staffing recruitment drive during 2022/23 resulted in the service being almost fully staffed and this is ongoing.

Diversion from Prosecution: the increase in numbers is considered to be very positive. While it may be indicative of the need to reduce court backlogs by using alternatives to prosecution, it enables individuals who have committed offences and have significant underlying needs to be diverted into support and, ideally out of offending and Court

processes, at an early stage. This disposal, particularly when imposed by the Problem-Solving Court, is again intended both as a lower level, albeit intensive, intervention and as a diversion from custody.

Bail Supervision: the increase in Bail Supervision is significant when compared to pre pandemic levels and the additional service demands are being met by an increase in staffing levels to support this service. This offers a robust and credible alternative to remand in custody, whereby people accused or convicted of an offence (or offences) are assessed as requiring a level of supervision, monitoring, and support to adhere to bail conditions. Those who the court may decide would otherwise be held on remand pending trial or for reports after conviction are instead released on bail on the condition that they meet with a bail supervisor (or nominated worker from a relevant agency) three times per week, subject to an assessment of suitability and compliance management. The overarching aim of bail supervision is therefore to reduce the use of remand by giving confidence to the court that people bailed in the community will be supported to comply with the conditions of bail, and that any non-compliance will be robustly managed. Bail supervision involves Bail Supervision assessments being provided to the Court with a proposed a package of supervision and support to the person. This can include the provision of direct support, as well as signposting and assistance to access relevant support services, including accommodation, employability, drug and alcohol services, or mental health support. Access to appropriate support services whilst subject to bail supervision is dependent on statutory and third sector services provided in local areas. As such, local collaboration between community justice partners is critical.

Caledonian Programme: Domestic abuse permeates much of our work and Caledonian assessments and resulting orders are now above pre-pandemic levels. 138 Caledonian assessments were undertaken for suitability of the programme, following which 41 Caledonian Programme requirements were imposed as part of Community Payback Orders, and we had an average of 90 men undertaking the programme during the year. This is an increase from an average of 80 the previous year meaning just over 10% increase. The service completes Caledonian assessments for most cases of domestic offending and victims are referred to the Caledonian Women's Service for support from a Women's Worker. We are exploring the possibility of developing and piloting a lower-level Domestic Abuse programme.

Justice Social Work Reports: The JSW service was involved in the piloting of a new Court Report template for shorter and more concise reports which has now been rolled out nationally.

5) Working in Partnership

Justice Social Work cannot operate in isolation, and continues to work closely with partner organisations and services, including:

- as part of the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), and MARAC (multi agency working around the safety of those harmed by or at risk of domestic abuse);

- as part of the Scottish Prison Service’s regular Case Management Board and Integrated Case Management pre-release processes;
- regular working with services including Health, Housing, Substance Use, Employability, and a range of third sector partners, to provide person-centred supports to clients;
- the Court and Procurator Fiscal Services; and
- as part of Community Planning Aberdeen’s multi agency Community Justice Group, and the related Local Outcome Improvement Plan projects.

6) Delivery Plan Objectives

The JSW Delivery Plan 2021-2024 has four key objectives which seek to make Aberdeen a safer place in which to live, and which the service is working towards:

- To contribute to the creation of safer and fairer communities;
- To fairly, effectively and proportionately implement court orders and release licences;
- To reduce offending by promoting desistance;
- To promote the social inclusion of people with convictions.

These four objectives also form the basis of the Service’s Performance Framework together with a number of relevant, objective-specific metrics to enable the service to reflect on how well it is meeting or progressing towards each particular objective.

To contribute to the creation of safer and fairer communities

One of the wider outcomes from supporting individuals with their assessed needs, helping them complete their orders and in doing so, assessing, and managing any risks that present themselves is the positive impact on our communities with the result that Aberdeen is a safer place to live and work.

A) We continue to focus on attending to needs such as benefits/housing/health/stabilising drug and alcohol use as early as possible into an individual’s **Community Payback Order** (or ideally from first contact with the service) to support them to concentrate on offence focussed work and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) interventions, including relating to domestic abuse, sexual offending, drug and alcohol interventions, anger management, and bespoke programmes of work responsive to risk/needs of individual clients. Referrals are also made to JSW support work, Venture Trust and any other agency which will provide specific person-centred support.

Our Development Officer for Justice Social Work and Alcohol and Drugs continues to support our service users to access the Assertive Outreach Service which can offer support to those who are struggling with substance use to receive appropriate support at the time they most need it. This enables service users to stabilise the issues affecting them which improves their ability to engage with their Supervision and reduces their likelihood of further offending.

There was a 52% drop in CPO numbers between 19/20 and 20/21. Although numbers of Orders imposed has not reached pre-covid levels, the complexity and length of Orders

have increased. As of 31st March 2024, there were 1,258 active CPOs. See also Table 5: Exit Questionnaires.

