



Community Justice Scotland
Ceartas Coimhearsnachd Alba

Research and Ethics Committee (REC)
Annual Report 2019-20

April 2020

Introduction

Purpose of this report

This report provides a summary of the activities of Community Justice Scotland's Research and Ethics Committee in 2019-20.

REC Background

The Research and Ethics Committee (REC) was formed in January 2018, with its first meeting held in May 2018. It was established in order that:

- No research is carried out which may be detrimental to Community Justice Scotland in terms of ethical failings;
- An orderly and critical approach is taken to all research proposals, whether internal or external;
- All research proposals are considered by a group of professionals and are marked in a consistent way;
- Returns from the CJS Research Budget spend are maximised.

See [Research and Ethics Committee and Academic Advisory Group Annual Report 2018-19](#) for a summary of last years' activity.

In Spring 2020 a review of wider organisational structures was undertaken. As part of this, REC processes and membership required to be reviewed in order to streamline this for all involved.

This review resulted in the following actions being taken:

- Review REC membership
- Create Terms of Reference and associated guidance¹
- Update and create Research Proposal Application Forms, guidance, and processes
- Ensure all CJS staff members are aware of new and existing processes

Budget

The research budget for 2019-2020 was originally £37,500 and was reduced in the latter part of 2019 by £7,500. The REC were unaware of this reduction which resulted in a shortfall of £1,312 due to funding commitments made prior to this change. This shortfall was filled from elsewhere in the organisation.

From March 2020, the Head of Finance will join the REC in an advisory capacity to provide routine budget updates.

¹ REC Terms of Reference available [here](#)

Membership

Membership to April 2020 included the following internal CJS members:

Julia Clarke – Research Officer
Emma Heffernan – Research Officer
Samantha Reekie – Improvement Lead
Rose McConnachie – Policy Lead
Laura Hoskins – Head of Policy
David Scott – Head of Learning, Development and Innovation
Bill Fitzpatrick – Director of Operations
Mairi-Clare Rodgers – Head of Communications

Committee membership and expectations were reconsidered as part of the REC review. All members have a clear contribution to be made to the work of REC and members provide a balance of independence and expertise within both Standing and Advisory roles.

Membership will be reviewed annually and areas of added value should be considered, such as widening the Committee to include members who are independent of CJS, those with lived experience of the justice system, and those who can provide more strategic oversight and financial guidance. In January 2020, direction from the CJS Chief Executive required the membership and functions of the REC to be reviewed. This resulted in narrowing the membership to the following from March 2020:

Standing REC Members

Research Officers (2)
Improvement and Analysis Representative (1)
Policy Team Representative (1)
Trauma Informed Practice and LDI Representative (1)
Human Rights and Communications Representative(1)

Standing REC Roles (held by the above Standing REC Members)

Chairperson
REC Co-ordinator

Advisory REC Member

Head of Finance (1)

Quorum

Four REC members constitute the quorum for this Committee.

REC Guests

Where it is considered to be beneficial to have the applicant, or an expert in a particular topic, in attendance at the REC meeting this will be arranged. Scoring and discussion will take place separately from their input.

Committee meetings

Quarterly meetings were set at the beginning of the year but some dates required to be altered slightly to suit members. See below table for 2019/20 meeting dates.

Research and Ethics Committee Meetings 2019-20				
Meeting Dates	13/05/2019	26/07/2019	23/10/2019	24/01/2020

Notes from each meeting are recorded. Meetings include an update on any ongoing research supported by the REC, as well as a discussion of any recently submitted research proposals.

All proposals are scored according to a range of factors which reflect the fields contained within the original research proposal application form (available on the CJS website). Scores range from 1 (Low) to 5 (High). An average of scores across all Committee members is collated in order to produce a final proposal scoring.

Research and Ethics Committee Overall Assessment	
Very good project	(Mostly 5s, possibly with some 4s)
Good project	(Mostly 4s, maybe a 5 and up to one 3)
Marginal Project	(Mix of 4s and 3s, and up to one 2)
Not supported	(several 2s and/or a one for any of the criteria)

Summary of research applications commissioned 2019-20

In 2019-20, CJS commissioned and supported research projects which covered a diverse range of topics. Research was undertaken mainly by internal CJS staff, collaborative work was seen and independent research organisations were also commissioned.

