

The Strengthening Engagement Transition Project – Ayrshire Collaborative Community Justice Event *Burns Birthplace Museum, Alloway, Wednesday 1st March*

The Strengthening Engagement project hosted a half day collaborative workshop event on 1st March at the Burns Birthplace Museum, Alloway. The event was well attended by both statutory and third sector partners and feedback for the day was highly positive, with a majority of participants saying that, following the event, they knew more about national developments and local community justice arrangements across Ayrshire, as well as more about building successful relationships between the statutory and third sector.

The day began with an exploration of the national and legislative context of community justice in Scotland, as well as the previous work and findings of the Strengthening Engagement Project, by Chris McCully of the [Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum](#). This was then followed by a presentation by Justina Murray, then Chief Officer of South West Scotland Community Justice Authority (SWSCJA), on the progress towards implementing the new model of community justice and towards establishing Community Justice Ayrshire (CJA), the new combined community justice partnership incorporating East, North, and South Ayrshire.



Attendees discuss the opportunities and challenges for third sector engagement in Ayrshire

third sector which needs to be addressed before an effective relationship can be established with the partnership.

Recommendation (i)

Given the central place of the third sector in the new legislation and their key role as provider of justice services, it will be necessary to reassure those who doubt that their contribution is valued and who feel like they will not be adequately included in the process before effective collaborative working can be undertaken. As such, Community Justice Ayrshire should explore ways to reassure the third sector locally that their contribution is valued. This might be achieved through continued engagement and networking events, as well as information sharing, to bring statutory and third sector partners together and to build trust.

Recommendation (ii)

Further to this it is also recommended that Community Justice Ayrshire explore possible ways to include the third sector at a strategic level in the partnership. This may include developing a communication protocol or the formal inclusion of third sector representation on the partnership. Any action would need to be developed with the participation of the third sector to ensure that their concerns are sufficiently addressed.

Assessing relationships across Ayrshire - Following a break for refreshments and an opportunity for informal discussion and networking, attendees were invited to examine the relationships that currently exist in Ayrshire that involve both the third sector and the statutory partners and to assess how those relationships are characterised, in particular whether they are a strategic or operational relationship and whether they are formal or informal.

As well as providing an opportunity for partners to discuss the work they did with one another, the activity uncovered the broad spectrum of work involving third and public sector cooperation in Ayrshire under the remit of community justice. This work included service provision, participation in development groups, attendance at local and national working groups, and various other formal, informal, operational and strategic relationships.

Although the relationships recorded are encouraging and show what looks to be a high level of engagement between statutory and third sector partners in Ayrshire at all levels, it should also be noted that there is a range of engagement across third sector organisations. When asked to consider the "level" of engagement across the relationships they identified, participants tended to observe that the engagement between the third and statutory sectors was at the weaker end of the "spectrum of engagement" and tended to involve the third sector being informed and consulted by statutory partners but rarely being empowered to take action.¹ While participants were able to identify some good examples of collaboration and genuine partnership working, during discussions it was observed that the third sector could be involved as a more active participant more often and that real collaboration and partnership working involved more than sending out drafts for consultation; there was more to be achieved with an active, rather than passive, third sector.

Recommendation (iii)

Partners should look at the current level of engagement with the third sector and assess whether that level of engagement is correct or could be changed to better

¹ For more information of the "spectrum of engagement" please see the Engagement Matrix and explanatory notes developed by Voluntary Health Scotland; https://vhscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Engagement_Matrix_ed2_web.pdf

utilise the opportunities provided by an experienced and active third sector. This could include, where appropriate, empowering the third sector to drive change on behalf of the partnership.

Overcoming barriers to engagement - in the final activity of the day, attendees were asked to consider the potential barriers to third sector participation in the new community justice arrangements, identified in [Phase 1](#) of the project, and to consider how best to ensure that they do not impede future collaborative working. The table below includes some of the suggestions made by attendees.

