



Spring 2008,

Have you visited www.lcjb.cjsonline.gov.uk/merseyside?

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Potential features and ideas are welcome!
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TUNE INTO
City Talk
on **105.9 FM.**

Justice Awards 2008 Nominations Launch.

After the great success of the 2007 Justice Awards when Merseyside had 4 winners, we are now looking ahead to this year's campaign.

Nominations for the Justice Awards can be submitted from Monday 12 May on the Justice Awards website, closing on Monday 4 August. Frontline staff and volunteers are encouraged to nominate their colleagues and teams in categories recognising the breadth of service in the CJS, including work with victims and witnesses, youth crime, adult offenders and contributions to communities and diversity.

Due to its popularity last year, there will be a Volunteer of the Year Award for a second year, alongside other special categories including Partnership of the Year, Long Service and the Justice Shield.



The Office for Criminal Justice Reform are once again aiming to secure sponsorship for the awards from a variety of stakeholder organisations including the Daily Mirror regarding a third annual People's Award.

Further details on plans both nationally and locally for the Justice Awards will follow, including how you can nominate your colleagues. As a county we are aiming to beat the number of nominations we submitted last year and once again to reward the work that we do locally - with national recognition.

City Talk

City Talk launched in January as the regions only 'all talk' radio station, providing commentary and debate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to around 1.5 million listeners.

Merseyside Criminal Justice Board Communications Officer has already arranged the recording of a documentary with City Talk which brought together specialist speakers from the Crown Prosecution Service and Police to discuss the support that rape victims receive from the criminal justice agencies when they are victims of this type of crime. RASA (Rape and Sexual Abuse centre for abused women in Merseyside) also contributed to the programme as well as a victim.

We have a range of topics planned for recording with City Talk throughout 2008. Our aim is to get across to the wider public the type of joint agency working we do across the county to support victims and witnesses and to bring offenders to justice.

In the Chair.

**Mark Barrow, Witness Service Manager
Crown Court Liverpool**

Mark Barrow Witness Service Manager recently spoke to Carol Davenport from Merseyside Criminal Justice Board about his role and the work of the Witness Service at the Crown Court in Liverpool.



Mark Barrow

Witness Service is a charitable organisation which is part of the larger Victim Support and Witness Service on Merseyside. Witness Services are located in all of the courts on Merseyside and Victim Support Services are located in each of the Merseyside Police areas.

Can you tell us a little a bit about your background Mark?

I am originally from Newcastle Upon Tyne but I have served in 3 police forces during my career; Northumbria, Northamptonshire and latterly Merseyside. I retired from my role with Merseyside Police as a Chief Superintendent in January 2006, I held several roles over a number of years which included Head of Calls and Crime Recording and Head of Corporate Criminal Justice. After taking a year off, I took up this post with the Witness Service in Liverpool and I've been here since December 2007.

So What is the Main Role of the Witness Service here at Crown Court?

We all work together to help witnesses and their support networks i.e. their families and friends as they go through the court process. We also provide support to the families of the deceased in homicide cases. We work very closely with the Liverpool Witness Care Unit and do our very best to make the going to court experience as painless as possible for all of our clients.

We offer witnesses the chance to do a 'pre-trial visit' to the court, one week before they are due to appear. The pre-trial visit to court is an opportunity for the witness to be shown around the court building and to be told exactly what is going to happen – we do our best to allay any fears or concerns that the witness has before the trial date. We show the witness the facilities in the Witness Suite. To those who have never been in to a court building before, the pre-trial visit is a good way of easing the witness gently into the court environment so that on the day of the trial they are familiar with their surroundings and have a good idea about proceedings. It is all about reassuring them and helping them to feel confident about coming to court and giving evidence.

Being a Charity, You're Dependent on Volunteers, How Does that Work?

Well, we have 44 active volunteers working for us at the moment, each of those freely gives us 2 to 3 days a week of their own time to help witnesses in court. We have a team of 5 staff who work permanently for the service. We are totally dependent on volunteers. Last year we provided 8,000 hours of support to witnesses, which is a huge amount of time.

Can Anyone Be a Volunteer?

Generally speaking yes, however we do have an application process, a comprehensive training programme and we do ask for a firm commitment from volunteers.

