

Justice Social Work

Annual Performance Report 2024-25

1. Introduction

As Chief Officer for Adult Social Work, I am delighted to present our Justice Social Work Annual Performance Report for 2024-25.

We continue to deliver our services to a high standard, despite increasing workloads (as reflected in the figures provided in this report). Justice Social Work is also impacted by wider system pressures, including resourcing constraints which are affecting services across the piece. And those we work with are presenting with increasingly complex and challenging risks and needs.

Notwithstanding this, our dedicated workforce continues to aspire to our service Vision, that “Every person that we work with achieves the best possible individual and statutory outcomes, whilst acknowledging that public protection is paramount”. Staff engaged in the refresh of our Vision and Values in February 2025, (as part of the refresh of our service Delivery Plan), which served to reinforce our core values of being person-centred, demonstrating ‘stickability’, flexibility and responsiveness, and working in a way that is informed by an understanding of the impact of trauma.

In August 2024 the first appointment was made to a new role within the Justice Social Work Service – Strategic Service Manager – to work alongside the Service Manager for Operations. This role was created in recognition of the extensive strategic, statutory performance reporting and governance demands that the service has in place. This also gave a real focus and increased capacity for continuous on service improvement.

This report presents an overview of the huge amount of work undertaken by the service during the year, showing what has been achieved, including the positive outcomes for our clients. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to all the staff who work within the service for their ongoing commitment and dedication within an increasingly challenging context. I would also like to recognise the longstanding contribution made by our outgoing service manager who retired at the end of March 2025.

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 2025-29](#) sets out the priority objectives for all of the delegated functions and services. 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.

At a national level, the [National Outcomes and Standards](#) provide clear guidance on the delivery of justice social work services. Other key strategic documents include [The Vision for Justice in Scotland](#) (2022), the [Strategy for Community Justice](#) (2022), and a Community Justice Outcomes Performance and Improvement Framework (2023). Service delivery also aligns with the national [GIRFE principles](#). In addition, and the Scottish Government have outlined [national health and wellbeing outcomes](#) which all partnerships must strive towards.

3. Governance

The Terms of Reference of the Service's Performance Management Board (PMB), were refreshed during the year, as part of a review of the Services' governance arrangements. The PMB is 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.

A new operational Implementation Group, on which all staff are represented, was established during the year. This group reports in to the PMB, with the remit of progressing the Delivery Plan actions, consideration of performance information and learning & development matters, resolution of any systems issues (D365, LSCMI, etc), and consideration of any wider Community Justice 'operational' issues / issues relating to other services. This group has replaced three other groups, contributing to freeing up valuable staff time.

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, via the Implementation Group.

Other key activities during the year have included undertaking a self-evaluation response to Phase 1 of the Care Inspectorate's Autumn 2024 national 'Thematic Review of Performance and Quality Assurance' across JSW services, the refresh of the service Delivery Plan for 2025-29 and related Performance and Quality Assurance Framework, reviewing service governance arrangements, engaging with staff across the service (via survey and engagement events) to inform service improvement, and establishing a regular monthly staff forum on the back of this.

4. Our Service

The Service continues to be diverse, complex and busy and consists of a Pre-Disposal team based at the Court, three Community Payback Orders (CPO) teams, an Unpaid Work team, Women's Service, Caledonian workers, Throughcare team, Support Work and Admin teams. The primary remit of the Service 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 be experiencing a range of issues, including 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.

