

Annual Report

April 2019 to March 2020

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1. Overview

The Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice (CYCJ) has enjoyed another impressive year, publishing ground-breaking research, hosting well-attended events and training sessions, and continuing to provide strong practitioner support, despite recent global events which have forced us to adapt our working patterns.

Highlights include the publication of our positively acclaimed work on Scotland's youth justice system and children's rights; publishing key messages from five years' worth of research into trauma, bereavement and loss; and undergoing a successful evaluation exercise as a centre and bringing people together to help us 'future proof' youth justice.

We also hosted visits from the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Humza Yousaf MSP and the Minister for Children and Young People, Maree Todd MSP; supported the development of our partnership projects; and took forward the work of the Scottish Government's Youth Justice Strategy through implementation groups and forums.

Our international outreach has continued to grow, with visits to Ireland, Geneva and Wales enabling us to find out more about youth justice practice out with Scotland and develop new partnerships.

Throughout all this activity, CYCJ has continued to strive to meet the needs of the Scottish youth justice workforce and young people.

2. Impact and Outreach

Local Authority Reach

CYCJ continues to support local authorities to develop their practice. This has included providing case specific support; facilitating meetings between youth and adult justice services to improve communication and transitions between services; and supporting EEI, Restorative Justice and risk management procedures and practice. The team have also travelled across Scotland to deliver bespoke training via a wide variety of [roadshows](#) and delivered lectures and seminars on youth justice and social work to students in Scotland's universities. We have also supported NYJAG Exec, NYJAG and WSA Lead meetings.

Evaluating the work we do

In July 2019, we embarked upon a six month evaluation journey to better understand and strengthen our contribution to youth justice.

The evaluation, conducted with independent evaluator [Catherine-Rose Stocks-Rankin](#) and jointly funded with the Scottish Government, took place from June to December 2019. During this time, Catherine-Rose worked closely with CYCJ to better understand the centre's work. This involved conducting interviews with team members and stakeholders, and joining conversations, meetings and activities to assess the impact that CYCJ is having on those who work across youth justice in Scotland and on young people's experiences/outcomes. Her [resulting findings](#) aim to help CYCJ in its mission to improve youth justice and continue to support Scotland to be the best place in the world for children to grow up.

Informing youth justice legislation and policy

In August 2019, we were delighted to welcome Humza Yousaf MSP, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, to CYCJ and the University of Strathclyde. Following his joint address with the Minister for Children and Young People at the 2018 National Youth Justice Conference, Mr Yousaf was keen to find out more about CYCJ. Along with members of the University and CYCJ's Executive Governance Group, we discussed practitioner support, research, secure care and youth justice participation work, and our shared goal of keeping children and young people out of the criminal justice system via early interventions and systems, whilst ensuring we support those who do enter the system with rehabilitation and in reducing reoffending.

We gave evidence to the Education and Skills Committee on the Disclosure (Scotland) Bill on behalf of CYCJ; and to the Justice Committee at Scottish Parliament on the secure care of children and young people in Scotland, referencing CYCJ's report '[Just a wee boy not cut out for prison](#)'. Fiona Dyer also joined senior leaders from justice, health, local government and social work as part of a [national group](#) focused on improving community justice intervention.

Parents and carers

To improve our outreach to parents and carers, we have created a [section on our website](#) sharing relevant resources, blogs and links to useful organisations.

CYCJ Associates

In October 2019, we welcomed a [new cohort of Associates](#), including youth justice and children's rights academic Dr Anthony Charles (Swansea University); Rania Hamid (Professional Justice Social Work Adviser for the Scottish Government); Dr Clare Allely (Reader in Forensic Psychology at the University of Salford); and Claire Sands (freelance youth justice researcher). Our Associates have shared blogs, and a roundtable event on children's rights in youth justice was planned with Dr Charles; this has had to be postponed due to COVID-19.

3.Events and Training

We have hosted and delivered a wide range of events this year, from preventing harmful sexual behaviour to understanding criminal exploitation of children by serious and organised crime. We have run specific training and refresher sessions on CARM, Safer Lives, AIM 3, SAVRY and START:AV, for which there has been a high demand. To better understand the impact of START:AV training in Scotland, which we have been supporting delivery of, we undertook an evaluation exercise, [the results](#) of which were published in May 2020. CYCJ also delivered judicial training to 35 members of the Judicial Institute in late 2019.

