Workforce Consultation 2016: Engaging with the Workforce

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March 2017

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Introduction

Each year the Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice (CYCJ) develops and agrees a programme of activity with the Scottish Government. Designed to progress key objectives and to meet practice and knowledge needs across the country, the resulting workplan shapes most of the CYCJ workload over the coming year.

It is very important to us at CYCJ that this workplan is truly informed by the needs of our stakeholders: predominantly the youth justice workforce (by which we mean anyone from any sector working in some way with young people involved in offending behaviours); as well as young people and their communities. Every two years we undertake a focused consultation exercise to ascertain the needs and priorities of our stakeholders to inform our thinking and use this as the basis of the workplan for the coming financial year.

In 2014 we undertook a large scale exercise, involving 53 practitioners; 235 community councils; and 423 children and young people. The report from this 2014 consultation is available on our [website](). The suggestions were varied and broad-ranging and could not all be progressed in a 12-month period, and so many of the suggestions, especially from communities and young people, have been carried over into this workplan. These include: substance misuse; information and data needs in youth justice; and a lack of resources.

As a result it was decided to solely focus on the workforce in the 2016 consultation, but to engage with them in such a way that helped us prioritise and navigate our way through what are always very important, interesting and varied (at times conflicting) needs and suggestions. We therefore decided to use a Delphi approach to our consultation. The Delphi method is a research technique designed to facilitate group communication with a panel of people who are knowledgeable within a particular field. The Delphi method has been used in many ways, but is particularly useful where the aim is to try and build consensus around an issue, for example in relation to the setting of goals or the selection of policy solutions. The benefits of a Delphi study are that it facilitates group communication but at a time that suits individual panel members; individual panel members receive feedback about the views of other panel members that can be used to refine their own positions; and that it provides a level of anonymity for panel members so that group views

can be considered without potential confounding factors that exist in traditional focus groups, such as group pressure or the influence of especially dominant individuals.

Since the consultation last year we have been working to finalise our workplan, which you can view online. The purpose of this short paper is to present the main findings from the Delphi study which we hope will help our stakeholders understand how we have used their comments and suggestions to shape a focused and coherent workplan.

Methodology

Initial gathering of ideas

During the course of June and July 2016 CYCJ issued an open online consultation designed to generate ideas for priorities for work. The brief online survey was available on the CYCJ website and promoted via social media and existing networks of contacts. A total of 117 different suggestions were received.

The Delphi Panel

In August 2016 CYCJ stakeholders who are involved with one of the key groups that support youth justice in Scotland were then invited to participate in a telephone Delphi study to help CYCJ prioritise and make sense of these varied suggestions. These groups included: the Youth Justice Improvement Board; the three Youth Justice Implementation Groups (which support the implementation of the Scottish Youth Justice strategy); Whole Systems Leads; the National Youth Justice Advisory Group; Scottish Government; and CYCJ's Executive Governance Group as well as a small group of practitioners. The groups were selected as they could provide an important perspective on youth justice in Scotland today.

Procedure

The Delphi study is normally conducted across a series of questionnaires. Panellists complete the first questionnaire (Round 1). The full panel's responses from Round 1 are collated, summarised and fed back to panellists, and panellists then have the opportunity to review, reflect and re-evaluate their own responses in light of this feedback from the rest of the panel (Round 2). Further rounds can be added as necessary and follow the same

pattern of feedback, reflection and review. Three rounds are typical, and although three rounds were planned for the CYCJ Delphi, for a number of reasons only two rounds were conducted via telephone, mostly due to a sufficient amount of consensus received, plus time and capacity issues on behalf of both interviewers and participants.

A total of 53 responses were received in Round 1, although this does not represent the full number of participants who were consulted, as a small number of groups decided to respond collectively. In addition, some participants sat on more than one group, but their responses have only been aligned to the group with which they have their main involvement (for example, Implementation Group Chairs who also sit on the Youth Justice Improvement Board are counted only once, in their Implementation Group).