Table 2: Number of Community Payback Orders imposed

	Aberdeen				
	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Orders	1,055	506	669	909	851
Male	894	441	570	798	590
Female	161	65	99	136	145
Under 18	17	7	5	6	2

B) The **Unpaid Work Service** had to vacate their premises at the end of January 2023 and relocate to other council buildings on a temporary basis. Efforts continue to find suitable replacement premises. There has also been a reduction in individual placements available (since Covid and the withdrawal of some charitable organisations). The consequence of this is that over the last 12 months approximately 35 placements per week have been lost, (from loss of workshop space only - equivalent to 1820 placements, or 12000 unpaid work hours, over the course of the year). Notwithstanding, the Service has continued to cope well, without a significant impact on service users or service delivery, for example through the use of Learning Packs and home working projects for those where their health precludes them from participating in a work party or craft workshop environment. See also Table 5: Exit Questionnaires.

C) The number of individuals in custody on 31st March 2024 where Aberdeen have **Throughcare** supervision responsibility was 137 (up from 121 the previous year) and those in the community subject to licence conditions and Supervised Release Orders was 61 (52 as at 31st March 2023). There has been a high percentage of remand prisoners and the Government's introduction of Bail Supervision and Electronic Monitoring in May 2022 as a direct alternative to remand does not appear to have had a significant impact on this as SPS indicate that remands have not reduced significantly during this period. On the other hand, the number of Supervised Bail Orders imposed in Aberdeen continues to increase, from 117 in 2022/23 to 126 in 2023/24, and would appear to be supportive of preventing the number of remands being significantly higher. Table 3 below sets out the number of individuals released on licence during the year.

Table 3: Number of Individuals Released on Licence during year

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Female	1	1	1	1	2
Male	37	39	32	39	45

The total number of individuals being supervised on Licence in the community as at 31st March 2024 was 66. This excludes the 65 individuals who were provided with Voluntary Throughcare support during the year.

D) **Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)** places a statutory duty on the responsible authorities in a local authority area to jointly establish arrangements for assessing and managing the risk posed by certain categories of offenders. This includes all registered sex offenders under MAPPA Category 1 and those assessed as presenting a high risk of serious harm under MAPPA Category 3 for violent offenders.

Justice Social Work continue to work in close collaboration with the MAPPA Co-ordination Unit and with our partner internal and external agencies such as Health, Housing, Police Scotland, Scottish Prison Service, Care Management and Children's Services. The revised national guidance implemented in May 2022 has been incorporated into practice resulting in clearer processes and co-ordination of multi-agency services being taken forward. Thus, ensuring that access to appropriate housing and primary care services are in place when prisoners are released.

Throughout the year 2023/24, Justice Social Work reported 10 initial notifications of potentially serious incidents between MAPPA and the Care Inspectorate with none of those reported proceeding to a Serious Case or Learning Review which indicates the ongoing appropriateness of our interventions and balancing statutory obligations, public protection and the needs and rights of those we work with.

To fairly, effectively, and proportionately implement court orders and release licences

Although it is an extremely diverse, complex, and busy service, JSWS is efficient and effective in terms of the achievement of positive individual and statutory outcomes, as demonstrated below.

E) In 2022/23, 659 **Community Payback Orders** (CPOs) were completed successfully and 131 were returned to Court under Breach Proceedings. The number of CPO completions for 2023/24 is not as yet available.

F) The Court and associated **Pre-Disposal Team** is effectively the front door to the Justice Social Work service. Virtual Courts continue to be used in some cases which impacts on our ability to meet with service users within required timescales (as per National Standards) as they are often released from custody late in the day or they can be released from prisons across Scotland with lengthy travel requirements for the individual to return to Aberdeen. We work with prison based social work and SPS on an ongoing basis in order to maintain some contact with individuals who are released from custody under statutory supervision or who require a voluntary service to ensure they have the support they need and to offer appointments at the earliest opportunity.

G) JSW in Aberdeen is accredited to deliver the **Caledonian System** which includes a Men's Programme for higher risk perpetrators of domestic abuse in tandem with a support service for women and children harmed. The majority of Justice Social Work reports to court for offences of a domestic nature are assessed for Caledonian with approximately a third resulting in the imposition of Community Payback Orders with 2-year Caledonian Requirements. Where a Supervision Requirement is imposed without a Caledonian

requirement the individual will still be supervised by Caledonian trained workers because of the nature of the offence.

Table 4 shows annual number of Caledonian assessments and Orders imposed. This appears to have reduced in 2022/23 and again in 2023-24 and it may be that the increase seen in 2021/22 was reflective of the Court prioritising these cases within the Court backlog following the pandemic. Domestic abuse accounts for a significant amount of the workload across the service for Admin, support work, social work, MARAC, MAPPA and Throughcare, in conjunction with partners as relevant. The average number of individuals subject to a CPO with a Caledonian Programme requirement at any one time during 2023/24 is 90.