The training programme lasts for 1 week and following initial training each new volunteer works closely with a mentor for a protracted period before they are fully ready to support witnesses on their own. The modules cover topics such as the rules and procedures of giving evidence and listening skills. Training doesn't end there though, we have supplementary courses for example to support vulnerable witnesses and victims of serious crime.



What are the Main Aims for the Witness Service for 2008?

New Facilities

In the short term we're looking forward to opening the new facilities at the Crown Court, we have expanded and refurbished the Witness Suite and we have a dedicated entrance/exit for witnesses which will allow them to discreetly enter and leave the building without coming into contact with defendants or the public.

I also want to spend time communicating the work of the Witness Service to the public so that they are confident in the services we can provide to them, should they ever become a witness to a crime and have to attend court.

Defence

We want to increase the number of defence witnesses that we can offer the service to.

Responsiveness

The Witness Service has come a long way since 1990 when it was first set up in the Crown Court by Norma Canevali, at that time we were the first Witness Service in the country. In the longer term I would really like to see the Criminal Justice System truly responsive to the needs of witnesses by making the Witness Charter come alive.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer for the Witness Service, please call Mark Barrow on 0151 231 1379 for an information pack and application form.

New Drug Measures at HMP Liverpool

Rehabilitation Through Bighthousearts

Prisoners at HMP Liverpool recently entertained fellow prisoners, staff and guests including Minister for Prisons David Hanson, at a concert in the prison chapel. Billy Bragg and his 'Jail Guitar Doors' tour spent a few days with prisoners encouraging and inspiring them to express themselves through song writing and poetry. The prison musicians calling themselves 'Convicted', ran through ten songs which they wrote during a three day workshop.

The aim of the workshops and the concert was to provide prisoners with guitars and give them the skills and confidence to use them. Local band 'The Farm' came along to support the event and Billy Bragg sang a few of his own songs. The aim of initiatives like this to work with prisoners to change their behaviour to try and reduce reoffending on their release. Prisoners who take part in 'Bighthousearts' feel a sense of self achievement and pride and this has an impact on morale inside the prison. Bighthousearts is the umbrella name of a whole host of creative activity run inside which includes drama, music and poetry.

This initiative is part of a wider plan at HMP Liverpool to give prisoners some skills that they might not have originally had, being part of the workshop meant that they had to work to deadlines and targets and helped improve their literacy and numeracy.

Depending on funding, HMP Liverpool hopes to be in a position to install new window vents to the front of the prison later this year.

Over the last six months HMP Liverpool has had new window ventilators or grills fitted to the windows of all cells at the back of the prison.

The new vents costing £30k have greatly reduced drugs trafficking into the prison and drug dealing inside. Before the vents were installed, prisoners and drug dealers went to great lengths to pass drugs through the old style windows by making devices such as catapults, the dealers outside frequently used crossbows to launch packages of drugs through the windows. It wasn't always possible to stop drugs being fired into the prison, but police frequently worked together with the prison on targeted operations to combat this type of activity. In one joint operation with police, cannabis with a street value of £10,000 was seized in a cemetery close to the prison. That gives readers an indication of the scale of what was going on before the vents were introduced. Drug incited bullying and gang warfare is less common now due to the reduced amount of drugs inside.

In addition to stopping drugs trafficking, the new vents mean that prisoners can no longer drop waste food out of their windows which they frequently did, so hygiene and cleanliness in the grounds has improved and rats are not as much as a problem as they once were. CO2 emissions have reduced and heating bills are less because the vents are more energy efficient than the old style windows.

Jerry Spencer, Deputy Governor commented 'In 2004, a random drug testing exercise of 5% of prisoners revealed that 50% of those tested were actively using drugs. Today, the number testing positive is around 17% so we know that introducing the new vents has made a difference. As a matter of course, 15% of the population of HMP Liverpool is tested for drugs each month. We make huge efforts to address the drugs problem in our prison and we continually invest in preventative initiatives such as CCTV and electric fencing.'

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Simple, Speedy, **Summary Justice Update**

CJSSS – Simple, Speedy, Summary Justice in the Magistrates’ Courts has been live across the county since the beginning of this year.

