

'Second Chancers' – A Smart Justice Campaign

Summary and Recommendations

This report provides members with a background to 'Second Chancers' which is a smart justice campaign that Community Justice Scotland (CJS) have recently launched.

The campaign aims to build confidence in community justice as an effective sentencing option that local government has a pivotal role in leading.

This report invites members to:

- i. Provide any comments on the 'Second Chancers' campaign;
- ii. View the CJS's campaign materials exhibited in COSLA's Conference Centre before or after the Board meeting;
- iii. Note that the campaign materials are available to be presented locally in council areas from CJS; and
- iv. Note that the campaign materials may be displayed at a future COSLA Leaders or Convention meeting.

References

Previous reports:

- Not Applicable

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'Second Chancers' – A Smart Justice Campaign

Purpose

1. This report provides members with background information on 'Second Chancers', a smart justice campaign that Community Justice Scotland have recently launched. The campaign aims to build confidence in community justice as an effective sentencing option that local government has a pivotal role in leading under the new model for Community Justice.

Current COSLA Position

2. The shared aspiration of COSLA and the Scottish Government/Community Justice Scotland is to reduce the prison population and avoid people going to prison in the first place, given Scotland's prison population is one of the highest in Western Europe.
3. In Scotland nearly 14,000 people were sentenced to prison between April 2015 and March 2016 with 65% of these for sentences of six months or less. In addition, many people in the Justice System tend to be the most damaged and sometimes damaging citizens due to addiction, mental health and learning difficulties.
4. A main focus of the CJS is to see a reduction in the number of "ineffective" short prison sentences imposed by the courts and to have more "robust" community sentences. It is recognised that serving a prison sentence intrinsically increases the challenges for someone when they return to their community. As a result, an increase in community sentences should reduce the prison population.
5. Sentences served in the community are also believed to be more effective than sentences served in prison. Six in 10 of those given a short sentence reoffend within a year, compared with 3 in 10 of those given a community sentence.
6. Nearly two thirds of Scots do not know what community justice is. As a result, efforts are required to increase this level of awareness and confidence in community sentencing, given community justice reduces offending as well as the number of victims.

What is changing?

'Second Chancers' – A Smart Justice Campaign

7. Community Justice Scotland launched the 'Second Chancers' campaign on Thursday 11 October to raise awareness of the smart justice system. Rebecca Worrall, Community Justice Scotland (CJS) will provide a brief presentation on the campaign at the Board meeting which will include a short film featuring a case study.
8. The campaign is primarily aimed at young people, aged 18-24, living in Scotland. It explores positivity, hope, aspiration and chaos through the lens of people with experience of the justice system. It also gives a voice to people who have been let down and rejected, but who have managed to pull themselves up and fought for better. In short, it is about those offenders who have essentially grasped a second chance.
9. The campaign is supported by a toolkit that consists of a series of short films and an exhibition that consists of six stories.

10. Key messages of the 'Second Chancers' campaign are that Community Justice involves a diverse range of services, including health, housing, social work, third sector, as well as the police and courts, working together to repair harm to the community, address offending behaviour and support reintegration back into society.

11. Other key messages of the campaign are outlined below.

- Nearly two thirds (63%) of Scots do not know what community justice is.
- Only 21% of Scots agree that Scotland operates a smart justice system that is robust, effective and fair.
- 45% of Scots believe prevention of crime is the primary objective of the Scottish justice system.
- Everyone can make a mistake. We want a smart justice system that is robust, effective, innovative and fair. A system which can give people a 'second' chance.
- Smart justice means people repaying their debts for crime(s) they have committed and rebuilding their lives.
- Our communities deserve a smart justice system that makes them safer, stronger and more productive.

12. Members can view the website campaign at <http://secondchancers.tv/> that features a number of thought provoking case studies of offenders that have managed to turn their lives around.

Next Steps

13. To raise the profile of this agenda, given local government has a crucial lead role on community sentencing under the new Community Justice model COSLA is considering sharing further information on the 'Second Chancers' – Smart Justice campaign with member councils at a future COSLA Leaders or Convention meeting.

14. Members are invited to consider whether they would like to host the campaign.