



Neil Mitchell
Chair of the Community Justice Partnership
East Lothian Council
John Muir House
Brewery Park
Haddington
EH41 3HA

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Dear Councillor Innes

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 East Lothian community justice partnership 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 stage of community justice implementation 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 East Lothian community justice partnership received notification on 30 September 2019 that we would undertake a supported and validated self-evaluation in their area. Scheduled activities took place between October 2019 and February 2020.

The East Lothian community justice partnership was established in November 2017 to lead on the strategy and vision for community justice in the area.

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>

It is made up of a wide range of statutory community justice partners³ and is referred to as “the partnership” in this letter. The partnership is currently chaired by the Police Scotland local area commander however the role of chair is currently rotated annually between partners. The partnership reports to the East Lothian Partnership Governance Group which provides oversight of the implementation of community justice in the area.

We engaged with partners 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 carefully reviewed the self-evaluation report and supporting evidence which the partnership submitted.
- Care Inspectorate staff and colleagues from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS) worked collaboratively in order to engage 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 to validate the partnership’s approach to self-evaluation. The self-evaluation process enabled the partnership to identify strengths and areas where improvement was required. They were keen to use the learning to ensure they had identified the right priorities to move forward successfully. We consider that the identified areas for improvement will support the partnership in moving forward with their plans to introduce a new community justice outcome improvement plan based on a sound understanding of the needs of individuals and communities.

We note the key messages below:

Partnership approach to self-evaluation

The partnership demonstrated an enthusiastic and well-planned approach to undertaking the self-evaluation, enhanced by representation and engagement from a wide range of statutory and non-statutory partners throughout the process. Partners involved in the process showed a clear interest in reviewing and reflecting on the implementation of community justice in the area to date and to using the learning from this process to further develop their approach to self-evaluation. Partners planned to use the findings from the exercise to inform a strategic needs analysis and new strategic plan.

The partnership established a small community justice team to lead on the self-evaluation process. This was made up of the community justice coordinator, chair of the partnership, and managers from justice social work, planning and performance and the health and social care partnership. The co-ordinating team was a helpful point of contact and facilitated planning for meetings and focus groups. The work of the team and the quality of the self-evaluation process was helpfully overseen by a group of senior strategic leaders from within the community justice partnership.

³ The statutory community justice partners are local authorities, health boards, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Skills Development Scotland, Integration Joint Boards, Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service and Scottish Ministers (in practice, the Scottish Prison Service and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service).

Community justice partners engaged effectively, using the support on offer to develop a sound understanding of the self-evaluation process and the quality indicator framework used to guide evaluations. The partnership undertook a well-attended development session to gather a range of views and evidence against the quality indicators. Prior to this event, the coordinator provided a template to partners to request examples of supporting evidence related to the quality indicators and the three core questions of *How good are we now? How do we know? and How good can we be?* This generated useful contributions from partners which enhanced the self-evaluation process and informed the confidence statements within the submission. Partners subsequently collaborated on producing a self-evaluation report that was supported by useful and relevant examples of collaborative working and shared use of resources. Strengths and areas for improvement were identified within the report. While partners had taken the opportunity to evaluate their performance against the three quality indicators, the evidence in support of the rationale for the evaluations reached was less robust.

From the activities undertaken, we found a strong commitment to collaborative working and to developing a well-informed outcome improvement plan. There were examples of effective services being delivered through the collaborative use of resources. However, there was less evidence of services being evaluated in terms of the outcomes being achieved nor from a resource management and best value perspective. In respect of the leadership of strategy and direction, the pace of initial implementation of community justice had been slow. This could be attributed to a number of changes in senior personnel. It was clear however, that in the past year the partnership had strengthened its membership, identified key priorities and introduced a model for the implementation and delivery of these.

Feedback on self-evaluation against the quality indicators

Planning and delivering services in a collaborative way

As well as increasing membership and attendance at community justice partnership board meetings, current partners had achieved a more focussed approach to collaborative planning. There was also a sense of increased momentum, drive and ambition within the partnership. The existing community justice outcome improvement plan is due to expire on 31 March 2020 and the partnership was in the process of developing a new plan informed by a comprehensive analysis of strategic needs and consultation with partners, services and individuals using services. However, partners acknowledged that they could do more to encourage and support increased involvement of all statutory partners in strategic planning including the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service. We suggest further opportunities to ensure meaningful involvement of these statutory partners should be explored.

The partnership had established three thematic groups with a remit to address specific themes identified by partners as priorities. These groups were focussed on early intervention and prevention, communication and engagement and implementing a 'getting it right to reduce reoffending' agenda across the partnership. The groups demonstrated strong collaborative working and had usefully developed operating arrangements and initial delivery plans which were in the process of being implemented. These reflected the vision, values and objectives of the partnership as well as local and national community justice priorities. The groups benefitted from having a senior officer level sponsor and a dedicated lead for each group.

Partners demonstrated strong practice in respect of collaboration on the development and initial implementation of a progressive local housing strategy that included a focus on the needs of individuals being released from prison and those on community supervision. The approach was supported by effective links with the Scottish Prison Service, in particular at HMP Edinburgh. This enabled partners to identify and track individuals due to be liberated so that they could plan more effectively to meet reintegration needs and access to services, particularly housing, following release.

