

ANGUS Community Justice Partnership  
Annual Report April 2023 – March 2024



## Foreword from Chair of Angus Community Justice Partnership

The years 2022-23 and 2023-24 have represented a transition for Community Justice, with the introduction of a refreshed Delivery Plan for the National Community Justice Strategy, issued in June 2023 and updated in March 2024, following a new iteration of our National Vision.

*“Our vision is for a just, safe resilient Scotland.*

*Issues of Justice affect us all.*

*Justice is the concept of fairness”*

*(Scottish Government, 2022)*

The Delivery Plan sets out a number of high-level actions needed to fulfil the shift away from a justice system characterised by a large prison population to one where the balance of care is shifted to the community, and which seeks to tackle the underlying causes of offending at an earlier stage.

Our vision for Community Justice in Angus is:

***‘Prevent and reduce offending by addressing its underlying causes... delivering a fair and equal service that safely and effectively supports and manages those who have committed offences or are on the periphery of the justice system reintegrate back into their community, reduce and repair the harm caused to victims and communities through crime, and maintain the public’s trust in the justice system.’ (ACJP, 2022)***

It falls to the Angus Community Justice Partnership to lead the way, working in partnership across all sectors, alongside the communities of Angus and together with those of lived and living experience. The partnership itself is comprised of members of the following organisations:

- TCA (Tayside Council on Alcohol)
- Angus Council
- NHS Tayside
- Victim Support Scotland
- Families Outside
- Skills Development Scotland

- Police Scotland
- Angus Women's Aid
- Angus Health and Social Care Partnership

The following narrative offers an insight into the work of our Partnership from April 2023 – March 2024. I would like to thank each and every member for their support in engaging with the challenges of creating an Angus which reflects the national ambitions of fairness and justice for all.

Kathryn Baker

Chair of Angus Community Justice Partnership

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## **Introduction**

Angus Community Justice Partnership (ACJP) continues to evolve and respond to the shifting national response to community justice.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, Scottish Government published a revised Community Justice Performance Framework which sets out a group of agreed national outcomes for Community Justice Partnerships. These outcomes will be used to set the local delivery plans for ACJP and will in the coming years allow for benchmarking of local outcomes and some national comparisons may also be drawn for this data.

ACJP reports directly into Angus Community Planning Partnership and links between these two partnerships have been strengthened during the reporting period with the implementation of the Angus Community Plan 2022 – 2030 being embedded into practice, supporting clearer governance arrangements for ACJP.

ACJP has one delivery group which focuses on monitoring and reviewing the Angus Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2021- 2026.

The ACJP Co-ordinator is also the Lead Officer for the Protecting People Angus Strategic Committee, this ensures strong links between the ACJP and the Protecting People Angus Strategic Committee which has a remit for Child Protection, Adult Protection and Gender Based Violence.

# Angus Justice Services April 2023 – March 2024

420



Average number of individuals open to Angus Justice services.



14%

Percentage of females open to service.

84%

Of individuals managed in the community.



1326

Scheduled Court appearance in 2023/24

77

Average number of Angus residents sentenced in prison.



57

Voluntary Throughcare cases commenced for individuals following a period of custody of less than 4 years.

578

Community Payback Orders in existence (297 new orders) in 2023/24.



2,789

Months of Offender Supervision imposed as part of a CPO.

15,170

Hours of Unpaid Work or other activity completed in 2023/24.



## **Our Partnerships Strengths and Achievements**

ACJP are pleased to report that there have been a number of improvements in community justice service planning and delivery during April 2023- March 2024.

### **Governance and Support to Angus Community Justice Partnership**

Over the last year, the Chair and Co-ordinator have worked hard to develop strong links both within the partnership and outwardly with other local strategic committees.

Work is now well underway to enhance support to the partnership. The ACJP is now being supported by the Protecting People Angus Team. This will ensure cross over into developments for child and adult protection and violence against women and girls and prevent any duplication of efforts amongst our strategic partnerships.

