



Reducing Re-offending

**Strategic Plan for West Lothian
2013 - 2018**

**How services in West Lothian will plan their work
together to make West Lothian's communities safer**



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1 Introduction to West Lothian Reducing Re-offending Strategic Plan 2013-18

Welcome to the West Lothian Reducing Re-offending Strategic Plan for 2013-2018. The first edition of this plan, intended to cover the period 2012-15, was the first plan of its kind in West Lothian or anywhere else in Scotland, and it represented the commitment of all partner agencies to work together to address the six identified priorities within it.

However we live in a period of rapid change, with new initiatives and priorities being regularly identified both at national level and by Community Safety and Community Planning Partnerships. Within a few months of starting to implement the West Lothian Reducing Re-offending Plan for 2012-2015, we had highlighted a range of other increasingly significant areas for development.

This new edition of the West Lothian Reducing Re-offending Strategic Plan attempts to bring together the original and the more recent strands of activity and development in a way that makes sense both to the people working to achieve them, and to the wider population of West Lothian. These areas of work are of course inter-related; none of them can stand alone.

However, we also feel it is important to understand the wider context of our work, including the factors affecting members of our society that make someone statistically more likely to offend. While it would be an oversimplification to suggest that there is inevitably a connection between upbringing, social situation and offending, the Scottish Government recognises the wide range of factors that may contribute to a person committing an offence. 'Working up-stream' – recognising and dealing as soon as possible with the range of problems and poor influences that contribute to later offending – seems to be an entirely logical approach. But while intervention with young people and their families is crucial, we also need to acknowledge that patterns of unacceptable behaviour may come about from adult experiences and social learning. While services for adults who offend need to support those services engaged in 'Early Intervention', they also have to work directly with those people who are not of an age to have benefitted themselves from early intervention; it is probable that many of those people will be the parents of the next generation of people to find themselves in the justice system.

We, as partners, have already seen the benefits of working closely, and look forward to further developing effective joint working practices through the life of this plan. We continue to believe that we can build approaches at an early stage that will increase the value and effectiveness of what we do together in delivering care and social outcomes for our communities.

Graham Jones (Deputy Divisional Commander, Police Scotland) – Chair, West Lothian Reducing Re-offending Committee

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2 What is the purpose of this strategic plan?

Reducing re-offending is a shared responsibility for society. No single organisation can possess the entire range of skills and resources that is needed to reduce the incidence of behaviour that causes harm, whether physically, emotionally or financially, to individuals or to the wider community.

Between us, partner organisations in West Lothian have strength in the skills and resources we possess – in particular, trained, confident and experienced workers who are well-supported to cope with the demands of their work. In this document, we set out the ways we will plan our activities together. Through this joint work, we believe we can reduce re-offending, and, through earlier intervention, reduce the risk of young people engaging in crime. The consequences of this should be to:

- improve outcomes for people who offend, helping them to take on fuller responsibility as members of our communities
- increase the confidence of victims and the community in the services provided
- make our communities safer and better places to live.

3 West Lothian's Criminal Justice partners will:

- actively cooperate in work to reduce re-offending, and report on the progress we have made.
- jointly plan our service delivery in West Lothian, through the Reducing Re-offending Committee structure.
- investigate best practice in early intervention, in preventative approaches, and in managing transitions from youth to adult justice systems; and will implement such approaches across West Lothian.
- build on previous successes and past learning.
- further develop ways to:
 - share resources, expertise and information
 - support transitions, particularly from prison to the community
 - ensure a strong partnership with the voluntary sector
 - move resources to support earlier intervention and preventative approaches.

4 What we know about the people we work with

Our ability to reduce re-offending is directly related to our knowledge of our service users and their needs. This comes from a number of sources:

- The shared and extensive experience of workers across a range of related disciplines
- Wide-ranging research about the factors that make a person more likely to offend
- Our ability to assess effectively the impact of these factors on the behaviour of people who offend
- Use of assessment tools focusing on risk of re-offending and of harmful behaviour
- The availability of a range of interventions that can be tailored to the individual needs of service users.

We understand that the needs of offenders, in terms of reducing re-offending, gradually change; we have started the process of profiling these evolving needs, which will be a continuing task and will require us to collate relevant information sourced from a range of organisations. This will be a significant challenge, but is an outcome that is well worth achieving in order to ensure we remain on target with our strategic planning.

5 Why is reducing re-offending a key priority?

A significant percentage of offending is actually re-offending – that is, where those convicted of a crime have at least one previous conviction. We know who has offended in West Lothian and we therefore know who is more likely to re-offend.

A Priority for Victims

Reducing re-offending is a key priority because people in our communities have the right to live their lives free from crime, disorder and danger.

Every crime has a victim, and most often more than one, depending on whether an offence directly affects an individual or a group, or causes nuisance or harm to the wider community.

We should also remember that offending may impact on a range of other individuals, such as families and neighbours of offenders.

Research among victims suggests that their most desired outcome is that the offender will not commit the crime again. This is often coupled with a desire for an offender to make reparation to the community in some way.

A Priority for Offenders

We know from evidence and experience that offenders are representative of the most disadvantaged groups in society. An offender is more likely than most people to have had:

- high levels of family dysfunction and breakdown as a child;
- poor levels of literacy and numeracy, often because of not participating in education;
- high levels of drug and alcohol use;
- mental health issues;
- poor accommodation;
- lack of access to health services;
- a poor history of employment opportunities;
- problematic relationships in adult life.

