



Community Justice Scotland

Ceartas Coimhearsnachd Alba

Financial Inclusion

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Introduction

This report has been compiled to provide an overview of financial wellbeing within a community justice context in Scotland. Engagement between Community Justice Scotland and the Improvement Service has highlighted the importance of understanding and improving the experience of people in our justice system in relation to their financial wellbeing.

An overview of financial wellbeing and justice is reported here, along with a detailed case study and an overview of financial inclusion activity across local authority areas in Scotland.

‘Talk Money’

The Money Advice Service are running their annual Talk Money Week in November 2018. In the participation pack published for the event, the purpose of the week is outlined:

“Talk Money Week (12-18 November 2018) is an opportunity to have a conversation about money. Whether it’s within families, between friends and colleagues, financial services and customers, charities and clients, housing associations and residents, teachers and students, government and local authorities and citizens; Talk Money is about improving people’s money management skills and financial wellbeing. The first step is breaking the taboos, so that we can all Talk Money.

It is also the annual celebration of the work thousands of organisations are doing to improve people’s financial capability across the UK. Throughout the week organisations will be engaging with their customers, showcasing their services, and leading the charge to make their work more effective, by turning evidence of what works into action at scale.

The theme for 2018 is financial wellbeing – with a focus on what organisations can do to get more people accessing free debt advice, more people saving regularly, more young people receiving a meaningful financial education and fewer people using credit for everyday spending.”

The following two case studies have been produced by the Improvement Service:

Improving the links between justice and financial inclusion in North Lanarkshire

Partners work together to make advice work for people impacted by the justice system in West Lothian

This report will be launched during Talk Money Week 2018 to highlight the work that is going on within Community Justice Partnerships, or their equivalent, across Scotland to support financial wellbeing.

Financial Wellbeing

The Money Advice Service define financial wellbeing as:

“Financial wellbeing is when people are satisfied with their day to day and longer term finances – they are able to keep up with bills and credit commitments, have some resilience for unexpected costs and life events and aren’t feeling anxious about their money.”



Financial Wellbeing and Community Justice

As stated in the National Strategy for Community Justice¹, people who have committed offences are likely to have multiple, complex needs and require support to access and engage with necessary services. At Community Justice Scotland, we recognise that offending and re-offending is a complex issue that can be affected by various factors in an individual's life, including health and wellbeing, housing, employment and financial wellbeing. As such, a holistic approach that addresses these multiple, complex needs may be the best approach to reduce offending and re-offending and to support people to achieve positive life outcomes.

Nevertheless, financial wellbeing is one crucial factor that can contribute to an individual's likelihood of offending. The National Strategy for Community Justice² provides the following overview of financial inclusion within a justice context:

"In general, people who have committed offences, their families, and victims of crime, come from and return to deprived areas of Scotland where the most financial poverty and educational exclusion exist. At all points of the community justice pathway, individuals will typically be dependent on welfare and benefits payments to support themselves. Consequently, early assessment of financial issues is crucial."

The Community Justice Outcomes, Performance and Improvement (OPI) Framework³ sets out the Scottish Government vision for Community Justice and provides common outcomes that statutory Community Justice Partners must work towards within their local areas. Community Justice statutory partners include:

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscals Service;
Health Boards;
Health and Social Care Integrated Joint Boards;
Local Authorities;
Police Scotland;
Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service;
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service;
Scottish Prison Service;
Skills Development Scotland.

In relation to financial wellbeing, the National Strategy states that:

"To improve financial inclusion, community justice partners should work together to improve access to financial and welfare advice services for people who have committed offences, families and victims of crime."

The OPI Framework sets out a requirement for statutory partners to engage at a local level to achieve the outcomes listed in Figure 1 below. This includes four structural outcomes over which statutory partners are likely to have direct control, and three person-centric outcomes which are largely dependent on achievements made under the structural outcomes. Financial wellbeing may be a factor in all four of the structural outcomes, and features most prominently in the first person-centric outcome.

¹ National Strategy for Community Justice, Scottish Government (2016). Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00510489.pdf> [accessed 18/09/2018].

