



Community Justice Authorities Consultation
Room GW.15
St Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

29 June 2005

Dear Sir or Madam

Consultation on Community Justice Authorities

YouthLink Scotland is the national youth work organisation for Scotland. We support the development of accessible, high quality youth work services which promote the well-being and development of young people. We are a national voluntary organisation working with both statutory and voluntary bodies. YouthLink Scotland's membership includes nearly 50 voluntary organisations, and 32 local authorities. YouthLink Scotland responded to the Scottish Executive's consultation, *Reduce Rehabilitate Reform*, and submitted evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Justice 2 Committee's Stage 1 consideration of the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Bill. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Executive's consultation on Community Justice Authorities ("the Consultation").

YouthLink Scotland's evidence is based on our extensive experience of working with young offenders at YouthLink Scotland's Outlet Youth Centre at HMP HMYOI Polmont ("PYOI") to assist their rehabilitation. The Outlet Youth Centre provides a wide range of services to the young people, and the recent HM Inspectorate of Prison's report on PYOI highlighted that its overall work is an example of good practice; *HM Inspectorate of Prisons: Report on HM Young Offenders' Institution Polmont, 5/8/04, Para 7.16 ("the HMI Report")*. By way of further background, we attach a copy of the joint YouthLink Scotland/SPS briefing paper, *YouthLink Scotland's Youth Work Services at Polmont Young Offenders' Institution*. YouthLink Scotland staff at the Outlet Youth Centre have also been working with the Scottish Prison Service ("SPS") to develop transitional support for young people aged 16 – 21 years' old leaving PYOI, and to embed this support within the SPS system. YouthLink Scotland's evidence also draws on the in-depth experience of many of our member organisations of working with young offenders.

For ease of reference we have used the same headings as the consultation document. YouthLink Scotland's response raises certain general issues around support for young offenders upon release, as well as focusing on a number of the specific questions set by the Consultation.

In summary, YouthLink Scotland's main points are:

- **YouthLink Scotland welcomes the Scottish Executive’s commitment to create Community Justice Authorities (“CJAs”), which we believe can play a key role in helping to reduce levels of reoffending in Scotland**
- **The criteria for a voluntary organisation to qualify as a CJA partner body should be widened to include voluntary groups in receipt of public funding, or funding from other sources, for work with offenders or victims**
- **Youth work organisations should be added to the list of CJA partner bodies**

General

YouthLink Scotland notes that CJAs will be introduced under the provisions of the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Bill, which is currently being considered by the Scottish Parliament. We welcome the statement recently made by Cathy Jamieson MSP, Minister for Justice, in her evidence to the Scottish Parliament’s Justice 2 Committee that, in relation to assisting young offenders upon release, this legislation should be seen within the context of the youth crime action plan. In addition, YouthLink Scotland welcomes the emphasis placed by the Minister on the importance of early intervention strategies to tackle youth crime and antisocial behaviour. We also warmly welcome the Minister for Justice’s support for addressing the complex issues faced by many young offenders upon release through the development of a national strategy. Against this background, YouthLink Scotland believes that the CJAs should have a strong emphasis on assisting young offenders, particularly in view of the high levels of reoffending amongst groups of young people leaving custody.

Functions and Structure

YouthLink Scotland notes that the membership of the CJAs will be drawn from local authorities. YouthLink Scotland takes the view that it is important that at least some of the membership have a good knowledge of youth justice, and of work with young offenders.

We also believe it is vital that the Strategic Area Plans developed by the CJAs must include a focus on the support, and management, of young offenders upon release.

Q1. In your view, which option would form the better basis for the CJA areas?

YouthLink Scotland recognises that both options could potentially offer significant advantages. We believe it is, therefore, essential that, whichever structure is chosen, the Scottish Executive monitors the CJAs to ensure that they are working effectively.

Partner Organisations

Q1. Do you agree with this list of partner bodies?

We note it is proposed that the designated statutory partner bodies “are those public bodies which deal directly with offenders, ex-offenders and victims and those voluntary bodies in receipt of public funds for this purpose”.

