

**COMMUNITY
JUSTICE AND
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
2016-17**

*What we found out from
our communities about
the Community Justice
agenda and how it could
make a difference.*

Community Justice and Community Engagement

Why we involve communities – the legal requirements.

CPP partners are required to place community engagement at the heart of all our activity.

- The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 is based on the principle that communities should be supported to do things for themselves (community empowerment), and that people have a right for their voices to be heard in the planning and delivery of services (community engagement and participation).
- The Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 provides a new approach to the delivery of services intended to reduce levels of offending and to increase public safety. At a local level, strategic planning and service delivery will be responsibility of local community justice partners, with Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) taking a lead role. The statutory partners will be required to produce a local plan for community justice and will have a requirement to engage and involve all relevant bodies in the planning, delivery and reporting of services and improved outcomes.
- Finally, the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010 defined an ongoing legal obligation for local authorities to consult with a defined range of organisations and interest groups in relation to the operation of Community Payback Orders.

Why we think it is important to involve our communities

Community Planning partners acknowledge that there is a huge wealth of experience that we should draw upon in the preparation of our plans. This clearly includes the knowledge of a number of people with many years of experience of delivering services across West Lothian, but even more important are the views of people who receive these services or who contribute to the success of these services in the community.

Many of us will come into more than one of these categories; anyone living in West Lothian will have experienced some of the services that are provided to make living here as good as it can be, and much of our workforce does live locally. At the same time, we realise that Community Planning partners do not have a monopoly in making West Lothian an interesting, welcoming and inclusive place to live. Much of the most important work done in West Lothian to improve our quality of life is done by people working very hard within community groups, and we need to reflect this in our planning activity.

For these reasons, we will continue to involve the widest possible range of respondents to our surveying activities.

How we approached consultation in 2016-17

In autumn 2016, a number of West Lothian justice partners, specifically those within the Safer Communities Strategic Planning structure, launched a survey to attempt to harness the communal knowledge of our communities: gathering information and opinions from residents of our communities, from people who receive services, and from people who know our communities through delivering services within them. This was carried out using a variety of methods including stalls in public venues, with the users of a range of services across the council area, and by a widely publicised on-line survey. We received a total of 193 responses.

As part of our partnership approach, we used this opportunity to include sets of questions prepared by Scottish Fire and Rescue and by Police Scotland. Those results are being evaluated separately by those organisations.

What we learnt

We asked respondents to score each question on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not very important and 5 being very important. We will report first on the most significant statistical themes from our results, and then on the comments made by respondents. For each question, we have placed the responses in the order in which they were prioritised by respondents, and we show the proportions of respondents who scored their responses as 5 or 4 (the two highest scores).

Q1 We asked which of the following priorities for community justice were most important for respondents in their community.

Feeling safe in your community	90.6%
Reducing serious / high level crime	90.0%
Everyone being treated equally	85.9%
Improving life chances for individuals	83.6%
Reducing antisocial behaviour	82.5%
Having pride in your community	81.0%
Reducing low level crime	69.0%

Q3 We asked what issues respondents thought we should be focusing on in order to achieve these priorities.

Domestic Violence	87.4%
Mental health	87.4%
Employment	86.9%
Homelessness and lack of appropriate housing	86.7%

Drug and alcohol	82.6%
Antisocial behaviour	81.8%
Supporting school attendance	77.3%

Q5. We asked what respondents think should be done at an earlier stage to help prevent children, young people and adults from offending.

Reduce alcohol misuse in the community	89.9%
Reduce drug misuse in the community	88.8%
Improve people's opportunities of gaining employment	87.2%
Providing more family based support to promote positive parenting	84.2%
Increased availability of community based activities	81.5%
Encouraging people to take an active part in their local community	77.3%
Providing more support to promote positive relationships	74.6%

Q8. We asked how effective respondents thought the following approaches are in reducing the risk of a person re-offending in the long-term, in order to make our communities safer.

Helping people understand the effect of their behaviour on others and supporting them to make amends to their victims (individuals or communities).	83.4%
Monitoring the actions and behaviour of people who have committed more serious offences, to reduce their risk to the community. This involves Police Scotland, Criminal Justice Social Work and other agencies.	83.4%
Working with prison staff to prepare prisoners for release, and continuing this support in the community to avoid further offending	82.4%
Helping people who have offended change their patterns of behaviour through supervision and support in the community by Criminal Justice Social Work and other agencies.	82.3%
Carrying out Unpaid Work as part of a court order to benefit individuals in need and the communities of West Lothian.	76.8%
Offering alternatives to prosecution for minor offences (e.g. offering help and advice to people whose problems cause them to offend, or allowing people to carry out some work to help their community)	70.1%
Electronic tagging to restrict people to their homes for part of each day	67.8%

Q10. Our priority is to make our communities safer by helping people reduce offending. We asked which of the following respondents would use to seek help and advice if they had concerns.