² Ibid

³ Community Justice Outcomes, Performance and Improvement Framework, Scottish Government (2016). Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00510517.pdf> [accessed 18/09/2018].



Structural Outcomes
What is delivered by partners

Person-Centric Outcomes
Changes for users



Figure 1: Structural and Person-Centric Outcomes



Financial Wellbeing in Local Authority Areas in Scotland

Each local authority area in Scotland has a Community Justice Partnership, or an equivalent, that progresses Community Justice activities in their area to address local needs and improve outcomes. The partners in each local authority area in Scotland are required to compile a Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (CJOIP), which should be underpinned by a Strategic Needs Assessment for the local area and should include an action plan that measures and develops community justice activity. The following information has been extracted from these local CJOIPs. This provides a general overview of what local areas have planned in relation to financial wellbeing⁴. More detailed case studies are provided later in the report.

Summary of information received

- Many local area plans consider socio-economic factors as part of a needs assessment within their local area. This includes consideration of factors such as deprivation, poverty and income levels within their area;
- Many local areas recognise the links between inequalities and health issues, including substance misuse. Financial exclusion is identified as an additional complexity that many people have to face;
- The relationship between offending and financial difficulties is addressed in the majority of local plans. This includes financial issues faced by those leaving prison and those serving community sentences;
- The need to address underlying needs that people experience, including financial inclusion, through equitable access to services is discussed in the majority of local plans;
- Some local areas have identified a need to address the stigma that is associated with financial difficulties and poverty;
- Several areas identify the need to address child poverty in particular, with specific activity planned to address this issue;
- A small number of plans discuss Universal Credit and potential issues following its introduction, including actions to assess issues and mitigate concerns;
- The majority of plans consider and include information from existing local strategies and policies, and other local strategic groups, tackling poverty and disadvantage.

⁴ Please note that this information is based on text searches of all local plans for terms such as “financial inclusion”, “money”, “debt”, “poverty”, “welfare” and “Universal Credit”.



Financial Inclusion in Local Areas

Community Justice Co-ordinators in all local authority areas were asked to provide information about ongoing work relating to financial inclusion in their area, including local initiatives and thematics, any progress made and any planned activity.

A detailed case study is provided by one local area, Clackmannanshire, below. This is followed by details of ongoing work in several other areas across Scotland.

Case Study: Clackmannanshire

Clackmannanshire CAB Criminal Justice Project

The significance of tackling financial exclusion within a justice context has been recognised in Clackmannanshire since 2014 through an ongoing partnership project between the local authority Criminal Justice Service and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) that aims to mitigate some of the issues that may contribute to people re-offending. Although there are several examples of CAB outreaches operating within prisons in Scotland, Clackmannanshire CAB's Criminal Justice Project is different in that it identifies a role for a specialist advice service for men and women within the justice system who are serving all or part of their sentence in the community. Having a dedicated CAB adviser working closely with criminal justice social workers helps to improve access to advice for people in urgent need, as well as addressing the issue of poor voluntary engagement with services as individuals can be referred directly rather than merely being signposted. Men and women can also be referred easily to other specialist CAB services, for example, for advice on resolving more complex debt problems or finding the best deal for their energy supply.

The strength of the service provided by the Criminal Justice Project lies in its partnership approach and its capacity to offer a level of flexibility and accessibility that mainstream services do not. The project operates three days a week with referrals coming directly from criminal justice social workers, as well as from other professionals working with offenders in the community and via colleagues within the CAB. People are seen at either the CAB or the Criminal Justice Service office in Alloa, with joint home visits with criminal justice social workers also carried out where necessary. Although advice is given on a range of issues, the majority of referrals to the project concern problems with the benefit system, reflecting the fact that many people within the justice system are living on low incomes through being unemployed or being unable to work due to health problems. Problems with debt, particularly gas and electricity debts and rent arrears, are also common reasons for referral, as are issues concerning housing and homelessness. The number of people needing help with Universal Credit (UC) has steadily increased since June last year, when the fully digital service was introduced in Clackmannanshire, and it is anticipated that this will continue to increase as more and more people are required to claim UC. The online nature of UC has proved particularly challenging to many people within the justice system, with issues of 'digital exclusion' compounding existing barriers relating to poor literacy and numeracy skills.

