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Dear Councillor Forson

Supported and validated self-evaluation of community justice in Scotland

I am writing to provide feedback on the recent self-evaluation of community justice undertaken by the partners in Clackmannanshire and validated by the Care Inspectorate.

Background

The Scottish Government has asked the Care Inspectorate to support the implementation of community justice in Scotland and to provide scrutiny in this area of work. We agreed that our approach to scrutiny at this early stage of community justice would be through a model of supported and validated self-evaluation¹ using 'A guide to self-evaluation for community justice in Scotland.'² The aim is to build capacity among community justice partnerships to quality assure their own work and use the insights gained to plan and implement improvements. For the purpose of this activity, partnerships who volunteered were asked to gauge their progress in relation to three specific quality indicators; *planning and delivering services in a collaborative way; effective use and management of resources and leadership of strategy and direction.*

Having expressed an interest in being involved in this work, the Clackmannanshire partnership received notification on 22 October 2018 that they were to be the second community justice partnership to undertake a supported and validated self-evaluation. Scheduled activities took place between November 2018 and February 2019.

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<http://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/4690/Supported%20and%20validated%20self%20evaluation%20of%20community%20justice%20in%20Scotland.pdf>

² <https://www.hub.careinspectorate.com/media/437466/a-guide-to-self-evaluation-for-community-justice-in-scotland.pdf>

At the start of the process the community justice partnership was chaired by the local authority chief social work officer. The chair subsequently retired and leadership was assumed by the acting chair, representing Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface. Self-evaluation activities were organised by the community justice policy co-ordinator on behalf of the partnership.

We engaged with partners in Clackmannanshire in the following ways:

- Through regular communication and dialogue we supported the co-ordinator and partners to become more familiar with the quality indicator model, therefore building capacity to undertake their own evaluation. We also offered general guidance on what constitutes robust supporting evidence.
- We read the written self-evaluation and supporting evidence which the partnership submitted to the Care Inspectorate.
- Care Inspectorate and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland staff met with relevant partners to explore the supporting evidence and triangulate key findings of the self-evaluation.

As a result of the activities undertaken we are pleased that we are able to validate the partnership's approach to self-evaluation as appropriately robust and mature. We consider that through their self-evaluation, the partnership has been able to appropriately identify strengths and areas where improvement is required. We are confident that the partnership is well placed to establish a shared culture of continuous improvement as they strive to achieve excellence in the implementation and delivery of the community justice model.

We note the key messages below:

Partnership approach to self-evaluation

From the outset the partnership had a clear view of how they intended to undertake self-evaluation. At an early stage they identified a range of useful and relevant supporting evidence. Learning from previous multi-agency consultations also helpfully informed the approach, with an individual interview format favoured over group discussions. We were initially concerned that this approach was time consuming and involved significant work for the co-ordinator. However, our concerns were alleviated as partners indicated a preference for the approach as it allowed time for reflection and in depth discussion. The interviews with all statutory partners also generated meaningful and reflective contributions in response to the three core questions of *How good are we now? How do we know? and How good can we be?*

Thereafter several partners, plus a local authority strategy and performance advisor came together to consider and reach consensus on the evaluations with the Care Inspectorate offering clarification and constructive challenge on the use of the six-point scale. The findings from the individual interviews and discussion on evaluations were then used to inform confidence statements for the three quality indicators under consideration.

Several partners experienced unplanned changes in leadership at the start of the self-evaluation process. With a view to avoiding further disruption to operational responsibilities within a small area during this period, partners adopted a representative approach. This meant the acting chair, co-ordinator and several partners attended sessions led by the Care Inspectorate as opposed to coming together as a partnership. While the reasons for choosing such an approach are understood we believe it limited opportunities for all partners to build familiarity with the quality indicator model together and to collectively reach consensus on the areas for improvement. Nevertheless, partners submitted a concise and focussed self-evaluation within expected timescales. Strengths were clearly identified and well supported by a comprehensive and coherent range of evidence. The areas for improvement highlighted during the process were also included along with intended action. We suggest these could have been more fully integrated within the self-evaluation narrative. The rationale for the evaluations reached by partners was realistic given the relative early stage of development of the community justice model.

Feedback on self-evaluation against the quality indicators

- ***Planning and delivering services in a collaborative way***

The partnership is well established and has effectively built upon a commitment from partners to planning and delivering services in a collaborative way. This commitment comes across strongly within the partnership annual report, particularly efforts to integrate statutory and community based services. Partners have now delivered two community justice outcome improvement plans which demonstrate real progression and evolution in collaborative working. Both plans have been meaningfully informed by the original comprehensive strategic needs assessment which was underpinned by a wide range of consultation activities. Several innovative approaches and models have been effectively used by partners to consult and engage individual service users, staff and members of the local community in shaping the planning and delivery of services.