Because offenders often face multiple and interrelated problems, breaking the cycle of re-offending is a considerable challenge. Considering the disadvantages and inequalities faced by offenders does not seek to legitimise or excuse their behavior, but it does give an insight into the issues that need to be addressed in order to reduce re-offending.

We know that the majority of offenders do not specifically wish to commit offences, but that they are often poor at controlling their behaviour. The Scottish Government considers that behaviour-change work in the community can be very effective for many in reducing re-offending.

A Priority for the Community

The wider community will benefit in a variety of ways from a reduction in re-offending:

- Less physical damage to the community's environment, and the reduced costs of repairing harm.
- Reduced public anxiety about offenders and their activities.
- Lower future costs of providing:
 - justice services - the courts and prosecution services, prisons and community-based justice services.
 - services that have a very close relationship to offending, such as those for addiction problems.

Reducing re-offending is a key priority because:

- Breaking the re-offending cycle is synonymous with addressing disadvantage and inequality in our community
- It will lead to safer communities and fewer victims
- It will reduce pressure on the resources of the organisations that make up the criminal justice system.

6 Strategic context

Almost all of the work carried out in Scotland to reduce re-offending is defined not only by legislation, but also by a range of documents that have addressed changes in strategic direction and improvements in practice. These have been prepared at a variety of levels – by independent review bodies, by the Scottish Government, by the Lothian and Borders Community Justice Authority (L&B CJA), and by West Lothian Council.

In the last two decades, there has been increasing national government engagement with the processes of reducing rates of offending. The gradual roll-out of National Objectives and Standards (now National Outcomes and Standards) for different aspects of Criminal Justice Social Work in Scotland was an important means of standardising practice and of providing focus to the work we do to reduce re-offending. Scottish Government investment in a range of tools to assist in assessment and interventions has contributed considerably to the changes in practice that we have seen, and to the ability of partner organisations to speak the same language in describing their work.

Alongside this, we have seen the growth of other bodies which share the task of supporting these activities. The role of the third sector, and of partner organisations that would not formerly have seen themselves as directly involved in helping reduce offending, is now crucial. The current role of Community Justice Authorities has supported local initiatives in partnership working. Centralised national resources such as the Risk Management Authority have also contributed to practice development, in conjunction with learning development and research offered by organisations such as the national Criminal Justice Social Work Development Centre.

In the forty-five years since the passing of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, which passed to local authorities the responsibility for managing offenders in the community, the way that local authorities work with people who offend has changed out of all recognition. This is a combination of greater focus on doing what we do best (supporting and encouraging people to desist from offending), and far greater training and expertise in using effective techniques to do this demanding work. Within local authorities, work with offenders now has a prominence that would have been unimaginable even twenty-five years ago.

However, there is now a shared understanding, reflected throughout this plan, that effective intervention in longstanding patterns of offending cannot be the responsibility of any single organisation. The problems facing many people who offend, in terms of their everyday life, are wide-ranging and difficult to control. The joint response to these includes organisations that in the past would not have seen community safety as a core responsibility. The contributions of all partners are valuable in making our communities safer, whether the offender is in the community or in prison.

Alongside these areas that we consider should be substantially developed, the core work of all partners has of course to continue. Even if they do not fit into these categories, people who offend still need to be apprehended; they need to be assessed for the courts and Parole Board; and they need to receive appropriate interventions from a range of agencies. And, of course, all partner organisations have a range of other continuing responsibilities that may not fit neatly into this framework. We acknowledge that the task facing us is not easy.

Despite these challenges, it is reasonable to say that, at this time, more offenders in Scotland are receiving meaningful help than at any time in the history of justice services.

More information about the background to this area of work can be found in the West Lothian Reducing Re-offending Plan 2012-15 at

<http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/downloadoc/1799563/1843076/WLReducingRe-offendingPlan>

7 How does this plan connect with Scottish Government strategies?

West Lothian's Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) 2013-2023¹ is founded on the theme of 'Tackling Inequality'. The SOA focuses on prevention and early intervention; it is intended that services will thus be able to move resources towards different ways of working, improving outcomes for local people in a way that reflects local circumstances and priorities. The 'Tackling Inequality' agenda is closely linked with Reducing Re-offending priorities, and 'Addressing Inequalities' is a specific theme within this Strategic Plan, developed further in Section 9.10.

All partners in the Community Planning process share a commitment to make it work, and all have different ways in which they will contribute to its success.

The Scottish Government's "Strategy for Justice in Scotland"² lays out a comprehensive National Outcomes framework, based on an overarching purpose: to focus the Government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.

Within the range of National Outcomes, three have been identified as particularly relevant to justice services:

- We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger;
- We deliver strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others; and
- Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.

The Scottish Government has identified a range of eight contributory justice outcomes. Each of these is, in criminal justice terms, an indicator of a healthy society:

We experience low levels of crime

We experience low levels of fear, alarm and distress

We are at a low risk of unintentional harm

Our people and communities support and respect each other, exercising both their rights and responsibilities

We have high levels of public confidence in justice institutions and processes

Our public services are fair and accessible

Our institutions and processes are effective and efficient

Our public services respect the rights and the voice of users

¹ West Lothian Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2023 - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0042/00420953.pdf>

² The Strategy for Justice in Scotland - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0040/00401836.pdf>

