

Developing a Community Safety Narrative for Scotland

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Is this you? When you tell people what you do, do people understand? Do you have to follow it up with a long winded explanation of community safety?

What is meant by community safety, or safer communities, has **broadened over the years, and the landscape is increasingly complex**. The initial focus on preventing and reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and disorder is now much wider. Community safety **encompasses everything that helps people to be and to feel safe in their homes, within their community and at places of work or leisure**. It is fundamentally about improving people's quality of life and includes a wide range of issues such as home safety, road safety, water safety (together known as injury prevention), as well as priorities around community justice, counter-terrorism, child sexual exploitation, online safety and substance misuse. This notion of community safety sits within the broader context of **enabling communities to be inclusive, empowered and resilient and safe**, which recognises the influence of the broader economic, social and physical environment.

The 2018 report '[Community Safety – the emerging landscape and future opportunities](#)' outlined and discussed the current challenges facing community safety in Scotland, and recommended that the **development a community safety narrative would help local and national organisations and practitioners** better understand the current community safety landscape.

This paper begins to develop this narrative following a series of discussions between October 2018 and March 2019 with national policy leads and local practitioners working in community safety and related policy areas. The paper is intended to **prompt further discussion and thinking around these issues to help support local community safety partners** to enhance their understanding of current and emerging policy areas and work streams that are relevant to community safety, and increase awareness among those who are working within **other policy areas of the importance of 'thinking with community safety in mind'**.

1. Background

While community safety is not a statutory function for either local or central government, its delivery does **align with statutory obligations**, for example, child protection and anti-social behaviour. Creating safer communities is also **central to the delivery of the National Performance Framework** and contributes towards creating the conditions within local communities that support the **Community Empowerment Act**.

Alongside public sector colleagues, community safety practitioners work within a **post-Christie Commission environment** and are part of the wider community planning arena, where there is a key focus on **shifting to prevention, and working in partnership** to collectively deliver wider community planning outcomes.

During the discussions held, a number of important issues emerged as underpinning safety in 2019, including:

- The importance of **addressing the needs of people and communities holistically**, which requires an understanding of the complexity of a situation as well as how issues in one aspect of people's lives or a community can impact on all other aspects. We know that interventions on one issue can improve other outcomes – improvements to housing and the physical environment, for example, can help to reduce crime rates¹. Working across such a broad range of topics, which cut across a range of policy themes, can make it challenging for community safety practitioners to identify their specific role and where and how to make links.
- The importance of recognising and **fostering the wider social conditions that impact upon community safety**. This includes: people's social networks and personal relationships; volunteering and participation in community activities; the way people relate to each other including trust and shared values; and the extent to which people in communities have control and can influence decisions and actions to improve their local area. We know, for example, that if people feel empowered and satisfied with local services they are more likely to feel safe².
- The **role and importance of the Third Sector** was recognised as playing a key role in enabling safer communities. There are many local and national Third Sector agencies working directly with communities, families, individuals and other partners to improve safety. This often busy and vibrant landscape can make it difficult for partners to know who is doing what and how best to ensure the appropriate links are made.

¹ Taylor, 2008

² Allik and Kearns, 2016 - The study found that interacting with and trusting neighbours had a slightly greater effect on feelings of safety than the perceived quality of policing services; and that people feel safer at home when their housing service provider keeps them informed of things that might affect them, and takes their views on board in making decisions.

2. Strategic Context

The strategic context for public services in Scotland has, not surprisingly, been a **key driver for the current direction of community safety**. This includes Scotland's National Performance Framework, the Christie Commission (discussed above) and subsequent legislation, including the Community Empowerment Act as well as specific strategies and frameworks within Justice and related fields including the Justice Vision, and the Place Standard. All of these have changed the expectations and landscape of the governance and delivery of public services in Scotland, with a growing emphasis on partnership working, community planning – including at a sub-local authority level, community engagement and empowerment, recognising and building on the strengths and assets of people and communities, and the co-production of services.