Police	70.7%
G.P. / Health Worker	60.7%
School Guidance Teacher	57.6%
Local Councillor	48.9%
Word of mouth	43.8%
Social media	42.9%
West Lothian Council website	42.9%
Posters / leaflets	27.2%
Press	24.4%

Q12. People sometimes need to access services to help them with their own offending or with the behaviour of family members, or they may have been a victim of crime or antisocial behaviour. We asked respondents what might make it difficult for them to make contact if they were in this position.

Not being sure I would get the help I need	67.0%
Not being sure of what services are available	65.4%
Uncomfortable or embarrassed talking about my problem(s)	60.4%
Having limited transport	49.7%
Language difficulties	36.6%

Q14. We asked respondents what they feel success would look like for them and their community.

Reduced anxiety of fear or alarm and a greater feeling of safety	89.9%
Less crime, vandalism and antisocial behaviour	87.7%
Fewer victims and fewer repeat victims	87.6%
Greater feeling of health and wellbeing	83.7%
Increased employment	83.0%
Increased community spirit and positivity	78.6%
Improved self confidence in individuals	76.4%

Summary of comments and possible themes for development.

Most comments from the different questions can be categorised into themes, whether the questions were posed in terms of community or more specifically in terms of our responses to people who commit offences. To avoid repetition, we summarise them here in these categories.

Public safety.

Three respondents supported better public environments – more secure and better lit parking areas, better lighting in parks, and a suggestion that investing in making streets appear more attractive increases safety. Two respondents focused on protection of the elderly, and one person identified that more community safety teams would help.

Improving social networks and social engagement.

Developed social networks allow communities to support themselves, and it was also suggested that this process might benefit from classes and groups for young adults (13-25). Respondents noted the role that schools, education services and community learning and development have in this.

Having places for young people to go so they are not bored or hanging around the street was seen as a useful contribution to managing this issue.

Another respondent highlighted the role and significance of social media, and emphasised the challenges of ensuring online safety, with risks including online bullying and child sexual exploitation.

Police contact and presence.

Respondents focused on an increased police presence in their communities, particularly the possible advantages of foot patrolling in areas where young people are tending to cause a problem. The other significant theme was of the lack of accessibility to police services, and particularly the need to go through a call centre.

Housing and accommodation.

Comments included the need for a range of accommodation in each community, providing appropriate housing to meet diverse needs, with one person identifying this as a specific personal need. A respondent noted that getting one's own house is an important step in allowing people to move on from previous patterns of offending, and hopefully to get away from previous bad influences.

Environmental issues.

Several respondents commented on dog fouling, litter in the streets, provision of litterbins and possible deployment of street cleaners.

Early Intervention (how we do our best for the youngest in our communities).

It was noted that the wider Community Justice agenda starts with children, and that children's provision and inclusion is very important.

Getting it right at an early stage (sometimes known as 'up-streaming services') reduces the risk of young people getting involved in offending in their teens. It was recognised by many respondents that this would be a continuing challenge.

Specific suggestions included:

- Availability of parenting support, to encourage a stable and healthy home environment.
- Providing more support to keep children who are perceived as challenging within mainstream schools.
- More support could be provided in schools.
- Teaching and promoting positive life skills. Encouraging positive achievements and promoting a good way of life.
- Employ more people to work individually with young adults and parents to promote positive lifestyles and self-responsibility.
- Community-based activities involving young and elderly together, to help them respect each other.
- Summer camps/clubs run by our local police officers, offering education and participation with achievements awards, and thus promoting self-esteem at an early stage
- Supporting local residents with appropriate skills and experience to inform and educate peers.
- Taking a longer-term view, increasing funding to give people training opportunities would introduce new skills that would lead to better employment chances.

Respondents were aware of the challenges of this complicated agenda.

- "Reducing stigma is not easy."
- Financial deprivation is a reality – "Too many places are too expensive for those on low income with big families."
- "Up-streaming services is a must, but a political football... (The) political agenda operates on a 4 year cycle and up streaming service required interventions many years before entering mid-teens when offending starts."
- "Many things you can't force people into, but encouragement is key!"

Community sentences for people who offend.

- One respondent acknowledged the importance of alternatives to prosecution for minor offending, and the possibility of group work in the community for young offenders. The use of a structured Deferred Sentence programme was suggested to encourage people away from further offending.