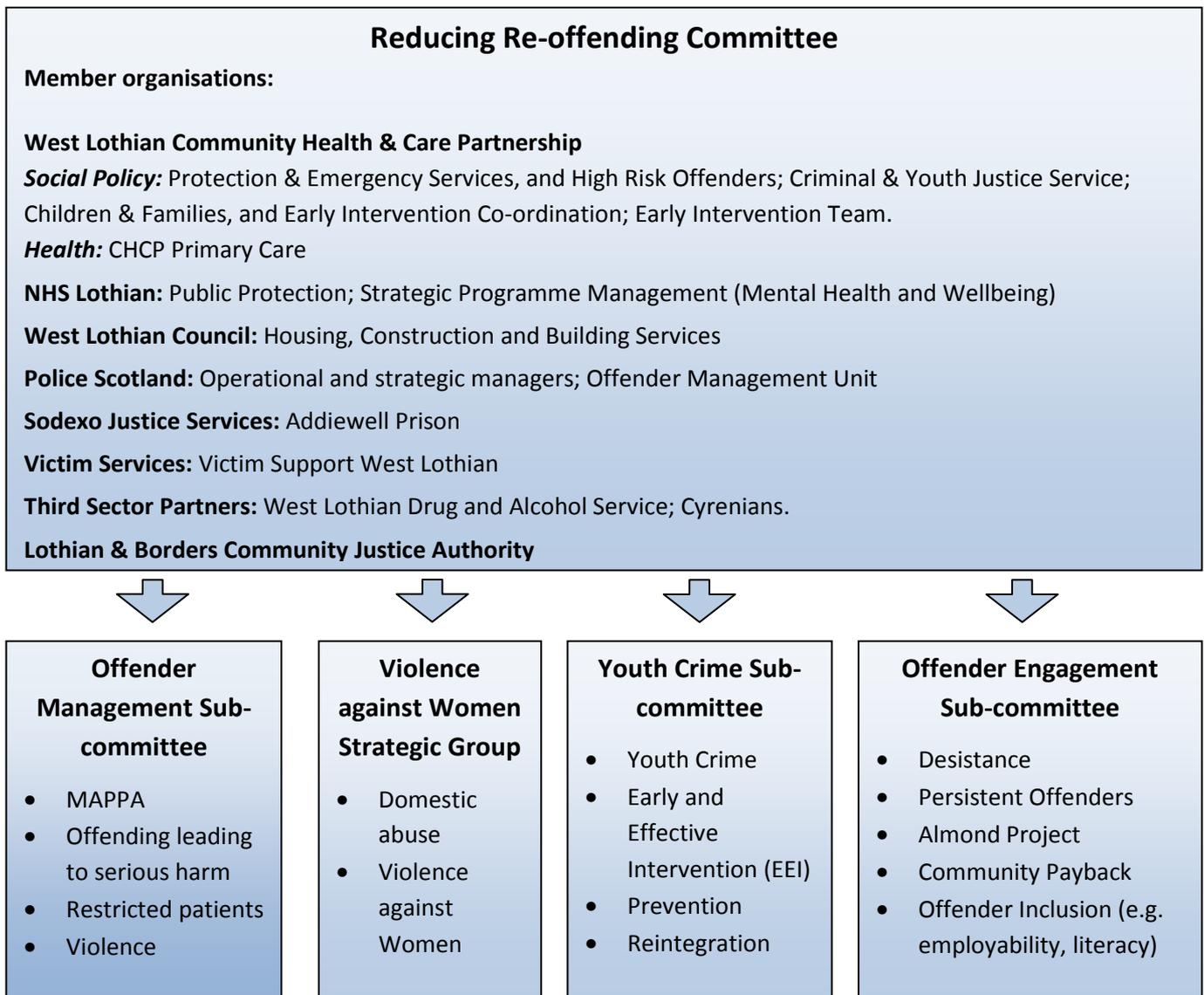
The Scottish Government is clear that in order to deliver this vision and these national outcomes, all of these justice outcomes must be achieved.

To do this, the Scottish justice system will have to change. The report of the Christie Commission highlighted that this change will require:

- a decisive shift towards prevention;
- greater integration of public services at a local level driven by better partnership, collaboration and effective local delivery;
- greater investment in the people who deliver services through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership; and
- focus on improving performance, through greater transparency, innovation and use of digital technology.

8 What structures do we have in place in West Lothian to manage these demands?

West Lothian’s Justice services consist of a range of partners from the statutory, voluntary and third sectors, all of which have a belief that they have a significant role to play in reducing re-offending. In early 2013, a governance structure for Reducing Re-offending was agreed, which brings all partners together in a range of themed groups to plan developments.



9 The themes that we consider to be our priorities, and what we will work to achieve.

In this section we give some background to the identified issues, consider some of the main outcomes that we are planning, and report on progress to date with each of these. We will further develop further each of these strands of work during the second year of the Reducing Re-offending Plan's implementation.

Firstly, what are our key themes? We recognise that these are diverse and inter-related. With no specific order of priority, we have divided these up into two main categories, based on:

- types of offender/offence
- shared criminogenic needs – the social and lifestyle issues that if not addressed will make it more difficult for a person to avoid offending

We intend to focus our Reducing Re-offending service development activity on the following areas:

- Women who offend
- Young people who offend
- High risk violent offenders
- Short-term prisoners – prison throughcare
- Persistent/prolific offenders (adult and juvenile)
- Services to reduce risk from Domestic Abuse, and support for victims of such behaviour

In parallel with this, we will continue to develop services of relevance to a large proportion of people who offend, concentrating on:

- Employability
- Housing needs
- Problematic substance misuse
- Addressing inequalities (particularly poverty and issues arising from welfare reform)
- Managing difficult-to-engage offenders

Readers of the first edition of this plan will recognise a number of these current themes as having been previously identified. Only one of the original six themes no longer features; the ongoing development of Community Payback structures and practices has reached a point where these are self-sustaining and are main-stream practice. Some of the themes relating to services of relevance to people who offend will be significant to Community Payback's longer-term success in reducing re-offending.