There are questions about whether **more could be done to raise awareness of these strategies and frameworks**. It is important to understand the main themes underpinning the national strategic direction - those of *empowerment, resilience and addressing inequalities*. Among those consulted, the general consensus is that the strategic direction has been invaluable in creating the conditions for better collaborative working at both the local and national level. A number of these drivers are outlined below:

National Performance Framework

Scotland's revised [National Performance Framework](#) (NPF) was published in June 2018, with a purpose of '*creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through sustainable and inclusive growth*'. The framework focusses on eleven national outcomes. Although community safety contributes to many of these, the most relevant outcome is '***We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe***'. The delivery of the NPF across a range of public services provides an opportunity for community safety practitioners to review their work and work collaboratively to deliver shared outcomes. For further discussion on how the NPF links to community safety see the more detailed [briefing paper](#).

Justice in Scotland: Vision and Priorities

Scotland's [Justice Vision](#) focusses on **prevention and early intervention** and highlights the need for a cross-cutting approach, **recognising the role of other areas to justice and community safety outcomes**, including health, education, housing and employment. The overarching vision is for a 'safe, just and resilient Scotland' and this is underpinned by four key priorities, including '*We live in safe cohesive and resilient communities*'.

A focus on 'Place'

The [Place Standard](#) is a tool to evaluate the quality of places and to help communities, public authorities and industry to work together to create places that support healthy lifestyles and tackle inequalities, particularly health inequalities. The tool was developed in partnership with NHS Health Scotland and Architecture & Design Scotland and can help communities assess what works about their place and where it needs to improve. Local authorities and Community planning Partnerships can use the tool to help plan their activities and prioritise appropriate action and decision on spending.

A Collaborative [Place Principle](#) has been developed which provides a shared understanding of place, and highlights the need to take a more joined-up, collaborative approach to services and assets within a place to achieve better outcomes for people. The principle is not prescriptive and encourages and enables local flexibility in responding to issues and circumstances in different localities. It aims to strengthen **cross-sector collaboration to help maximise the collective**

impact, and agree the joint actions required, to make improvements happen, irrespective of scale or setting.

The Place Principle is a way of bringing ideas about services, investments, resources and assets together. It is an approach to change founded upon a shared understanding of what that place is for and what it wants to become. With this comes a commitment to engaging and involving local people and communities, and the Place Principle provides a route to exercising local or regional accountability over decisions taken about the way resources, services and assets are directed and delivered.

The Place Principle builds on the National Performance Framework by acknowledging, not only the importance, but the necessity, of organisations working collaboratively with each other, and with communities, to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities for all.

Local Governance

The Scottish Government is also building on its commitment to promoting a more participatory, place-based approach, through the [Local Governance Review](#).

Through the Local Governance Review, the Scottish Government and CoSLA are working together to ensure great participation of local communities in local decision-making. The review has two strands 'Community Decision Making' and 'Public Service Governance'. In October 2018, SCSN held a Local Governance Masterclass event aimed at community safety partners, and anyone with an interest in finding out more about increasing participation and decision-making of communities; particularly within the context of safer communities. Read more about the discussion and learning from the day here - [SCSN Local Governance Masterclass Event](#).

Outcome-focussed Performance Monitoring

The shift in emphasis towards outcome-focussed performance monitoring, as opposed to traditional performance monitoring and 'number counting'³. This means measuring the impact of actions, not just the actions themselves, and better understanding the difference which has been made. This is being increasingly recognised in local community safety activity. Further emphasis on this nationally would help further support and drive forward this shift.

Human Rights

Scotland's commitment to creating an inclusive Scotland is one that protects, respects, promotes and implements internationally recognised human rights – developing a '[Human Rights Approach](#)'. This means ensuring people's rights are at the centre of policy and practice. The Scottish Government is committed to creating an inclusive Scotland that protects, respects, promotes and implements internationally recognised human rights and is working to embed human rights into the day to day business of government. More detailed information about what this means in practice for those working in policy is [available](#). Embedding human rights into policy development is not new to many working within community safety. Practitioners are involved in work to protect human rights (e.g. human trafficking, domestic abuse) but have also had to consider the impact on human rights of such work streams as CCTV⁴.

