



North Strathclyde Community Justice Authority (NSCJA)

Communications Strategy 2008/11



Background

The Scottish Executive's 'Reducing Reoffending' consultation pointed to significant communication gaps within the criminal justice system and a lack of public understanding of how the Criminal Justice System works.

Community Justice Authorities (CJA's) are statutory bodies created by the Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Act 2005 designed to improve offender management and partnership working amongst criminal justice agencies. As the criminal justice reform programme is taken forward, improving communication will be an essential element in promoting public confidence and trust in the efficiency and effectiveness of offender management services. A key task for NSCJA has been to create a Communications Strategy.

Communications Strategy

This strategy is aimed at improving the communication capability of NSCJA as an organisation and does not seek to replace the existing strategies of partner organisations. The role of this strategy is to develop and maintain a positive public profile for the work of the CJA and to continually strive to enhance the organisation's reputation by ensuring a consistent, proactive and high quality approach to communications both internally and externally. It is critical that all communications activity is rooted in the main aims of the CJA as set out in the National Strategy for the Management of Offenders.

The Communications Strategy underpins the shared vision of NSCJA and its partner organisations of enabling safer, stronger communities where ordinary people can live their lives free from the fear of crime and where the rights of all members of the community are respected and upheld.

The leadership role of NSCJA as communicators

The CJA's purpose is to protect public safety by reducing both offending and reoffending. Our aim is to develop more integrated, consistent management of offenders in both the community and in custody, which also takes into account the level of risk in each individual case. The shared aim of NSCJA and its partners is to reduce reoffending and the amount of serious harm caused by those already known to the Criminal Justice System.

An important function for all CJA's will be providing leadership in communicating clear and simple messages about developments in offender management at a local level. NSCJA will therefore:

- evaluate the Communications Strategy as part of the area planning process;
- work with our partners to deliver the local communications strategy, providing leadership and identifying clear messages;
- build relationships with the local media to promote understanding of the work of offender management services; and
- use the area planning process to explore how communications with offenders and their families can be used to engage them constructively.

Key messages for NSCJA

The key messages for communications will be:

- a) The vision for Scotland of safer, stronger communities where people can live their lives free from the fear of crime;
- b) The purpose of Criminal Justice Services in protecting public safety by reducing offending and reoffending;
- c) The public has the right to expect Criminal Justice Services to use their contact with known offenders to reduce the risk that they will offend again but recognise that it is not possible to eradicate risk;
- d) Criminal Justice Services will work together in a more integrated way; provide consistent management of offenders in the community and custody, which takes into account the level of risk in each case;
- e) Reducing reoffending cannot be a task for the Criminal Justice System alone. Policies intended to promote social justice should take into account the specific challenges presented by integrating offenders into the community; and
- f) NSCJA is committed to supporting the Scottish Strategy for Victims' three key objectives:
 - Better access to information
 - Increased support
 - Greater participation in the Criminal Justice system.

All communications by NSCJA will promote:

- a) Increased public awareness and improved understanding of the purpose and vision of the CJA;
- b) Increased public confidence in the effectiveness of work with offenders;
- c) Improved understanding of community disposals;
- d) Improved understanding of the role of prisons;
- e) Improved satisfaction for victims, sentencers and beneficiaries of work by offenders; and
- f) The appropriate care of victims, including appropriate and timely information.

Target audiences

The community

Public opinion sets a powerful context for the work of offender management. Locally and nationally, the CJA and its partners have a duty under the modernising government agenda to provide the public with balanced information and actively involve citizens in the decision making and direction of what happens in prisons, what community sentences involve and how well services are performing. CJA's will be expected to build links with the local media, while service providers need to build relationships with local communities and to listen to their concerns.

Victims of crime

Communications links with the victims of crime are improving eg the MAPOS pilot, and the enhanced partnership and information sharing arrangements created within the CJA will assist in ensuring that case specific information and the general awareness of the needs of victims of crime will be met more effectively. Current legislative proposals seek to enhance the provision of information on release dates of offenders, NSCJA and its partners will work to ensure that victims of crime receive the appropriate advice and support when offenders are due to be released back into the local community.

Partner organisations

NSCJA will use our contact with our partner organisations to complement and build links into existing communication activities. We will promote clear messages in the understanding of offender management services and the benefits to the community of our partner organisations working together. Partner organisations can themselves play an important role as communicators, with their own staff and through their own experience of working with the media.

Offenders and their families

Communicating clearly to offenders and their families and seeking their views is an area that needs to be developed.

Judiciary

Good communications are needed with sentencers at a local and national level, to ensure that we benefit from their experience. As the agendas of the Criminal Justice Board and CJA's develop opportunities to consolidate links may be beneficial.