### **Diversion from Prosecution**

Diversion from Prosecution is a process by which the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) can refer a case to social work – and their partners – as a means of addressing the underlying causes of alleged offending when this is deemed the most appropriate course of action, rather than pursuing prosecution through the Courts at that time. Diversion of Prosecution is an example of a community justice approach.

In Angus, individuals are offered support via Diversion from Prosecution using a trauma informed and person-centred approach. Angus Council Justice Services remain the responsible service for Diversion from Prosecution however, Justice Services collaborate with a range of services and third sector agencies to ensure people subject to Diversion from Prosecution receive the best and most relevant support possible. During the reporting period, Justice Services increased their number of Community Justice Assistants by one full time worker to assist with early interventions: Arrest Referral, Bail Supervision and Diversion from Prosecution.

### **Transitions: Back to pre-COVID Service Delivery**

In the reporting period, the custodies – which had all been held in Dundee during and following Covid – returned to Forfar Sheriff Court. This enabled Angus Council Justice staff to carry out Arrest Referral interviews in the Court cells and provide an assessment and support to all Angus residents in custody.

It is hoped now the custodies have returned to Forfar the number of bail assessments carried out in Angus will increase.

Angus Justice Services has a good relationship and effective communication with Police, the Procurator Fiscal's Office and the Courts and the geographical proximity of the Angus Council Justice Services Teams and the Sherriff Court supports these positive relationships. Justice Services staff benefit from good access to the Court and Court cells, likewise service users have easy access to the Justice Services Teams located in County Buildings and a Duty Worker is available each weekday to provide advice, support and guidance.

### **Transitions from Prison to Community**

Justice Healthcare Services, NHS Tayside, liaise with Angus Integrated Drug Alcohol Recovery Service for any patients who are being released with a prescription of Opioid Substitution Therapy. The Substance Use team within the prisons in Tayside have an excellent relationship with the community teams. There is a multi-disciplinary group which meets daily in HMP Perth to discuss persons of concern. This includes those who have been found to be under the influence and are due for liberation soon.

Justice Social workers in Angus Council Justice Services identify health needs of service users prior to liberation from custody and liaise with services within the community currently in place and share relevant information to develop a collaborative approach. If no current supports are in place, referrals are made to relevant health care services i.e. General Practitioner, Angus Integrated Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service (AIDARS), Community Mental Health, dentists or third sector organisations i.e. Hillcrest Futures, TCA, Penumbra. Service users are supported to access services and attend appointments. The impact of this has contributed to a smooth transition from custody to community for service users.

Support with housing during prison – community transitions, is also a priority area for ACJP partners and during the reporting period, there has been some successful interventions to support individuals to maintain their tenancies during custodial sentences and support families where the main tenant has been given a custodial sentence. The Housing Protocol was revised and strengthened in 2019, in line with SHORE standards and rapid rehousing guidelines. The focus is on partnership working to prevent homelessness on entry to prison, and to avoid unplanned homelessness on release. The Council has an information-sharing agreement in place with SPS and receives weekly reports on prison admissions and upcoming liberations.

Effective partnership working has been key to both preventing tenancy loss on admission, and facilitating housing on release, where a prisoner would otherwise be homeless. In



one case, information-sharing between SPS, Angus Council, Angus Housing Association and benefits staff identified a prisoner with high arrears and legal action. A substantial backdate was successfully applied for on mental health grounds, cancelling arrears and legal action, and the person able to return home on release.

### **Community Payback Orders**

Many people believe that Community Payback Orders (CPO) simply involve court ordered unpaid work. While many CPOs do involve an unpaid work requirement, a more holistic approach can be taken and works very well here in Angus.