In the case of people returning to the community after spending time in prison, although advice and information is generally made available to sentenced prisoners prior to their release, what can be achieved on a practical level within prisons is limited. Also, it would appear that some people choose not to engage with these services pre-release and subsequently look for support from criminal justice throughcare or other services within the community following their liberation. For remand prisoners, the provision of prison-based advice and information is further complicated by uncertainty over the timing of release, which inevitably places the burden on community advice services; it is common for people to present at the CAB for assistance with reclaiming benefits, resolving housing issues, or



accessing crisis financial support (or all three), and delays or problems at this time can have profound consequences. In these situations, the Criminal Justice Project is able to provide immediate advice and assistance, or to support colleagues to provide the initial advice and then provided follow-up assistance where necessary.

The advice and assistance provided by the project has produced positive outcomes in the form of successful benefit claims and appeals, emergency financial assistance and better debt management. During the past twelve months, the project has assisted 84 people and helped to put an estimated £38,824 back into the community, mostly in the form of additional benefit entitlements. A limitation of measuring outcomes only by financial gain, however, is that it overlooks the wider impact and value of the service. A lack of material stability in a person's life inevitably makes it more difficult to address more complex issues such as mental health or addiction problems. These are issues that often underpin an individual's offending behaviour and, in turn, can hamper or undermine the criminal justice social workers in their efforts to address this. Thus, referrals to the project have led to a number of homeless men and women receiving support to move into permanent accommodation, and project workers have provided advocacy to ensure that adequate support was offered by local authority housing services and that people engaged effectively with this. In addition, people faced with eviction have been provided with advice to prevent them from losing their tenancies.

In part due to the trusting relationships that the project workers have been able to build with many of those referred to the project, individuals have benefited from support and advocacy at appointments with lawyers, in court, or at the Jobcentre, wherever a need for this level of support was identified. In one particular case, the project worker was included in an individual's care plan such was the beneficial impact of the relationship. For many of those being referred it is the first time they have experienced the CAB and one of the key aims of the project is that people will be more confident to seek advice for themselves in the future without the need to be referred, thus increasing their resilience at difficult times.

The Criminal Justice Project is now an established part of the community-based criminal justice service provision in Clackmannanshire, including contributing to the Clackmannanshire Community Justice Improvement Plan for 2017-18. In addition to this service, the CAB provides financial capability sessions at HMP Glenochil as part of the liberation programme prior to release from prison and also provides advice and support to family and friends of prisoners via a weekly outreach at the prison visitor's centre.

Justin Boyes
Criminal Justice Project Worker
Clackmannanshire Citizens Advice Bureau

Testimony

"I feel this service is invaluable to Criminal Justice Service. I have found the service, referral process and communication both effective and efficient, which makes that aspect of my job simpler and allows me time to focus on other priorities. It has provided a greater level of direct support for my clients who struggle to navigate their way through a complex benefit system and I have received positive feedback from my clients who I have referred." Amy, Criminal Justice Social Worker

"Prior to working in criminal justice, I had little contact with CAB apart from pointing my clients in their direction. I worked with a client who was really struggling with his benefits and had a lot of debt due to his business folding. I referred him to the CAB worker, who has



really gone above and beyond his remit to support my client with his debt and helping him to contact the appropriate agencies whilst ensuring he was receiving the appropriate benefits. I feel that this service is second to none, as the CAB worker was not involved with my client, our supervision sessions would be consumed by his concerns regarding money and debt and focused work would be very hard to engage him in.” Sara, Criminal Justice Social Worker

Example 1

A 27-year-old man who was well-known to Criminal Justice Services was referred to the CAB Criminal Justice Project by his criminal justice social worker. At the time, he was having difficulties with signing on at the Jobcentre due to a combination of poor timekeeping and literacy problems, which had resulted in his benefit being sanctioned. He was also homeless having been unable to sustain a previous tenancy and was generally in a very unstable place in his life, which impacted on his ability to stay out of trouble.

