

Strengthening Engagement Transition Project

Phase 1: Final Report Summary & Thematic Analysis

Introduction

The Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 includes an obligation for statutory justice partners to engage with third sector bodies in planning, delivery and reporting of services and outcomes related to community justice. This aspect of the new model for community justice aspires to encourage the development of stronger links between the public and third sector, better partnership working and in turn improved outcomes for people receiving services. Though the benefits of partnership working with the third sector in attaining improved outcomes are well recognised, barriers to effective and enduring engagement between sectors persist. In 2015, the Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum (CJVSF) led the Strengthening Engagement Transition Project, considering how third sector engagement can be developed within the new model of community justice. The project seeks to support the new community justice partners and third sector providers as they prepare for the new model as described by the Act; to identify barriers to engagement, and ways forward.

Phase 1 of the project was completed in June 2016. This initial phase included self-evaluation survey exercises in two areas, Glasgow and Ayrshire, along with collaborative workshop sessions including both statutory and third sector participants. In addition, a national scoping exercise was conducted seeking examples of positive and negative engagement from across Scotland.

This report seeks to summarise the main findings of the first stages of research, capturing themes and key areas for future focus. The full final report, along with the final Glasgow and Ayrshire area reports, is available on the CJVSF website¹. These contain summaries of the research methodology in more depth, and the detailed outputs from each area.

Area Surveys

In both Glasgow and Ayrshire statutory partner responses, there was substantial potential identified for development of links and understanding with third sector providers. Half of the statutory partners' responses indicated that third sector key contacts had already been identified, while the other half indicated that further work was required. Similarly, around two thirds of responses indicated engagement and awareness of third sector providers required further development. A third of responses suggested that the CPP had successfully involved the third sector in discussion of planning arrangements; the rest indicated either this had not yet happened or that they did not know if this had happened.

¹ <http://www.ccpscotland.org/cjvsf/hot-topics/strengthening-engagement-transition-project/>

From a third sector perspective, high levels of involvement were reported with community justice meetings in their various forms; almost a third of respondents reported meeting the £100k threshold² and formal 'partner body' status, around half were smaller organisations below the threshold who reported attending community justice events and meetings, and the remaining reporting a position on another community justice related forum.

In contrast to this and the responses from the statutory partners indicating relatively high levels of engagement, the third sector respondents in both areas reported limited direct involvement. Around half reported no contact from the community planning partnerships or that they were unaware of any contact, a third reported contact via an intermediary organisation rather than directly, with the remaining minority indicating direct involvement in discussions. Similarly, though the statutory partners had often indicated high levels of awareness of third sector services albeit with some work remaining, a substantial majority of third sector providers felt that the CPPs were limited in their awareness, or responded that they did not know about awareness levels. A minority of respondents (between 13% and 36%) felt that the CPP had sufficient awareness.

Collaborative Workshops

While the surveys were a useful snapshot of people's perceptions of present levels of engagement, the collaborative workshop provided an opportunity to gain an insight into underlying attitudes and levels of understanding of the contribution of the third sector and their place in the transition towards the new model of community justice. The participants were a mix of statutory and third sector, involved in different levels of planning and service delivery within community justice.

Across all the workshops, enthusiasm for the current and future potential contribution of the third sector was strong, along with recognition of the benefits of incorporating the third sector at a strategic level in developing and planning approaches to community justice. There was a notable enthusiasm for joint and collaborative working to address the issues at the heart of community justice.

However, though the willingness to engage theoretically was high across all participants, there was also a shared perception that there are significant structural and practical issues which create significant barriers. Certain key themes became clear, while the workshops also suggested potential ways forward and areas for development.

Sustainability

Sustainability was consistently identified as a barrier to engagement, with limited funding and resources within both the third and public sector identified as a potential problem for maintaining services, and also contributing to logistical issues for third sectors in attending and contributing to engagement events and meetings. For example, the funding mechanism of competitive tendering often in use by local authorities in contracting for services was noted as creating hostile competition in areas where collaborative pooling of resources and expertise was perhaps preferable to those involved and likely in the interest of those using the services. A concern about cost over quality being the prime consideration for statutory

² The Management of Offenders etc. (Scotland) Act 2005 (Designation of Partner Bodies) Order 2006 formally defined 'additional partner organisations' with which Community Justice Authorities were required to engage as any relevant organisation or individual in receipt of funding over £100k (<http://origin-www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2006/63/article/2/made>). This threshold aspect of the previous legislation is now revoked in favour of the broader definition contained within the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 – any "third sector body [that] is involved in community justice" (<http://origin-www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/10/enacted>).

organisations was highlighted as undermining the third sector as well as the quality of service delivered to service users. In terms of suggestions to overcome some of these barriers, there was strong support for the use of new technologies to address some of the logistical barriers to inclusion; for example through use of social media to engage otherwise hard to reach groups, video- and teleconferencing to facilitate inclusive representation at meetings, and so on. There was also considerable support for strategic commissioning approaches such as co-production as an alternative in procurement processes.

Awareness

A lack of awareness and understanding, on both the part of the statutory partners' awareness of the specialisations and services of third sector providers and on the part of the third sector of community planning governance arrangements, were flagged as potential barriers to engagement. The development of capacity and addressing problematic attitudes on both sides was seen as key to moving forward.

Intermediary organisations

Intermediary organisations, such as the CJVSF and local TSIs, were identified as assets in developing collaborative links with the third sector, however this was also identified as an area which required development to be used more effectively by partners on both sides. Intermediary organisations were also highlighted as potential sources for developing community engagement and communication strategies, including developing links with service users. Concerns were raised by participants that these organisations in their current form are not necessarily representative, often limited in resources, and as such may have limited capacity to lead on future engagement. There was a view that intermediaries need to be well run and relevant to all engaged in community justice. There was also a noted concern that smaller organisations could be lost, with the risk that larger organisations would dominate such arrangements – however conversely, intermediary organisations could also be seen as a means for smaller organisations to benefit from resources and access discussions otherwise out of their reach. Strong arrangements are felt to be required to balance these risks and benefits, and appropriate resourcing to maintain positive networks.