³ Delivering Change, defining outcomes and capturing evidence: What can we learn across the UK? [Delivering change, defining outcomes and capturing evidence: What can we learn across the UK? - The Alliance for Useful Evidence](#), [Community Planning: an update impact report](#)

⁴ The Scottish Human Rights Commission is a useful resource for information and updates – see <http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/>

Fairer Scotland

Through the Fairer Scotland conversation the Scottish Government has identified five ambitions for 2030 underpinned by 50 selected actions. The intention being that through this we can help build a better country - one with low levels of poverty and inequality, genuine equality of opportunity, stronger life chances, and support for all those who need it. Underpinning the drive to ensure a 'Fairer Scotland' is The Fairer Scotland Duty, which came into force in Scotland in April 2018. This act places a legal responsibility on particular public bodies in Scotland to actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions. [Further information](#) outlines the bodies which are bound by the duty (which includes Local Authorities) and that the duty expects 'tackling inequality to be at the heart of key decision making'.

This strategic direction has been invaluable in creating the conditions for better collaborative working, and local partnerships have embraced and are driving this forward in practice. Community safety partnerships have, by definition, focused on partnership working and the delivery of joint strategies and outcomes. However, 2019 brings a more challenging environment. Resources are limited and organisational capacity has reduced. What is needed now is more than traditional partnership working, with a stronger and more concerted focus on translating this into working collectively and building trust⁵. Those leading and working on community safety are well placed to answer the call across public services for 'collaborative leadership', sharing with others their experience, and learning, from having work this way for a number of years.

⁵ See for example the Place Leadership Summit held in November 2018) (<https://www.corra.scot/scotlands-place-leadership-summit/>)

3. Defining Community Safety

Through the discussions held with national policy leads and local practitioners there was consensus that there would be benefit in reinvigorating a national definition of community safety. It was felt this would **provide greater clarity for community safety practitioners and partners and, in turn, create the conditions for more collaborative working**. By drawing out the links with other policy areas this will encourage greater engagement and collaborative working going forward. Importantly, two key principles underpinning any community safety definition were identified:

- **Being person centred, and place-based**

It is noted that *'safety is but one window into the feelings people and communities have about the place they live, work, play, raise families'*. Safety may just be one window, but it is a crucial one, and vital to improving the well-being of individuals and communities. Consider a community where people feel 'unsafe' - such a community is unlikely to thrive economically. Similarly, for a community to be inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe, it must function well socially, physically and economically. This links directly to the next principle for community safety – the importance of addressing the needs of communities holistically.

- **Addressing the needs of communities holistically**

As highlighted in the 2019 Community Safety report *'evidence consistently points to the need for integrated actions, rather than a sole focus on just the economic, physical or social aspects, which, on their own, fail to achieve the desired outcomes for communities'*.

Community safety has historically been an area where partners work collaboratively towards shared outcomes. Thinking about the broad spectrum of activity that contributes to community safety it is important to look at what makes somewhere a safe place to live, work or play. Many areas have local community safety structures (for example tasking and co-ordinating groups) where partners come together with the aim of identifying collective solutions to community safety issues. There is scope to consider how these groups can extend their reach and begin to link with and influence wider issues.

Putting this together, the following definition of community safety may be relevant to the community safety context in Scotland. Its strength being in the extent it encompasses the key community safety issues and reflects the importance of relationships and connections (this is adapted from a definition developed in New Zealand):

'A safe community is a liveable community, where people can go about their daily activities in an environment without fear, risk, harm or injury. Community safety is about building strong cohesive, vibrant, participatory communities, where homes, the roads, public spaces and the workplace are safe, and feel safe for everyone to enjoy.'