Table 4: Number of Caledonian Assessments undertaken, and Requirements imposed

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Assessments	171	202	161	138
Orders	49	64	49	41

- H) We have continued to provide the **Moving Forward Making Changes (MFMC)** programme for sex offenders which involves a 3 year CPO Programme Requirement. This programme is currently transitioning to the 'Moving Forward 2 Change' (MF2C) Programme which has required training for all practitioners who deliver this and which has now been completed and will continue to be provided on an ongoing basis for new workers. On average we have between 30 and 35 people on the MFMC programme at any time due to it being a three year programme and people joining and leaving the programme throughout the year. The MF2C Programme will largely be provided to perpetrators of contact offences, however, consideration will be given to the appropriateness of this for non contact offences where there is an indication that there may be a risk of serious harm to the public. The majority of lower level/non-contact sexual offending will not meet the criteria for the MF2C programme and, where this is the case, the lower level/shorter programme, the 'Aberdeen Sex Offender Programme' will be proposed to the Court.
- I) The computer based **LS/CMI risk/needs assessment** tool is utilised by JSW across the country from Justice Social Work Report stage to ongoing assessment and case/risk management planning throughout the statutory supervision process. The tool was withdrawn from use in March 2022 due to glitches in the system resulting in incorrect risk/needs scoring outcomes and staff were required to utilise paper based assessments until it's reinstatement in August 2023. This impacted on the time taken to complete these as well as to upload the paper based assessments in line with nationally agreed procedures and timescales once reinstated.

To reduce offending by promoting desistance

The essence of this objective is our JSW value base. This is what we do every day to the best of our ability and in collaboration with partner agencies.

We have continued to pursue what we did well during covid, including virtual contact where appropriate, for example we continue to support those affected by physical and mental health issues by providing the home learning and craft home working packs to undertake their unpaid work. We continue to have positive relationships with housing colleagues and where necessary we can now provide support to prepare tenancies with basic supplies and identify potential issues with utility connections prior to the service user being released from custody. We also continue working closely alongside SPS, Housing and Substance Misuse services to ensure that everyone leaving prison has suitable accommodation, medication, and support.

“Desistance is the process of abstaining from crime amongst those who previously had engaged in sustained offending.” It is neither quick nor easy and can take a considerable time to change thinking, behaviours and underlying problems. Desistance research emphasises the need to: adopt an individualised approach; develop positive relationships as individuals are influenced to change by those whose advice they respect and whose support they value; recognise and build on people’s strengths.

It is important that individual outcomes as well as statutory outcomes are achieved as a result of the engagement between our staff and the individuals that they supervise and support. Justice Social Work staff have undertaken trauma informed practice training to support their practice, approach and knowledge. We know that many, if not most of our clients have experienced bereavement and adversity in childhood which has significantly impacted on their thinking and behaviour. We are very aware of the need to listen to our clients as to what works for them and seek their views on how they think services could be improved. We are also very mindful of the factors that have led people to offend and seek to reduce the influence of these on an individual’s behaviour. Getting feedback about what has worked is beneficial to the ongoing improvement of our person-centred service delivery.

J) Feedback is sought via **Exit Questionnaires** from those we supervise, including individuals on Diversion from Prosecution. Highlights are below:

- Number of Supervision Questionnaires increased from 53 in 2022-23 to 93 in 2023-24;
- People reporting improvement in at least one area was 100% in both 2022-23 and 2023-24;
- In 2023-24, 58% of respondents reported having mental health issues, with 58% of these reporting improvement during Supervision;

Responses reflect both local and national issues associated with severe and multiple disadvantage (SMD). Many individuals reported significant improvements in all domains about which information was sought: Housing, Education and Employment, Drugs, Alcohol, Personal Relationships, Self Esteem, Mental Health, Physical Health, Money Issues and Coping Skills. These positive outcomes are perhaps reflective of the person-centred service they get from JSW.

Table 5: Number of Exit Questionnaires and comparison of ‘Before’ and ‘After’ Supervision Improvements

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
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Responses	56		53		93	
	People/ Improvement					
People reporting improvement in at least one area	42	88%	53	99%	93	100%
Housing	20	65%	12	95%	29	79%
Education and Employment	17	70%	15	82%	29	86%
Drugs	13	77%	12	92%	25	92%
Alcohol	8	75%	19	100%	24	88%
Personal Relationships	25	62%	20	93%	37	81%
Self Esteem	23	79%	22	100%	32	94%
Mental Health	33	82%	29	95%	54	87%
Physical Health	11	59%	11	81%	23	87%
Money Issues	17	41%	16	100%	33	70%
Coping Skills	25	89%	22	97%	48	92%

In addition to the above, 131 Exit Questionnaires were completed by clients who completed Unpaid Work during the year (157 in 2022/23), and 23 were completed for those on Diversion from Prosecution, following their introduction during the year. It is recognised that improvement is required in terms of increasing the amount of service user feedback in order to effectively evaluate our service on an ongoing basis, identifying what we are getting right and what we need to improve in order to provide the best service to those working with us. Exit questionnaires are a valuable resource for achieving this, and increasing the number of Exit questionnaires is the focus of one of the Community Justice projects included in CPA's LOIP for 2016-26.

