



Community Justice Scotland
Ceartas Coimhearsnachd Alba

Community Justice
Strategic Commissioning Framework

Consultation Feedback – Executive Summary

September 2019

Executive Summary

Background

The National Strategy for Community Justice¹ outlined that a strategic approach to commissioning would be developed for use by all partners in community justice. Community Justice Scotland (CJS) has prepared a draft *Framework* for all partners. It aims to provide a common vision for effective implementation and good practice to support partners to meet their duty to jointly plan, coordinate and deliver services.

The consultation exercise

The consultation was open between 1st July and 30th August 2019. Draft documents were made available to partners for consultation online. Views were sought on the drafts and future actions necessary to achieve effective implementation across the sector.

Partners were invited to respond in writing via questionnaire² and four consultation events. A total of 38 written responses were received, and 45 stakeholders attended consultation events. Twenty-eight of 30 Community Justice Partnerships (CJPs) contributed, through written responses and/or consultation events, and contributions were received from a range of statutory and non-statutory partners. Statutory partners from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Scottish Ambulance Service, Skills Development Scotland, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and Scottish Prison Service (SPS) also took part. Non-statutory sector respondents included third sector charities working with prisoners on release and their families, homelessness organisations, substance misuse and mental health charities, among others.

Feedback was collated and a thematic analysis undertaken. This executive summary provides an overview of the dominant themes for the total sample, and of differences in the views expressed by those representing different sectors, where appropriate.

Main findings

Feedback on the draft documents

The majority of respondents across all sectors found the *Model for effective implementation in community justice* comprehensive, visually easy to navigate, well-structured and straightforward, with consistent language and messages presented throughout. All types of partners recognised a need for a set of key outcomes for establishing and supporting the development of strategic commissioning, and viewed that the *Model* went some way to achieving this. CJPs, in particular, reported that clear direction was needed to reduce current variability in practice across Scotland.

The main perceived gaps in the *Model* were related to lack of resources/leveraging of resources, and the need for a cultural shift in partnership working towards a 'whole

¹ Scottish Government (2016) (Available at <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/11/5600/downloads>)

² Consultation documents, including feedback questionnaire, are available at: <https://communityjustice.scot/news/strategic-commissioning-Framework-for-community-justice-now-open-for-consultation/>

system approach'. Linked to this were views across different sectors that long term outcomes could not be delivered and sustained by the community justice sector alone. Recognising the role of the third sector in strategic commissioning more explicitly in the *Model* (and *Guidance*) was also encouraged, mainly by third sector respondents.

Across most partners, the short, medium and long-term outcomes were considered to be relevant and to provide a robust strategic structure for the future. They were also seen as helpful in embedding best practice in strategic commissioning in a progressive way. Longer timeframes for each set of outcomes may, however, be desirable.

In updating and finalising the model, requests for greater clarity of national outcomes and actions were made. Statutory and third sector partners also stressed that achieving outcomes would depend on external factors (such as the wider determinants of offending).

Feedback on the *Guidance* was largely positive, being seen as detailed, well-structured and comprehensive among all respondent groups. Setting out more clearly what is meant by 'strategic commissioning' (particularly aspects of commissioning that are unique to community justice) would help partners. Similarly, adding clarity around the scope of the *Framework* was seen as necessary.

There was a shared view among CJPs and statutory partners that the document needed to consider the local context and strategic influences more thoroughly, and better align to other local planning partnerships. A small minority of CJPs also expressed disappointment in the *Guidance* overall and felt that best practice guidance was not what was required or expected.

Specific sections within the *Guidance* attracted a limited range and volume of feedback, as did the *Explanatory Note* and *Executive Summary*. For reasons of space they are not reported in this summary.

Implementing joint strategic commissioning

Despite support for the *Framework Guidance* and draft *Model* in principle, several contributors from across different sectors questioned how it would support local delivery.

Specifically, it was felt that while the draft documents make clear that the *Framework* and model are for all partners, it is unclear how local partners should engage with the outcomes as the activities outlined were led by CJS. Respondents in different sectors also indicated that the model may be too ambitious in trying to achieve both a national and local focus.

The main barrier to effective delivery was not a lack of awareness of how to approach strategic commissioning, but rather the need for a shift in perspective, some suggested. While the *Framework* was seen as helpful in detailing the skills and knowledge required within CJPs and demonstrating to partners the importance of their roles and responsibilities within the Partnership, a common theme was that more guidance on how collaboration should be realised was needed.

One of the other main challenges identified was the lack of integrated budgets to support joint commissioning. Several respondents from across different sectors, including event attendees, noted that existing challenges include lack of resources/insufficient resource, sustainability of resources (with some short-term frailty in annual budget commitments and funding for coordinator posts), and upstream movement of resources (i.e. changes in political will and local leadership arrangements impacting on how resources are used).

Other constraints included data availability and sharing, and the availability of skills for using and analysing data to inform planning. Different CJP starting points (and local contexts), leadership and governance arrangements were also cited.

Despite these constraints, the majority of respondents indicated that the *Framework* would help develop long term planning, arrangement and improvement of services for people in community justice. Training to support implementation would be needed in some cases. The value of sharing best practice to support implementation was also a feature of responses.

Timeframes for implementation

The majority of CJPs indicated that timeframes for implementation were only possible with support (n=13 of 19 respondents). A third of CJPs did not think that the proposed timeframes were feasible.

Actions for ensuring effectiveness in joint strategic commissioning

The main 'broad' priorities and actions to emerge were:

- Resolving capacity and resource challenges
- Increasing collaboration, whole system vision and strengthened Partnership working
- Effective leadership and accountability
- Effective co-production and participation
- Increasing effectiveness, needs-led planning and delivery
- Accessing key skills and capacity to deliver effective strategic commissioning
- Finding solutions to data constraints and improving available datasets

Partners from different sectors suggested that new outcomes may be needed and others may need to be refined to provide greater focus.

Conclusions

Although the *Guidance* and *Framework* were largely welcomed, a number of barriers to implementing strategic commissioning exist, primarily insufficient resource for community justice, lack of shared commitment and lack of access to reliable data on service need and effectiveness. These constraints are characteristic of the sector *per se*, and beyond the scope of the *Framework*. Partners reported that the *Framework* should, however, support and contribute to a shared vision for community justice and help to focus partner activities in the short, medium and long term.

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