- Another suggested that more information would be useful - knowing how a community disposal is managed should help members of the community understand how those who offend are held accountable for their behaviour, as well as how this impacts on their risk of re-offending.
- One person considered that any community-based activity should be meaningful and not just a waste of time. Planting gardens would improve the community and give people a vested interest to look after the area, as well as teaching skills which could be used in employment, etc.
- Another suggested that the Community Payback system should be reviewed, with the adoption of a more holistic approach. This could widen the opportunities available through partner organisations, particularly for young offenders, and this may reduce non-compliance. Another approach would be re-educating offenders by showing them the impact of their conduct.
- One respondent had a very negative view of community-based approaches – “Cannot think of any approaches that would work but I do not believe that community service or tagging works at all. Do not believe there is any reduction in crime through these methods and it is not a deterrent at all.”
- Drugs and alcohol. One respondent identified a need to reduce problems of drug supply and possession, with others supporting the development of new and innovative ways of working with people who misuse drugs and alcohol, including more groups for addicts and offending behaviour.
- A number of respondents highlighted the need to reduce the risk-taking behaviour of young people, particularly in relation to drugs and alcohol. Early intervention at school age was seen as crucial. “Not enough drug education at school means kids are unaware of the actual risks and negative effects of drug use.” “Talk to P6 and P7 to make everyone aware of the dangers.”
- One respondent suggested that the Licensing Board needs a policy to reduce availability of alcohol.
- Finally one person pointed out that services need also to help people to stay focused on something other than drink and drugs.

General points.

Many of the comments in this category relate to the system as a whole.

- Quality of life should always be a focus point for any planning, by reducing anxieties and promoting trust. One respondent noted that ‘Life chances’ is a very broad/vague concept, but the health and wellbeing and the educational aspects of improving life chances should be considered really important. Another commented that there should be a focus on reducing barriers to improve life chances for individuals, and expressed concern that services “now look for reasons not to support individuals when the focus should be on striving to support individuals for more positive outcomes.”

- Respondents commented that it was important to find a system that promotes responsibilities and taking ownership of actions, showing the effects on their victims, while giving them professional help to reduce the risk of them offending again. Witness and victim protection issues were important, with one respondent proposing that the system “take the offenders away, not the victim”.
- Significant points were made by respondents who emphasised the need for continuity of support, and of educating those affected by crime how the work done by Criminal Justice and Police Scotland, etc. is making a difference in reducing crime.
- Another person highlighted the need to speed up the court system to allow findings of guilt and sentencing to be carried out closer to the alleged offence.
- Finally, one person suggested the benefits of showing the success of people who have turned their lives around after being in trouble with the law.

13. What else would prevent you from getting help you need?

Attitude

- Attitude of service delivery staff
- Fear of being belittled or ridiculed
- “Not being taken seriously when I do visit an agency. Or being told I had a limited time to deal with my issues, rather than letting me take my time to deal with issues with the support of the agency.”
- Lack of confidentiality
- Being discussed
- Need to provide evidence

Competence and professionalism

- Concerns about the level of competence and professionalism of the person dealing with the issue.

Availability of services

- People don't know how to access the support
- Thinking the help wouldn't be there! Funding, lack of services, lack of resources
- Flexible access times of service
- Trying to get away from work if it was during the day or outside of West Lothian
- Having young children.
- Mental health / disability issues

Social stigma

- Feeling you would be isolated from your community.

General anxiety

- Possible fear of change/ motivation to change as change can be difficult in many situations.

Fear of reprisals

- The consequences of speaking out / seeking help. “A lot of people are scared of the consequences of talking out. It should not be like this.”
- Fear of direct reprisal / feeling at risk: “I’d want reassurance that I would be safe.” “It’s happening again with revenge attacks.”

What would be better?

- One stop shops. “An information base in the centre would be good - not an official council looking base. A variety of services - statutory and non-statutory - working together providing general info/sign posting- non-threatening.”
- “A help line that people can access 24 /7 or be directed to other services who have a helpline.”
- “More information on services that are available in my community.”
- “In the good old days we had community workers working in the communities addressing the above – austerity.”

15. What other benefit would you get?

Pride and participation in your community

- More pride in the community. Trust.
- Sense of joint interest and responsibility for community development
- A sense of pride and promote this area.
- People want to feel safe.

Local events and activities

- More community-led local events
- Having groups in the community for young adults or single parent families

Belonging in your community

- To be able to make a home not just a house.

Mutual respect in the community

- Security in knowing your children have a positive influence in their peers.
- People would have more respect for each other and appreciate what people do to help and what they have to help themselves.
- Feeling of trust between all age groups

Summary

The Safer Communities working group that organised this piece of work was impressed by the level and detail of the responses received. It was clear that, for many people, we were asking questions that directly touched them and their families, and feedback from staff

working at our stalls in the community was that a number of people were interested in debating the issues.

There is a clear challenge in making the Community Justice agenda relevant to the daily lives of West Lothian's population. Past initiatives based on putting out publicity materials are perhaps less efficient than local agencies would hope, whereas an approach of directly sharing information and of asking for views and opinions in return may be a useful way forward. Our future challenge will be to find appropriate forums to do this sort of work.

We are always interested in hearing your views. If you have any further comments on the information presented in this document, please contact Paul Streater paul.streater@westlothian.gov.uk