

REDESIGNING THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE SYSTEM -CONSULTATION

Introduction

In December 2012 the Scottish Government issued a consultation on proposals to redesign the Community Justice System. This follows two critical Audit Scotland reports which highlighted continued problems with re-offending, one particularly dealing with women.

Key Issues

The Scottish Government believes that more must be done to tackle reoffending and started the process with its Reduced Reoffending Programme. They are also introducing a Reducing Reoffending Change Fund to place greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention, which is aimed at providing offenders with one-to-one support through evidence-based mentoring schemes and promoting greater partnership working between third and public sector organisations. It also proposes that the redesigned system would undertake strategic commissioning and procurement of services whichever form the service takes.

The consultation also has to be considered alongside the UK Government's plans to privatise most of the Probation Service in England, which is the equivalent of Scotland's Criminal Justice Social Work Service.

The consultation outlines three options to be considered.

- **Model1**

This model gives the current Community Justice Authorities (CJA) new legislative powers with a significantly enhanced strategic and commissioning role, with service providers accountable to the CJA. This would widen CJA Board membership and involve the appointment of the chair by Scottish Ministers. At present the CJAs do not have commissioning powers and Board members are drawn from elected members of constituent local authorities. In addition, partner bodies would be statutorily required to work together to develop a local plan for reducing reoffending.

There is an additional option within this proposal to give CJAs direct operational responsibility for delivery of criminal justice social work services in the community by transferring them from local authorities to CJA control.

- **Model2**

A local model whereby CJAs are abolished and the statutory responsibility for the strategic planning, commissioning and delivery of services are wholly assumed by the local authority. These arrangements would be delivered within the context of

KEY POINTS:

- Option A: An enhanced Community Justice Authority (CJA) model, where changes are made to CJA membership and functions.
- Option B: A local authority model, where local authorities assume responsibility for the strategic planning, design and delivery of offender services in the community.
- Option C: A single service model, where a new national social work-led service for community justice is established.

Branches should:

- Discuss with members
- Feed in information
- Attend Delegate Meeting



Contact UNISON's Bargaining & Campaigns team:

Diane Anderson
diane.anderson@unison.co.uk
 0141 342 2842
 0845 355 0845

Dave Watson
d.watson@unison.co.uk

local planning frameworks (Community Planning Partnerships; Alcohol and Drug Partnerships or the proposed Health and Social Care Partnerships) and therefore be subject to local accountability.

The Consultation document refers to the current structures for delivery of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) within CJAs and indicates that this is an area which would require careful consideration

- **Model3**

CJAs are abolished and a single national criminal justice social work - led service established, responsible for strategic services including, commissioning, procurement and direct provision and management of local offender services, with local authority Criminal Justice Social Workers and other staff transferring to the new service. The service would be a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) and headed up by a Chief Executive. Services would be delivered locally but within a wider federation arrangement based on that of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and the new national police service. The Federation would be made up of three areas; North, East and West, headed up by local Area Directors.

Under all options a statutory duty would be placed on all partners to work together to produce plans for reducing reoffending and engage in its delivery.

UNISON View

UNISON believes community justice is a local service. It gains its strength from its links with local authorities, police and community organisations that operate at a neighbourhood level. In line with the Christie Commission recommendations we support democratically accountable local services, not centralisation or privatisation.

UNISON believes that to place the running of big regional contracts into the hands of multi-national private sector companies, as proposed in the UK Government's plans would destroy the localism and accountability that is key to the success of these services. They would increase fragmentation and pass over vital work to an unaccountable and poor performing private sector, interested only in profits. The Scottish Government has given assurances that they do not intend to go down this road.

UNISON Scotland will be consulting its members who deliver community justice social work services in Scotland on the Scottish Government's plans.

Action for Branches

- Discuss these options and their implications with members affected.
- Forward comments to diane.anderson@unison.co.uk by **30 March 2013**
- UNISON's Social Work Issues Group will be calling a delegate meeting of all branches towards the end of February/early March to consider the paper and discuss the options. Make sure that your branch is represented at the meeting. Further details to follow once date is set.

Further info

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/12/7292>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/public-safety/offender-management/about/rr-programme>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/public-safety/offender-management/change fund>

http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/central/2012/nr_121107_reducing_reoffending.pdf

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0039/00391828.pdf>

http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/response/cja_uthorities.html

http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/b005_PolicyBrief_ChristieCommission%20PublicServices_June2011.pdf

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