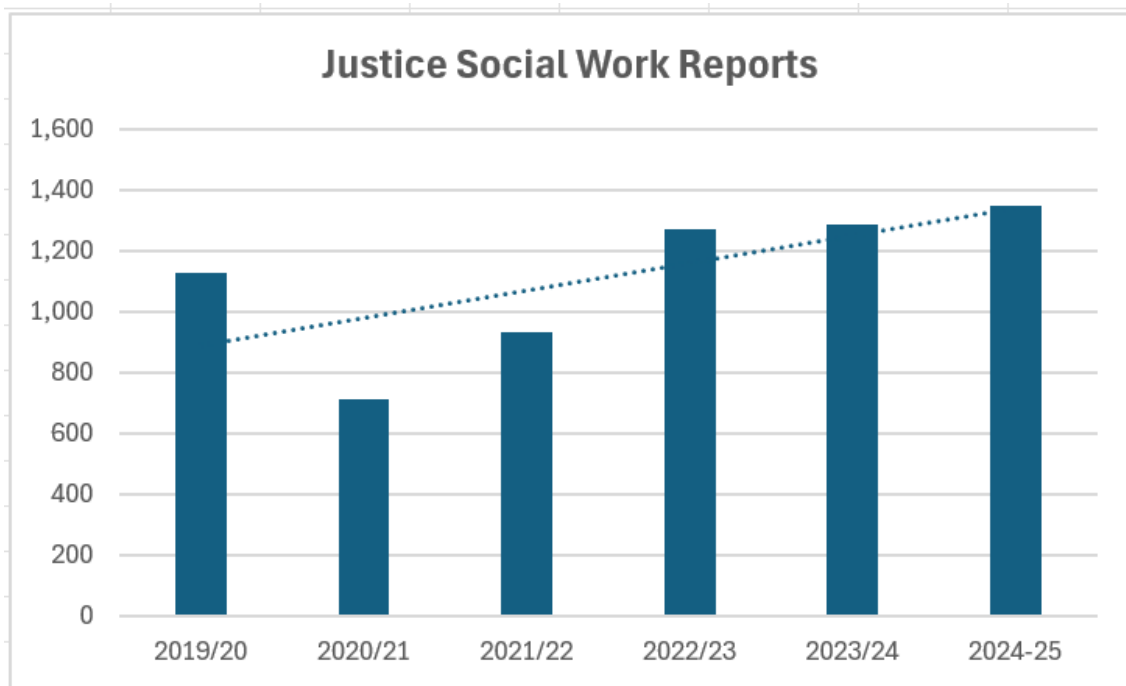
5. Our Performance

The table below provides an overview of some of our key Justice Social Work data for 2024-25 and the years preceding.

Table 1

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024-25
Justice Social Work Reports	1,126	715	935	1271	1286	1348
Community Payback Orders imposed	1,055	506	667	909	851	1059
Diversion commenced	114	150	168	149	287	248
Bail Supervision commenced	45	<5	26	117	126	90

The purpose of **Justice Social Work Reports** (JSWR) is to assist in the sentencing process, provide a risk and needs assessment, which will complement the range of other information available to the court. Justice Social Workers are skilled at assessment, problem solving and devising person centred plans and require drawing on all of these skills when compiling a JSWR. In particular, the report provides information on the context of the person's circumstances and focuses on social work interventions and how these may impact positively upon recidivism and the identified risk and need factors.



Numbers of Justice Social Work Reports have increased by 5% from 2023-24 to 2024-25, and continue to surpass pre-pandemic levels.

Diversion from Prosecution by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service 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.

It gave me the kick I needed to get the support I needed

Although numbers of Diversion cases have reduced overall in 2024-25, (though still remain higher than the four year period from April 2019 to March 2024), the numbers of young people aged between 16 and 25 who were diverted has increased by 41%, with the increase particularly relating to young people under 21. This reflects local multi agency efforts to ensure that young people are kept out of the adult justice system where possible and diverted to interventions which will support them to move away from offending behaviour.

I started to believe in myself and that there was a path forward

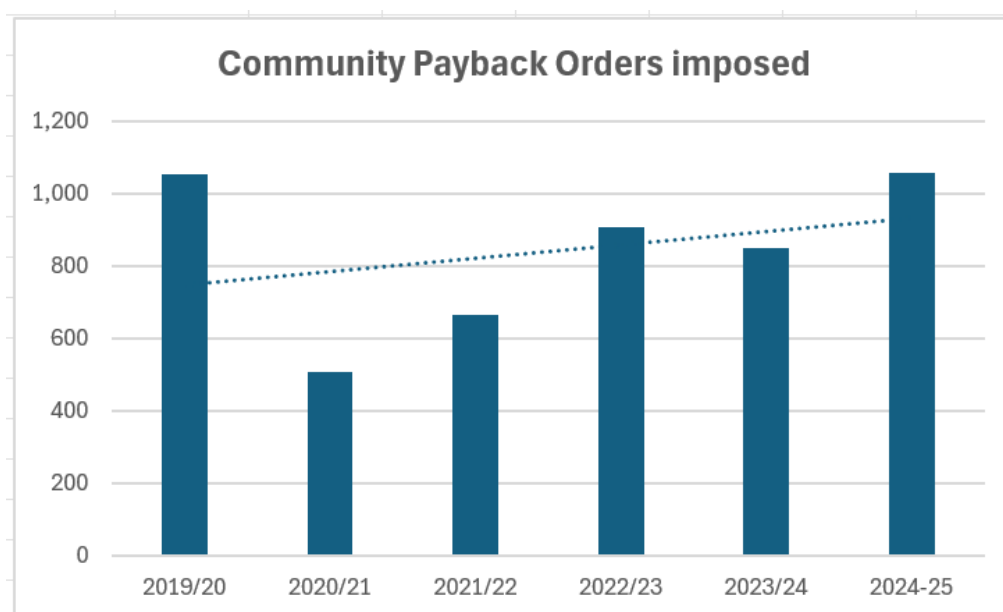
80% of those who completed Exit Questionnaires at the end of their Diversion intervention felt that they were less likely to get into trouble again, and better able to cope with issues that led to them being charged.