2019

['Prevention, Intervention and Inclusion: Harmful Sexual Behaviour and young people with additional support needs'](#) took place in April. Held in partnership between CYCJ, Supporting Offenders with Learning Disabilities (SOLD) and the Scottish Transitions Forum, this conference discussed how preventative and early intervention can support young people with additional support needs who present with Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB).

In May, our event 'Adversity, Hope and Living life to the Full' took place as part of the University of Strathclyde's Engage Week. Ross Gibson was joined by Professor Chris Williams (Glasgow University) and others in exploring the life experiences of young people who have resided within secure care, discussing ways of working with children and young people that support and engender hope and resiliency.

Organised by CYCJ, the Scottish Government and the National Youth Justice Advisory Group (NYJAG), the National Youth Justice Conference is the biggest event of the year for the Scottish youth justice sector. The focus of the conference for 2019 was '[Youth Justice Through the Ages](#)', and delegates considered it to be a resounding success. Particular praise was given for the first ever Ministerial joint address, with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Minister for Children and Young People addressing questions from young people via Youth Justice Voices and practitioners, and the introduction of 'lightning' talks, shorter versions of talks allowing us to cover a wider variety of topics, whilst keeping interest and attention levels invigorated.

The day before the conference, CYCJ Associate Tim Bateman held a roundtable entitled '[Keeping Children out of Young Offenders Institutions](#)' - sharing practice from England, with representation from across Scotland's secure care and residential sector.

In November, CYCJ, Action for Children, Scottish Government and Police Scotland hosted a practitioner conference on understanding child criminal exploitation and serious and organised crime, featuring speakers from across the UK and Ireland. This was opened by Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Children and Young People, and chaired by David Harvie, Crown Prosecutor (COPFS).

2020

On January 31, we launched our report '[Rights Respecting? Scotland's approach to children in conflict with the law](#)' at the University of Strathclyde's Kilbrandon Lecture (delivered by Austrian human rights lawyer and Lead of the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, Professor Manfred Nowak). This was followed by a Symposium at which a panel of youth justice senior leaders discussed the key issues and outcomes. Read the meeting note [here](#).

On February 6, to celebrate and share the findings of CYCJ's evaluation exercise, we held an event entitled '[Grappling with Uncomfortable Truths: Future-proofing Youth Justice](#)'. This brought together youth justice professionals, academics and young people with lived experience to learn more about the evaluation exercise and CYCJ's 'Rights Respecting' report, and discuss where we go next as a sector.

4. International Reach

CYCJ contributed to a [global justice campaign](#) that launched in New York City in July 2019.

The [Justice for Children: Call to Action](#) is working with internationally-recognised organisations to highlight the distinct realities of justice for children globally. This campaign is at the heart of the 'Justice for Children, Justice for All: The Challenge to Achieve SDG16+' initiative, commissioned by Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies' Task Force on Justice to inform the next steps for the implementation of the UN Sustainable

Development Goal 16. This goal aims to promote peaceful, inclusive societies for sustainable development and to provide access to justice for all.

Claire Lightowler and Nina Vaswani were part of the Technical Working Group behind this initiative for the wider 'Challenge Paper' and Fern Gillon produced a brief [literature review](#), bringing together key themes and messages from global learning on children, and young people's views and experiences of their participation in justice. CYCJ also managed the PR and communications activity for the campaign.

Donna McEwan visited Ireland to take part in a roundtable at the University of Limerick, together with partners from Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales to share knowledge, ideas, research and consider different approaches to working with criminally exploited children. And Pamela Morrison met with Almanbet Abylkasym, a [John Smith Trust](#) Fellow from Kyrgyzstan who's the founder of Smart Nation and Smart Academy, social enterprises in Osh created to empower young people to realise their potential.

5. Knowledge Exchange

There was a total of 35,712 user sessions during April 2019 to March 2020, compared to 28,781 sessions during April 2018 to March 2019. The top five user countries were the UK (89%); US (6%); Australia (1.39%); Ireland (82%); and Canada (0.72%). Resources was the most viewed page, with 4,181 one-time clicks.