Table 1: Respondents to Round 1

Group	Number of responses: Round 1[1]	%
National Youth Justice Advisory Group	14	26%
Whole Systems Approach[2]	13	25%
Improving Life Chances Implementation Group	11	21%
Developing Capacity Implementation Group	4	8%
Scottish Government	4	8%
Practitioners	3	6%
CYCJ's Executive Governance Group	3	6%
Youth Justice Improvement Board	1	2%
Total	**53**	**100**

A further 31 respondents were followed up in Round 2 and this high attrition rate is fairly standard, but one of the potential drawbacks of a Delphi study. These respondents received

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[1] A group response is only counted as one response
[2] This includes the WSA Implementation group as well as the WSA Leads

a summary of the overall results, as well as a reminder of their own responses for comparison. Respondents were then able to amend their responses in light of this feedback, or to keep the same response.

Findings

The biggest issue in Youth Justice right now

In Round 1, a total of 50 respondents made suggestions, although some made more than one suggestion as to what the biggest issue in youth justice currently was. The biggest issue mentioned was about the dissolution of many youth justice teams and the need to ensure that youth justice skills were maintained and developed and that youth justice remained a priority across the country (14 respondents). There was some concern that, due to continued falls in youth offending statistics, an element of complacency was setting in. The next biggest issue, with nine responses, was mental health and trauma, followed by the minimum age of criminal responsibility and children's rights (seven responses). The challenge of resources, or a lack of them, either in local authorities or in families directly impacted by austerity also received seven responses.

These four priorities were fed back to participants in Round 2. Participants were then asked to rate whether they agreed that these were the most pressing issues right now, on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 2: Most pressing issues after Round 2	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Mental health and trauma	4.7	0.5	4	5
The need to maintain specialist Youth justice skills and services	4.4	0.8	2	5
Lack of resources (in services and communities)	4.2	0.8	3	5
Minimum Age of Criminal responsibility	3.7	0.9	2	5

There was substantial consensus around the need for Mental Health and Trauma, as evidenced by the high mean, and lowest standard deviation, with no participant rating this priority below a 4. Almost three-quarters (71%) rated this area as their highest priority (scoring it a 5). The high relevance of mental health issues and past trauma in offending behaviours, plus challenges in accessing service provision in this area were often cited as reasons as to why an increased focus needs to be given to this area. However, a few people commented that while it was clearly a priority, they were not necessarily certain how or where CYCJ could begin to make an impact in this area.

Mental health and trauma is the driver for most issues we are seeing

Mental health and trauma - this is a theme throughout the study, it is important but I question what CYCJ can affect in relation to the current national services available for mental health and trauma

The next area with the highest level of congruence was the need to ensure specialist youth justice skills were not lost, whether these were embedded in specialist or generic service provision.

There is a clear need to maintain specialist skills and where possible services. Without this, the type of young people we work with are likely to end up getting a poor service or no service

Difficult to ask for specialist resources based on reducing figures in youth justice and therefore increasing difficulty in justifying specialist services

In many ways the issue of resources was linked to the above priority, with a reduction in youth justice provision often perceived as being linked to the financial climate. There was often a recognition that more money, or resources, might not be readily available and that the solutions might come from smarter, more effective ways of working.

Not so much a lack of resources, not about more money, but about using money more wisely, better joined up service

There is a massive issue of resource collapse so we need to come out of the silos and start joining up smarter

The Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility was the area of work that received the most varied response, with the lowest mean score and the highest standard deviation. However, it was not necessarily that participants did not see this as an important issue, but that frequently many felt this was an area of work already underway, or one which CYCJ could not fully influence. Others felt that it was an important area of work, and 19% of Round 2 participants still rated this as a 5 (strongly agree with the priority).

MACR- already on agenda so do not feel need for extra push

MACR is meaningful and needs to be beyond the technical change - what difference will this make to practice?