4. How Do We Deliver Community Safety

At a local level, much of this work will be taken forward within local community planning partnerships. Local community safety staff are well placed to feed into these discussions and make the connections between community safety and other policy areas. This may be challenging, as the link between community safety and Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs) may not always be explicit. However, recognising that a safe community creates conditions in which individuals and communities can thrive, and is therefore fundamental to improving wellbeing, should make it easier to find the fit and make the case for the prioritisation of community safety activity.

Nationally, the [Scottish Community Safety Network](#) is further developing links with national community planning partners and is an active member of the Community Planning Managers Network. SCSN will continue to raise awareness of key discussion areas and support colleagues to understand where best to make links with local partners. Local and national community safety practitioners should use SCSN to their own advantage, by asking for support and guidance and by sharing their learning and practice. At a time where it can be difficult to see beyond the daily grind of operational or policy work, SCSN is able to provide wider oversight, and help bridge the gap between national and local work, and between local partnerships.

Community participation, influence and ownership

Fundamental to taking forward work to create safer communities is the participation of communities and individuals. At an **individual level**, improving safety is frequently about awareness raising, education and facilitating behaviour change. For example, reducing unintentional injury is carried out with individuals and their families to raise awareness of key home safety risks that will support a long-term reduction in the number and severity of home accidents to complement, for example, the provision of safety equipment on its own. At a **community level**, this extends beyond community engagement to supporting and enabling communities to identify and address issues that are of most importance to them.

Community safety has a key role to play in **creating conditions in which communities want and feel able to participate in local decision-making**. If individuals are experiencing high levels of crime or anti-social behaviour, or are living with substance misuse or domestic abuse, they are less likely to want, or feel able, to take part in local decision making. Community safety partners can address these issues and help inspire confidence in communities that their concerns are being listened to. Addressing what is often considered to be ‘low level anti-social behaviour’, such as dog fouling and cars parked on pavements, should promote confidence within communities to engage with partner agencies and, as this confidence and trust grows, encourage them to participate in addressing other issues.

However, partners should be mindful to ensure that they continue to listen to communities not only consulting on the issues that they deem to be important. With regard to community safety, this can be challenging. For example, partner agencies may be aware that there are issues with drug supply and misuse in an area, but residents elect to discuss fly tipping. It can be tempting to dismiss these issues as unimportant but it may only be by listening to and addressing these issues that relationships will be formed which will enable partner agencies and communities to work together in the longer term.

Another important issue is that of **‘perception versus reality’**. Community safety partnerships have historically faced criticism for using crime statistics to demonstrate to communities that where they live is ‘safe’. There needs to be an acknowledgement that an area may feel unsafe for a number of reasons which may not be immediately apparent to practitioners.

The ideal is for communities to take the lead in identifying issues and developing solutions – looking to partner organisations for support. This requires a **culture change, both for communities and organisations, fundamental to which is transparency and a willingness to promote open and honest discussion**. Community safety partners must be honest about their capacity and resources, and be brave enough to have frank discussions with individuals and communities about the role they can play. This honesty should stretch to acknowledging what isn't working. Partners need to be brave enough to stop doing something and ensure, whenever possible, that they work collaboratively with each other and local communities to try something new.

There is no doubt that this kind of shift is challenging and will take time to become more widespread. There is scope for community safety partners to identify individuals skilled in community development utilising their expertise to support effective community engagement. If reductions in numbers of local community development staff continue, there will be an increasing need to **upskill community safety staff to undertake effective community development**. Staff should identify those 'change makers' within their areas, those with an appetite for participation, and work with them. An important point to note is the importance of **ensuring the voices of all across communities are encouraged and listened to, and not only those most able to make their voices heard**.