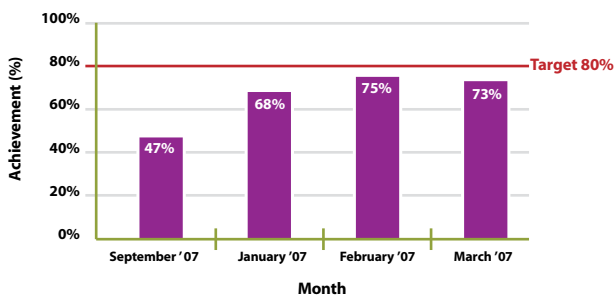
Anne Reilly, CJSSS Project Manager held a post implementation review in March which was well attended by local implementation teams (LITs) and key practitioners from across Merseyside which included front line Police, CPS and administrative staff.

Many positives came out of the CJSSS post implementation review:

- The governance structure worked extremely well with strategic decision making coming from the Area Criminal Justice Board Team and LITs driving and implementing procedures locally
- Excellent joint criminal justice agency working and team work approach to successfully implement CJSSS
- Effective communication and training events were jointly delivered
- From the first month there was a marked increase in progress at first hearing at court

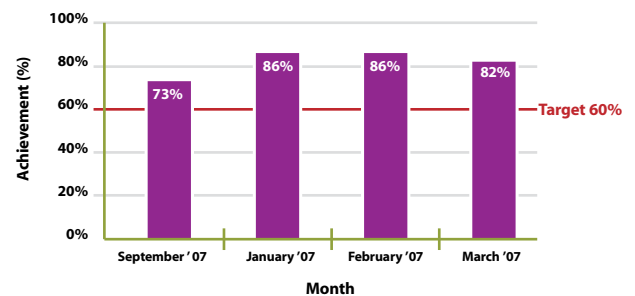
A Snapshot of Performance Through CJSSS

Pleas at first hearing, Merseyside target=80%



There has been a month on month increase in the number of pleas at first hearing, March 2008 currently stands at 73%.

Guilty Pleas Disposed of at First Hearing, National Target = 60%



Merseyside is surpassing the national target in terms of performance for guilty pleas disposed of at first hearing.

As CJSSS settles into business as usual within Merseyside, the results will continue to be monitored to ensure sustainability. Assistant Chief Constable Helen King, Senior Responsible Officer for CJSSS in Merseyside said 'This project has been one of the most ambitious initiatives that Merseyside Criminal Justice Board has embarked upon. It has been a complex project with far reaching implications for all criminal justice agencies. Whilst we have achieved a great deal we must not be complacent and must continue to improve the justice that we are delivering for victims, witnesses and defendants here in Merseyside'.

Merseyside Criminal Justice Board is in the early stages of planning for the implementation of CJSSS in the youth and Crown Courts in Merseyside.

'Quotes'

District Judges view.

'This is the best initiative that has been introduced in a long time and one that we will sustain as we have changed the culture with Magistrates and Legal Advisors'.

Defence

A balanced comment from the Defence in Liverpool. 'CJSSS has been running for three months and my own view is that it has been successful. As a firm we welcome any initiative that leads to the swift conclusion of a case and provided that the Police/CPS to continue to

improve the Advance Information Pack and that the Courts process our legal aid applications within two days, then we will continue to make progress at first hearing. One point I want to make is that CJSSS should not mean that no case can ever be adjourned, each case should be dealt with on its own merit. There have been times when the interests of justice have perhaps been set aside to reach a swift conclusion. Whilst this is not a criticism, it should be made clear that when a case genuinely cannot be dealt with on the first occasion, then consideration must be given to adjourning. I have welcomed the opportunity to work with the Local Implementation Team in Liverpool on this initiative'.

Police

'Steady improvements are being made in the gathering of evidence due to training and improved supervision at the custody suites'.