We should note that there are other parallel approaches to long-term reduction in antisocial behaviour and offending. The development of the concept of Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) has been a logical response to these issues, and has been adopted across Scotland. EEI is about co-ordinating effective measures to deal with a young person's offending; partner organisations are responsible for delivering the agreed actions, but the EEI Group reviews progress and can reconsider the best approach if necessary.

Monitoring of re-referrals and the outcome of these helps us understand not only what works for individuals, but also the effectiveness of our delivery of these services.

Early and Effective Intervention is a crucial component of the Scottish Government's Whole System Approach, which is intended to create a reduction in the long-term in offending rates.

9.1 Women who offend

While women comprise a relatively small percentage of the overall prison population in Scotland, this has increased disproportionately in recent years. A growing body of national and international evidence suggests that this is a direct result of gender-neutral responses to female offending, which do not acknowledge or accommodate gender differences in offending, sentencing and interventions.

Females who offend have many of the same life problems as their male counterparts; there are however significant differences that characterise women's experiences. Research suggests that female offenders have experienced higher rates of:

- Alcohol and other drugs
- Mental health and self-injury
- Histories of abuse
- Involvement in prostitution and/or other sexual exploitation, often drug-related
- Poverty

Women are, on average, more likely to be imprisoned for fewer or for less serious offences than men. Most women are imprisoned for short sentences that do not give the option of mandatory post-sentence supervision. Since females have historically been a small part of the offending population, most of the programmes designed to address offending behaviour have been designed around the needs of males who offend. Evidence suggests that comprehensive behaviour-change work cannot be carried out effectively in mixed-sex groups, partly because of the gender dynamics of such a group, but mainly because such groups do not provide a protective environment for discussion of sensitive issues.

What we have achieved so far

West Lothian's Almond Project (operational since September 2012) was set up to improve outcomes around female offending and to reverse the recent increase in the female prisoner population. It provides an assertive outreach service based on a key worker/mentoring model, which maximises women's access to services and addresses the underlying issues that drive their offending behaviour. Based in the Domestic and Sexual Assault Team (DASAT), the key worker plans and coordinates services for women who are involved in the criminal justice system.

The key worker utilises established links across health, social work and housing as well as other support services in the statutory and voluntary sectors to provide a holistic support package tailored to the women's individual needs. The worker also liaises closely with supervising officers and case managers to achieve outcomes identified within risk management and supervision plans. As well as challenging the offending behaviour and attitudes, the worker ensures women's essential needs are met by providing practical help with housing, health and employment issues and by facilitating appointment attendance and individual care plans.

Outcomes

Women who offend will see reduced patterns of disadvantage in their treatment by the justice system; they will experience significantly improved opportunities to manage their responsibilities, through better deployment of and access to effective community-based services.

Relevant PI: CJ089 - Percentage of women who offend who complete assessment and successfully engage with the Almond Project.

9.2 Young people who offend

Children and young people who offend have a range of complex problems which will most often include several or all of these issues:

- Parenting and family relationship issues; poor parental supervision, and a need for strong and appropriate role-models.
- Exposure to domestic violence, and for some young people, personal experience of abuse of various types.
- Problematic alcohol/substance use by themselves or their parent(s); their own or their parents' mental health issues
- Poor educational engagement
- Their own or their parents' mental health issues
- Housing needs

We know that young people's offending rarely occurs in isolation, and that those who offend frequently will go on to offend as adults, and will then become involved in the cyclical process of repeated short-term prison sentences. This results in poor life chances and lack of choices for these young people, and a considerable cost to society, both socially and financially.

We also know what works and how to improve the effectiveness of our interventions for these children and young people. What works is a multi-agency approach ensuring that we deliver all of the right services at the right time in a way that is suitable for the young person's age and stage of development. Repeated offending almost never occurs in isolation, and it is crucial that we understand the complexity of the underlying problems.

Joint working by the Youth Justice Team and welfare service providers will produce better life chances for these young people. We will focus on early and effective intervention, and the principle of this approach is considered further in section 9.12. Our planning is aligned with the Whole System Approach endorsed by the Scottish Government and is underpinned by evidence-based research on what reduces re-offending.

What we have achieved so far

- Improved consultation processes involving trained and skilled staff from a range of appropriate organisations
- Earlier identification of issues and engagement with young people and their families before a pattern of offending is established.
- Success in avoiding young people going into the justice system through effective Diversion services. This has allowed our statutory services to devote more time and energy to helping young people with more challenging problems.
- All partners have benefitted from the sharing of information and knowledge of other service providers.
- Agencies need to recognise the need for intensity and continuity in service provision.

Outcomes

Through implementation of the Whole System Approach, young people who offend will be supported through offers of increased opportunities for diversion from prosecution and viable community alternatives to secure care and custody; we will effectively manage the risk posed by more concerning young offenders.

Relevant PI: CJ083 - Number of children/young people in secure or residential schools as a result of offending behaviour.

9.3 High-Risk Offenders

Unfortunately, crime is a reality of our society; some individuals do commit offences, and they create victims in the process, very occasionally causing serious harm. The impact that offending can have for victims cannot be underestimated.