The power of **relationships and building trust** cannot be underestimated – across partner agencies, across communities and organisations and within communities themselves. Change happens when people trust each other to do what is in the best interests of everyone. It is important to acknowledge the importance of creating shared outcomes – people and organisations rarely work collaboratively when there is nothing in it for them. Working towards a safer community can be a focus for bringing people together and, as such, can provide a starting point for encouraging community participation and ownership. On a very practical level, there are a number of examples across Scotland where communities lead the way in community clean ups including litter picking, and graffiti removal. Supporting people do this can help set the foundations for other more active democracy.

Further examples of community involvement can be seen through '[Participatory Budgeting](#) (PB). There is scope for community safety partners to become involved in these processes and encourage use of PB to promote safer communities. While this could include responding to lower level anti-social behaviour and other environmental issues it does not need to be limited to this. There are [examples](#) where PB has been used for communities to consider policing resources and approaches to tackling hate crime.

Tacking inequalities

Community safety partners must be committed to focusing resources on those communities most in need. This requires **data and evidence** to allow these areas to be identified, as well as an **understanding of what works well and why**. This is about more than just tackling financial poverty but considering inequalities linked to age, connectivity, health and vulnerabilities. Tackling inequalities is fundamental to the delivery of the Fairer Scotland agenda and is a recurring theme throughout nearly every local and national strategy. This provides opportunities for cross policy working and the development of shared outcomes – it is likely that the same areas/communities are going to be 'targeted' by a range of services and agencies. The same families frequently come to the attention of a number of community safety partners – albeit for different reasons. The most effective support is that which addresses all these families' needs through a holistic and preventative lens.

Accessing the data and evidence to identify the community safety needs of a community is a challenge identified by all those working in community safety. There is no easy or quick solution to this, but there are examples where local partners have created mechanisms for coming together and sharing information (including co-location and the creation of community safety hubs). Becoming an active player within local community planning partnerships will also support access to a wide range of partners and information and even resources such as local authority, Police or NHS analytical support.

Aspiration is also an important issue for community safety practitioners – how safe a community expects an area to be or feel can differ considerably from area to area. Evidence demonstrates higher levels of anti-social behaviour and environmental incivilities within deprived areas compared with less deprived areas, although this is not always reflected in higher levels of complaints⁶. One reason for this may be that residents are living with other more pressing issues, such as poverty. However, it may also be that residents have grown used to these levels and do not feel there is an opportunity for improvement. In line with the focus on place, community safety partners should work with communities to help address this and work with communities to bring about improvements. This might involve working with local authority colleagues to deliver the quick removal of graffiti or fly tipping – or with local youth work colleagues to undertake youth engagement. This can also work the other way, where there may be a need for more honesty between services and those communities who more readily complain about everyday low level incidences of an anti-social nature. Partners may need to be more open about their capacity to respond and consider asking communities ‘how can you use the resources within your community to address these issues?’

Whether communities themselves would benefit from a clearer definition of community safety, and understanding of the principles that underpin community safety is debatable, but what is important is that **community safety services are visible and easily accessible to those who need them.** While this definition may help communities understand the broad remit of their local community safety teams and services, of greater benefit is the clearer definition and promotion of the services they provide. For example, this could include an easy to understand referral process for reporting anti-social behaviour, outlining the service and support provided.

The definition above is likely to be of more use to those working across policy areas in the public and Third Sector. Crucially, this clarification of ‘community safety’ should help to develop a shared understanding across community and ‘non-community safety’ colleagues, and help prompt discussions about shared outcomes and priorities.

Underpinning all of this is that **community safety is evolving and, the importance of being flexible and agile to respond to emerging issues.** Community safety can also be subjective – what makes one individual or community feel ‘safe’ or ‘unsafe’, may not be the same as for another. This highlights a recurring theme throughout this narrative: the importance of listening to, and working with, communities.

