



## SCSN Briefing Paper No 03 – Offender Management

### 1 Topics

- Crime Reduction
- Youth Justice
- Reducing Offending
- Criminal Justice

### 2 Executive Summary

Recorded crime is currently at its lowest level since 1976 having fallen by 23% since 2006/2007. Between 2009/10 and 2010/11 the number of crimes fell in four out of the seven categories with the largest fall (12%) in the category of fire raising and vandalism etc. This downward trend in recorded crime is mirrored by the results from the SCJS 2009/10 report which shows that the overall risk of being a victim of crime fell by 1.1% from 2008/9 - 2009/10. In the same period the overall estimated number of crimes experienced by adults fell by 10%.

The clear up rate for all recorded crimes in 2010/11 was 49% which is the same as the previous two years and the highest in over 30 years. Additionally, the clear up rate for violent crime rose to 72%, a 35 year high. The number of ASBFPNs also rose by 61% during the same period, resulting in an estimated saving of £1.8 million to the criminal justice system.

Within 2009/10 the SCJS reported that over 70% of people had confidence that everyone had access to the legal system if they needed it. However, only 40% had confidence that the system provided a good standard of service for victims of crime and that it dealt with cases promptly and efficiently.

A total of 120,800 people were convicted in Scottish Courts in 2009/10 which is a decrease of 4% from the previous year and the lowest since 2001/02. The majority (60%) of those convicted received a financial penalty, a reduction of 7% since 2003/04. 13% received a custodial or community service and the remainder received admonishments or cautions. As of March 31st 2011 there were a total of 3,098 registered sex offenders and restricted patients in Scottish Communities managed under MAPPA. This indicates an increase of 36 persons from the previous year.

There has been a steady increase in the prison population since 2000/01. This dropped by 1% in 2010/11 to an average daily population of 7,853. This is primarily due to a 15% reduction in the young offender population. The latest projections show a continuing upward trend predicted to reach 9,500 by 2019/20. For those who were convicted in court and received a custodial sentence in 2009/10, the average sentence length was over nine months. This is the highest level in ten years and has increased by almost 23% (2 months) since the low in 2005/06. Similarly, the number of community orders issued has increased from 14,200 in 2001/02 to 19,900 in 2009/10. Data shows that 1,820 community payback orders were issued in the first 5 months of their introduction. One year reconviction rates are at their lowest point in the last 12 years, with 31% of the 2008/09 cohort reconvicted within a year. This is of particular importance as reducing reconviction rates by two percentage points by 2011 is a National Indicator.

Recent studies have shown that the most prolific offenders begin offending at a very young age; between the ages of 10 and 13 years and that their involvement in anti-social behaviour is a key precursor to involvement in crime. By working together to

build more consistent approaches to prevent and reduce offending by children and young people, those at greatest risk of offending can be presented with early and effective interventions through the Whole System Approach. A breakdown of ages of those detected for ASB offences from data taken from Scottish Police forces shows that around three quarters of incidents were attributable to those aged between 11 and 24 years with offending peaking around 15-16 years. SCJS notes that in the cases of violent crime, males aged between 16-24 years are the offenders in 46% of cases and at the highest risk of being a victim. Evidence suggests that contrary to popular belief, most violence occurs in the domestic setting where victims and perpetrators are known to each other. In 20% of cases (2009/10) the SCJS notes that the victim knew the offender well, 19% said they were a friend or acquaintance, in 17% the offender was the current husband, wife or partner and in 11% the former husband, wife or partner.

Different types of offending tends to peak at different ages. Female offending tends to peak earlier than males, at 14-15 years of age. Activity around anti-social behaviour demonstrates two patterns: involvement in graffiti and noisy/rude behaviour peaks early at around 14-15 years of age and then declines sharply in prevalence, whilst nuisance to neighbours and racist abuse were more persistent in later ages. Concern has been raised over the emphasis that is placed on boys and young men in terms of youth offending. Although numbers are fewer, young female offenders have been growing in number over the last two decades. Young female offenders have a higher likelihood of self-harming, being the victims of crime, experiencing family crisis and living in poverty. Although the overall number of young female offenders is low, a lack of research into and knowledge of the reasons why they are involved in offending behaviour creates difficulties in providing support and services.

### **3 Key Statistics**

- Of 66,000 cases fully prepared for trial, fewer than 10% went ahead. A further 55,000 prepared for trial did not go ahead.
- A 10% increase in cases which plead guilty at the pleading diet at Sheriff Court will release savings of £1.7million.
- Audit Scotland estimates that inefficiencies in the criminal justice system cost around £55 million per annum.
- Scotland locks up more of its people than most other European countries.
- 57% of the prison population is made up of low level offenders serving sentences of 3 months or less.
- 62% of those discharged from custody reoffend within 2 years. This figure rises to 74% for those who served short term sentences. In contrast, only 42% of those who received Community Payback Orders re-offend within 2 years.

### **4 Discussion Questions**

- What are the challenges for offender management in the next 5-10 years?
- Are there any examples of effective projects or initiatives that we should be promoting the roll out off?
- As regards preventative spending – what should our three priorities be, and who do we need to work in partnership/collaboratively with to achieve these?
- Should more Community Payback Orders be issued and for what types of crimes?

Briefing Paper produced by:  
Scottish Community Safety Network  
November 2011  
Version 1