YouthLink Scotland agrees with the list of partner bodies. We welcome the recognition being given to the important work being undertaken by voluntary groups with offenders or victims.

Q2. Do you agree with the definition of voluntary bodies?

YouthLink Scotland further notes that the definition of ‘voluntary bodies’ will be “voluntary groups in receipt of public funding for working with offenders or victims”. Many of YouthLink Scotland’s members work with young offenders and victims, and rely on public funding or funding from external funders or a mixture of both to support their work. Indeed, a combination of such funds is often necessary during the lifetime of a project to ensure its survival, given the short-term nature of much funding. Against this background, YouthLink Scotland takes the view that the criteria for a voluntary organisation to qualify as a statutory partner body should be widened. We would suggest the following wording: “Voluntary Groups in receipt of public funding, or funding from other sources, for working with offenders or victims”. This amendment would help to ensure that CJAs are able to maximise their ability to draw upon the expertise and experience of voluntary organisations working with offenders, and those at risk of offending.

Q3. Which other agencies do you think should be identified as partner organisations?

YouthLink Scotland strongly believes that youth work organisations should be added to the list of CJA partner bodies, given the youth work sector’s expertise in, and extensive experience of, working with young offenders, and those at risk of offending. This is essential if the CJAs are to make an effective contribution to reducing the level of reoffending amongst young offenders upon release.

The youth work sector has a proven track record in working with young offenders, and YouthLink Scotland’s member organisations run a wide range of projects focusing on early intervention to tackle youth crime and antisocial behaviour, and on support for young offenders upon release.

Reflecting this, successful community based programmes focusing on young people include, for example, East Lothian Council’s Youth Justice Team’s work with young people, where the latter, having been identified by schools, community police officers and other relevant agencies as being at risk of offending, are given opportunities to allow them to address their behaviour, and to start leading more positive lifestyles. The emphasis in the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award New Start Programme is also on early intervention. The New Start Programme features a wide range of projects including diversionary activity groups involving The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award as a means of accrediting the activities that the young people are doing, mentoring schemes and projects designed to reduce gang related violence. A further example of successful community based interventions is the joint work being undertaken by Fairbridge Scotland and the Venture Trust, which offers week long access courses and a comprehensive follow on programme and three-week cognitive approach courses respectively for young people aged between 13 and 25 to tackle offending and disruptive behaviour.

YouthLink Scotland’s Outlet Youth Centre has also been working with PYOI to develop transitional support for young people leaving Polmont, and to embed this support within the SPS system. In addition to the work being undertaken jointly by YouthLink Scotland and the SPS, a number of other agencies work with those at risk of offending and with young offenders upon release, including East Lothian Council, Glasgow City Council,

Falkirk Council, Inverclyde Council, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Fairbridge Scotland, and the Prince's Trust Scotland to name but a few.

Q4. what do you think this guidance in respect of partner bodies should cover?

YouthLink Scotland believes that guidance outlining the ways in which CJAs will consult partner bodies, including youth work organisations, on the area plan, on annual reports, on area performance and on other aspects of their work would be particularly welcome.

YouthLink Scotland also considers that guidance covering the information sharing framework would be helpful. In this context, the guidance should recognise the fact that many voluntary groups are volunteer led, and that this should be reflected in the scheduling of any meetings organised by CJAs to provide their partners with updates and other information. To maximise the attendance of representatives of the voluntary sector and youth work organisations at such meetings we recommend that the guidance highlights these meetings will be scheduled to take place out of office hours, or at the weekend.

Q5. Do you agree non-members should be able to attend and speak at the invitation of the CJA?

Yes.

Q. If so, should these non-members be restricted to statutory partners or should the CJA have the discretion to include others?

Non-members invited to attend and speak at CJA meetings should not be restricted to statutory partners. YouthLink Scotland takes the view that CJAs should have the discretion to include others. This will allow CJAs to draw on the widest possible range of experience, expertise, and best practice, from organisations and agencies working with offenders, and those at risk of offending.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require more information, or would like to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Margaret McLeod
Head of Development