To promote the social inclusion of people with convictions

This objective is about improving outcomes for people in the justice system by intervening at the lowest possible level, providing both supervision and support, linking into other services and agencies as appropriate and, ideally, linking individuals into community supports in the longer term.

K) A **Fiscal Work Order** is a Direct Measure offered by the Procurator Fiscal as an alternative to Court and the numbers of these tend to fluctuate, however, have remained consistently low in recent years.

L) **Diversion from Prosecution** is also an alternative to attending Court and in Aberdeen all 16/17 year olds are referred to Barnardo's while individuals aged 18 and over are offered a bespoke service tailored to their individual needs. This is overseen, and is largely delivered by JSW however, clients are at times referred on to whatever service best meets their needs e.g. mental health, Children's services, ADA, Housing. Figures have increased significantly from 149 Diversion cases commenced in 2022-23 to 287 in 2023-24. In trying to reduce court backlogs, individuals with slightly higher risk/ needs offending than previously are increasingly being referred for Diversion thus allowing us to assess and address underlying needs at an early stage.

M) The use of **Structured Deferred Sentences** reduced by six to 34 in 2023/24. This disposal, particularly when imposed by the Problem-Solving Court, is again intended both as a lower level, albeit intensive, intervention and as a diversion from custody.

N) There has been a further increase in the use of **Bail Supervision** due to efforts to reduce numbers remanded, where possible and appropriate, and also as a result of the legislation imposed for Bail Supervision and Electronic Monitoring in May 2022. Intensive intervention and support services are provided to individuals on Bail Supervision.

Table 6: Other Interventions

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Fiscal work orders	16	7	12	1
Diversion From Prosecution	150	168	149	287
Structured Deferred Sentence	11	30	40	34
Bail Supervision	4	26	117	126

O) We continue to build on positive working **relationships with wider partners and services**. Our dedicated Development Officer liaising between Justice Social Work and substance use services has been involved in the progression of a number of initiatives, including:

- Leading a LOIP project to increase the number of Justice clients offered or accessing support with their substance use;
- Improving information sharing in relation to individuals released from prison, to support their attendance at appointments with substance use services;
- JSW single point of contact for the Assertive Outreach Team and the Substance Use Related Death work;
- Staff learning and development and awareness, including in relation to Naloxone and overdose.

We also commission services from Aberdeen Foyer to deliver Other Activity and Employability services and there are opportunities for wider collaboration and development through this service as well as Adult Learning and Community Education.

7) Learning & Development

Training and development of staff is prioritised to ensure we have a motivated and effective workforce, with training being centrally monitored. Secondments are welcomed, both into and out of the Service, and our Practice Educator runs a regular programme for Social Workers in Training, in conjunction with Robert Gordon University. We aim to develop a Learning & Development Framework during the course of the current year, to clearly set out training requirements – both essential and desirable – for different staff cohorts, alongside development pathways, in recognition that our staff are our greatest asset.

8) Conclusion

As this report shows, we continue to be committed to improving service delivery, including through our close working relationships with partner agencies. In line with our Vision, we continue to prioritise individuals with the highest risk and greatest vulnerability, and to adopt a meaningful, person centred approach to all.

9) Looking Forward

Delivering our core functions to the highest level possible – providing the most effective service to the Courts, undertaking statutory supervision of those on Orders and Licences in the community, and supporting those we work with to improve their outcomes and reduce the likelihood of reoffending – remains our priority, but we always have an eye to improvement. Going forward this will be led to a significant degree by our new Strategic Service Manager. Improvement and developmental work will include:

- review of the Delivery Plan, with the new Plan expected to be in place for 2025-2029, in line with the Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan timescales;
- related review of the Service's Performance Framework;
- completion of the Self Evaluation required by the Care Inspectorate in relation the current National Thematic Review of Performance and Quality Assurance, and progression of resulting improvement work;
- involvement in multi agency 'Community Justice' projects, including increasing numbers of exit questionnaires completed, improving supports for individuals where there are concerns with substance use, and improving confidence in Community Justice;
- ensuring adherence to revised National Outcomes and Standards, once published;
- exploring the possibility of developing and piloting a lower-level Domestic Abuse programme;
- implementation of the Children's (Care & Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024, in conjunction with wider partners and services;
- etc ...

In addition to the above, the Scottish Government, in response to the rapid rise in the prison population, took emergency measures to release prisoners early across the prison estate. In

collaboration with SPS and other relevant services, the release of 19 'Aberdeen' individuals was successfully coordinated, in June 2024, to ensure, that those transitioning from prison to the community have access to housing, healthcare, financial support, in the same way as we would seek to deliver for those being released from prison on a routine basis. The Scottish Prison Service advised at the October 2024 Justice Social Work Scotland Standing Committee that the prison population continues to rise and expected to reach crisis levels in the coming months, therefore, it is anticipated that there are likely to be more such emergency release measures proposed during this period also.