The client was assisted to make a claim for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), as his social worker felt that he needed some breathing space from the pressures of signing on. The CAB project worker supported the client throughout the assessment process – including supporting him to attend the medical assessment and obtaining a letter of support from his social worker – resulting in ESA being awarded for 18 months, giving the client a level of financial security that he had not previously benefitted from.

At the same time, the client moved into a new tenancy with a local housing association. He had initially received assistance from local authority housing support but had struggled to engage reliably with this and the support had been withdrawn. The CAB project worker helped to make sure that housing benefit was being paid and also ensured that household items awarded by a grant from the Scottish Welfare Fund were delivered to him.

Despite a potentially upsetting change of social worker, the client has enjoyed a period of relative stability in his life. This has seen a marked reduction in his involvement with the criminal justice system and it is anticipated that his supervision order will end without further problems. The improvement in his circumstances was further recognised when he was granted contact with his daughter having not seen her for several years.

Although much of the hard work has been done by the client himself, the improvements would not have been achieved without the partnership working and support of the social workers involved and the CAB project worker.



Financial Inclusion Across Scotland

The following specific information was received from 11 areas:

Summary of information received

The following general points can be summarised from the information received from 11 local areas:

- Partnership working is key when addressing financial inclusion with many partners involved in tackling issues, most commonly Department of Work and Pensions and Citizens Advice Bureau;
- Where partnerships have not directly prioritised financial inclusion, there are often links with other local groups (i.e. Poverty and Inequality Groups, Employability Groups, Financial Inclusion Network) that share information and progress activities;
- Within a justice context, financial inclusion is commonly considered for those individuals leaving prison and individuals with convictions;
- Several areas have provided specific examples of local initiatives and ongoing work, these are detailed in sections below.

Aberdeenshire

Although this wasn't a local priority for the Community Justice Partnership during the first year of activity, the Community Justice Co-ordinator has formed links with the local Tackling Poverty and Inequality Group and the Employability Partnership, through which there is a lot of local work ongoing. Information is shared with Community Justice partners wherever relevant, including with Criminal Justice Social work around the development and implementation of Universal Credit.

Throughcare Support Officers at HMP Grampian work with individuals around financial inclusion, both pre- and post-release. Criminal Justice Support Workers are also involved in supporting people in relation to welfare issues.

Angus

The Angus Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan set out to "improve access to financial and welfare services for those who have offended and their families". The main target groups that need access to welfare rights and financial services have been identified as follows:

- * Prisoners and those due for liberation from HMPs Perth and Castle Huntly;
- * The families of those held in custody or in prison;
- * Individuals and the families of those undertaking unpaid work as part of a Community Payback Order.

Events schedules in Angus include an awareness raising event (two half days) about the welfare rights/financial services available in Angus to support vulnerable families (including those who have offended and their families).

The Welfare Rights team were also to be represented at the Community Justice Partnership Employability Event scheduled for 22 November 2017.



A Community Justice Partnership event aimed at better connecting people involved in the criminal justice system with welfare rights/financial services was considered at the start of 2018.

There is ongoing liaison between Criminal Justice Social Work and Welfare Rights Services in order to move the financial inclusion improvement plan forwards. Links will be further developed between the Welfare Rights Service and the arrangements for the Short Term Prisoner Integrated Case Management at HMP Perth.

Ayrshire (North, South and East)

Financial inclusion is a priority area being focussed on going forward. The Community Justice Partnership have got commitment from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) locally and financial inclusion teams across Ayrshire are looking at the issues that people are facing to see if they can plug some of the gaps that are known to exist. There will be specific actions going forward, and these will be taken forward via our 'Throughcare & Community Integration' thematic group. Further details of the specific actions are to be confirmed.

The local Community Justice manager has a meeting scheduled with the local 'Money Matters' team soon to discuss how they can be better linked.

The consultation exercise for the local Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan highlighted that partners felt a more co-ordinated approach to financial inclusion was required.

Dumfries and Galloway

Locally in Dumfries and Galloway there is an anti-poverty group who lead any work on financial inclusion. The Community Justice Partnership is leading on two actions within the Anti-Poverty Strategy Plan. The Partnership also has close links with HMP Dumfries and supporting throughcare is one of the actions in the new annual action plans, which underpins the local 3-year Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan. HMP Dumfries is one of the few prisons in Scotland that offers the Tenancy Award which is currently being reviewed, part of this involves financial inclusion. Dumfries and Galloway Community Justice Partnership engaged at an early stage with DWP as the value they bring to the partnership is recognised.