Whilst it is not possible to eliminate the risk of offending entirely, we have the ability to reduce the risk posed by the few individuals who pose an ongoing risk of serious harm. Prison serves a purpose: to contain risk and to punish individuals. Apart from a few exceptional cases, the state does not imprison people for their whole life. We therefore have to manage offenders in the community.

Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) exist to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to reduce the risk of serious harm to the public from known offenders. MAPPA brings together professionals from the police, local authorities (e.g. Housing, Education), health and the Scottish Prison Service - the 'Responsible Authorities'. There are three case management levels, intended to ensure that resources are focused on the individuals posing the most risk, to reduce the risk of harm they pose. At present, this framework is limited to Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs) and Restricted Patients (mainly violent offenders with a small number of sex offenders). The Scottish Government is currently considering expanding the use of MAPPA to work more widely with violent offenders. In the meantime, a number of local multi-agency arrangements exist in order to manage the risk posed by these offenders, in particular those who pose a risk of Domestic Abuse.

Risk assessments are used to inform and guide the work required to manage an individual offender's risk. Such work can include:

- Monitoring, through use of supervision appointments, electronic monitoring, home visits and surveillance. Co-ordinated through joint working between Police, Local Authority and the Criminal & Youth Justice Service.
- Offence-focused work and programmes – structured work is completed on a 1-to-1 basis or within a group programme to address thoughts, feelings and behaviour that contribute to offending behaviour
- Restrictions: we may exclude individuals from specified areas; ban contact with specified people; instruct them to refrain from alcohol/drug use; or restrict times where they can be away from their home.
- Support; this may include assistance to find employment, gain qualifications, secure appropriate accommodation and to become a positive, contributing member of our community.

What we have achieved so far

Offender Management Committees. We need to be sure that we have quality assurance systems in place so that we can continually review and develop local practices. These committees include representatives from all key agencies, and significantly a number of who are also members of the child and adult protection committees, ensuring effective communication across services that are involved in managing offending behaviour.

Outcomes

Through best practice in multi-agency working, we will maximise our ability to manage those who pose a risk of causing serious harm, whilst best protecting the most vulnerable.

Relevant PI: CJ058 - % of cases subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements where level of risk has been contained or reduced.

9.4 Short-Term Prisoner Throughcare

The majority of people sentenced to imprisonment are considered short-term prisoners; this category includes anyone sentenced to less than four years. The most recent figures for our area indicate that two-thirds of West Lothian prisoners come into this category. The current legal presumption against use of short-term custodial sentences in favour of Community Payback Orders is resulting in the majority of short-term prisoners being people who have not been able to engage effectively with community-based services.

The long-term/short-term distinction is crucially important in terms of prison throughcare and after-care – how we prepare and support prisoners in the often difficult transition back to life in the community. While long-term prisoners are subject to supervision licences which are likely to have a range of conditions attached, short-term prisoners have no such demands made upon them. They are however entitled to request Voluntary Throughcare, within 12 months of release. The take-up of this service has traditionally been very low across Scotland; despite West Lothian workers having made efforts to see all eligible prisoners prior to release, fewer than 1 in 10 subsequently keeps arranged appointments or makes contact.

The largest single problem is substance misuse, and the struggle experienced by offenders to follow through on the commitment they show in prison to becoming drug-free. There is practice and research evidence that suggests that the key to reducing risky behaviour on release is effective management of the transition back to the community and particularly into community-based services that deal with addictions.

What we have achieved so far

A restructuring of West Lothian's Voluntary Throughcare arrangements in 2012 followed the acknowledgement of the crucial input of addiction services to reducing post-release re-offending. The overall responsibility for Voluntary Throughcare was taken on by the West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Service (WLDAS), which had been running the local Arrest Referral Service for a number of years. All West Lothian short-term prisoners in Addiewell and Edinburgh Prisons are interviewed, and ongoing work is done with 20–25 prisoners each month. There is also contact with young offenders in Polmont YOI and women prisoners in Corntonvale, whose release is supported and managed by other services.

Workers have been able to meet almost all released prisoners and help them to keep post-release addiction service appointments.

Outcomes

By utilising accessible throughcare services, short-term prisoners will be supported towards effective reintegration into their community, and towards desisting from an offending lifestyle.

Relevant PI: UNDER CONSTRUCTION - % of offenders released from prison who have engaged with Voluntary Throughcare services, and who have not been convicted of a further offence in the 12 months after release.

9.5 Persistent/prolific offenders

We know that much offending that occurs in West Lothian is carried out by a fairly small number of individuals, and that their activities have an adverse effect on individuals and communities in West Lothian that is out of proportion to the number of people involved. We know who these people are; we also have a fairly clear understanding about what leads them to offend.

Projects in Scotland, particularly in Edinburgh and Glasgow, have each reported some success in engaging these offenders in activities that concentrate on reducing their rate of offending. High among these activities is linking prolific offenders with addiction agencies; the link between crime and the funding of significant drug use is well-established. However, other needs are also frequently seen, particularly education, training and employment, and accommodation. All these personal challenges are more demanding in the case of people being released from short prison sentences.

The challenge is to respond appropriately to differing degrees of engagement with services. We accept that some people are serial 'non-engagers'; others would like to use services, but find that pressures of everyday life get in the way; a third group accepts and embraces the help and support on offer. The key to knowing what to provide is effective communication between partners on an individual level. Persistence in offending has to be matched with persistence in interventions.

We consider that this approach may prove useful in West Lothian, and intend to jointly further develop processes that will help these challenging individuals.