Our social media presence continues to grow. Twitter remains our dominant account, with almost 6,000 followers compared to 4,630 the previous year. The CYCJ Facebook page has 805 likes, compared to 554 the previous year. Additionally, we created an account on Instagram, which currently has 222 followers and a growing amount of interaction.

We provided expert comment to the media on several occasions, contribution to articles on [cross border secure care placements](#), the [UN torture report](#), [child criminal exploitation](#) (including a BBC appearance). We also [commented](#) on the closure of IVY and worked closely with the media to enable coverage to remain neutral with regards to CYCJ's role.

6. Research and Resources

2019

To provide the busy youth justice workforce with access to a variety of approaches and learning, we introduced our first collection of [Case Studies](#) in May. Each Case Study was written by practitioner(s) working in the third sector and local authorities, to inform, inspire and share good practice with others.

We revised and published '[A Guide to Youth Justice in Scotland](#)' (Practice Guidance) in June. This involved significant reworking of several sections, taking feedback from a wide range of stakeholders and including two new sections.

Also in June, we published '[Bullying behaviours: adverse experiences for all involved?](#)'. This paper draws together evidence from a rapid review of the literature in relation to bullying and

offending, especially violent offending, to support practitioners in their understanding of this area.

[‘Trauma, Bereavement and Loss: Key learning and messages from research and practice’](#), published in July, consolidated the key messages and themes from five research papers in order to inform the development of trauma-informed approaches more widely.

Together with the University of Strathclyde, in July we also published a practical guide to service user involvement in community justice. [‘Inclusive Justice: Co-producing Change’](#) is the result of a two year action research project, commissioned by Community Justice Ayrshire and has received the most hits of any of our resources, with 1,377 downloads by March 2020.

[‘Improving the life chances of children who offend: A summary of common factors’](#) was published by the Improving Life Chances Implementation Group. It aims to support all practitioners, managers and policy makers involved in improving the life chances of children. It was published in September, with plans to refresh a designed version in 2020.

CYCJ’s online resources [Youth and Criminal Justice in Scotland: The Young Person’s Journey](#) and the accompanying [Journey through Justice](#), to assist children and young people in understanding the journey through the youth justice system following being charged with an offence by the police, were both [updated](#) in September.

In October, the [Talking Hope report](#) was published by the University of Strathclyde and CYCJ, on behalf of the University of Strathclyde’s [Institute for Inspiring Children’s Futures](#). It shares outcomes and progress from the Talking Hope project, which explores the factors identified as important by young people, and the staff who support them, in achieving hope

Also in October, we published [‘Bereavement and offending behaviours: a role for Early and Effective Intervention \(EEI\)?’](#), which reports on findings from a scoping study undertaken with West Lothian Council, exploring the prevalence of bereavement in recorded EEI data, practitioner views on the needs of young people and the role of EEI in responding to childhood bereavement.

CYCJ contributed to [‘When People Die: Stories from Young People’](#), a comic aimed at helping young people deal with grief and bereavement, the result of a collaborative project between the Universities of Dundee and Strathclyde, CYCJ and charities Barnardo’s Scotland, CHAS and Richmond’s Hope. This was published in December.

2020

CYCJ contributed to a report calling for Scotland to pioneer a public health response to harmful sexual behaviour among children and young people. [‘The Expert Group on Preventing Sexual Offending Involving Children and Young People’](#) report was published in January 2020.

CYCJ has also undertaken research into the use of bail and remand for young people (under 18) across Scotland, to understand how the experience of going through the criminal justice system affects young people and their families.

In 2019, we created a [Youth Justice in Scotland](#) page on Knowledge Hub, the UK's largest digital platform for public service collaboration. This was intended as a one-stop shop for all youth justice information in Scotland, and practitioners have been busy uploading resources and sharing best practice.

We delivered seven Information Sheets during the year, following an agreement not to produce an Info Sheet every month. We also delivered 39 blogs on a wide range of subjects (compared to 32 between 2018-2019), a substantial amount of which were guest blogs, written by young people with lived experience of the justice and care systems.