COMMUNITY PAYBACK ORDER (CPO)

ANNUAL RETURN

FINANCIAL YEAR: **2023/24**

LOCAL AUTHORITY: **Aberdeen City**

TEMPLATE RETURN DATE: **29th of September 2024**

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

1) Background

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

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

2) Completing the template

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

Please ensure all answers are relevant to your local area within the 2023 to 2024 reporting year.

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

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

3) Questions to answer

4) Reducing risk of reoffending

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

Case study EF, aged 20, 2 back-to-back CPOs both for supply of drugs and road traffic offences, one summary and one solemn, both with Supervision and Unpaid work requirements. No family support in UK. At the start of the orders E had very pro-criminal attitudes but his supervising social worker used consequential thinking and motivational work to encourage him to think differently. This included listening to a radio programme where a man who had committed a number of offences, for which he had served prison sentences, spoke about how he had got into offending and how he got out of it. His worker supported him to see things differently and change his narrative and build on small successes. E started going to the gym which helped him establish a routine and has now started college. He continues to engage well with his orders and says he has gone from “I want to sell drugs, to, I want to train as a personal trainer”

5) Support for underlying needs

Please provide a case study or examples of your work with people subject to a CPO, focussing on how you work to address their underlying needs (e.g., mental health, substance use).

The specialist knowledge, people skills and sheer tenacity of JSW Support Workers are vital in supporting individuals to successfully complete their orders through addressing their underlying needs. In 2023-24 Support Workers report an increase in referrals for support with accessing accommodation and benefits reflecting national trends.

Support Work Case Study AB

AB, aged 60, CPO x 2 with supervision requirements. Mr B presents with “schizoaffective disorder and alcohol misuse”. His alcohol problems are longstanding, he frequently presents as volatile and is now subject to an ASBO which bars him from the city centre and direct access to many services. In order to reduce his risk of reoffending, including breaching his ASBO, his Social Worker maintains contact as per NOS while JSW support workers make regular home visits (at 9.30 am pre-alcohol) and support him to access Alcohol services, GP/health, housing and DWP by whatever means possible (phone, email, accompanying him to appointments, changing his GP to an accessible location, advocating on his behalf). Workers have good relationships with Mr B and, having identified triggers to volatility, have solutions in place to avoid them. As a result, Mr B’s offending has decreased, he has been supported to engage with his order, he has been able to access services he and assessments undertaken to ensure that he has appropriate support in place post-CPO.

6) Unpaid work

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

Outdoor/ indoor Placements for more able Unpaid Workers

Community Garden Assistance: One of the more notable unpaid work projects over the last few years involves assisting in the establishment and maintenance of community gardens

across the city, utilising disused green spaces. The number has grown year-on-year and we are currently providing a service to seven community gardens. Individuals on unpaid workers work alongside volunteers cultivate and maintain these spaces, fostering a sense of ownership and community pride. The benefits of this initiative include helping to address food insecurity by providing nutritious food to vulnerable individuals; workers acquire gardening knowledge; community interaction and integration.

Park Maintenance: UPW teams participated in ongoing park maintenance activities, ensuring these public spaces remain clean, safe, and enjoyable for all. This includes litter-picking, rubbish removal, strimming/raking grass, weeding, planting, leaf removal, painting park structures and whatever other work needs to be done to improve the environment.

Painting Projects: Community Centres/Sheltered housing/ supported accommodation/ Graffiti tags

Fly-tipped rubbish removal: Unpaid Workers collecting fly-tipped rubbish from the city streets enhancing the appearance and accessibility of public spaces and fosters a sense of civic pride.

Regular litter picking and Beach Clean-ups

Indoor placements for those who need seated or lighter duties

Upcycling and smaller woodwork projects

Crafts – wood burning, model making, painting

Unpaid workers support sheltered housing residents to get their weekly supermarket shopping. This project has very positive feedback from both recipients and unpaid workers. Examples of feedback received:

- *“Respecting the work that goes into helping the elderly do their shopping”*
- *“Taking the elderly to do their shopping was a great way of interacting with them and giving back to the community”*
- *“Enjoyed clearing the beach and taking the elderly for their shopping. Think shopping with the seniors is a great idea, and the beach needs all the help it can get”*

Individual Placements

We have a number of individual placements across Aberdeen. These include charity shops, churches, community centres, golf courses, and food banks. We have unfortunately seen however that since covid the number of suitable and available individual placements has reduced significant, and we are proactively trying to increase these by reaching out to organisations and communities.

Women at Unpaid work

While women may have placements in any of the above, in our experience they prefer women only placements. Many are traumatised and vulnerable and have difficulties in sustaining whole day placements. We therefore have a dedicated female task supervisor/support worker who delivers workshops and work parties for women. Her approach involves assertive outreach when women fail to attend plus a range of activities and placements to keep them interested. This can be anything from making jewellery for sale in charity shops to cooking in the women’s centre to working in a baby bank which provides

essential and necessities to disadvantaged families. Adult Learning also provide other activity input. The UPW women's service requires intensive resource, but outcomes are positive for this otherwise hard to reach group.