⁶ See for example <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/environmental-problems-and-service-provision-deprived-and-more-affluent-neighbourhoods>

5. Opportunities

Key issues for local and national community safety partners to be aware of include:

Public Health Reform

In June 2018, The Scottish Government and CoSLA jointly published shared [public health priorities](#) for Scotland, which were developed through a process of engagement. They provide a focus for closer collaboration and a joined up approach to improving health and wellbeing. The priorities provide a context for how public health can support the whole system to take collective action, across organisational boundaries and in communities. The *whole systems approach* will seek to identify and understand current and emerging public health issues where, by working together, partners can deliver sustainable change. This new way of working marks a fundamental shift away from the status quo. With a diverse range of different organisations working to improve public health in Scotland, the reform programme recognises that change needs to evolve and be owned by localities and communities.

Those working with the reform programme recognise that there is work happening to deliver aspects of the whole system approach, with prevention and place-based approaches being developed to improve health outcomes and refresh communities. The aim is to work with partners to increase the pace of change and develop new models of joint working.

This reform programme provides an [opportunity for community safety and public health colleagues to work together towards a shared outcome of improving health and wellbeing across Scotland](#). Priority one has specific reference to ensuring Scotland's communities are safe - 'A Scotland where we live in vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities'.

This provides a number of opportunities for community safety practitioners, including:

- Being aware of and understanding the priorities and considering scope to identify similar outcomes to your own. Outcome 1 'A Scotland where we live in vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities' is of most relevance and work to deliver safe and vibrant communities is the 'bread and butter' of community safety partnerships. As such, they offer public health colleagues the ideal forum for collaborative working.
- Develop stronger partnerships with Public Health colleagues by inviting them to be members of your community safety partnership and ask to attend one of their local meetings. Those who work nationally can link with public health colleagues to raise awareness of policy areas.
- Keep in touch with what SCSN is doing – currently, it is working with Public Health colleagues to learn more about how best to support members and facilitate collaboration.

Local Governance Review

Through the Local Governance Review, the Scottish Government and CoSLA are working together to ensure great participation of local communities in local decision making. The review has two strands 'Community Decision Making' and 'Public Service Governance'. This review provides the opportunity for local and national community safety colleagues to think how best to work collaboratively with local communities and colleagues and involve them in making decisions about what matters to them.

Community safety practitioners are encouraged to:

- Learn more about the review and take up opportunities to keep updated on progress.

- Link in with SCSN, who have prioritised this area as a key opportunity for community safety staff to review how they engage and work with local communities. Have a look at the learning report from the [SCSN Local Governance Masterclass](#).
- Work to identify who else locally is looking at the impact of the review and how to take this way of working forward. It is likely colleagues within community planning partnerships are looking at the review - consider linking in with them
- Raise awareness of the review among local community safety partners. Begin discussions around what decisions could be devolved to communities or what decisions would be best made locally.
- Develop or improve links with colleagues with responsibility (or experience) in effective community development/engagement – consider ways of working together and/or consider how to upskill existing community safety staff.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) / Resilience

The Scottish Government has committed to [preventing ACE's, building resilience, and reducing the negative impact of ACE's](#). Links have been identified in national ([NHS Scotland – Adverse Childhood Experiences](#).) and international ([ACE's USA](#)) research between higher levels of ACE's and community safety issues such as offending, violence reduction substance misuse and domestic abuse. There is a lot of work underway to raise the profile of ACE's - which includes of the Resilience documentary – one such session was facilitated by SCSN last year. Looking at the impact of ACE's and trauma fits neatly with looking at the wider social conditions which impact on community safety, in particular social cohesion and personal relationships.

Community safety staff can learn more about the [SCSN Resilience Event](#) and the wider links between ACE's and Community safety. The [NHS Education Scotland trauma training strategy on a trauma-informed workforce](#) is a useful tool for community safety partners thinking about how to support their own workforce.

Social Isolation and Loneliness

The Scottish Government's [strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness](#) and building stronger social connections. Citizenship and feeling part of a community has proved to be key to desistance, helping to reduce offending ([Transforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing offending, Ministry of Justice](#)). The link between wider community safety issues and isolation is also often touched upon, with partners feeding back anecdotally that feeling isolated can increase levels of fear in the community (and vice versa – fear of crime can increase isolation) as well increase risk to unintentional harm.

