Justice Committee

Scottish Government’s Draft Budget 2014-2015

Written submission from Scotland’s Community Justice Authorities

1.0 Scotland’s Community Justice Authorities welcome the opportunity to submit written evidence in advance of the appearance of Councillor McNamara at the Justice Committee on 30 October 2013.

1.1 We endorse Scottish Government’s position on prioritising preventative spend throughout the budget statement, in particular, its focus on:

- Children and young people
- Victims of domestic abuse and violence against women
- Women Offenders

1.2 We also support the Government’s commitment to strengthening Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) as a means of improving shared budget and resource planning across the whole public sector, including the NHS (p20). We value the responsibility CPPs have in delivering Prevention Plans as part of their Single Outcome Agreements and we would encourage scrutiny of this responsibility.

2.0 Health and Well Being

2.1 The additional £100m that is to be made available via NHS Boards to support partnerships to drive the shift towards prevention, in particular, the investment in early years and reducing health inequalities and preventative measures on alcohol is very welcome. These areas have a particular resonance with the work of CJAs in our efforts to tackle the root causes of (re)offending and ensure offenders, both male and female, are able to obtain fair and equitable access to preventative and treatment services. We recognise that the successful integration of Health and Social Care will be crucial in achieving these same measures.

3.0 Education and Life Long Learning

3.1 We support the Scottish Government’s ongoing commitment of the Whole System Approach to Youth Justice to maximise early intervention and minimise the impacts on young people coming to the attention of the Police. The Whole System Approach is already providing positive outcomes for many young people who are being diverted from formal justice involvement (p63).

3.2 CJAs recognise the benefits of linking mainstream spending to justice such as robust literacies programmes for offenders.

4.0 Justice

4.1 In relation to the Justice Allocation, the CJAs welcome the Scottish Government’s commitment over this current Spending Review period, and the next, to make the necessary resources available to SPS to implement the modernisation
of the prison estate for both male and female prisoners. The investment in a new
dedicated facility for females at HMP Inverclyde is very welcome. Similarly, the
plans to replace HMP Barlinnie and HMP Inverness are welcome too. Both facilities
are in need of replacement. That said, whilst CJAs are supportive of the
development of a modern prison estate that is fit for purpose, we remain concerned
at the number of individuals imprisoned in Scotland each year. Our vision is for a
reduction in the numbers of prisoners and a corresponding reduction in the number
of prisons required. Our expectation would be that these same resources could
instead be invested in community alternatives. Research has shown this to be far
more effective at reducing reoffending for the vast majority of those otherwise
sentenced to short periods of custody.

4.2 The Scottish Government’s continued support for implementation of the
recommendations contained within the report of the Women’s Commission is
welcome. We would note however the recommendations are relevant to all women
offenders not just the female prisoner population.

4.3 On 9 September 2013 the Scottish Government published the reconviction
rates for 2010-2011. These figures provided clear evidence of a continuing
downward trend of reconviction rates across Scotland. The Scottish Government’s
commitment to continue to invest in the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund over
the next 2 years should provide the opportunity for that downward reconviction trend
to continue. The CJAs endorse this pledge but we would recommend that this
continued investment be utilised to fund the existing PSPs that have only recently
commenced. The existing PSPs have begun to provide mentoring support to women
and prolific offenders, but these services will be at a premature stage to provide the
necessary robust evidence of effectiveness when Change Fund financing finishes in
March 2015.

4.4 The Reducing Reoffending Change Funded PSPs are not the only new
investment to stimulate more effective practice. The Government’s Third Sector
Division, in partnership with the Robertson’s Trust and the Big Lottery have funded a
unique PSP within HMP Low Moss. In response to the recommendations of the
Women Offenders Commission, Justice funding has helped establish Women’s
Justice Centres in three areas and related projects across Scotland. A pilot
Diversion project in Glasgow has galvanised support for women while in Police
Custody and diverted them from Courts and possible prison sentences. In common,
all of these projects have short-term funding. The challenge to securing permanency
of funding is to develop robust evidence of the savings within the system and to
redirect this funding, which takes time. We would support continued Government
support during this period of shift towards preventative spend.

4.5 The CJAs acknowledge the intention to continue investment in the Cash for
Communities Programme that enables young people to take part in sporting, cultural,
education and mentoring activities. In 2011, the Scottish Government provided £3m
for the Payback to Communities – Sports Facilities Fund to CJAs in 2012-13. The
intention was that this fund be utilised to allow offenders on Community Payback
Orders to develop and deliver local projects to improve sports and leisure facilities
across Scotland. This was a very successful initiative.* In excess of 140 were
delivered across the 8 CJA areas which were greatly appreciated by local
communities. Offenders too clearly recognised the benefits and the appreciation of their efforts by their communities.

4.6 CJAs would welcome the opportunity for a further allocation of Cash for Communities funds to develop similar Community Payback projects over the next two years.

Cllr Peter McNamara
Chair of National CJA Conveners Group
22 October 2013

*A report on the Unpaid Work projects funded by the Payback to Communities – Sports Facilities Fund is available should the Justice Committee wish copies*