7) Other activity

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

Good New story from Aberdeen Foyer from whom we commission an Employability Service

"GH, was referred with 30hrs of other activity, aged 17. He obtained his CSCS card and wanted to work in construction. He had never worked before. We sourced a work placement with a construction company which gave GH the experience of different trades. The company was so impressed with him, but they could not employ him, so they asked the agency who recruited on their behalf, to employ him so they could keep him. The feedback from the company was that they were so impressed with someone so young. He completed all his hours and is still working".

The broader spectrum

Aberdeen Foyer offer: CSCS, Forklift, Banksman Slinger, Asbestos Awareness and City and Guilds Training; job application and interview training; links to work placements (30 hours of work-related activity with employer; additional support, mentoring and much more.

Learning/Training offered: Blended Learning and Woodwork Design Packs; Adult Learning (English, Maths, Computer Studies, certificated work courses); First Aider Course, Driving Theory Test; Colin's Historical Walks; Tool-Box Talks

Volunteering: Wildlife Trust, Churches, community centres, cancer research, 4x4 support for emergency services, football coaching, teaching guitar, charity shops

Drug/ Alcohol Counselling, Drug Awareness and Women's Learning Pack is also offered.

8) Feedback

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

People subject to a supervision requirement

The comments below are from Exit Questionnaires in relation to individuals' experience of Supervision. Almost all are positive and emphasise the importance of both the relationship with their social worker, and how that helped them change thinking and behaviour.

- "Over the last three years my SW has helped me turn around and move forward, coached me to recognise my resilience, encouraged me to engage with my interests and guided me to meditation practices that are now part of my daily routine. My SW

brought her attitude, experience and importantly herself to help me that goes far beyond procedures and policies. Improved and balanced self-worth, self-esteem and mental health which has resulted in a positive attitude. I have not offended since before my arrest but the unhealthy coping strategy that I had used my whole life can be put in the past and I now have a range of healthy coping skills which means that my offending behaviour is now firmly behind me”

- “Speaking only for myself – I have found the Women’s Centre to be helpful for me by helping me to navigate around Aberdeen City as I am a “Newcomer” to Aberdeen of 4 years. Very supportive and encouraging me to steer away from alcohol as this has become an issue. The Centre has also helped me with housing, taking back control of my finances, budgeting, more importantly ensuring I attend my medical appointments.”
- “I realise it, and I work on it. I will leave a situation if it is toxic. But if I can cope then I will reply to a person and tell them they are wrong then walk away or just give a big smile and a thumbs up.”
- “I am just a better person all around. My anger is kept more under control, and I recognise triggers easily. I have grown up and matured more. I was linked in to support work and drug counselling. Thank you for helping me become a better person.”
- “I think more positively. I am trying to see things differently and more positively and challenging negative thoughts. I found the group beneficial, it was engaging. Group work was powerful, especially 3 chairs exercise. 1:1 helped a lot with changing my thought pattern and thinking more positive.”
- “My SW has been there for me since day 1. Her door has always been open and any problems I've had. I've been a thief my whole life however I've been out a year without offending.”
- “The Women’s Centre has been a great help to me and many others. It is somewhere to go when you need help with housing problems, money matters and it is so much nicer to have appointments with social workers to do with Court Orders in a nice, homely environment, where we can make tea or coffee and get something to eat if we want.”
- “Thank you so much. This has changed my life, I'm so grateful to my SW and everyone who helped me.”
- “Lets hope this is the first and last time I have to fill in this form”

People undertaking unpaid work or other activity requirement

Once again feedback from clients about the support they received from Task and Order Supervisors is universally positive.

- “The people supervising were extremely helpful. Always kind and helpful and was importantly open to work without judgement or prejudice. Amazing stuff”
- “Supervisor was excellent, very health and safety aware and very friendly and easy to work with. Also A for having time with him and patience as had a few issues while on CS and he helped.”

Unpaid workers report the following achievements:

- “Got put on a placement and got a job out of it.”
- “I was able to get a job as CS put me back in working mind”.

- My achievements were that I was able to commit to my Order and complete it well within my time limit.
- Seeing to go every week to finish the order
- Stayed out of prison. Keep my personal possessions and my accommodation
- Socialising, learning about other people's difficulties, feel good to give back to the community.
- I addressed mental health issues during my work order and managed to gain employment.
- Keeping the streets free from rubbish
- I was placed at Aberdeen Mosque I felt like I helped the Muslim community a lot
- yes, crystal chains art made for charity shop, fairy doors drawn and painted for social work.
- I really enjoyed what I did to the point that I would volunteer to do it again

The community and beneficiaries of unpaid work

Our Assisted Shopping service for sheltered housing residents covers 38 sheltered house complexes, supports an average of average 170 - 190 senior service users per fortnight by providing transport and carrying shopping. This project is mutually beneficial for both recipients of the service and the unpaid workers.