Dundee City

The Community Justice Partnership in Dundee have positive links with several agencies that offer support with financial advice or support, such as Welfare Rights, Dundee Money Advice Project, Transform (for started pack etc.), and Dundee Foodbank. Referrals are made as appropriate.

In addition, links have been strengthened with DWP and as a result train was secured for Community Justice Service staff on how their service users might make a claim. The DWP offered a practical walk through of how to make a Universal Credit claim and also were able to answer any questions from staff. This will assist staff in the future to support service users and increase their confidence and ability in making a claim, particularly since there have been recent changes to the benefits system.



East Lothian

The East Lothian Poverty Action Plan 2017 is a detailed account of ongoing work to address financial inclusion. This includes actions under the following main person-centred themes:

1. Having a home;
2. Financially included;
3. Educated;
4. Employment and economy;
5. Identity: understood and valued;
6. Healthy and well;
7. Connected to the community;
8. Empowered and responsible.

Examples of work ongoing include the Citizens Advice Bureau providing advice in East Lothian regarding financial inclusion with some specific targeted activity. East Lothian Council also undertakes some welfare rights work. The DWP is forming links in to work locally for improving access to and vice and support for offenders, through involvement in the Reducing Reoffending group.

Highland

In Highland, the Libertie Project work in partnership with the Highland Housing Register and Good Things Foundation around financial inclusion and improving prospects for those most disadvantaged across Highland. The Project wants communities or organisations to get in contact to ask to run events and small group sessions, to reach significant numbers of people through the fully funded project.

The Libertie Project have also applied for a grant to employ a part time digital outreach worker for people with any form of housing support needs from social tenants, homeless, temporary accommodation, supported living etc. Their sole focus will be to improve economic prospects by getting online and incorporating financial inclusion.

The Libertie Project are one of 100 UK flagship online centres that offer free online training in things like how to apply, access and use online and mobile banking, financial products and keeping your identity safe online to prevent you becoming a victim of crime.

The Highland Council has funding for the European Social Fund (ESF) Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme. The Programme encompasses two projects, 'Preventing Poverty and Increasing Financial Capability' and 'Move On – Support Service'. Highland Council is the lead partner for this ESF Programme, as per Scottish Government rules, but given the focus of the Programme, the original proposals were developed in partnership. Since the initial submission and subsequent approval of the proposals, there have been a number of delays in taking these projects forward; however, the Preventing Poverty Programme is underway and the Move On project has now recruited staff and is about to go-live.

Renfrewshire

The 'Just Learning-Skills for Employment' project aims to improve the employability pipeline for people with convictions. The programme is about to complete its fourth month of being active and is proving to be a very positive programme for the clients and services alike. The project now has over 40 clients registered on the programme and they are gaining support in various areas. Some have accessed the Sector Based Work Academies, Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) training as well as gaining support through the pipeline with support with CVs, cover letters etc. Apex Scotland are also in post to support clients with disclosure letters and ensuring that the clients are aware of how and when to disclose when in front of an employer. A workshop has been run by Recruit with Conviction, and staff from various departments of the council as well as partnership agencies attended. The workshop



was aimed at staff who work with clients who may have convictions, giving them the knowledge of disclosure and how to disclose. A further event is organised for a smaller number of staff to go more in depth in to the disclosure procedure.

Glasgow Homelessness Network ran their “Keys to Learn” programme and 7 clients completed the course. Out of the 7 on the course 5 have applied for college (2 already accepted), 1 into employment and the remaining client will hopefully be entering into a Training Scheme through Barnardos. Three of the 7 clients that were on Keys to Learn were referrals from the Community Payback team. The clients were rewarded their hours for attending the course and stated at the end of the course how rewarding it was. It gave them the confidence and belief in themselves to apply for college courses and also attend interviews for that course.

The local Community Payback team is planning information sessions from partners from the Department of Work and Pensions to attend and present to staff and clients on Universal Credit and the impact it may have on them.