The role of CJA's

The key role of CJA's is to plan, co-ordinate, monitor and report on the delivery of offender services. Their statutory functions include:

- Create an area plan with partners responsible for service delivery focusing on reducing re-offending;
- Monitor the performance of partners;
- Report annually to Ministers on delivery of offender services;
- Promote good practice;
- Allocate resources to local authority criminal justice social work services; and
- Arrange with partner bodies the sharing of information relating to relevant persons.

Partner Organisations

Who are NSCJA's "partner organisations"?

The organisations that are to be designated partner bodies are:

- Constituent local authorities: Argyll and Bute Council, East Dunbartonshire Council, East Renfrewshire Council, Inverclyde Council, Renfrewshire Council and West Dunbartonshire Council
- Scottish Prison Service
- Strathclyde Police
- NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and NHS Highland
- Voluntary organisations operating within the area of the CJA which are in receipt of funding from local authorities for work with offenders and/or their families. In NSCJA these organisations are Apex Scotland, Action for Children, Turning Point Scotland, SACRO
- Scottish Court Service
- Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
- Victim Support Scotland

Links with other agencies

It is recognised that while Criminal Justice Social Work and the Scottish Prison Service have specific responsibilities for the management of offenders, these agencies alone will be unable to achieve the broad aims of the National Strategy for the Management of Offenders and reduce re-offending. It is recognised that support and liaison is required with a number of national and local agencies. These include:

National

- The Scottish Government
- The Parole Board
- The Risk Management Authority (RMA)
- Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA)
- HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMIP)
- The Sentencing Commission
- Jobcentre Plus
- The State Hospital
- Scottish Children's Reporters Administration

Local

- Community Planning Partnerships
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Community Health Partnerships (CHP)
- Other local voluntary groups as judged appropriate by the CJA, including community and faith groups
- Criminal Justice Boards
- Further Education Colleges
- Prison Visiting Committees
- Area Child Protection Committees
- Youth Justice Services
- Drug and Alcohol Teams
- Housing Representatives
- Education and training and employment bodies.

Strategy and Action Plan

1. **Promote a strong, consistent brand for NSCJA**

- Create guidelines for the use of NSCJA's corporate visual identity and use these to promote NSCJA
- Ensure all corporate documentation complies with these guidelines
- Adopt a 'Plain English' style for all communications with the public.
- Ensure a greater focus on the CJA's key messages in communications activity.

2. **Build relationships with the local media to promote understanding of the work of Offender Management Services**

- Produce a media response protocol between CJA and local authority press offices.
- Ensure key CJA staff receive training in promoting services to the media.

3. **Online Communications**

- Maintain the NSCJA website to ensure that it can provide information for the public, practitioners and stakeholders.
- Ensure that we maintain appropriate links to partner organisations
- Ensure that partner organisations reciprocate website links on their websites

4. **Be more proactive and strategic in engaging with, consulting and seeking feedback from target audiences**

- Host a workshop of communications practitioners from our partner organisations to focus on key communication issues facing CJA's as part of the area planning process.

5. **Use the area planning process to explore how communications with offenders and their families can be used to engage them constructively in the development of services**

- Ensure that hard to reach groups such as victims and families are considered specifically in consultation and communication, commissioning specific approaches where required.

6. **Produce an annual programme of CJA events**

- Produce a programme of events annually with input from partner agencies that reflect the CJA's Area Plan priorities.

7. **Monitoring and evaluation**

- NSCJA's Communications Strategy will be reviewed in line with the area planning arrangements (currently every three years) by the CJA and partner organisations.

Media Protocol

1. Background

Community Justice Authorities (CJA's) are statutory bodies created by the Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Act 2005 designed to improve offender management and partnership working amongst criminal justice agencies. As the criminal justice reform programme is taken forward, improving communication will be an essential element in promoting public confidence and trust in the efficiency and effectiveness of offender management services. A key task for NSCJA has been to create a Communications Strategy. This Media Protocol forms part of the strategy.

2. Aim

The aim of this protocol is to enable a consistent approach to communications for partner organisations across NSCJA in relation to press releases by NSCJA and incoming press enquiries to NSCJA.

3. Protocol

This protocol has been agreed and accepted by NSCJA and all its statutory partners.