7. Youth Justice Partnerships

Youth Justice Voices

Since it was established in April 2019, this joint collaboration between CYCJ and the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (Staf), funded by the Life Changes Trust, has made considerable progress. With the aim of amplifying the voices of young people aged 16-25 with experience of the care and justice systems, the youth justice advisory group is using creative ways to enable young people to be heard in the justice system, and explore and share their experiences with policymakers, managers, corporate parents and the Scottish Government. It is led by the 'Youth Just Us' steering group. Highlights of the group's work so far have included a visit from Scotland's Minister for Children and Young People, Maree Todd MSP, to discuss the Disclosure (Scotland) Bill; a member of the group recording a podcast with Deputy First Minister John Swinney; and taking part in consultations, including why incorporating digital rights into the UNCRC might be beneficial. Youth Justice Voices has also embarked on a project with local Glaswegian artists to create artwork encapsulating young people's experiences, and shared blogs and an Info Sheet. Above all, it has successfully engaged with, connected and inspired young people - especially during COVID-19.

Inclusion as Prevention

Along with Action for Children, South Lanarkshire Council and the Dartington Service Design Lab, CYCJ is a partner on the 'Inclusion as Prevention' project, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund Early Action System Change Fund. The project has been working with the local community (initially in Rutherglen and Cambuslang) to share its aims and arrange opportunities for people to find out more and get involved. In February 2020, CYCJ's Fern Gillon published a [scoping study](#) that built a picture of prevention in South Lanarkshire.

Youth Justice Strategy: Implementation Groups

The Implementation Groups were set up as part of the Scottish Government's Youth Justice Strategy 2015-2020. Project managed by CYCJ and governed by the Youth Justice Improvement Board (YJIB), they are on the themes of: Advancing the Whole System Approach; Developing Capacity and Improvement; Improving Life Chances. The three groups and related sub groups have met throughout the year to discuss and influence guidance and legislation, sharing actions and progress via CYCJ's website and e-bulletin.

Outcomes include the publication of the ['Improving the life chances of children who offend: A summary of common factors'](#) by the Improving Life Chances Implementation Group, and two targeted SLCN events held by the ILC subgroup bringing together SLT leads and WSA

leads; two resources created by the Developing Capacity and Improvement Group as part of the Scottish Government's Youth Justice Strategy: [Preventing offending: Improving outcomes for children and young people](#) and [Preventing offending: Improving our approach to workforce development](#), and a related online wellbeing tool; and the publication of the EEI Core Elements document by the Advancing the Whole System Approach Group, which also redrafted CARM and contributed to diversion guidance and SOC materials.

Most recently, the groups have been supporting the final stages of the Youth Justice Strategy, with preparation of final impact reports for submission to the YJIB, to help shape the next steps for Scotland's Youth Justice Strategy.

Forums

The CYCJ managed Forums have met with regularity during the year, adapting to hold online meetings during the COVID-19 lockdown. They provide a safe and informal space in which to discuss issues, practice and ideas.

Early and Effective Practitioners Forum

The forum provides a platform for all parties involved in EEI to express their views and influence areas of work, identify issues and contribute to the resolution of these issues. A joint workshop in August hosted by Maria Galli of the Children and Young People's Commissioner Office on [Rights into EEI Practice](#) was well received.

Risk Formulation Forum

The Risk Formulation Forum was developed to support practitioners working with children and young people in conflict with the law to formulate, manage and reduce risk of harm. The forum has continued to support practitioners with the assessment and formulation of individuals, as well as providing support with wider issues in relation to local systems and processes.

Diversion from Prosecution Forum

This Forum discusses diversion related issues and topics, including changes to COPFS prosecutorial guidance and the forthcoming Diversion from Prosecution guidance (revised for 2020) and has met with external visitors including the Centre for Justice Innovation in London.

Interventions for Vulnerable Youth (IVY)

After six years of being based at CYCJ as a pilot project, IVY transitioned over to Kibble Education and Care Centre in October. We worked closely with Kibble to ensure this transition went as smoothly as possible, with minimum disruption to clients.