Bail Supervision 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. 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.

As Table 1 above shows, the numbers on Bail Supervision have reduced over 2024-25 by 29% compared to the previous year. This is due to a number of factors, including changes in legislation (eg the Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023 and the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024) which mean that sheriffs are more reluctant to remand and will offer standard bail rather than requesting assessment for Supervised Bail or an Electronic Monitoring Order. A decline has also been seen in bail being opposed by COPFS, for the same reasons. A new process was implemented, in conjunction with the Court, in light of the legislative changes, which has led to a reduction in the number of individuals assessed for Bail Supervision. The service now awaits requests for bail supervision assessment from the court or sheriffs except where an individual is specifically identified who would benefit from Supervised bail.

Community Payback Orders (CPO) are the main community sentence in Scotland. A CPO can consist of one or more of nine requirements including offender supervision, compensation, unpaid work or other activity, mental health treatment, drug treatment and alcohol treatment. Every order must contain either an unpaid work or other activity requirement or an offender supervision requirement, or both.



As can be seen, the number of Community Payback Orders imposed has increased significantly from 2023-24 to 2024-25, up by 24% and returning to pre-pandemic levels.

80% of those who completed Supervision Exit Questionnaires (the majority of these being individuals who have successfully completed Community Payback Orders with Supervision), felt that their Supervision had helped them stop or reduce their offending.

My CJW was extremely easy to get on with and I felt able to discuss anything with them. I trust them which was very important to make progress

I started to believe in myself and that there was a path forward

Definitely won't be back!

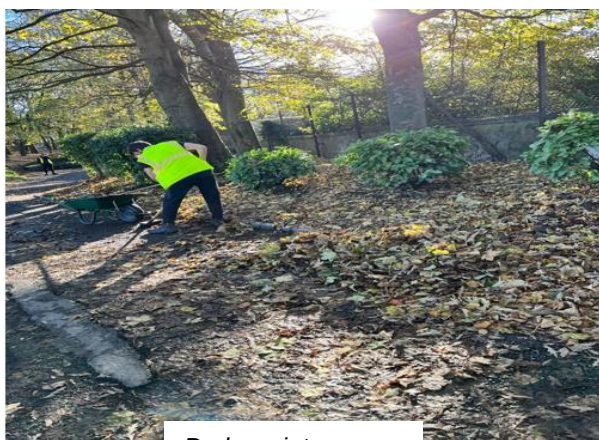
Unpaid Work

At the point of sentence, the court may impose an unpaid work or other activity requirement as part of a CPO. Reparation via 'unpaid work' supports the strengthening of relationships with others in the community, improves employability where appropriate, and supports the development by the individual of a new 'pro-social' identity. Unpaid work is intended to be purposeful, have clear tangible benefits to the community and be meaningful to the individual.

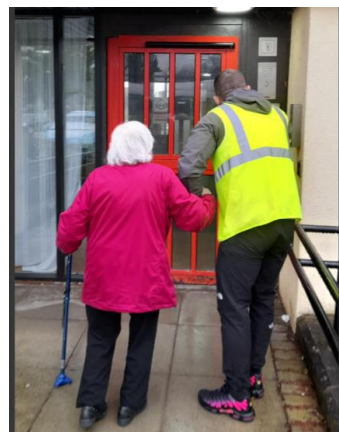
In Aberdeen those undertaking unpaid work are involved in a range of initiatives such as:

- community garden assistance,
- park maintenance,
- painting of community centres, and supported accommodation units etc,
- rubbish collection/fly tip removal,
- assisted shopping runs for the Elderly community,
- snow clearing and gritting, and
- indoor unpaid work craft.