Spokesperson:

- a) The opportunity to represent NSCJA to the media or respond should be offered first to the Convener.
- b) No officer of NSCJA or Local Authority Officer will speak on behalf of NSCJA to any media organisation unless specifically authorised by the Convener of NSCJA or the Local Authority Chief Executive.
- c) The spokespeople for NSCJA, to be included in press releases, will be:
 - Councillor Douglas Yates, Convener, NSCJA
 - Councillor Eileen McCartin, Vice Convener, NSCJA
 - Jim Hunter, Chief Officer, NSCJA
 - Others as agreed

4. Key messages:

- a) The vision for Scotland is safer, stronger communities where people can live their lives free from the fear of crime.
- b) It is the purpose of Criminal Justice Services to protect public safety by reducing offending and reoffending.
- c) The public has the right to expect Criminal Justice Services to use their contact with known offenders to reduce the risk that they will offend again. It is not possible to eradicate risk.
- d) Criminal Justice Services will work together in a more integrated way; provide consistent management of offenders in the community and custody, which takes into account the level of risk in each case.

- e) Reducing re-offending cannot be a task for the Criminal Justice system alone. Policies intended to promote social justice should take into account the specific challenges presented by integrating offenders into the community.
- f) The CJA is committed to supporting the Scottish Strategy for Victims three key objectives:
 - Better access to information
 - Increased support
 - Greater participation in the Criminal Justice system

5. Covering of events:

- a) The CJA Chief Officer will liaise with the lead local authority Head of Communication and the relevant Communication Officer of event to be covered.
- b) The lead Local Authority Communication Officer will arrange to cover event and write press release in conjunction with NSCJA's Chief Officer.
- c) The lead Local Authority Communication Officer will then email the press release to all other Local Authorities and Statutory Partners for release as appropriate.

6. Local Media:

All press releases to local media on behalf of NSCJA will be undertaken by the lead Local Authority Communication Officer. Local media includes:

- Local newspapers
- Local radio
- Local Authority website

7. National Media:

All press releases to national media on behalf of NSCJA will be undertaken by the Local Authority Communication Officer of the lead authority (Renfrewshire Council). National media includes:

- National newspapers
- National radio
- Television

8. Links with Partner Organisations:

- a) All statutory partners will receive copies of press releases on behalf of NSCJA by the appropriate Local Authority Communications Officer, for dissemination within their own organisation and inclusion on their website.
- b) Partner organisations will also send stories relevant to NSCJA produced by their organisation to all Local Authority Communications Officers for release as appropriate.

9. Partner Agencies

The following is a list of Communication contacts within each organisation that will send and receive information for release:

Organisation	Contact and job title	Telephone	Email
Apex Scotland	Bernadette Monaghan Chief Executive	0131 220 0130	bm@apexscotland.org.uk
Argyll & Bute Council	Aileen MacLennan Press and Media Relations Officer	01546 604276	Aileen.MacLennan@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service	Diane Stewart Area Assistant, Area Team, Paisley	08445 613 337	diane.stewart@copfs.gsi.gov.uk
East Dunbartonshire Council	Claire Robertson Public Affairs Officer	0141 578 8032	claire.robertson@eastdunbarton.gov.uk
East Renfrewshire Council	George Barbour Senior Media Officer	0141 577 3853 M:07768616381	george.barbour@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk
Inverclyde Council	Stuart Wilson Head of Corporate Communication & New Media	01475 712385 07766686035	stuart.wilson@inverclyde.gov.uk
Action for Children Scotland	Bryan Christie Press / Media Officer	07788 583 037	bryan.christie@virgin.net
NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde	Emma Gregory Media Relations Manager	0141 201 4429	emma.gregory@ggc.scot.nhs.uk
NHS Highland	David Ritchie Communications Manager	01436 655040 07776480406	davidritchie@nhs.net
Renfrewshire Council	David McLavin Senior Media Relations Officer	0141 840 3637	david.mclavin@renfrewshire.gov.uk
Sacro	Alan Mairs Publications Officer	0131 624 7259	amairs@national.sacro.org.uk
Scottish Court Service	Susan Whiteford Head of Corporate Communications	0131 221 6814	swhiteford@scotcourts.gov.uk please note if passing contact information to the media the Scottish Government Justice Desk provides the press office function for the Scottish Court Service and can be contacted on 0131 244 2642
Strathclyde Police	Kirsten MacColl Divisional Communications Officer	0141 532 6026/ 07894 313659	kirsten.maccoll@strathclyde.pnn.police.uk
Scottish Prison Service	Tom Fox Head of Communications	0131 244 8463	Tom.Fox@sps.pnn.gov.uk
Turning Point Scotland	Marisa Mahood Communications Manager	0141 427 9422	marisamahood@turningpointscotland.com
Victim Support Scotland	David Sinclair Head of Communications	0131 662 5409 07803 970320	david.sinclair@victimssupportsco.org.uk
West Dunbartonshire Council	Joe Cox Public Relations Officer	01389 737296	Joe.Cox@west-dunbarton.gov.uk