SAFEGUARDING COMMUNITIES – REDUCING OFFENDING

Sacro Annual Conference 2008

Community Sentences Making Scotland Safer

Wednesday 5 March

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Chief Executive

I’m going to give you

> a brief overview of Sacro’s vision for a Safer Scotland

> how Scotland might increase the use of community disposals and take the public with us.

Sacro's vision is for a safer Scotland, able to:

> resolve conflict constructively

and we believe that conflict is most effectively resolved through informal, facilitated resolution and

> deal effectively with offending and its consequences

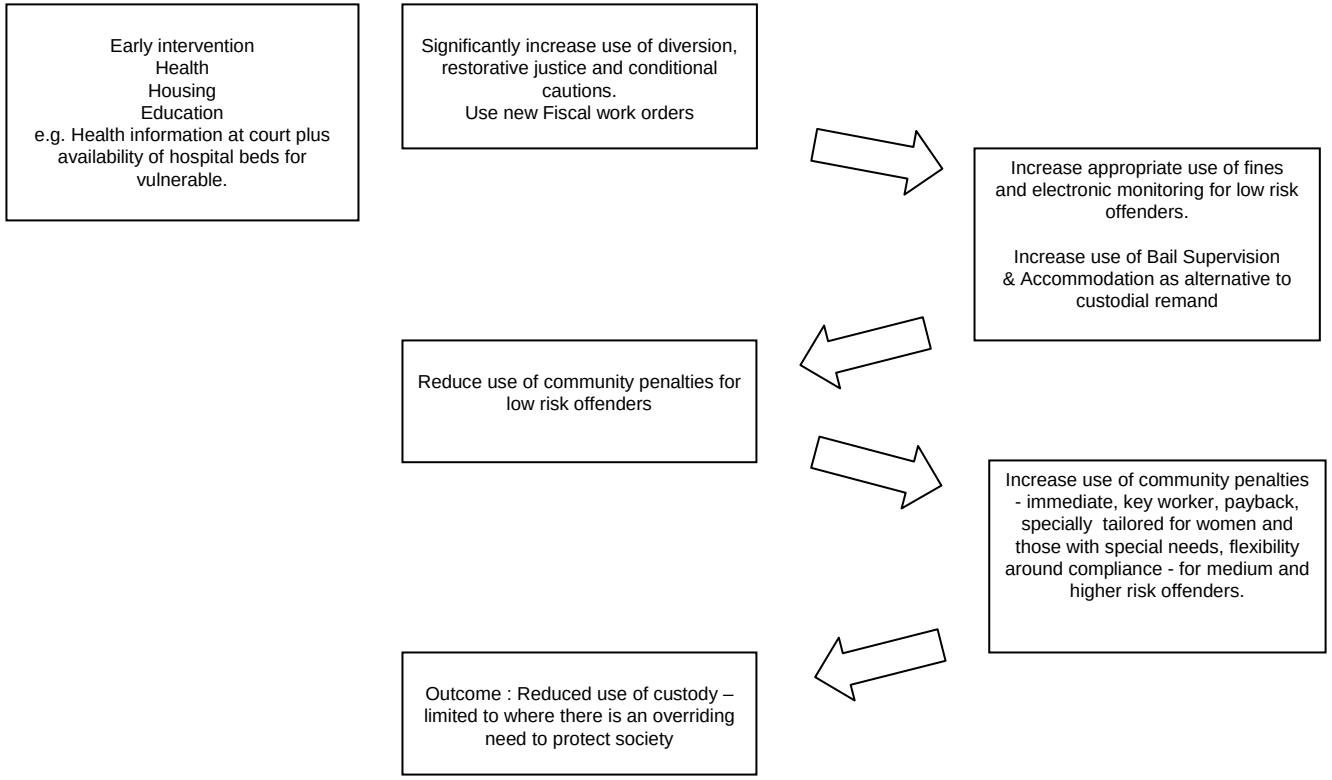
and we believe that the consequences of offending are most effectively dealt with through an emphasis on community sentencing and disposals, other than where there is an overriding need to protect society.

Support many of the Scottish Government's objectives

> 'Drugs, drink and deprivation' – tackling underlying causes of crime
> Review of community sentences
> Promoting community disposals and evolving a coherent penal policy to reduce the Prison Population
> Scottish Prisons Commission
> Increasing capacity in bail supervision and DTTO
> Support for victims
> Removal of child prisoners
> Review of ASBOs

How can we increase use of community disposals/reduce the prison population?

Focus on intervention at the earliest opportunity and at the appropriate level



Prison absorbs a lot of resources that should be and need to be going to community sentences, so that **every court** is confident that when they give a community sentence it will start tomorrow and all the resources are there to make it work.

How to take the public and judiciary with us?

Partnership approach

All agencies jointly and individually promote ‘the message’ about community sentences – politicians, judiciary, statutory, voluntary, media

How to take the public and judiciary with us?

- Cabinet Secretary led Public Education Campaign with positive message cf *Scotland - Smoke free & proud*
- Sheriffs visit community penalties; message from bench about community sentences and their expectations of them
- Dialogue with media e.g. Glasgow School of Social Work/Stirling University/Sacro Media seminar – May 2008
- Sacro will focus on four key messages:

Sacro's key messages

> **In Criminal Justice**: intervention at earliest opportunity and at lowest appropriate level; use community sentencing and disposals, other than where there is an overriding need to protect society.

> **In Restorative Justice**: importance of addressing deeds as well as needs and providing support for those harmed by offenders.

> **In Community Mediation**: should facilitate constructive and inclusive conflict resolution by empowering individuals and groups in conflict to reach a constructive resolution.

> **In Schools**: need increased support for introducing positive relationship building and constructive conflict resolution skills to all schools.

I am hopeful views of the different players and the public may be coming together in recognising the need for community sentences and for prison to be the alternative e.g. quote from The Scotsman.

‘*We must make a strategic turn towards greater use of non-custodial sentences for low-risk offenders. Punishments such as community service orders, supervised attendance and – above all – drug treatment testing orders are required … may be the only way to cut the Gordian knot of an ever increasing prison population, crowded jails, and constant reoffending.’*

The Scotsman 3 March 2008

All of us have a role to play in convincing the media and the public.

Those of us who are service providers have a role to play in offering SMART community disposals

I will now ask Keith Simpson to talk more specifically about how Sacro's services contribute to this agenda.