Priorities for CYCJ Work

In Round 1 participants were asked to rate how important a number of provided suggestions were to developing youth and criminal justice knowledge and practice at this point in time. Each potential piece of work was rated on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (highly important). The top 20 responses, and their mean rating were fed back to participants in Round 2, so that participants could compare their rating to that of the groups. A number of participants opted to change their rating in response to this feedback. In addition, two areas of work that emerged in Round 1 were proposed to Round 2 participants and they were asked to rate these on the same scale.

Table 3 highlights the mean score in Round 1 compared to the mean score in Round 2, sorted by the highest scoring priorities from Round 2.

Table 3: Highest scoring priorities in Rounds 1 and 2	Average Score Round 1 (*n*=53)	Average Score in Round 2 (*n*=31)
1. Mental Health	4.6	4.8
2. Trauma and Complexity	4.4	4.4
3. High risk young people	4.3	4.3
4. Understand Youth Justice better: effective practice / outcomes / drivers / prevention	4.2	4.1
5. Internet Offending / New Technologies	4.2	4.1
6. Young people in the adult criminal justice system	4.1	4.1
7. Family problems among young offenders	4.1	4.1
8. Relationship-based work with young offenders	3.8	4.0
9. Support and development of WSA	4.0	4.0
10. Child Sexual Exploitation	4.0	3.9
11. Substance Misuse	-	3.9
12. Harmful Sexual Behaviour	3.9	3.8
13. Education and youth justice	3.9	3.7
14. Children's Rights and Youth Justice	3.8	3.7
15. The use of remand and bail	3.8	3.7
16. Interplay between youth justice and child protection	3.8	3.7
17. Autism and LD in the CJ system	3.8	3.7
18. Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility	-	3.4

In both Rounds, Mental Health was most often mentioned, and the overall rating for Mental Health increased slightly between Rounds 1 and 2. Where comments were provided in Round 1 this mostly related to: difficulty in accessing resources for assessing and working with mental health issues in young people, with CAMHS being commented on specifically on a number of occasions. Other reasons given for choosing this as an issue included the fact that it was a key factor in young people's offending, that it cut across key areas such as

trauma and complexity, and that we need a better understanding of mental health issues in young people.

Mental health is one of the main areas for young people involved in offending - whether a diagnosed disorder or emotional health and well-being issues.

We've not got a handle on this, it's difficult to get a CAMHS assessment, particularly for self-harm and for 16-18 yr olds, if they leave school they can't get a CAMHS assessment

Trauma and Complexity was the next biggest priority, and key justifications included that it was a key factor in young people's offending, that it can cause long-term damage, that we need to better understand the impact of trauma and better support effective, and earlier, interventions by practitioners.

Evidence suggests that in youth justice people the levels of trauma are very high and that this ties in with family problems which lead to trauma. We need practitioners to have the ability to work to help and support young people.

Disproportionate number of young people involved in offending have experienced trauma and loss in their lives. We tend to know this retrospectively rather than being able to identify early and intervene as appropriate which may prevent or reduce likelihood of negative outcomes.

High risk young people was mentioned third most frequently, often because they were viewed as a small but important group that posed particular challenges for workers and for the system, and the level of harm that surrounded their behaviours (to themselves or to victims).

Small number of young people but important - different challenge for workers.

This group of young people is particularly vulnerable, needs prioritising in terms of resources.

This group of young people disproportionately causes a large amount of the issues in youth justice.

Developing a better understanding of youth justice was a broad category that encompassed a range of suggestions and comments. Frequently this referred to ensuring effective and evidence-informed practice in youth justice, or the need to ensure that youth justice skills were not lost as youth justice teams were disbanded into more generic provision.