These projects have been instrumental in fostering a sense of togetherness, benefiting both service users, community groups and individuals in need of support.



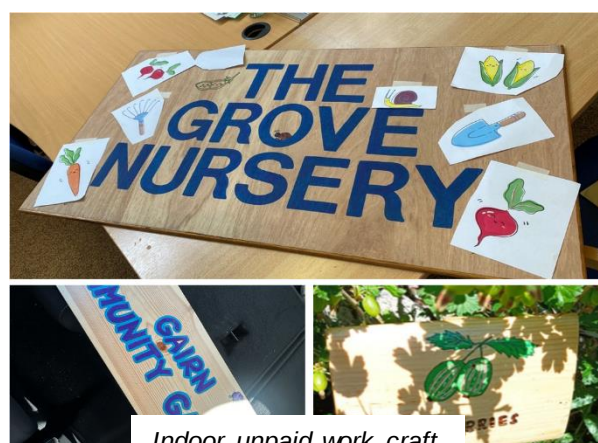
Park maintenance



Assisted shopping



Snow clearing



Indoor unpaid work craft

As at 7th May 2025, there were 701 CPO Unpaid Work and Other Activity Requirements in place (up from 524 as of 2nd May 2024), and 52,468 hours of Unpaid Work outstanding (up from 42,471). This is an increase in Requirements of 34% on the same date the previous year, and an increase in hours outstanding of 24%.

We currently have 18 Unpaid Work 'Individual Placements' in the city. These include large second hand furniture stores, smaller high street second hand clothing stores, food banks, community centres, a community café, churches and mosques, a community golf course, and a local football and boxing club. Most clients on Individual Placements say they enjoyed the experience, and some have continued volunteering after the Placement has completed.

Below are examples of feedback received from beneficiaries of unpaid work in the community:

- The job that would have taken myself and two others at least a couple of hours, was achieved in less than an hour. The young men you sent were brilliant, and so very helpful, I am impressed.
- I want to express a huge thank you to the task supervisors & the UPW'S for their help yesterday it was fantastic and actually I don't know what I would have done without them.
- Thanks once again and your team for all your help with our young people. We would be lost without it and couldn't do our job.

Programmes

i) Caledonian

The Caledonian System is an integrated approach to addressing domestic abuse. It combines a court-ordered programme for men, which is given as a CPO Programme Requirement, which is aimed at changing their behaviour, with support services for women and children.

During 2024-25, 132 Caledonian assessments were undertaken for suitability of the programme, following which 44 Caledonian Programme requirements were imposed as part of Community Payback Orders. The number of men on programmes generally sits at around 84. 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. So whilst a Caledonian Programme may not be imposed as part of a CPO, victims of domestic offences are offered support. We are also developing a lower-level Domestic Abuse programme which is to be piloted this autumn.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024-25
Assessments	171	202	161	138	132
Orders	49	64	49	41	44

ii) Moving Forwards Making Changes / Moving Forwards 2 Change

The Moving Forward Making Changes (MFMC) programme was developed to provide treatment for moderate-high risk adult men (aged 18 and above) convicted of sexual offences, and to increase their capacity to meet their needs by non-offending means. During 2024, MFMC was re-designed to draw on the latest available evidence base and based on evaluation and consultation with relevant stakeholders. The re-designed programme, Moving Forward 2 Change (MF2C), has now been rolled out across the country.

Attendance on the MF2C programme is as part of a three year Community Payback Order (CPO) Programme Requirement or prison licence condition. On average we have had 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.

Aberdeenshire Council has delivered the MFMC (and now MF2C) Programme on behalf of Aberdeen City but is withdrawing that service from April 2026. Our JSW Service is currently establishing a new team which will deliver the service in-house from that time.

Throughcare

The number of individuals in custody on 31st March 2025 where Aberdeen have Throughcare supervision responsibility was 180 (up by 31% from 137 the previous year) and those in the community subject to licence conditions and Supervised Release Orders was 75 (61 as of 31st March 2024).

Table 2 below sets out the number of individuals released on licence during the year.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Female	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5
Male	37	39	32	39	45	45

MAPPA

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. This continues to ensure that access to appropriate housing and primary care services are in place when prisoners are released.