What we have achieved so far

The pilot implementation of the West Lothian Persistent Offenders Partnership for six months from November 2012 gave us valuable information. We were pleased to find that West Lothian services are already engaging with the majority of our most prolific offenders, either voluntarily or because they were on court orders. This was by no means the experience of schemes based in Scotland's major cities.

There do appear to be areas where we could further develop practice. We should plan a consistent approach among partners to addressing desistance from offending as part of, for example, addiction work. We also would benefit from a clearer shared language about how we measure changes in patterns of re-offending; this would allow us to analyse how much of the reduction in the frequency or the seriousness of re-offending is a result of the effectiveness of our interventions. Such an approach would of course have benefits for groups other than persistent offenders.

Outcomes

The harm caused to communities through persistent alcohol- and drug-related will be reduced.

Relevant PI: CJ105 - Percentage of Offenders reconvicted within 1 year (Scottish Government data)

9.6 Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is a pattern of persistent and controlling behaviour by a partner or ex-partner which causes emotional, physical and/or sexual harm. In most cases, it is experienced by women and children and is perpetrated by men.

Domestic abuse is probably the most under-reported of crimes; some researchers suggest that a perpetrator is likely to have offended against the same person over thirty times before reaching the justice system. This happens for a range of reasons; fear that the violence will escalate, financial dependence, social stigma, lack of self-confidence, isolation, religious and moral values, love and commitment and concern for children, family pressures and lack of community support, including affordable accommodation. A man who is using violence against his female partner typically uses a range of strategies to encourage her compliance and dependence, such as monitoring her movements, destroying her self-esteem, and encouraging her to blame herself for the abuse. These dynamics too make it hard to leave abusive relationships.

A cognitive-behavioural approach with perpetrators has been shown to be effective in some cases, addressing dangerous attitudes and behaviour, and increasing the abuser's accountability for his own actions. These programmes are however only effective if combined with work which focuses on keeping women and children safe. Working in isolation with perpetrators can potentially expose victims to further risks.

What we have achieved so far

West Lothian Domestic and Sexual Assault Team (DASAT) provides a wide range of services to adult and child survivors of domestic abuse and rape and sexual assault. The team includes a substance misuse specialist (funded by West Lothian Tobacco Alcohol and Drugs Partnership), a counsellor for survivors of child sexual abuse, a mental health specialist, a housing and employability worker, a specialist service for women offenders and specialist children's workers. With the launch of the new West Lothian Domestic Abuse Court in February 2012, DASAT has extended the support provided to include specialist independent advocacy support for survivors throughout court processes and beyond. An appropriately trained advocacy worker attends fortnightly trial diets and daily custody courts, and liaises with court agencies.

In late 2012, the Council in partnership with a number of agencies including Police Scotland and Victim Support redesigned systems to engage all key services in responding to domestic abuse. The new service, called LISA (Living in Safe Accommodation), prioritises early intervention, reducing trauma, preventing homelessness, and enabling economic independence. It shifts the focus from crisis intervention, refuge provision and the displacement of women and children to meeting adults' and children's needs earlier, keeping them safe in their homes and providing multiple specialist housing supports and employability resources to support survivors - far more than just making them safe. LISA provides: access to earlier referrals from partner agencies; a tailored housing service, including a specialist allocation process; access to counselling; advocacy; and links to other services.

Outcomes

All victims of domestic abuse are supported and feel safe; all domestic abuse perpetrators sentenced to community-based disposals will have reduced both the frequency and seriousness of their offending by taking part in programmed work to address their behaviour.

Relevant PI: CJ045 - % of Domestic Abuse Perpetrators completing a Probation Order or Community Payback Order without further incidents being reported to the Police.

9.7 Employability

Offenders are more likely than most in our communities to have had poor experiences of learning. Whether as a result of unrecognised learning problems, or because of a lack of support in keeping up a commitment to schooling, the majority of regular adult offenders have literacy and numeracy skills well below the national average, often barely reaching secondary school levels of attainment. This early lack of success in learning basic skills permeates every aspect of most offenders' lives, resulting in their having fewer work-related skills, being poor at identifying possible work opportunities and even worse at making effective applications for jobs.

While a number of West Lothian offenders do manage to obtain employment, for the majority of them this work is likely to be unsatisfying, poorly paid and most often short-term, temporary or agency work.

Having a job that pays adequately is seen by the majority of offenders as highest among their aspirations, freeing them up both practically (through having a legitimate disposable income) and emotionally (by increasing feelings of self-worth) to take on and live up to other responsibilities – as a partner, parent and citizen. That is not to say that their journey is automatically easy after that, but the gaining of meaningful employment is often one of the most significant steps on that road.

What we have achieved so far

The Scottish Government's Community Payback Guidance emphasises the importance of an effective literacy and numeracy assessment of all offenders placed on these orders. It also allows work on these issues as part of the 'Other Activities' agenda for the Community Payback Order.

We have incorporated an employability assessment into the processes for induction of offenders. We have operational links with Adult Education that give us direct access to Adult Basic Education services, provided by a worker who is located part-time within the Criminal & Youth Justice Service.

Outcomes

People who offend recognise the significance of employability skills in reducing their levels of offending, and engage effectively with a range of services that are available to help them.

Relevant PI: UNDER CONSTRUCTION - % of offenders who, during their statutory contact with community-based justice services, have engaged constructively with employability agencies.