Some of our specialist youth justice teams have dispersed into generic children and family teams

Need specialist skills, as our services often don't hear about young people until a late stage i.e. when young person is at court. Need youth justice to be understood and accessible

This aspect is all encompassing as if we collectively understand each other's roles and what is proven through research and evidence as working, then working together we will accomplish what we are collectively seeking to achieve

Relationship-based work with young offenders increased its overall rating between Rounds 1 and 2, and many respondents linked this to the work priority in relation to family work. Respondents felt that while increasing understanding about how to make relationship-based work was important, supporting family relationships was also crucial. Substance misuse was a new priority in Round 2 and was rated quite highly by Round 2 participants. If this had been included at the outset of Round 1 then the overall rating may have been even higher.

The Top Three Priorities

In Round 1, some participants found it hard to select three priorities, and others grouped similar priorities together. Key groupings included: trauma/complexity and mental health; high risk, trauma/complexity and mental health; or high risk and harmful sexual behaviour. Other groupings included: young people in the adult criminal justice system and the use of remand/bail. However, from this, the nine most commonly mentioned suggestions were sent out to participants in Round 2. Participants were then asked to only rank three priorities, in order of preference from 1 to 3. Table 4 highlights the top priorities after Round 2.

While Mental Health obtained the greatest number of 1st place votes, trauma and complexity received a slightly higher proportion of 1st and 2nd place rankings, and they were tied when looking at all rankings. These two proprieties took almost 50% of all votes cast.

Table 4: Top 3 priorities after Round 2

Suggestion	% of 1st place votes	% of 1st and 2nd place votes	% of 1st-3rd place votes
Mental Health	39%	31%	23%
Trauma and Complexity	23%	32%	23%
Understanding Youth Justice better	13%	6%	4%
Support and development of WSA	10%	11%	12%
High risk young people	10%	8%	17%
Young people in the adult Criminal Justice system	3%	8%	7%
Understanding the Youth Justice workforce	3%	2%	3%
Education and Youth Justice	0%	2%	10%
Internet Offending	0%	0%	1%

Impact

Round 1 participants were asked about impact. The most common suggestions of how CYCJ could have the biggest impact was by ensuring information and evidence was available and accessible to practitioners to inform their practice (14 suggestions).

In providing the evidence base to support practice and the pathways where interventions and supports are best placed to occur

Research, practice, lived experience-the model is unique and really loud. CYCJ model works, it is high impact and could be replicated in other areas/sectors. Illuminating research and with clear practice implications like the bereavement work is where the impact can be maximised

CYCJ was also viewed as having a role in influencing and advocating for youth justice (nine suggestions) and in connecting people (eight suggestions).

Opportunity to be leading from the front in respect of mental health and trauma in the Youth Justice system. Using your voice to secure access to resources. CAMHS self-referral - if they don't show up they are dropped off the list. Use your academic backdrop to go to the mental health boards. CYCJ is critical in being that voice

By taking a lead role in addressing the likely issues for professionals. Taking a stance on contentious issues e.g. Health, Housing. CYCJ should be a voice for practitioners and young people, the profile needs to continue to be raised

Continuing to engage with a wider range of practitioners including those in adult services and early years to allow links to be made between the areas

More roadshow type events to help capture all professionals including health and education

Conclusions

The Delphi approach proved useful in narrowing down and prioritising a large range of varied, important and at times conflicting suggestions. The findings from the Delphi were considered at a CYCJ team meeting, and at a separate meeting with the management team, and as many of the suggestions as possible were incorporated into the workplan. Thus, in addition to a whole strand of work aimed at advancing the Whole System Approach, we will also publish research on the trauma of custodial and secure settings; organise an event on speech, language and communication needs; maintain an up-to-date profile of young people in secure care and custody; publish research on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences; develop a multi-agency approach to the development of core skills common to all partners across the workforce; support the implementation of any change to the MACR for practice; and help support creativity in challenging times by producing a range of case studies about innovative ideas and good practice which save money, alongside many other activities. You can view our full workplan here.

Future stakeholder consultations will consider this method again, and it may prove a useful method to reach consensus between adults and young people, where their views diverge on youth justice or other related issues. The next formal stakeholder consultation will take place in 2018, but in the meantime please do not hesitate to share any suggestions or comments by emailing cycj@strath.ac.uk.