Assisting senior citizens with transportation and shopping helps them maintain their independence and mobility, fosters social connections and reduces feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Feedback from Unpaid Workers suggests that they really enjoy interacting with the Sheltered Housing residents, even when they're being held to account by them for their offending behaviour!

- "Taking the elderly to do their food shopping. Was a great way of interacting with them and giving back to the community."
- "Did many work activities but the shopping trips were enjoyable and really liked helping the older people
- "Worth doing it to get out and about especially shopping was a great experience that i enjoyed."

Feedback from recipients who we undertook work projects for

1. What kind of work was carried out?

Furniture lifting, removals, disposals, dismantling and assembly of office furniture.

How would you rate the quality of work carried out?

The Task Supervisor has been consistently professional, approachable and communicates well with our staff on the requirements and needs of the service and confidently guides the team of unpaid workers on tasks required. They attend when arranged and perform duties swiftly and to a great standard

How would you rate the attitude and behaviour of the person(s) who carried out the work?

The Task Supervisor communicates well with our staff, and to the team present and I believe the way he treats the unpaid workers respectfully sets the tone for the job. The attitude and behaviour of all has been professional, and we have no complaints. Even though the workers change each time they have been respectful and always listen to instructions whilst on the premises.

Do you think you have benefited from the work carried out?

Yes, absolutely. As a third sector charity we have been quoted hundreds of pounds for similar services and having the support from the unpaid workers team has been a fantastic support. They can give back some of their time whilst helping a charity in Aberdeen and it works out well.

2. What kind of work was carried out?

Cutting grass, digging garden beds, moving bushes, tidying up garden and refuse area, building wooden garden beds, moving soil, and un-wanted large items. This is work the staff at the day centre just don't have time to do so it was a massive help to us.

How would you rate the quality of work carried out?

Work done promptly, quickly and reliably, good communication between Unpaid Team and centre staff that deal with the garden. There was a team's chat set up that also help the team know exactly what they were doing and kept all managers up to speed too. They have been a big help to our service this year.

How would you rate the attitude and behaviour of the person(s) who carried out the work?

Good workmanship and professional attitude.

Do you think you have benefited from the work carried out?

Yes, we have benefitted very much from all work done. There has been a flexible can-do attitude. There have been big improvements to our garden and that is down to the workers that came and completed the work. The staff team really appreciate all the time and work that was done as the small garden team would not be able to do this on their own. We are really happy with the service provided by unpaid work team.

How would you rate the attitude and behaviour of the person(s) who carried out the work?

Friendly, helpful and respectful

9) Benefits and challenges of other CPO requirements

Please mark with a cross the requirements that were imposed by courts in 2023 to 2024.

Compensation requirement

Programme requirement

Residence requirement

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

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

Compensation. There is an issue sometimes that the requirement detail is written on orders in a way which is hard to interpret. This gives challenges when trying to support someone to comply, but we liaise with courts and solicitors to ensure that we are clear on the detail of the requirement.

Programme. Generally imposed following assessment of suitability. Some issues where court imposes a programme requirement without an assessment having been completed or when we have assessed them as unsuitable.

Overall, the Caledonian Programme works well, both Men's Programme and Women's/ Children's service. There is undoubtedly an information sharing benefit in having all elements of the system under one roof. Feedback from the women's service is that they feel that their voices are heard, they are well-supported and safety plans are in place. Children also receive individualised support and safety planning suitable to age and stage.

The groupwork element of Moving Forward Making Changes is delivered by the Aberdeenshire Joint Sex Offenders Project team and, for lower-level sexual offending, Aberdeen City social workers deliver the Aberdeenshire Sex Offender Programme (ASOP)

Conduct. Primarily used for: RSOs who require police to check mobile devices; to attend drug/ alcohol/ mental health/ counselling/other services as directed by supervising officer.

Restricted Movement. Only one this year and no issues.

Drug Treatment. Rarely used as many are usually already known to drug services; SWs will refer to other agencies as appropriate and those higher risk are assessed for Drug Treatment and Testing Orders.

Mental Health Treatment. Rarely used as the majority of people with mental illness are already in treatment.

Others of interest. Requirement imposed: *"for a period of 6 months from the date of this requirement, that the offender contributes the sum of £300 to a local children's charity; refrain from owning or possessing imitation firearms or projectile propelling sports items used for recreational purposes such as starting pistols or air-soft guns; for a period of 2 years*

from the date of this requirement, does not contact the emergency services unless for a genuine emergency, and accepts assistance from Social work in regards to alcohol misuse”

The Court sometimes imposes unmanageable requirements e.g. to undertake “*elements of the Caledonian Programme*” and “*Requires the offender, for a period of 1 year from the date of this requirement, to refrain from consuming alcohol and admit to being breathalysed by Police or Social Work*”, the latter being impossible as the individual was alcohol dependent and to withdraw all alcohol immediately was likely to be life threatening. Such orders are returned to the court for amendment.