9.8 Housing Needs

Offenders are more disadvantaged in obtaining housing than their non-offending peers, not usually because of their offending, but because of the range of other problems in their life. As explained elsewhere in this document, offenders are more likely than the majority of our population to experience high levels of drug and alcohol use, mental health issues, and problematic relationships in adult life. All of these things impinge seriously on an individual's ability to retain accommodation.

What are the accommodation problems facing offenders?

- An overall shortage of suitable accommodation, with demand for social housing outweighing supply.
- Difficulties accessing privately-rented accommodation because of cost (higher rents, rent deposits and rent in advance).
- Inadequacy of the prison discharge grant and delays in receiving benefits for offenders.
- Private landlords' perceptions of people who have offended as risky or undesirable tenants.
- Limited appropriate accommodation options for offenders with complex needs.
- Offending is not recognised as a reason for automatic access to homeless accommodation.

There is one significant client group for which arrangements are in place; these address the specific needs of people convicted of serious sexual crimes. The National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders specifically highlights the crucial role of housing providers in helping to minimise the risk posed by sex offenders living in the community. Overall, though, the minimisation of risk is a challenge to be jointly addressed by all agencies concerned with assessing, managing and housing sex offenders.

However, sex offenders constitute only a small proportion of all offenders, and it is important to keep the wider picture in mind. While we do not suggest that offenders are entitled to priority in allocation of accommodation, it is clear that settled accommodation addresses a core need and gives them some security to address other life-problems.

What we have achieved so far

We have a fully operational strategy for accommodation of High Risk Offenders, who are monitored in their tenancies by the Offender Management Unit, the Criminal & Youth Justice Service, and Housing, Construction and Building Services.

A local third sector initiative, Cyrenians SmartMove, has assisted round 50 people who report having previous convictions to acquire and sustain a privately rented tenancy.

Outcomes

All offenders are supported to achieve sustainable accommodation.

Relevant PI: UNDER CONSTRUCTION - % of offenders who sustain appropriate accommodation for six months or more.

9.9 Problematic Substance Misuse

The prevalence of problematic substance misuse among people who offend has increased considerably in the past 30 years, with drug misuse becoming common rather than rare, and alcohol addiction remaining a substantial problem. However, patterns of problematic substance misuse in recent years suggest a complex story, in which heroin use appears to have reached a plateau, and with many offenders using 'legal highs', which are becoming easily and widely available. Alcohol misuse has increased, fuelled by the ready availability of cheap and strong alcohol, and continues to be a very significant factor in certain types of offending, contributing to much anti-social behaviour and to violence.

A range of statutory and non-statutory organisations works with and alongside the justice system in the management of an increasing range of measures to try to help people with substance misuse problems. Conditions of Probation Orders and Prison aftercare licences, Drug Treatment and Testing Orders, and most recently, pre-assessed Alcohol Treatment and Drug Treatment Requirements of a Community Payback Order each give more power to the work of these organisations.

The Scottish Prison Service has continuing problems in managing problematic substance misuse among prisoners. A repeated theme in research is that short prison sentences cause disruption in long-term addiction treatment planning, and while the strategy of the 'rapid detox' is useful at that time in helping participating prisoners, there is no clear data that shows a lasting benefit, and relapse rates remain high.

Finally, it is important to note that problematic substance misuse affects families, particularly children. These children are at higher risk of maltreatment, emotional or physical neglect or abuse, family conflict, and inappropriate parental behaviour. However, it should not be assumed that this is an invariable outcome, and an offender with such problems needs to be supported in a range of appropriate ways to be as good a parent as possible.

What we have achieved so far

West Lothian has a high degree of co-ordination of service delivery for problematic substance abusers. Co-location of many NHS and council addictions staff alongside Criminal & Youth Justice colleagues means that the strategies for reducing substance misuse and increasing desistance from offending can be readily planned on an individual level. At a strategic level, involvement of all addictions services in the Reducing Re-offending committee structure and activity is recognised as essential in achieving our objectives.

Recognition of the key role of addictions services in reducing offending levels can be seen in West Lothian in a variety of ways: the involvement of the third sector in delivery of core services (e.g. Arrest Referral, Voluntary Prison Throughcare); the increasing role of such agencies in supporting delivery of Community Payback; and in more effective joining up of services for long-term prisoners at the point of release. There has been a significant improvement in the speed of access to addiction services.

Outcomes

Offenders with acknowledged problematic substance abuse will have engaged with appropriate services, and will have increased control of their substance misuse.

Relevant PI: UNDER CONSTRUCTION - % of offenders who have problematic substance misuse who successfully engage with addiction services.

9.10 Addressing Inequalities

The theme of West Lothian's Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2023 is 'Tackling Inequality', an issue of great significance in working with people who offend.

From preceding sections of this report, it will have already become clear that people who offend tend to come from the more disadvantaged sections of our society. The relationship between disadvantage and offending is complicated; not every person who offends is disadvantaged, nor do most disadvantaged people commit offences.

Practice in addressing offending has changed considerably over the 45 years since local authorities took on the responsibility of working with people who offend. While in the early days the focus was on social need (deal with the problems, and people can move on from offending), this was replaced 20 years later with a focus on changing thinking patterns and mind-sets, to give people involved in the criminal justice system the tools to change their own situation. Now we acknowledge that best practice lies in combining these two approaches. Workers have available to them interventions that focus on the flawed or negative thinking that leads some people to offend, but we recognise that other issues – social, economic, cultural – all make it difficult for these individuals to apply their newly-developed skills effectively. Current UK benefits reform seems likely to increase the challenge for justice partners in helping their service users move towards a better lifestyle.