The importance of 'kindness' within public policy had been highlighted through the 2018 Carnegie UK Trust report '[Kindness, emotions and human relationships: The Blind Spot in Public Policy](#)' and the inclusion of kindness within the values of the revised [National Performance Framework](#).

The Carnegie Report notes *'This is not an easy value to adopt. Its role in the framework means that it needs to do more than 'send a message'. It establishes kindness as one of the things for which government, and public services, intend to be known for, and is something which all Scotland's citizens can expect. As a piece of statecraft this is ground breaking and significant. And it has well recognised implications in a number of directions but specifically: measuring and auditing for kindness; policy design for kindness; and regulating for kindness'*. The report goes onto identify the key challenge as being to ensure that this commitment drives *'higher levels of trust, and engagement.'*

Locally and nationally, community safety colleagues should review their own policies and strategies and consider what more could be done to ensure kindness is at the centre.

Relationships and kindness are crucial for not only helping create a safer community but also because developing community safety policy and practice which has a focus on individuals and relationships has a greater chance of making a difference

There is opportunity to consider undertaking a larger piece of work researching the links between community safety, isolation and kindness – looking in particular at whether it is possible to measure the links between kindness in a community and how safe people feel.

Housing and homelessness

Housing services are active members of a number of local community safety partnerships, with much of the focus operationally around estate management, neighbour disputes and antisocial behaviour. However, there is potential to build on this further – for example:

- In addition to ensuring Housing services are members of local Community Safety Partnerships, community safety staff should look across their area and identify where they can influence housing policy and strategy – for example, whether there is a Homelessness Prevention Group.
- Links between community safety and homelessness are crucial to improving the safety of the most vulnerable within our communities. Community safety partners are ideally placed to work with housing colleagues and individuals to improve their safety.
- Locally and nationally, community safety colleagues working to deliver injury prevention should raise awareness and develop links with community safety, but also the work underway locally to reduce unintentional injury in the home. Housing colleagues are ideally placed to identify individuals who would benefit from home safety advice and assistance and should be aware of what is available and how to refer.
- Housing colleagues responsible for new builds can also support injury prevention through the incorporation of [safety features within new properties](#). This is an excellent example of where resources can be shifted towards prevention: incorporating features at this stage may be costly but could save money when compared with retrofitting safety features.

Building Safer Communities Unintentional Harm

There are four overarching aims to Building Safer Communities Unintentional Harm. First, to develop a co-ordinated approach to the wide range of legislation, policy and commitments that link to reducing unintentional harm in Scotland. Second, to support and develop capacity and capability among those working on unintentional harm interventions and approaches for robust and appropriate learning and evaluation to be carried out. Third, to further develop understanding of what interventions and approaches are effective in improving unintentional harm outcomes. And fourth, to develop a national web based tool to gather and share projects and initiatives across Scotland that support the reduction of Unintentional Harm, and to provide advice and guidance that will drive best practice. This national web based tool will be launched in June. Community safety practitioners are encouraged to:

- Raise awareness of why reducing unintentional harm is a key outcome for community safety – highlighting in particular those most at risk.
- Review what work is already underway locally and how this is supporting the delivery of national outcomes – submit examples of good and promising practice for inclusion within the online hub. If injury prevention is not a priority within your area, consider whether this is a gap.
- Keep updated with the work of SCSN and Evaluation Scotland around ‘measuring what matters’ within unintentional injury.
- Link in to work of [RoSPA](#), become a member of the [Cross Party Group on Accident Prevention and Safety Awareness](#) as an opportunity to network with others who are working to reduce unintentional harm and influence future working and priorities.

Reducing offending and further offending

The Community Justice Scotland Act (2016) required each Community Planning Partnership to develop a Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan (CJOIP). Some local authorities have established local Community Justice Partnerships while others have incorporated the work into existing structures, including local Community Safety Partnerships. In some areas, community safety and community justice practitioners are one and the same person, while in others, the link is more distant, with community justice primarily being the responsibility of those working within social work or in a standalone role.