Partners clearly recognised and valued the contribution of the third sector at an operational level and were committed to supporting and investing in specific initiatives. Partners had made arrangements to engage with a wide range of third sector providers in order to map the provision of supports and services across the area which will contribute to a review of service planning and commissioning arrangements. However, the partnership recognised that mechanisms to ensure that third sector and non-statutory partners are consulted and involved in the planning and delivery of services at a strategic level need to be stronger. While there were positive examples of agencies seeking the views of individuals using services, partners recognised that there was a need to improve wider and more systematic engagement in order for the views and experiences of individuals to meaningfully inform the planning and delivery of services.

Effective use and management of resources

The partnership recognised that while there will continue to be challenges in finding new sources of funding for projects or initiatives, there was a clear willingness and commitment to utilise shared resources wherever possible. This included the provision of funding from the council to pay for three police officer posts for the East Lothian community action team to target anti-social behaviour and a police officer post to act as a local authority liaison to enhance communication and service planning. We also found strong examples of the police community team, council services and third sector agencies working effectively together to reduce reoffending and address the potential impact of crime on communities.

The partnership had established services and projects with a clear early intervention and prevention focus that were based on the provision of support for individuals on issues of specific need. These included the East Lothian offender recovery service which provided individual interventions for people with convictions who were seeking entry into employment, training and education; the Transform project which used a multi-agency approach to supporting individuals to desist from offending; and the Connect group, delivered by third sector staff which aimed to support women with lived experience of the justice system. In addition, the Mid and East Lothian Drug and Alcohol Partnership continued to strengthen the development of a recovery orientated system of care. This is a network of community-led and community-based person-centred services designed to promote recovery for individuals wishing to address their problematic alcohol or drug use.

One of the partnership's main strengths was the commitment and ambition of staff to make a positive difference for individuals and communities. This was enhanced by a willingness to engage across agencies and services, to share staff, expertise and property where possible. For example, the intention to establish a collaborative hub to bring together staff from police, social work, housing and the fire and rescue service was intended to enable a multi-agency team to jointly manage community issues and pursue solutions in a truly collaborative way. It was anticipated that joint daily briefings will encourage the sharing of information and best use of available resource, whilst promoting sustainable initiatives that

will have an impact across the area. While still in the early stages of development, the initiative has considerable potential to coordinate agency response, target resources and deliver more focussed services.

Partners acknowledged that more needs be done to develop a strategic approach to joint budgeting and deployment. This included recognition of the need to map and broaden their understanding of their collective resources. In addition, partners had identified the need to undertake a sound cost, risk and needs analysis to ensure that successful projects and initiatives are sustainable and achieve best value.

Leadership of strategy and direction

In a relatively short period, the partnership had experienced significant changes in senior personnel including three changes to the chair of the partnership and to the community justice coordinator post. This was against a backdrop of significant change in community planning structures within the council. This had limited the initial progress of the partnership in implementing the agenda set out in the community justice outcome improvement plan published in 2017. Over the past year, momentum had improved as result of consistent leadership, strengthened membership and increased commitment as evidenced through regular attendance and engagement in partnership meetings. There was increased clarity of role and purpose among community justice partners and leaders. Leaders had used existing service information and data to gain a better sense of local community justice priorities. While they intended to undertake a wider analysis of strategic needs, partners had used the available information effectively to set up the aforementioned thematic groups and as a basis for an interim community justice outcome improvement plan. The interim plan will run from April 2020 to March 2021. The partnership intends to use the duration of the plan to gather additional information on strategic needs and undertake consultation with communities and individuals to inform long-term planning. Effective collaborative relationships between leaders was helping to ensure that there were clear lines of communication to related forums such as the Public Protection Committee and the Violence Against Women Partnership.

Partners recognised that initial governance and accountability arrangements had been insufficiently robust. In order to strengthen oversight, they had established a clearer reporting structure with the community planning partnership governance group now overseeing progress of community justice implementation. Through the process of undertaking the self-evaluation it was evident that the partnership had limited evidence available to them on the impact that services were having for individuals or the longer-term outcomes being achieved for communities. The partnership now intends to develop a performance monitoring and management framework to identify and track this information more efficiently and to inform future service planning. Leaders acknowledged that they needed to raise the profile of community justice among staff and across communities for future strategic planning to have the best possible impact.

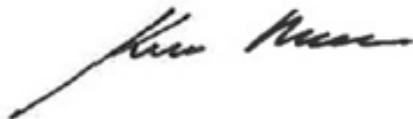
Designated leads and partners involved in the thematic groups highlighted the positive contribution of the community justice coordinator who was seen as an important conduit between the partnership board, thematic groups and partners from other services. This was helping to minimise duplication and share learning.

Next steps

Partners have committed to developing an interim community justice improvement plan. It is intended that this will incorporate the learning from the self-evaluation and the planned strategic needs analysis. We agree there are opportunities for partners to include a clear vision and objectives for the partnership within the plan, aimed at raising the profile of the partnership and enhancing community engagement. The partnership is committed to embedding robust governance and accountability arrangements and to introducing outcome measures and a performance framework to effectively monitor progress and delivery of intended results. We believe partners have identified relevant and realistic areas for improvement which recognise the need to include the views of individuals using community justice services in the planning and delivery of services. We found a commitment to working towards including all statutory partners in the work of the partnership and future self-evaluation in order to bring additional value and learning to the process. Partners have also highlighted the importance of identifying the services, projects and approaches which are working well, or where improvement is required, in order to ensure investment is made where it can have the most positive impact for individuals and communities.

Should the current leadership stability, as well as the drive and ambition for the partnership be maintained, we are confident the partnership has the ability, capacity and personnel required to achieve the objectives identified within their improvement plan.

Yours sincerely



Kevin Mitchell
Executive Director of Scrutiny & Assurance
Care Inspectorate