Angus Justice Services run groups including life skills; understanding relationships; steps to change (offence focused & victim empathy); walk & talk/nature; sleep hygiene; trauma; and programmes for high-risk domestic abuse perpetrators (Fergus Programme). We also work in partnership with Dundee, Perth & Kinross Councils in respect of groupwork programmes (MFMC) for those convicted of sexual offences and given a CPO with a programme requirement.

### **Successful Community Justice Interventions following a Serious Offence**

#### **Case Study – Munro Team, Angus Council Justice Services**

'David' is a 60-year-old male who first entered the Justice System in 2004 after committing the offence of murder. David committed the offence whilst experiencing significant alcohol addiction. David had a history of childhood trauma and subsequent issues within his marriage, which were compounded by difficulties in emotional regulation.

David was given a mandatory Life Sentence at Court and having served the minimum term imposed (12 years in custody) the Parole Board granted David's release into the community: his Life Licence is managed by Angus Justice Services. Whilst he appeared to manage well initially, David was then recalled to custody on three separate occasions, due to familial relationship issues, further offending and unreported relapses with alcohol use, the latter of which was a highest risk factor for further offending and an escalation in risk.

#### **Intervention**

Whilst in custody, following his last recall, David was again being considered for re-release. However, without a robust Justice risk management plan and greater commitment to the process by David, it was assessed this could potentially result in a further recall. Through intensive liaison with David, prison based social work and local alcohol recovery services, a plan of support and intervention was formulated which was deemed suitable

to manage the potential risk David posed to the community. The intervention plan submitted to the Parole Board included:

- Relationship building.
- Regular appointments with alcohol recovery services to undertake relapse prevention and emotional regulation programmes, in addition to random and regular alcohol testing.
- David to undertake the Justice-led 'Understanding Relationships' Programme.

Prior to David's release, introductions were made with recovery services staff for relationships to be established. This was beneficial and allowed trust to develop. Furthermore, the Justice Social Worker instilled the importance of honesty in professional working relationships.

As a result of the trauma responsive practice and approach to relationship building, therapeutic interventions, worked well to engage David and placed him at the centre of his own interventions.

#### Outcome

David has been able to move forward in his life, enjoying rewarding relationships within which he has learned the coping strategies required to better manage conflict and adverse situations. He has always evidenced remorse for his actions and victim empathy, this has not changed. He is now in a long-term stable relationship which is positive in nature and is successfully self-employed. Where David was once closed off to services and support, he now enjoys open and honest relationships with professionals. With reference to partnership working with prison social work staff and recovery services, this has been successful to date, with David remaining abstinent from alcohol for the past four years since his release.

## **The challenges we face and areas for improvement**

Whilst the period April 2023 – March 2024 has seen many successes for ACJP, taking forward the community justice agenda remains challenging. As a small, rural local authority we face challenges around scope, breadth and engagement. Numbers requiring diversion and early interventions such as arrest referral are small. This largely precludes the opportunity to commission discrete provision. This leaves our partners within the statutory team leading on these aspects, with a less tangible role for third sector. That said, over the reporting period we worked hard to develop a more integrated approach, including appointing our partnership Chair from the third sector. Key challenges are presented in more detail below, with many of these forming the basis for our local area action plan as we move forward into 2024/25.

### **Strategic Leadership and Engagement**

Like many strategic partnerships, ACJP benefits from a core group of very active and skilled professionals. The partnership has, however, identified some gaps in membership. As ACJP's Chair is the Chief Executive Officer at Tayside Council on Alcohol, our leadership reflects the key role that the third sector plays in ensuring the success of community justice in its broadest sense. The partnership also benefits from the expertise of many victim-focused third sector agencies such as; Angus Women's Aid and Victim Support Scotland. However, we have limited engagement from more universal third sector services and local support services who do play a role in supporting individuals involved in the justice system. During April 2024 – March 2025, we will work to strengthen our membership and ensure each partner understands how their organisation supports the strategic aims of ACJP.