Throughout the year 2024/25, Justice Social Work reported 6 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.

Support Work

The service's support work staff are a vital part of the Justice Social Work Service. Support Workers work with clients to encourage and support them to comply with orders and licence conditions, supporting them to engage as well as with accommodation and financial issues, etc.

6. Working with Third Sector partners

During the year we undertook re-commissioning of two services; one for the provision of an Employability service for adults (16+) who are subject to a 'Community Payback Order with an unpaid work and other activity requirement' and other individuals receiving a service from justice social work, which is provided by Aberdeen Foyer; and secondly the provision of an Outreach Support Service provided by Turning Point Scotland. This service is for adults (16+) who have served a custodial sentence and are subject to Release Licence or Court mandated supervision or are eligible for voluntary aftercare following release from prison within the last 12 months.

The Aberdeen Foyer contract was continued from the previous year, and individuals engaging with the service gained 45 qualifications during 2024-25, with 12 clients moving into employment.

Case Study: X was referred to Foyer in September 2023. He began his journey with a strong start, making progress towards his CSCS card and engaging positively with his Development Coach. After a setback linked to alcohol dependency, X temporarily disengaged. However, he returned with renewed motivation, having started attending support groups for recovery. X reconnected with Foyer and began attending weekly appointments again. He showed real commitment – completing mock tests and eventually passing his CSCS exam with full marks. X now has his green card and continues to work with Foyer to find employment in the construction sector. His journey highlights the importance of second chances and the power of perseverance.

7. Challenges

Release from custody via virtual Courts, and ‘unplanned’ liberations from other Courts, continue to present challenges in respect of providing multi agency ‘throughcare’ support (for housing, medication, benefits, etc) and engaging and inducting individuals being released from establishments across the country who have CPOs to progress in the community. Justice Social Work is represented on a multi-agency short life working group which is looking at ways services and agencies can work together to improve our collective response and pathways, particularly considering increasing drug related deaths.

Numbers of CPO Unpaid Work Requirements have now surpassed pre-pandemic levels. The ‘workshop’ element of the service, which provides lighter, seated unpaid work placement opportunities, remains in a temporary location. Further focus is to be given to increasing availability of individual placements, and to providing further appropriate and meaningful placements for the increasing number of clients (around 50%) who can only undertake indoor or seated tasks.

Although numbers of 16 and 17 year olds in contact with the service are low (seven Justice Social Work Reports and <5 CPOs in 2024-25), the service provided JSWRs for 89 young people aged 18 – 20 years, and oversaw the same number of CPOs, in the same period. Getting it right for these young people is critical, and with a lack of dedicated resourcing, there is scope for improvement in terms of pathways and collaborative working between Justice and Children’s Social Work Services, particularly in light of current and future changes relating to the Children’s Care & Justice (Scotland) Act 2024.

In light of continuing pressures on prisons, further tranches of early release of prisoners were initiated by Scottish Government. The STP40 early release programme took place between 18th February, and 20th March 2025. A total of 312 individuals were released nationally, with 20 returning to Aberdeen City. Feedback from involved partners was mostly positive. Coordination between services, particularly Alcohol and Drugs Action, Integrated Drugs Service, and the Assertive Outreach team was effective, enabling advance planning and support for individuals. However, gaps were identified in several cases involving Supervised Release Orders, where individuals were released without Integrated Case Management or MAPPA-level assessments. Justice Social Work had to respond reactively, convening MAPPA meetings and finalising risk assessments post-liberation. Communication delays and incorrect information (e.g. misidentification of Opioid Replacement Therapy (methadone script) status) were noted, especially during the third tranche. While housing coordination improved compared to previous releases, challenges remained with individuals not attending appointments or being unreachable post-release. Additionally, not all establishments followed through with expected Case Management Board processes, requiring local staff to chase information and arrange contact independently. These issues underscore the need for consistent national protocols and clearer accountability in future early release scenarios.

8. Feedback from clients

JSW clients completing supervision (either CPO or licence), a CPO Unpaid Work requirement, or Diversion from Prosecution are asked to complete an exit questionnaire. The below table shows the numbers of questionnaires completed, and the increase achieved during the year compared with the previous year (41% overall).

