



Community Justice Scotland
Ceartas Coimhearsnachd Alba

Research and Ethics Committee (REC)
Annual Report 2020-21

April 2021

Introduction

Purpose of this report

This report provides a summary of the activities of Community Justice Scotland's Research and Ethics Committee in 2020-21.

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 Annual Report 2019-20](#) for a summary of last years' activity.

Budget

The research budget for 2020-21 was £25,000, however, this remained unspent (with the exception of £40 for interview incentives) due to limitations on research which resulted from the suspension of face-to-face research across the Scottish Government due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Membership

Membership to April 2021 included the following internal CJS members:

Julia Clarke (to September 2020) – 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
Rebecca Worrall (from September 2020) – Head of Communications
Mairi-Clare Rogers (to September 2020) - Head of Communications
Helen Boath – Head of Finance (Advisory member)

Committee membership and expectations were reconsidered as part of the 2020 REC review where it was agreed that all members must 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. The 2020/21 annual review of membership agreed that the second Research Officer role should be filled by the new staff member in this position, and notes of interest should be requested from CJS staff to fill the Human Rights/Equalities representative role.

The following shows membership from April 2021 (Human Rights/Equalities role is currently vacant and notes of interest from CJS staff have been invited throughout May 2021).

Standing REC Members

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

Bi-monthly meetings were set at the beginning of the year but some dates required to be altered slightly to suit members. See below table for 2020/21 meeting dates.

Research and Ethics Committee Meetings 2020-21							
Meeting Dates	21/04/20	23/06/20	03/09/20	16/09/20	05/11/20	21/12/20	15/02/21

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 2020-21

In 2020-21, 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.

Whilst a number of projects were approved by REC, many were placed on hold due to a lack of resource. It is hoped that these will continue at a later date.

Projects Approved by REC

Research Projects that were approved by REC within 2020-21 follow:

Community Payback Orders in Scotland: Exploration of Order Terminations (Scoping Work)

This project aimed to scope work, with partner agencies, to explore the reasons behind categories of termination of Community Payback Orders (CPO's) used within the latest Scottish Government CPO data publication. The work intended to provide

greater clarity and understanding of CPO terminations, establish the elements that led some individuals receive a successful review, and obtain detail around the causes of death of those on community sentences with a view to considering how improvements could be made going forward.

Restorative justice practice in custodial settings – a review of the evidence

REC supported a literature review of evidence and best practice being carried out in relation to restorative justice (RJ) in custodial settings. This work aimed to support ongoing research on the delivery of RJ in HMP Addiewell through obtaining information on: national and international evidence of RJ conferences, restorative approaches, and non-face to face RJ approaches in custodial settings.

Lived Experience Research Series

REC were supportive of the proposal to build an evidence base of lived experience of Scotland's justice system, some of which could be illustrated in [CJS justice process map](#). CJS research approved in 2019/20 (*Rules for them, rules for us: First-hand experiences of the justice system in Scotland*) highlighted a need for further targeted research into how specific factors such as (but not limited to) age, gender and support needs impact individuals' experiences of specific stages of the justice system. Any proposed research under this series continues to require individual approval from REC.

Two proposals were approved under this series:

Victims' Experiences of the Justice System

Experiences of the justice system in rural and remote areas of Scotland

Justice Language and Communications Research Review

REC approved a desk-based review of Justice Language and Communications Research intended to build a picture of existing language/reframing/narrative projects, toolkits and research about crime and justice. The aim of this work was to inform a Scottish-specific campaign which builds on the use of the term 'smart justice'.

Community Justice Survey (scoping work/options paper only)

This work aimed to scope and consider the practicalities around the production of a national biennial Community Justice survey to all individuals serving a Community Sentence. The aim of this survey relates to gaining insight and understanding of the experiences and needs of this cohort and to track general change over time.

Exploration of the impact of COVID-19 on the experiences of CPOs (specifically supervision and unpaid work) in Scotland

This project sought to understand the nature of people's experiences of community sentences throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim was to interview both those on community sentences at this time and the staff that manage them to obtain an understanding of the impact a potential surge in additional cases would have and how the pressures that may come with this could be eased.

Academic Articles

The aim of this work was to implement an informal annual framework agreement which would allow members of the CJS Academic Advisory Group (and/or other academic professionals) to produce timely journal-style articles in response to pertinent questions/topics requested by CJS.

Caledonian System Interim Review

This Scottish Government commissioned (CJS managed) research aimed to review the Caledonian System to inform decision making that is required ahead of the formal review which is scheduled to take place in 2022. This work aims to analyse monitoring data which is collected as part of the programme (completion rates, length of time to complete stages etc); obtain staff perspectives on process and potential programme improvements; and to obtain an understanding of participants' and partners' experiences of the programme.

Restorative Justice Animation – Measuring Awareness

This joint work with the Children's and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) aimed to ascertain the effectiveness of a newly created Scottish Government Restorative Justice (RJ) animation clip on raising awareness and understanding of RJ by stakeholders, partners, and people supported throughout the system. This clip differs from other RJ media material as it portrays this in a Scottish context and provides only the most relevant information on the subject. Awareness and understanding will be measured before and after viewing the animation clip to obtain insights into this.

Projects not Approved by REC

Two projects were not approved by REC throughout this period, but detailed feedback was provided in both cases. These proposals would be welcomed for resubmission once appropriate changes have been considered.

Scheduled meetings for 2021-22

Research and Ethics Committee Meetings 2021-22						
Meeting Dates	19/04/21	17/06/21	16/08/21	18/10/21	20/12/21	21/02/22

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.