

VISION FOR JUSTICE AIMS VS COMMUNITY SAFETY REALITY

One year on from publication
of the Vision for Justice 2022



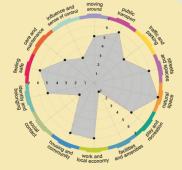
WE HAVE A SOCIETY IN WHICH PEOPLE FEEL, AND ARE, SAFER IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

What we know...

Perceptions and personal experiences of community safety are crucial, and vary depending on a spectrum of factors, including place, wealth, age, sex, ethnicity, sexuality/gender identity and other economic and social distinctions. Absence of crime [quantitative data] does not necessarily correlate with confidence [qualitative data] that places are safe. Fear of crime can be debilitating, affecting wellbeing, life choices, trust and – more broadly – how a community feels and sees itself.

What needs to happen...

Greater focus on place and how people feel is critical; empowering communities; inviting residents into dialogue and critical decision making. The Place Standard Tool (PST) is a model for this kind of involved collaboration. It is an engaging methodology, asking citizens and services to look through different lenses together, to measure what's working, what's not, and why in their area. Support for and investment in this kind of approach – applied uniformly in every local authority – could help neighbourhoods better understand how its citizens feel, and provide an accurate baseline from which to make improvements, and how to make communities feel safer.



WE WORK TOGETHER TO ADDRESS THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF CRIME AND SUPPORT EVERYONE TO LIVE FULL AND HEALTHY LIVES

What we know...

Support for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) is static or being cut. Funding and resourcing of CSPs is under threat, due to the wider financial constraints at local and national levels.

But this is happening at precisely the time when – as a mechanism for knowledge sharing, cooperation, pooling resources and enhancing capacity – CSPs should be protected and promoted.



What needs to happen...

There is no statutory obligation for local authorities to create CSPs but – unless this changes – government should be explicit in its enthusiasm and encouragement for them. Making clear the benefits of multi-agency collaboration; understanding the overlapping complexity of issues and their root causes; and applying whole-system, holistic approaches to community safety, is essential. CSPs are at the heart of this aim, to work “...together to address the underlying causes of crime”. CSPs make manifest the Christie Commission's (2011) recommendation that “Scotland's public services need to work more closely with each other – and with communities – than ever before”.



WE HAVE EFFECTIVE, MODERN PERSON-CENTRED AND TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES TO JUSTICE IN WHICH EVERYONE CAN HAVE TRUST, INCLUDING AS VICTIMS, THOSE ACCUSED OF CRIMES AND AS INDIVIDUALS IN CIVIL DISPUTES

What we know...

Person-centred, trauma-informed approaches help humanise – and resist othering – people, particularly the less able and vulnerable in society.

This is particularly evident to those involved in the cycle of justice.



What needs to happen...

These methodologies should be rolled-out nationwide; in the judiciary; the courts; through policing; and sentencing etc. Staff should be trained. Processes should be updated.

The evidence for person-centred, trauma-informed approaches is overwhelming. It helps to divert and prevent. Support from government seems sure enough, endorsed throughout the Vision but tangible, practical application appears rare. A sustained, significant investment – and a campaign in support of same – would help increase awareness and uptake, and persuade. Perpetrators are the victims of our collective failures.

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WE SUPPORT REHABILITATION, USE CUSTODY ONLY WHERE THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE AND WORK TO REDUCE REOFFENDING AND RE-VICTIMISATION



What we know...

Prison doesn't work. It punishes and brutalises, rather than rehabilitates. It separates us from each other, rather than integrates. And it removes people from their communities, only to return them, often damaged and traumatised, without appropriate provision of care, support, means or compassion. Reconviction rates for offenders in Scotland are rising.

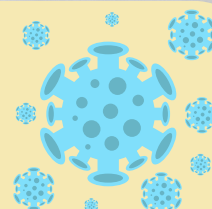
The Howard League tells us that, "if Scotland is to break the cycle of offending, those leaving custody must be given every opportunity to turn their lives around and reintegrate successfully back into their communities." Prevention, mentoring, early intervention and diversion do work.

What needs to happen...

Penal reform; meaningful investments in prevention; significant support for the alternatives to custody and remand; and enhanced funding for prison throughcare and aftercare is essential. There needs to be greater consideration to creative community sentencing; community payback orders (CPOs); restorative justice; and the presumption against short-term sentences, as faster and fairer answers to justice.

There also needs to be greater sympathy in all these aspects, to the effects of the global pandemic on individuals; finances; employment; relationships; mental health. The answers for how to do this exist, with partners like Community Justice Scotland, the Howard League, and with academics and researchers throughout Scottish higher education. Government must engage with expertise and be radically progressive to meet the ambitions of the Vision.

WE ADDRESS THE ON-GOING IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND CONTINUE TO RENEW AND TRANSFORM JUSTICE



What we know...

The global pandemic exacerbated delays in court backlogs and aggravated mental health in many in communities. This stressed an already busy justice system, further delaying disposals and sentencing. In turn, this has impacted confidence and trust in justice, damaging citizens lives – victims and perpetrators, both – waiting for resolution.

Delay in justice can be mentally crippling, affecting wellbeing, employment and social mobility for victims, and the accused, unfairly prolonging their penance beyond formal sentencing.

What needs to happen...

Punishment as deterrence becomes less effective when the distance between offence and consequence increases. Backlogs and delays need to be eliminated, through substantial investment and support for court staff. Justice in Scotland needs to be efficient and swift but empathetic, person-centred and trauma-informed too.

Transformational change is possible, and greatly needed, to help deliver justice that's fair and effective, and recognises society's responsibility to victims of crime, but also the perpetrators of crime who – for whatever reason – are unable to make the right choices.