Our challenge is to find the best ways to ensure that people who offend consider themselves full, participative and enfranchised members of their communities. From the point of view of justice services, there is also the challenge of ensuring that our service users understand their own role in supporting the rights of others. In the context of this report, we focus on the people who commit offences and cause harm to the community, but we acknowledge that the benefits of reducing re-offending are far wider.

What we have achieved so far

Partners share a responsibility to reduce inequalities in society, and thereby to reduce the incidence and impact of offending in our communities. There are many strategies that can be implemented, and indeed every approach detailed within this document will have its part to play in the process.

Programmed work with people who offend is a significant part of our approach, ensuring that they have consistent learning, and that this is provided in accordance with best practice. As an example, new community-based programmes on Citizenship (for groups) and on Domestic Abuse (one-to-one work) will each address power imbalance and its consequences, in the context of both the offender and victims.

Outcomes

This topic feeds directly into two of the Scottish Government's National Outcomes, specifically:

- We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities
- People most at risk are protected and supported to achieve improved life chances

Relevant PI: CJ105 - Percentage of Offenders reconvicted within 1 year (Scottish Government data)

9.11 Managing difficult-to-engage offenders

Even when supervision of offenders concentrated on improving welfare in the early days of local authority social work, some offenders would be reluctant to engage with the help on offer. Now, 45 years on, the services on offer and the demands we make on our service users are very different. We have a considerably wider range of services on offer; we, rather than our service users, are the arbiters of which services they should use to reduce the risk of their re-offending; and the consequences of their not following through on agreed actions will usually be a return to court or a Parole Board review.

There is a risk that we over-simplify the issue by noting that in many cases the service user consented to the order being made by the court. Such consent was given in a pressured environment, with potentially alarming consequences from not giving consent. It is certainly the case that some people give consent to court orders while having no intention of complying, and these people constitute a particular challenge. However motivational techniques are needed as an integral part of almost all work with people who offend.

There is an inevitable tension in working with uncooperative offenders. The Scottish Government provides guidance on how much latitude workers may have before taking someone back to court, and sentencers may express strong views if an order is allowed to go on too long before being returned to court. At the same time, we know that many of the people we deal with have had long-term difficulties in engaging with services, and that without offering at least some flexibility, we may be setting them up to fail. Persistence is crucial; the approach used by the Drug Treatment and Testing Order team, and also adopted in the piloting of the West Lothian Persistent Offenders Programme, seems equally applicable to those offenders who find compliance a struggle. We should acknowledge that there are financial costs involved in keeping some of our service users engaged, but also that the costs to society of repeated prison sentences are even higher.

Use of mentoring services may well provide support for offenders in engaging with services.

It is clearly inequitable if some service users are granted more latitude than others; at the same time, we have to make changes in the mind-set, widely accepted by many participants in this complicated situation, that breach of an order is an ending, rather than a way-point on the journey to desistance. Keeping a working relationship with a service user while taking an order back to court is not easy, but seems likely to have long-term benefits that are proportionate to the amount of effort put into the process.

What we have achieved so far

The Criminal & Youth Justice Service (C&YJS) is a partner in research carried out by Strathclyde University into compliance issues in work with people who offend. The C&YJS is also carrying out its own research into the specific issues for people who have failed to comply with court orders.

The Reducing Re-offending Change Fund, launched in 2012, invited proposals for evidence-based mentoring schemes for young male and female offenders. While the Lothian & Borders bid was declined in favour of a national scheme, we believe that our local learning from planning the bid has confirmed the potential benefits of this approach, and we look forward to working with the Wise Group in rolling out this service.

Outcomes

All service users will share in planning for their future, and will understand what we want them to achieve; and people on court orders or post-release licences will use fully the interventions offered.

Relevant PI: CJ107 - Percentage of Community-based orders supervised by the Criminal and Youth Justice Service with a successful termination.

10. Next steps

In Year 1 of the Reducing Re-offending Strategic Plan 2012-15, which this plan supersedes, we carried out the following actions:

- We continued planning processes in a range of forums, which allowed us to generate the expanded list of development areas that appears in this plan.
- We have engaged with all partners in West Lothian whose work impacts on the Reducing Re-offending agenda.
- We agreed and set up the Reducing Re-offending Committee Structure, and have assigned almost all of the current themes in this report to the relevant sub-committee.
- We have agreed the high level outcomes for each of the revised and expanded list of themed priority areas, through consultation with partners.
- For some areas of development, we have already launched strategies, both long- and short-term, which have either already made a difference to our joint styles of working, or have allowed us to understand better the challenges that face us.

In Year 1 of the Reducing Re-offending Strategic Plan 2013-18, we will continue with the above activity, and will:

- agree action plans with partners, utilising existing networks and forums wherever possible, in relation to each of the themed priority areas.
- ensure our action plans contain details under the following headings:
 - Outcome
 - Activity
 - Lead partner(s)
 - Timescale
 - Resources
 - Performance measure(s)
- agree an approach to monitoring, reviewing and reporting progress of the action plans, and the systems for doing this.
- promote and raise awareness about the strategic plan amongst key stakeholders.
- initiate implementation of the activity detailed within action plans.

In subsequent years, we will:

- continue to implement activity detailed within action plans.
- continue to monitor/review action plans in accordance with agreed approach and system(s).
- report annually on progress to key stakeholders.
- amend our planning in the context of future developments in the field of community justice.



If you have comments to make about this document, or would like to know more about the work of community-based justice services and partners in West Lothian, please email criminaljusticeteam@westlothian.gov.uk