Questionnaires Completed	Male	Female	TOTAL 24-25	TOTAL 23-24
Diversion	40 (78%)	9 (18%)	*51	23**
Supervision	108 (89%)	13 (11%)	121	93
Unpaid Work	160 (90%)	17 (10%)	177	131
TOTAL	308 (88%)	39 (12%)	349	247

* includes 2 for whom gender unknown

** collation of Exit Questionnaires not reinstated until November 2023

Feedback collected is collated and reviewed on a quarterly and annual basis, and considered via our service governance arrangements, including in terms of any feedback which might inform service improvement. Summary highlights are shared with the wider staff group, with more detailed or specific feedback being shared with individual staff members via Supervision arrangements.

Feedback comments for 2024-25 was overwhelmingly positive, including the below areas:

- **Diversion** - the perceived benefits of Diversion, and personal improvements reported by participants
- **Supervision** - improvements in various life issues, relationships with Justice Social Work workers, useful aspects of supervision, behavioural changes, reasons for changes in offending behaviour, and community supports linked
- **UPW** - peoples' experiences, achievements, skills developed, and opinions about staff and community impact.

There were many very positive individual comments about the value of an individual's relationship with their worker/s, and the role played by the worker/s.

9. Areas for Improvement / Looking Forwards

The Care Inspectorate's National Thematic Review of JSWS Performance and Quality Assurance (Phase 1) focused on the current capacity of services to evidence performance, quality and outcomes in relation to community based sentences. This focused on the sector's ability to confidently and robustly evidence the effectiveness of community support and supervision. Undertaking the related self evaluation activity enabled the service to identify areas for improvement, including looking at how to extract information from the LSCMI database in order to gain increased

understanding of our client base and inform how we better meet the needs of those we work with.

At the start of 2025, work was done to refresh the JSW Delivery Plan for 2025-26. The Plan was refreshed taking into account the following:

- Outstanding actions from the previous Delivery Plan;
- Feedback from staff, clients and partners;
- Key data, including comparison with other areas;
- Findings from the above referenced Self Evaluation of Performance and Quality Assurance (as part of a national exercise led by the Care Inspectorate), and from Quality Assurance of case records;
- Alignment with the local Health & Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan and Community Planning Aberdeen Local Outcome Improvement Plan priorities; and
- Alignment with national Community Justice priorities.

Areas for improvement and gaps in support or services identified, which were incorporated into our refreshed Plan, include the below.

Local / service issues:

- Potential for improved collaborative working with wider partners including Aberdeen City Council Housing services, mental health services and third sector;
- Further development of our services for women, and what we offer specifically for men;
- Development of a lower level domestic abuse programme;
- Developing our in-house expertise in relation to working with individuals with alcohol and drugs issues; and

National / wider issues:

- Preparatory work for implementation of new legislation and other developments, in conjunction with partner & services as relevant, eg Children's Care & Justice (S) Act 2024, Bail & Release (Scotland) Act, Review of JSW National Outcomes & Standards, and Trauma Informed Domestic Abuse Courts.

In addition, during the period, Aberdeenshire Council gave notice that they are to cease providing the 'Moving Forwards 2 Change' programme for sex offenders (previously Moving Forwards Making Changes), for Aberdeen City clients, from end March 2026. On average we have between 30 and 35 people on the MFMC / MF2C programme at any time due to it being a three year programme and people joining and leaving the programme throughout the year. Aberdeen City JSW Service is in the process of developing in-house provision of this service, through relevant staff

training and development of appropriate procedures, etc, which will be required to fill this gap.

10. Conclusion

2024–25 has been a year of significant activity, challenge, and progress for the Justice Social Work Service. Despite increasing complexity in the needs of those we support, legislative changes, and ongoing system pressures, the service has continued to deliver high-quality, person-centred interventions that prioritise public protection and individual outcomes.

The data and feedback presented in this report demonstrate the breadth and depth of our work — from statutory supervision and unpaid work to specialist programmes and throughcare support. Our commitment to continuous improvement has been evident through the refresh of our Delivery Plan, enhanced governance structures, and engagement with national thematic reviews and strategic developments.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on addressing identified gaps, strengthening partnerships, and preparing for future legislative and policy changes. The development of in-house provision for the MF2C programme, further work on domestic abuse interventions, and improved collaboration with housing and mental health services are key priorities.

We extend our sincere thanks to all staff across the service for their dedication, resilience, and professionalism. Their efforts continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals, families, and communities across Aberdeen.