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Dear Mr Logue

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 North Lanarkshire 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 North Lanarkshire partnership received notification on 11 September 2018 that they were to be the first community justice partnership to undertake a supported and validated self-evaluation. Scheduled activities took place between October and December 2018.

¹

<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>

The community justice partnership is currently chaired by the local authority chief social work officer. As a result of the long-term absence of the community justice co-ordinator the criminal justice social work service manager is covering the work temporarily and led the supported and validated self-evaluation.

We engaged with partners in North Lanarkshire in the following ways:

- Through regular communication and dialogue we supported partners to become more familiar with the quality indicator model, building capacity to undertake their own evaluation. We also offered general guidance on what constitutes robust supporting evidence.
- We read carefully the written self-evaluation and supporting evidence which the partnership submitted to the Care Inspectorate.
- Care Inspectorate staff met with relevant partners and groups 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 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

The partnership demonstrated ownership of, and commitment to, the self-evaluation process from the outset and throughout. This commitment was characterised by strong representation and engagement from all statutory and non-statutory partners as well as a clear interest in becoming familiar with approaches to self-evaluation and the quality indicator model.

Partners established a small self-evaluation team, with appropriate membership comprising the manager of criminal justice social work, business manager (metrics) and a senior social worker who made effective use of available resources, experience and expertise. When the manager of criminal justice social work became unavailable during the self-evaluation process, the self-evaluation team demonstrated resilience by managing to successfully organise and complete all activities within expected timescales and to a high standard. This was testament to the shared ownership of the process and avoidance of over-reliance on any one partner.

The self-evaluation team adopted a proportionate and multi-layered approach incorporating individual and collective deliberation by partners to reach confident and informed conclusions in order to answer the three self-evaluation questions of *How good are we now? How do we know?* and *How good can we be?*

The self-evaluation team successfully organised a focussed and well attended self-evaluation development day led by the Care Inspectorate, which made effective use of the available support. By accepting an offer from Community Justice Scotland to help facilitate the day, they maximised available resources and provided a useful national context to group discussions. As a result, partners were able to work collectively and challenge each other to reach consensus on strengths, areas for improvement and agreement on overall evaluations using the six point scale. The self-evaluation team then used the learning from the day to inform confidence statements for the three quality indicators under consideration.

The individual submissions from partner agencies prior to the development day and the collective findings from the day usefully informed the self-evaluation and assisted in the identification of supporting evidence. As well as being concise and succinct, the confidence statements within the submission captured the open and reflective approach adopted by partners. The self-evaluation was accompanied by an appropriate range of relevant supporting evidence which was well organised and referenced across the quality indicators. A number of supporting pieces of evidence were undated, lacked titles or details on version control and the self-evaluation team recognised recording and management of information as an area requiring improvement. The identified strengths, areas for improvement and rationale for the confidence statements in respect of the three quality indicators were well balanced, carefully considered and 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***

We agree with the partnership's assessment that there is a strong commitment to, and examples of, collaboration to deliver on identified priorities. Long standing and mature relationships are enabling the community justice partnership to build upon a pre-existing commitment to working collaboratively. Involvement in other interconnected planning forums means partners such as Police Scotland and the local authority are familiar with and used to working with each other. The Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service and Scottish Court Service, who are less involved in other strategic structures of the partnership, work collaboratively in areas directly associated with their areas of work.

The third sector, represented by Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire (VANL), are involved and consulted and working alongside their statutory partners in directing the development and delivery of services. VANL also has responsibility for leading a network model which acts as an important route for gathering and disseminating the views of people involved in, and affected by, offending in order to inform strategic planning and service delivery.

Partners have delivered a Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan and annual report in accordance with legislation. We agree the plan is lengthy and could be made more accessible for a wider audience. While an initial strategic needs assessment and range of activities informed the initial plan the self-evaluation identified a need for an up-to-date strategic needs assessment. We consider a high quality strategic assessment of need as essential to providing a solid evidence base from which to identify actions, monitor progress against agreed priorities and demonstrate meaningful change where it is most required.

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

The self-evaluation has confirmed a clear commitment to utilising the resources within the control of partners to support innovation and the delivery of sustainable, resource efficient services. Partners have undertaken research; secured additional funds to deliver evidence based initiatives and reshaped service delivery through co-location. This demonstrates partners are open to sharing expertise, resources and maximising opportunities for collaboration. We agree there is a joint approach to prevention and early intervention as demonstrated by several strong examples of partners deploying collective resources to tackle inequality and reduce demand for specialist services. We suggest a robust strategic needs assessment will support partners in mapping the totality of resources and demonstrating the value of a partnership approach in delivering best value.

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

Community justice governance, accountability and oversight arrangements are the responsibility of the North Lanarkshire Partnership Board. There is also connectivity, through shared priorities, to the North Lanarkshire Partnership Officers Group. We agree the partnership has strong links to wider community planning structures which means collaborative leadership is in place to drive national and local priorities. Board representatives demonstrated a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities. We agree that organisational and partnership change, including at a political level, has contributed to a shared strategic vision and more collegiate approach to achieving shared priorities.

Within a context of on-going organisational change the partnership has experienced challenges in identifying the most appropriate representation from within large organisations such as the Health Board and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). We agree there is value in undertaking a review of membership, particularly with leadership roles. This should include the Chair's responsibilities which will change significantly as a result of criminal justice and children and families social work services being removed from the HSCP. It is our view that the proposed induction and training process will usefully support partners to fully understand and fulfil their role.

Next steps

Partners have committed to developing an improvement plan which incorporates the learning from their self-evaluation. They have committed to ensuring that local quality assurance mechanisms effectively monitor progress and deliver intended results. Community Justice Scotland is also in the process of evaluating a number of partnership activities which may further inform continuous improvement plans.

Yours sincerely



Kevin Mitchell
Executive Director of Scrutiny & Assurance
Care Inspectorate