Barrier	Short Term	Long Term
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 year strategies vs. annual funding Utilising 3rd sector to host events like today Funding confirmed half way through the year Procurement legislation – how helpful is it? Funding uncertainty – how can you plan ahead? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do the innovative approaches get supported to develop more funding to build? Co-location - Statutory and 3rd sector How longer sighted can we really be?
Awareness/knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is locality planning a vehicle for enhanced local awareness Communications – incremental improvement? Social media – double edged sword Participatory Budgeting (PB) – outreach work with local groups PB – raising awareness at more local/community level and addressing stigma Peer mentors and community connections Pathways – raising ex-offenders awareness of support → specialist services Partnership has to be about joint accountability – good times and bad Local based ‘community champions’ More effective use of social media, digital tools Continue joint networking events (statutory and 3rd sector) Community conversations pack. Use with all partners and communication Question in People’s Panel questionnaires Peer mentors – long term funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers – public and 3rd sector to take lead and offer jobs as example to private sector Address negative perceptions Positive stories from community pay-back. Translating ‘awareness’ into belief. Service users → partners
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy for families Education for schools and others of the impact on children when family members are imprisoned Single point of contact for sharing information Service user/people with lived experience stories – both positive and negative to inform our direction Sharing good examples of where it has been done well and sharing stories which effect good outcomes How we educate communities Data protection – family contact officers cannot confirm if any person is in our custody. Service level agreement – who are you passing this information on to? Good with bigger 3rd sector orgs, not so good with smaller ones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information sharing protocol/data protection Views of people involved in system – prisoner/offended, families, victims. IT systems, knowledge exchange hubs

Intermediary Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation is a challenge • Clarity required around community development.....join the dots with TSI! • What are we trying to do? Clear outcomes needed • Different needs for local, regional and national bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession planning – community leaders • High attrition levels in 3rd sector due to insecure funding
Management of Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness to change – 2 way communication and not change for changes sake • Ensuring opportunities to share information and engagement • Stability of staffing and partner relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to diversify and have new relationships • Enthusiasm is not stifled, have a vested interest. Be part of change • Ensuring goals, plans and outcomes have a realistic period to be measured upon (not one year!) • Planned longevity and sustainability to allow reasonable period to develop (longer periods of funding) • Shared vision between funders and providers • Maintain the good partnerships and practices in rush to change

While the above is far from exhaustive and many other issues were discussed throughout the session, the above table suggests the range of potential actions and behaviours identified by participants as contributing toward a successful model of community justice. While some of those suggestions may lie outside of the influence of partners and Community Justice Ayrshire, some would undoubtedly be achievable and beneficial, such as, for example, further networking events, establishing single points of contact within organisations, and developing information sharing protocols to ensure easy access to information as well as sharing as best practice.

Recommendation (iv)

It is therefore recommended that Community Justice Ayrshire review the suggestions above and consider which of the opportunities highlighted by participants would be most appropriate to proceed with.

Conclusion

Under the new model of community justice, North, South, and East Ayrshire have adopted a unique approach to community which will see the three local authority areas plan, deliver services, and report in collaboration under Community Justice Ayrshire.² In doing this they are faced with a number of challenges and opportunities, all the more so when engaging with the third sector across three local authority areas. A clear plan will be required to ensure that the opportunities and resources that lie in the third sector are used to their fullest potential and that the third sector is able to continue its valuable contribution towards achieving better outcomes for those individuals involved in the justice system across Ayrshire. It is hoped that this report and the suggestions it makes above can help contribute towards achieving that by highlighting some of the current barriers and opportunities and identifying some next steps.

² For more information on the structure of Community Justice Ayrshire and their plans please see <http://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/cpp/community-justice-ayrshire.aspx>

The Strengthening Engagement Project has now finished its work for 2016/17 and is currently planning its work for the 2017/18 year. A full report on all its activities for the year, including the event conducted in Aberdeen, will be published in the coming months. For further information on the activities of the project in 2016/17 or to learn more about the project's planned work for 2017/18, please contact the Strengthening Engagement Transition Project lead, Chris McCully, on chris.mccully@ccpscotland.org or 01314752676.