Whatever the structure, the shared outcomes between community justice and community safety make collaborative working essential. As already touched upon, working to create stronger, safer, resilient communities involves creating connected communities and supporting individuals to be active citizens. Individuals who participate in community life and have a sense of belonging, are less likely to offend. Reducing offending, in turn, leads to less crime and a safer community for all.

Possible next steps include:

- Develop understanding of national community justice strategic direction, in addition to the Justice Vision, this can be found through '[Community Justice Scotland](#)' and the [Youth Justice Strategy](#).
- At a national level, Building Safer Communities colleagues should continue to build links with those within Youth Justice so as to ensure that programmes such as Cashback for Communities can support work to reduce the risks of offending among Scotland's young people.
- Find out who within your local authority has a responsibility for delivering the Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan, read the CJOIP, share any of your plans and identify shared outcomes.
- Identify whether any individuals representing organisations on your community safety partnership are also members of your local Community Justice Partnership. Are they making the links between the two policy areas?
- Work collaboratively with community justice partners to promote 'smart justice' approaches and to understand connections which can be made to reduce the risk of offending and further offending, building safer communities for all.'
- If you are working in an area where this cross policy working is going well, share what you are doing with others.

6. And finally...

The range of issues and themes outlined in this report highlights the breadth of community safety. As a community safety practitioner, there is very little staff can't legitimately get involved in. This requires the ability to identify where to position themselves so that they can make the most appropriate links and the skills needed to work collaboratively with partners and communities. In many cases this role will involve persuading others to consider community safety or to think 'with community safety in mind'. While they should continue to raise awareness of community safety, it is likely that community safety staff will need to be more proactive and 'go to' colleagues, rather than expecting those working in other policy areas to invite them to work together.

There is no doubt that working in community safety, as with other 'community planning' roles, is challenging. When thinking about the skills needed to be an effective community safety practitioner, it is worth looking at a recent report by 'What Works Scotland' (which outlines comparative findings from two surveys, 2016 and 2018, with Community Planning Officials). This [report](#) notes three 'roles' for community planning officers – *'boundary spanner, deliberative practitioner, and knowledge broker'*. While the focus is on community planning officers, there is a great deal of relevance for community safety staff, and it is worth considering community safety officers as a specific type of community planning official.

It is important to note that there are different local models that help deliver community safety. Some local authority areas retain dedicated community safety teams or partnerships while others have moved to wider partnership structures integrating health or community justice. Neither model means that there is no-one working to deliver safer communities, or that community safety is not a priority for partners or the community itself. Services remain working operationally and strategically to improve the safety and wellbeing of local residents. This paper aims to further strengthen the principles of services working together to deliver shared outcomes, including wider outcomes around community wellbeing to help community safety practitioners to evidence the importance of work to deliver safer communities.

Throughout every discussion during this process, the themes of prevention, empowerment, resilience, and relationships were reiterated. The last of these – relationships - cannot be underestimated. Many of the success stories around improving safety have had at their heart, an effective relationship – whether between partners, individual staff members, partners and communities or within communities themselves.

Effective community engagement requires partners to build trusted relationships with communities, truly listening to them and, importantly, doing something in response. Trusted relationships, where everyone is working on an equal playing field, provides a foundation for more active participation and, ultimately, greater community empowerment.

In response to this report, community safety practitioners are encouraged to consider how best to promote community engagement and empowerment, to use the opportunities provided through the Local Governance Review, to be part of local and national discussions around increasing the role of local communities in local decision making. To deliver safer communities, partners need a clear understanding of the whole range of issues can affect communities and individuals, and need to work collaboratively with these communities to make a real difference. Adopting a Place based approach will not only ensure that safety issues are included, but will allow partners to exploit the opportunities that community safety provides to promote effective collaborative working - **improving the safety of a community is often a shared outcome that partners are ready to get on board with.**

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