Other gaps in our membership will be explored during April 2024 – March 2025 and following this we plan to engage with our existing membership to ensure that there is widespread understanding of members roles and responsibilities to support improved governance of the partnerships plans.

### **Public Opinion and Workforce Awareness**

ACJP have some limited evidence that public opinion is not broadly in favour of delivering justice in communities, as opposed to penal institutions. The most recently published findings from the [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2021-2022](#), found that 32% of respondents slightly or strongly disagree with the statement 'Only those who have committed the most serious crimes should be put in prison.' The partnership hypothesise that public opinion across large sections of society is not in favour of community justice approaches with many people, including victims of crime, believing that people who

commit crimes should be in prison. The recent media coverage of the emergency early release of prisoners also seemed to highlight a presumption against community justice approaches.

During April 2024 – March 2025, ACJP will work to gather local evidence of public opinion around community justice approaches and develop a community engagement and communications plan based on this which seeks to raise awareness of the benefits of community justice approaches while recognising the very valid concerns of victims of crime and those living in Angus communities.

In addition to community engagement, ACJP also plan to prioritise workforce development in April 2024 – March 2025 to raise awareness of community justice approaches amongst those working and volunteering in roles which involve supporting people in Angus.

### **Restorative Justice**

Restorative Justice is an area that ACJP are in the early stages of exploring. The CJS Restorative Justice e-learning module has been widely promoted within partner agencies to upskill staff in this area. Discussions have been held at partnership meetings, how best to proceed and victim support services have raised concerns around how this can be delivered successfully whilst ensuring the wellbeing of victims of crime is protected. During April 2024 – March 2025, the partnership will continue to explore this, including looked at best practice nationally and how other local authority areas have secured resources to move restorative justice projects forward.

### **Involving those with lived & living experience**

Across all agendas, professionals are increasingly recognising the importance of ensuring the voices of those with lived and living experience are heard and inform national and local policy and practice.

Many member organisations of ACJP are highly effective in gathering meaningful feedback from those who use their services and using this to develop good practice. However, ACJP intends to do more, by adopting a partnership approach to ensure that lived and living experience voices are at the centre of our planning and service delivery.

ACJP recognise that there are many considerations to ensure involvement is meaningful and that those with lived and living experience are treated with respect

and sensitivity and feel supported to share their expertise in this area. As such, progress will be prioritised but may be slow to be achieved as we navigate this and test ways of working to identify best practice.

### **Developing the Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan**

Under the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016, Community Justice Partnerships are required to publish a Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (CJOIP).

In preparing and publishing a CJOIP, partnerships must comply with various requirements set out in the Community Justice (Scotland) Act in relation to its content; information which must be taken into account during its preparation; and bodies which must be involved or consulted during its preparation.

ACJP's CJOIP will be reviewed and updated during the April 2024 – March 2025 reporting period and will be reflective of the current local community justice practice locally. ACJP updated CJOIP will be ambitious and provide renewed direction to local partners.

## **Appendix 1 – List on Acronyms**

ACJP	Angus Community Justice Partnership
ACPP	Angus Community Planning Partnership
ADP	Alcohol and Drug Partnership
AHSCP	Angus Health and Social Care Partnership
AIDARS	Drug & Alcohol Recovery Service
AJS	Angus Justice Service
AMH	Angus Mental Health
AMHAWN	Well-being Network
APC	Adult Protection Committee
AVAWP	Angus Violence Against Women Partnership
CARM	Care and Risk Management
CARS	Custody Arrest Referral Service
CLOG	Chair & Lead Officers Group
CPC	Child Protection Committee
DfP	Diversion from Prosecution
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
IJB	Integrated Joint Board
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
PPA	Protecting People Angus
PPT	Protecting People Team
S&T	Safe and Together
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SFRS	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
SHORE	Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone
START AV	Short Term Assessment of Risk and Treatability – Adolescent Version
VAA	Angus Voluntary Action