



Welcome to the third Community Justice Update. Eighteen months since the start of the project there has been a great deal of change and exciting developments. This brief newsletter provides you with an update on the progress made in both elements of the Community Justice Initiative

Explaining the Community Justice Initiative in 2008 and onwards

We are still running the Community Justice Initiative through a project management structure, with a multi-agency Steering Group providing a decision-making forum. The Senior Responsible Officer for the Initiative has changed from David Gentry to Steve Cross (Head of Operations, Her Majesty's Courts Service). Changes to the national Community Justice Programme now means work locally is split into two elements: innovation (including problem solving) and community engagement.

Innovation

The Community Justice Initiative Steering Group has recently agreed to expand the Community Justice Court principles to cases from across the city of Plymouth. This will remove the 'two tier' system. Further innovation such as: community impact statements pilot (Devon and Cornwall) and supporting life events problem solving model (Cornwall).

Community Engagement

Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS) are required to increase community engagement by Magistrates' across the country. In Devon and Cornwall a new member of staff, Tori Tweedie, is doing this. Tori joined the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) support team in August 2008 and you can read more about her, and the work she is involved in, later in this newsletter.

The Community Justice Court in Plymouth

The Community Justice Court in Plymouth has now been operation for over a year. In this time the Court has:

- Disposed of 232 cases (including 45 community orders, 109 fines, and 5 offenders were sent to prison)
- Sentenced offenders to a total 3,330 hours of unpaid work. This provides direct reparation to the communities within which they live or offend
- Held 77 problem solving meetings and made 60 successful referrals to support services.

Website

Some content has already been added to the Community Justice section of the Devon and Cornwall LCJB website. By the end of March the full content for this section should be online. This will provide a useful link to partner agencies and members of the community alike.

www.dclcjb.org.uk/communityjustice

Introducing the Community Engagement Co-ordinator.....

My name is Tori Tweedie and I am the Community Engagement Co-ordinator working on behalf of Her Majesty’s Courts Service (HMCS) and the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB). I started in this role on 26th August and am in post until 31st March 2009. I am on secondment from the police and have spent the last five years working first in The Intelligence Unit and then as a Crime Investigator in Plymouth.

In essence Community Engagement aims to improve public confidence in the Criminal Justice System by strengthening links between courts, the communities they serve and the wider justice system. It is founded in the principle that that a public service is most effective if the people that it serves are genuinely engaged in its activities and feel that they have an input in decisions and priorities.

Below is a brief overview of the community engagement work being undertaken in each of the six Bench areas in Devon and Cornwall. This work is in addition to the extensive Magistrates in the Community programmes.

Plymouth & District

Building on engagement work started by the Community Justice Court panel, this Bench have recently participated in a You Be The Judge [see box below for details] event in Tavistock, the Plymouth RESPECT festival, and a domestic abuse awareness stall in Drakes Circus Shopping Centre. This Bench is also actively learning about the communities they serve through a series of “walk abouts” with partner agencies, recently in Tavistock and North Prospect.



Barry Brooking (Magistrate) and Chief Superintendent Jim Webster Play ‘The Justice Game’ at the Plymouth RESPECT festival 2008.



Offenders cleaning graffiti in Devonport

The Unpaid Work Team in Plymouth are increasing community engagement through their Community Payback scheme. There are currently whiteboards located in The Oasis Centre in Stonehouse and Welcome Hall, Devonport where members of the community can nominate areas of work to be undertaken by offenders who are sentenced to a Community Order. This is to be expanded to other areas of Plymouth including North Prospect and Ernesettle.

Central Devon

The Bench Chair has been instrumental in increasing the number of presentations given by Magistrates. Forty-two parish and district councils have been given a presentation that had three areas of focus: What Magistrates do; Do you want to become a Magistrate; Liaison between the Magistrates and the community.

“You Be The Judge”

This is a free and unique, interactive sentencing event aimed at local people who are interested in finding out how justice is delivered. The audience are invited to step into a Magistrate’s shoes and use keypads to vote on the sentence they feel is most appropriate for each crime. The true outcomes of each case will then be revealed and explained by representatives of the criminal justice system including Magistrates, giving a behind-the-scenes insight into the role of magistrates and the justice system.

Real case scenarios are used with key elements altered to protect the identities of those involved in the crime.

Representatives from criminal justice agencies including the courts, probation, the Crown Prosecution Service and the police are available to answer questions from the audience.

The objective of these events is to improve understanding about sentencing and to boost public confidence in the Criminal Justice System.

North Devon

Magistrates within this Bench attend local neighbourhood police street surgeries every month at the South Molton pannier market along with local Town Councillors. Members of HMCS staff, alongside Magistrates, will have a stand at the Atlantic Village Outlet Shopping Centre, Bideford. There are plans to repeat this roadshow at other venues across North Devon.



Christine Canham (Magistrate) meets the public in South Molton

South Devon

This Bench participated in the Over 55’s Crime Conference, hosted by the LCJB, Safer Communities Torbay, Torbay Council and Age Concern Torbay on 21 October 2008. The day included four workshops Staying Safe (Crime prevention team), A Better Service for Victims and Witnesses (Witness care), Action on Elder Abuse and Dealing with Youth Crime (Torbay Youth offending service). There was also a “You Be The Judge” event in the afternoon. These events continue on from the pilot Community Justice work that South Devon started in 2007.



Over 55s Crime Conference



Offenders on Unpaid Work

Devon and Cornwall Probation Area (South Devon) have been attending a number of community partnership meetings across the Bay, receiving nominations for unpaid work which are then being carried out in the local area. A multi-agency team undertook some street research to capture the

views of people on Torquay Harbour about the unpaid work that had been done to the railings and seats. Of those questioned 84% agreed/strongly agreed that unpaid work benefits the community.

“Youth Court 100”

2009 sees the 100 year anniversary of the introduction of separate courts to deal with juveniles. The Youth courts came into being following the Children Act of 1908, which determined that young offenders’ hearing should be held in a separate building or sit at different times to adult hearings and that public access should be restricted.

This was a significant event in the history of the courts and its anniversary is to be marked by various events across Devon and Cornwall as well as articles in the local press and community newsletters.

East Cornwall

Magistrates and Her Majesty’s Court Services staff are regularly attending Partners And Communities Together (PACT) meetings in Bodmin, Camelford and Liskeard and have plans to extend this to Saltash, Newquay and Wadebridge. PACT meetings are run by local neighbourhood policing teams and provide an opportunity for the community to express their views to the police and partner agencies. They provide a sustainable mechanism for community engagement into the future. A “Youth Court 100” event is being held at the Shire Hall in Bodmin on 26 March 2009, involving tours of the holding cells, mock trials and other workshops run by the Cornwall Youth Offending Service and other partner agencies.

West Cornwall

Magistrates are regularly attending PACT meetings in Camborne, Falmouth, Penzance and Redruth. A “You Be The Judge” event was held as part of the Magistrates recruitment evening on 23 October to give prospective magistrates a greater understanding of the role of the magistrates and their sentencing guidelines. A “You Be The Judge” event is also planned on 17 March 2009 at Falmouth School to compliment “Youth Court 100” activities.

Community Advice and Support Service

Throughout the last couple of years the Community Advice and Support Service (CASS) has struggled to secure long term funding. In the summer of 2008 this issue, combined with a need to revise the established process, led to the LCJB offering a new model to potential service providers who would need to be self-funding. Following a presentation and interview process a new provider, called Rethink, was secured. They have now taken over the management of the Plymouth desk. The Bodmin desk is closed at this time, with plans to rollout a CASS model across Cornwall.

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