Communication

A recurring theme from all participants was that effective two-way communication is required for meaningful engagement, with communication issues highlighted as being fundamental to effective joint working. Single point of contacts were identified as being an attractive proposition as a gatekeeper and consistent resource for all, however there was near universal concern about who that single point would be. There was a feeling that this would be dependent on local arrangements and resourcing, plus given the complexity of the potential discussions, a concern that a single point would be quickly overwhelmed. Without adequate resourcing, this arrangement could lack resilience, with personnel change carrying significant implications for the material nature of engagement.

Management of transition

Across the workshops and surveys, there was an emphasis on the importance of retaining current examples of good practice and networks currently in effective use within the CJA model. This was also balanced with many noting that this should be an opportunity to not maintain the status quo where things could be learned from and improved. Positive relationships and effective steering groups were highlighted as valuable to current and future arrangements, and noted by both statutory and third sector partners as valuable to the process and implementation of the future model. Partnership working at all levels, from operational to strategic planning, was supported, with communication and shared learning

emphasised. Barriers encountered in these models thus far included highlighting that staff changes within large national organisations had created difficulties in ongoing engagement, with different individual levels of enthusiasm for or understanding of engagement. It was noted that for such relationships to be maintained they must be properly and consistently resourced.

Limitations

Engagement with the initial area surveys was limited however this was likely due to the timing in relation to the stage of progress of the Community Justice Bill (now Act). At the time of the surveys (December 2015), awareness of community justice was not universally high across or within organisations or the public sector, while outstanding amendments meant that final confirmation of what was going to feature in the Act was uncertain. This could account for the varying levels of understanding and awareness on the part of both statutory partners and the third sector. For example, levels of knowledge around the definition of *community justice* in relation to *criminal justice* were variable. It should be noted however that this did develop appreciably over the duration of the project, with participants at the later collaborative workshops displaying comparatively increased awareness.

Though awareness increased for most participants, a degree of uncertainty in relation to community justice persisted. For example, clarity on where community justice is sited within a public authority and who had primary responsibility was difficult to achieve for many in both sectors. To an extent, people struggled to see how to integrate the new model of community justice into current roles and functions. This uncertainty may continue where not addressed, creating further difficulties in meaningful planning arrangements and engagement with significant partners in both sectors.

Though involvement with the initial surveys was limited, it is likely that engagement with the self-evaluation tool and surveys perhaps provided a foundation for better engagement at workshops, and contributed to increased awareness of community justice overall. On balance participants valued working together in a workshop setting as it gave them an opportunity to build partnership as well as engage with the topic. Although this model of partnership working is to an extent new to many involved in community justice, the issues around partnership reflect those from the wider literature (e.g. Kippin³, Hutcheson⁴ etc.), and practice learning (CCPS⁵).

The collaborative workshops were very effective in drawing out peoples' attitudes and understanding around community justice, and helpful in building capacity between those involved. There was however a natural limitation in that they were delivered to those already involved in the transition towards community justice in some form, for whom a degree of 'buy-in' could be assumed enhancing their efficacy in building engagement.

Future Work – Phase 2

As awareness of the new model for community justice grows, so too does a degree of confidence within community justice partners in developing practical approaches in

³ 'From providers to partners: What will it take?', Kippin & Reid (2014), <http://www.ccpscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/FromProviderstoPartners.pdf>

⁴ 'The evidence base for successful alliancing'. Spalburg & Hutchinson (2015), <http://hallenges.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Evidence-Base.pdf>

⁵ CCPS Conference 2014 'Providers as Partners' - <http://www.ccpscotland.org/resources/ccps-conference-november-2014-providers-partners/>

transition towards implementation. The arrangements for delivering the new model which at the beginning of this project were in their infancy, or indeed yet to come into being, are now for the most part practically engaged with developing their local arrangements in accordance with the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016, including engagement with the third sector.

For some areas involved in the project, elements of engagement between the third sector and statutory partners was strong, however this was not consistent overall. A willingness of statutory partners to engage, and enthusiasm on the part of all, is necessary to any success of ongoing meaningful engagement. Furthermore, strong and collaborative leadership from community partners is a crucial factor in successful engagement, and leaders are instrumental in getting partners on board with the new model and shaping local responses for the future.

From the levels of participation in the various exercises, it is clear that the most effective way to engage with community justice partners is by face-to-face interaction in the form of group workshops and discussion sessions. Engagement events such as these are likely the most effective means to aid the partners in developing their capacity for engagement with the third sector and vice versa, as well as a means for delivering practical support in moving towards closer involvement. Furthermore, the development and facilitation of mechanisms for both direct and indirect engagement between local partners is likely to provide the most effective approach in developing and building upon current engagement. Local arrangements for structures and processes around engagement are likely to be substantially determined by local priorities, organisations and existing structures, however there is significant opportunity to provide support to strengthen these arrangements where they already exist and support joint working to develop new strategies.

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About CJVSF

The Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum (CJVSF):

- Supports voluntary sector providers to continuously improve their own criminal justice services through collaboration and sharing of good practice
- Assists voluntary sector providers to understand, navigate and influence the complex and changing environment in which they operate
- Promotes broader awareness of the activities, value and impact of voluntary sector services within criminal justice.

The CJVSF is hosted by CCPS (the Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland) and receives financial support from The Robertson Trust and The Monument Trust. Further details about the Forum can be found at: www.ccpscotland.org/cjvsf

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