Effective collaborative working with the third sector is a key strength. It is central to the successful functioning of the partnership and the contribution and expertise of the third sector is highly valued by other partners. There is a strong commitment to supporting and investing in the third sector alongside clear examples of partners working collaboratively to plan and deliver services. Innovatively, partners are supporting the development of the Resilience Learning Partnership (RLP) social enterprise. RLP, a progressive training and education provider, harnesses the power of individuals with lived experience of the care, criminal justice and prison systems. This new social enterprise is already working in commercial partnership with national organisations to meaningfully inform policy and practice developments.

Not all statutory partners are meaningfully involved in the work of the partnership. The previous Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service federation model limited opportunities to develop local justice connections. Engagement now takes place within a Sheriffdom model. This is an improvement and partners are committed to making the most effective use of the engagement model by ensuring communication and contributions to meetings are focussed and purposeful. The health and social care partnership (HSCP) structure is complex, extending across the areas of two local authorities and two community justice partnerships. This has resulted in challenges to securing appropriate representation from all statutory partners.

Criminal justice social work does not feature as prevalently within community justice outcome improvement plans as could have been expected given their centrality to the delivery of justice services. This was due to recently resolved staffing issues whereby the senior manager was not in a position to play as central a role as he would have liked. Criminal justice social work is now contributing to a range of key activities such as practice and workforce development forums.

- ***Effective use and management of resources***

Partners are using existing positive relationships to assist them in leveraging and managing available resources. For example, an integrated service delivery approach between the Citizens Advice Bureau and criminal justice social work is promoting financial inclusion and has been recognised within a national Community Justice Scotland report. Service delivery priorities are informed by a comprehensive strategic needs assessment and a clear understanding of local need. The accompanying baseline report has also assisted partners in mapping their collective resources.

Although limited, the community justice transitional budget is being used by partners to develop sustainable, resource efficient services. The budget is supporting a number of small test of change initiatives around unpaid work 'other activity' requirements, volunteering, employability and income maximisation in order to tackle poverty and inequality. Within youth justice the whole system approach is contributing to cost effective alternatives to secure care while criminal justice social work is benefitting from the knowledge and expertise of third sector partners in sourcing and securing funding to support community interventions.

While partners are in the early stages of considering joint budgeting there is a commitment to avoiding duplication and achieving best value within a challenging financial climate. As a result partners are outward looking in terms of seeking opportunities to maximise impact and influence in the effective use and management of available resources. For example, partners intend to utilise wider community planning research on the social vulnerabilities particular to Clackmannanshire to further inform and support their efforts in leveraging funding to support community justice outcomes.

- ***Leadership of strategy and direction***

Significant restructuring and reorganisation is taking place across the local community planning structure, known as 'the Clackmannanshire Alliance.' This includes plans which further define and streamline governance and accountability structures. Clear terms of reference are in place with community justice partnership chair responsibilities sitting with the chief social work officer. Since December 2018 the partnership reports directly to the Alliance leadership group chaired by the leader of the council.

The community justice partnership also benefits from the inclusion of the local authority strategy and performance manager who is the lead officer for community planning with oversight of the co-ordinator's role. This ensures continuity and connectivity across strategic groups and shared priorities.

In terms of performance management, partners make effective use of exception reports to monitor progress against agreed national and local priorities. We suggest performance reporting could be SMARTer³, particularly in relation to ownership of, and timescales for, agreed actions.

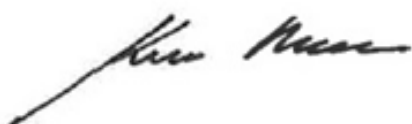
There is clarity of role and purpose among community justice partners and leaders with a clear strategic connection between developing work and partnership achievements to date. Supported by an 'Ambassador Toolkit' of relevant data and research, partners and political leaders disseminate the vision and represent the work of the community justice partnership within their respective organisations, agencies and communities. For example, Police Scotland, through their 'Ambassador' role is leading well received, multi-agency trauma informed practice training. Elected members, informed by the toolkit and with a clear understanding of national and local priorities, are contributing to a wider public understanding about community justice, including delivering messages on 'Smart Justice'⁴ to groups of local young people.

The partnership has lost the contribution of a number of highly experienced and influential representatives. This, alongside the appointment of a new chair and wider restructuring at a community planning level, is contributing to a period of uncertainty for partners. Nevertheless, the community justice partnership infrastructure and continuity of chairing arrangements should ensure disruption to the work of the partnership is minimal. There is also a commitment from the new Scottish Court Service representative to attend future meetings as well as a stated intention to improve collaboration between the community justice partnership and the HSCP. It is therefore an opportune time for partners to consider the potential impact of the on-going changes, mitigate any associated challenges and to ensure the intentions of statutory partners are realised.

Next steps

Partners' optimism about the value of the community justice partnership is underpinned by a shared commitment and common drive to achieve excellence. Partners therefore intend to use the learning and insights gained from this self-evaluation to support and enable greater and wider involvement of new personnel and partners as well as to inform a continuous improvement plan which further assists the implementation of the community justice model.

Yours sincerely



Kevin Mitchell
Executive Director of Scrutiny & Assurance
Care Inspectorate

³ Term to define SMARTER criteria for goals: Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound

⁴ Term to promote Scottish Government commitment to delivering a more robust, fair and effective criminal justice system