10) Organisational improvements and ongoing challenges

Looking back at last year (2022-2023), have there been any improvements to the challenges you noted? Are there any challenges you are still facing this year (2023-2024)?

- Issues around LSCMI are now resolved.
- We previously reported on the challenges posed by the move of our social work recording system, Carefirst in October 2022 and the building and introduction Microsoft Dynamic 365. The new system gives improvement as a case recording tool and for data management purposes, however with any new system, the implementation required significant work and change to practice. The ongoing building of the system to ensure enhanced data management has been challenging in relation to the allocation of resources.
- Production of Aggregate and CPO returns has now confirmed that our previously anecdotal evidence of an increase in Justice Social Work Report referrals and CPOs was correct, with the result of workers feeling stretched to meet the demands. Therefore, as a potential means of giving staff more time with their clients, we are working in collaboration with Sheriffs in Aberdeen Sheriff Court to pilot shorter and more succinct JSW Reports (see below).
- Loss of joinery workshop remains a very considerable challenge in those clients working in joinery tended to be more able, often in employment, and more likely to get through their orders more quickly. While we have attempted to compensate by increasing outdoor placements, many of these are in parks where we would have previously refurbished benches, play park equipment etc. in our joinery workshop. It was also a good resource in poor weather. We are continuing to seek suitable premises and looking at other options. Loss of the joinery workshop with the significant reduction in the number of placements we are able to offer is likely to have had a significant impact on the average length of time taken to complete UPW orders. This is further compounded by the loss of a number of individual placements in charity shops etc. UPW staff have been working creatively in trying circumstances to continue to deliver a quality service to clients but as yet have neither performance nor completion data.
- We have an aging vehicle fleet (incompatible with LEZ restrictions), difficulty in sourcing new vehicles to meet our needs and, even if we get new electric vehicles, there is a lack of charging points across our communities. These issues are likely to take some time to resolve and, in the meantime, we are reliant on “work arounds”.
- Some concerns about use of ASBOs particularly for people with mental health problems, learning problems etc. who will be unable to comply and therefore

criminalised. Within the Community Justice Improvement Plan, we have a project to review ASBO guidance and implement change ideas to how we respond and manage anti-social behaviour in our city centre and communities and only use Orders when it is deemed the best course of action.

- Increasing numbers of people with no recourse to public funds is putting additional strain on resources and we have increasingly seen this year that bail and community orders and are being imposed which results in social work securing housing and providing living expenses. We have reached out to the justice network across Scotland to determine how other areas are dealing with this challenge and we will continue to raise this nationally to ensure a consistent response and approach across the country.

11) Collaborative working across justice partnerships

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

Aberdeen Foyer currently delivers our Employability Service, primarily in respect of the Other Activity element of Unpaid Work. They provide a wide range of services outlined above and continued support for people beyond the end of their orders. Similarly Adult Learning links individuals into longer term services such as college courses, language classes et.

By and large we, especially our Support Works, have good knowledge and links with statutory and non-statutory services across the city. They are therefore able to provide “bespoke” support, referral and signposting to the most appropriate services to meet client’s needs.

12) Additional information

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

- Areas for improvement and planned next steps.
- New ways of working and benefits achieved from these.

Involvement in Community Justice Improvement Projects

Over this reporting period Aberdeen City’s Community Justice Partnership has aligned the new National Strategy with the needs of the citizens of Aberdeen to develop a suite of improvement projects. These projects are the Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan for 2024-2026 and they outline the next steps in terms of tangible improvement for Community Justice in Aberdeen. Justice Social Work will have a role in these, in relation to Community Payback Orders, including:

- Exit Questionnaires - leading a project to continue our focus on ensuring the voice of those we work with is central to informing our approach by looking at how we can further increase the completion of CPO Exit Questionnaires by clients when they come to the end of Orders;

- Support where concerns with substance use - contributing to a project which aims to increase the proportion of individuals who have concerns with their substance use who are offered or accessing support, including those on CPOs;
- Improving Confidence in Community Justice - contributing to a project which aims to increase confidence in Community Justice including via awareness-raising in relation to CPO Unpaid Work. The project will aim to
 - Increase the number of cross sector organisations signing up to offer individual placements to those on unpaid work,
 - Obtain and incorporate local community suggestions as to potential projects,
 - Compile a tangible record of projects – as a legacy of work done and impact made, and
 - Create a definitive guide to what UPW/CPO actually is and the benefits of it.

National Care Inspectorate Thematic Review of Performance and Quality Assurance

JSWS in Aberdeen welcomes the opportunity, as part of the current national review, to consider the current capacity and ability of our service to confidently and robustly evidence performance, quality and outcomes in relation to community-based sentences, including CPOs. The findings of this self-evaluation and review will inform how we can build on and improve in this area and reviewing our Service Delivery Plan and Performance Framework are early priorities for us, in the coming period.