Projects Approved by REC

Research Projects that were approved by REC within 2019-20 included the following:

Language testing for CJS ‘Smart Justice Manifesto’

The aim of this work was to obtain evidence on the approach that the CJS Communications Team should take in terms of designing the ‘Smart Justice Manifesto’ by rigorously testing language in order to ensure that all work has the best possible chance of making the desired impact. This work was commissioned to Progressive Partnership Ltd to carry out due to the scale and resources required to undertake this work.

Qualitative research to build upon previous CJS work in creating a map of Justice Processes in Scotland

The aim of this work was to interview individuals who have engaged with different parts of the justice system in order to provide real-life examples of the journeys illustrated by the justice map; understand what people's needs were at, and between, each point of the process they went through; and to generate a bank of qualitative data that can be mapped against a visual representation of the justice system in Scotland.

Development of an interactive mapping tool for the map of Justice Processes in Scotland

The aim of this project was to produce the above detailed visual representation of the justice system in Scotland. This sought to ensure this map may be used as an interactive, digital tool by local areas and CJS partners to facilitate strategic and operational planning. The presentation of the information in this manner seeks also raise awareness of the human context of the above research, providing a vehicle for CJS to highlight potential issues and strengths of the justice system as told by people with experience of that system. The development of this interactive mapping tool was commissioned to The Gate marketing agency to carry out due to the knowledge and resources required to complete this work.

Evaluation of Tribal Home Project

This work saw an evaluation take place of a collaborative pilot project between CJS and the Army. The pilot consisted of a residential training programme which simulated basic Army training, as well as offering mentor support and group work sessions. Places on Tribal Home were open to people who had an interest in working for the Army, but had experienced barriers in gaining access to training and/or employment. The evaluation comprised a number of questionnaires conducted with participants before and after the course to measure change in a range of areas include wellbeing and employability.

Evaluation of Restorative Justice training in HMP Addiewell

This is a collaborative pilot project between CJS and the City of Edinburgh Council who will jointly devise and deliver Restorative Justice training in HMP Addiewell. This training, and the outcomes of the training, will be evaluated in 2020..

Evaluation of CJS Policy Forum

This work seeks to evaluate the impact and efficacy of the CJS Policy Forum. The evaluation will inform the Policy Team whether this group is a good use of resource and worthwhile to all involved, and additionally, how the Forum may be developed going forward.

Projects not Approved by REC

Two projects were not commissioned by REC throughout this period, despite great interest by the Committee. Reasons behind this related to:

- Issues relating to the timing of funding close to the end of the financial year in 2018-19 saw the requirement to return this work to REC in the new financial year. This new year saw a reduction in research budget therefore REC could only part-fund this work despite its high level of interest and the value that would come from the project. However, the applicants did not take CJS up on this offer.
- A request for resource from CJS to join the applicants in carrying out longitudinal research which was not possible due to resource being stretched and unable to be spared for this purpose.

Considerations for 2020-21

A change from March 2020 will see REC meetings taking place on a bi-monthly basis where there are applications to review and assess. Meetings will not be held where there are no new applications. The intention behind this increase is to reduce the number of applications to be reviewed at each meeting and to benefit applicants by ensuring a more manageable time period between a research proposal submission and REC decision being made.

Research and Ethics Committee Meetings 2020-21					
Meeting Dates	20/04/20	22/06/20	24/08/20	26/10/20	21/12/20

As part of changes made to the REC structure and processes, in addition to budget constraints, consideration will be made in early 2020 as to whether REC will continue to accept external bids for funding for research.

Conclusion

Outcomes achieved

The REC continues to achieve a number of outcomes. These include the following:

Formalisation and documentation of all research within CJS

- All research undertaken by, or commissioned by, CJS has to go through a formal application to the REC and is reviewed on quality and ethics prior to approval.
- All research undertaken by, or commissioned by, CJS is comprehensively documented and accounted for.
- All research undertaken by, or commissioned by, CJS is consistent in its approach, and does not replicate or contradict other research under the remit of CJS.

Commissioning and production of high quality research

- A number of research projects have been completed by CJS staff and individuals out-with the organisation, which have made significant contributions to the literature in the area of community justice.
- This research has in some cases played an important role in shaping and informing policy development and community justice practice going forward.

Knowledge sharing

- Research conducted by, or funded by, CJS is disseminated across networks where relevant for the benefit of all.

Building and strengthening of relationships across the sector

- The existence of the REC has allowed for relationship building with professionals across the community justice field through the commissioning, evaluation and discussion of research.
- Continued support for, and engagement amongst those involved in the REC and Academic Advisory Group going forward will ensure that these relationships continue to prosper, ultimately supporting CJS to promote world-leading standards of community justice across Scotland.