The local Community Payback team have developed a programme called 'Fill Yer Belly' for clients on orders. Unpaid work attendees can struggle to manage their household income which often means attending without food for lunch, leaving them too hungry to fulfil their orders and embarrassed in front of others. This has led to clients disengaging from their payback orders and challenges that result in a breach of order. 'Fill Yer Belly' wants to train people in food hygiene, cooking skills and budgeting so they have basic life skills and reduce re-offending through an increase of self-worth.

Scottish Borders

The Homelessness and Financial Inclusion Service have been working on the Sustainable Housing On Release for Everyone (SHORE) standards with the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and with Four Square, and will also apply the standards to ensure a benefits check upon release (ideally, in advance of release) from prison for the individuals and their family if appropriate. Given the limited number of prisoners from Scottish Borders, SPS and Throughcare staff are aware of this process.

A web link has been set up with a range of resources for Scottish Borders on Universal Credit for residents, and SPS are aware.

South Lanarkshire

Poverty was an area of focus for the South Lanarkshire Community Justice Partnership, identified through engagements in the first year. The partnership has linked with the local financial inclusion network (FIN) who dedicated one of their events to community justice. The local Community Justice Co-ordinator has been promoting engagement in the FIN by partners. The local police lead had an interesting idea that is being explored to prevent people whose shop lifting links directly to poverty (theft of nappies, for example) coming into contact with the justice system, and putting them in touch with financial support services. The partnership are exploring an initiative with Citizens Advice Bureau to support people stranded at court to get home and provide clothing and footwear if the person is inappropriately dressed. Employability is another area of focus for the partnership that directly links with financial inclusion and the third priority area is housing, which also has significant crossovers and should improve financial inclusion.



West Lothian

West Lothian Council Advice shop offer a weekly session to support ex-offenders in relation to their benefits and housing issues. Support is offered to help integrate back into society and reduce the risk of re-offending.

The advisor provides a good link between prison and the community by working in partnership with other agencies to offer advice on benefits, housing, debt and energy issues. They assist with application forms, medical assessments, challenging unfair decisions up to appeals process and stabilising the person's financial situation to ultimately help prevent reoffending.

Keeping a tenancy and dealing with rent arrears when in prison is very challenging. The main reason for losing a tenancy is rent arrears, which cannot be covered by Housing Benefit. In the case of a short sentence, the advice workers can assist with claiming Housing Benefit; any rent arrears accrued can be negotiated with housing officers, arranging repayment plans after release. Longer sentences cause larger rent arrears, resulting with evictions and debt still owed or giving up the tenancy to prevent rent arrears occurring due to lack of income and no entitlement to Housing Benefit.

The Community Partner Meetings take place weekly inside the prison. Advice Shop staff member participates in these meetings along with other partners including Job Centre Plus, Edinburgh & Lothian Council on Alcohol (ELCA), West Lothian Drug & Alcohol Service (WLDAS), Cyrenians, Housing, Circle, NHS and more.

This approach brings together the prisoner, key internal staff, external staff, and, where appropriate, the family to support the prisoner through this process. Partners are given the opportunity to discuss referrals between agencies.

Potential barriers:

It is anticipated that there will be more cases of rent arrears and potential homelessness due to lack of entitlement to housing costs of Universal Credit.

The partnership have investigated how the project could address the barrier to support sex offenders who have a ban on access to the internet. They could confirm that access to the internet, or to devices that connect to the internet, although may be restricted, are not banned and that the person would still be able to meet requirements under supervision from Job Centre Plus staff.

The next steps involve:

- * To implement an early intervention and referral process at date of liberation. The advice worker will then assess the client need and any intensive support within a few days of liberation and refer to One2One Project if appropriate.
- * Work together to support people. There are discussed new admissions and liberations to identify any potential enquire and appointments are offered to prisoners.
- * Following the recent improvement meeting standards of advice and early intervention are being examined to try to prevent reoffending. Plans for networking and exchanging good practice are in place and case studies are being gathered.
- * A new process for contacting clients 2 weeks after release has been introduced. This has resulted in improved levels of engagement so far. This will be monitored to see if this results in increased referrals to the One2One project.





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