8. Secure and Residential Care

Secure care at CYCJ

Following the conclusion of the Secure Care National Project in 2018, Debbie Nolan took on the role of part-time Secure Care Practice Development Advisor, based at CYCJ. Her work has involved supporting the finalisation, design, delivery and implementation of the Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland. The Pathway and Standards, which were co-produced with children, young people and young adults with experience of being in or on the edges of secure care, have been finalised through a process of stakeholder engagement and validation and agreed by Maree Todd, Scotland's Minister for Children and Young People, COSLA leaders and the STARR group, for launch in 2020. To support this launch, a website for the Pathway and Standards has been co-designed in partnership with the secure care standards champions, young people currently in secure care, the STARR group and IRISS. A workshop to support implementation of the Standards was delivered to 75 multi-disciplinary stakeholders in one local authority area, with further sessions regrettably cancelled due to COVID-19.

Debbie also works closely with the Secure Care Group, established in February 2019 and jointly chaired by the Scottish Government and COSLA to complete the outstanding work of the Secure Care Strategic Board; and the STARR group of young people with previous experience of secure care.

Responding to Offending in Residential Childcare - Next steps project

We celebrated the conclusion of [Next Steps](#), our [award winning](#) joint project with Staf, with an evening seminar in April 2019. From 2016, the project has built on our research into the higher criminalisation rates of looked after children, working with over 600 people and a wide range of agencies. Read [Debbie Nolan's blog](#) for more information. In September 2019, we were part of the launch of Police Scotland Safer Communities' training around the unnecessary criminalisation of children in care - which came about as the result of the work of the Next Steps project. Further roll out of policy change and training is being considered.

Independent Care Review

The Independent Care Review [published its findings](#) in February 2020, including The Promise, a report that reflected what over 5,500 care experienced children and adults, families and the paid and unpaid workforce shared with the Care Review. At CYCJ we [welcome](#) these conclusions and commitments, especially the alignment with the changes in relation to a rights-respecting approach to children in conflict with the law.

International links

In January 2020, CYCJ arranged an exchange visit with colleagues from Northern Ireland's secure care estate, led by Debbie Nolan. This was an opportunity to find out more about Northern Ireland's [review](#) of regional facilities for children and young people, and share similar practice, learning and experiences from Scotland's National Secure Care Project and latterly, the Secure Care Group. Read [Debbie's blog](#) about these visits. CYCJ has also joined the cross-nations Secure Care Working Group.

CYCJ contributed to a visit in September arranged by Glasgow FCAMHS and hosted by the University of Strathclyde, which brought together academics from the Universities of Cardiff and Strathclyde and CYCJ to discuss their respective developments, joined by secure care and local authority representatives, Scotland's Children and Young People's Commissioner and the Scottish Government. During this time, CYCJ's Ross Gibson delivered a lecture to Edinburgh Children's Panel members on the secure care census, provided input to the Independent Care Review and focused on secure care in lectures to university students.

9. Upholding Children's Rights

With Scotland's promise to incorporate the terms of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots Law by 2021, there has been a clear and welcome focus on children's rights this year. At CYCJ, we have committed to support this by improving justice processes; supporting the use of community based interventions and children to remain in families/communities; and conducting research into trauma/adversity and alternatives to restraint.

In January 2019, Claire Lightowler embarked on a year's sabbatical to dedicate herself to exploring the complex and often emotive issues around offending by children, based on CYCJ's belief that youth justice in Scotland requires a reconfiguration on a scale not seen since Kilbrandon. The result was '[Rights Respecting? Scotland's approach to children in conflict with the law](#)' a report calling for Scotland to ensure its youth justice system is truly 'rights-respecting', if it is to uphold the terms of the UNCRC. The report, which is the first of its kind to translate the UNCRC into Scottish specific actions to improve policy, practice and experience in youth justice, received substantial praise from across the sector.

Claire Lightowler and Fern visited Wales in July 2019 to [learn more](#) about their approach to preventing children from entering the justice system, with a focus on 'rights-respecting' schools.

10. COVID-19 and Youth Justice

Latterly, during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent UK lockdown, CYCJ has been working to support practitioners, children and young people in the best way it can. This has included our review on [Practice implications of Coronavirus for children in conflict with the law](#), which we have updated on a weekly basis as policies, legislation and circumstances change. We have created a resource hub [COVID-19: Guidance on supporting young people in conflict with the law](#), which shares how our stakeholder organisations are offering support during the lockdown; chaired tri-weekly Whole System Approach Leads meetings; and [reached out](#) to practitioners to offer our services.