CPS Prosecutor

'First hearings are far more effective-no inappropriate requests for adjournments as the quality of files has improved'

Local Schools Take Part in National Mock Trials Competition

Citizenship education has been a compulsory part of the National Curriculum since September 2002. Mock Trials Competitions fulfil key parts of the Citizenship curriculum at Key Stage 3, which requires students to:

- Gain an understanding of the legal and human rights and responsibilities underpinning society and basic aspects of the criminal justice system
- Develop skills of enquiry and communication
- Consider moral and social issues, and justify those issues and opinions orally
- Consider other people's experiences and be able to explain and express opinions that are not necessarily their own
- Negotiate, decide and take part responsibly in school activities

The competition helps young people to understand criminal law, the criminal justice system and how courts work at a practical level. It also helps to develop young people's skills of listening, reasoning and ability to think on their feet. It is a fun and innovative way for young people to learn about the law and criminal justice, building their confidence in criminal justice - as their knowledge increases.

The Mock Trials Competition was held this year at both Sefton Magistrates' Court and St Helens and Knowsley Magistrates' Court. At Sefton, six schools from Wirral, Southport and Maghull took part. The trials were held in three court rooms with each school taking both prosecution and defence roles. Magistrates volunteered to give up their Saturday in order to either judge the performance of the schools or act as Lead Magistrate.

The trials were a huge success with Deyes High School from Maghull scoring the highest points overall. Deyes High will now go through to the finals.

The Chairman of the South Sefton Bench, Mr Bob Stam, who attended the Mock Trial Competition said "It was good seeing the young people of Merseyside getting an insight into the Criminal Justice System and seeing how the courts work, it was noted how enthusiastic they were, together with their teachers in getting involved on the day. The magistrates found it useful to engage informally with the schoolchildren after the competition."

Crown Prosecution Merseyside Opens Anthony Walker Law Scholarship Scheme

CPS Merseyside has recently launched the Anthony Walker Law Scholarship Scheme. The CPS is the largest employer of criminal lawyers in the public sector and has an absolute attachment to equality and diversity. Anthony Walker was a young black student, full of promise who was murdered in a horrendous racist attack. The Anthony Walker Law Scholarship Scheme is intended to be a fitting tribute to Anthony, a young man who was planning to study law.

The scholarship aims to assist black or minority ethnic people who aspire to a career in law and will help to ensure that CPS Merseyside is representative of the community it serves.

CPS are offering a scholarship to a graduate who wishes to study for the Legal Practice Course (LPC) with a view to becoming a solicitor, or the Bar Vocational Course (BVC), with a view to becoming a barrister.

The scholarship will last for 12 months starting in the summer of 2008. Work-based training will take place in the CPS office in Crosby, Merseyside. Training will include shadowing lawyers and caseworkers, undertaking legal research, going to court and attending meetings.

For full information about the scholarship, please visit: www.cps.gov.uk/working/

You be the Judge

In an attempt to increase public knowledge of sentencing in the Magistrates and Crown courts, Merseyside Criminal Justice Board recently invited the public to an event at Liverpool Crown Court to hear about four real cases. There was a chance for the public to vote on what sentence they would give for each case using electronic voting equipment.

The actual sentence passed in those cases by the judge, was then revealed to the public – the cases were real, but had been depersonalised for the purpose of the event. There was an opportunity for the public to ask questions to a panel which consisted of a Crown Court Judge, a Deputy Justices Clerk, a Magistrate, a Crown Prosecution Service Lawyer and a Defence Solicitor.

Before people left the court, they were asked to vote on how confident they were that the criminal justice system is effective in bringing offenders to justice here on Merseyside. The majority indicated a high level of confidence in our effectiveness. Similarly, people said that their knowledge of sentencing had increased having attended the event.

More You be The Judge events are planned for this year.

Witness Care Officers Bring Norwegian Witness Back to UK to Testify

Merseyside Witness Care Unit (WCU is jointly staffed by Crown Prosecution and Police staff) recently worked with a witness from Norway to bring an offender to justice.

Police had arrested the defendant on suspicion of selling forged football tickets. Witness Care Officers liaised with a Norwegian witness who was brought back to the UK to give evidence. The defendant pleaded guilty at court - the fact that the witness was present at court was instrumental in the guilty plea.

An example of the excellent work of the Merseyside Witness Care Unit.

New Independent Hate Crime Helpline Launched In Merseyside

Merseyside Criminal Justice agencies recently welcomed the launch of the Stop Hate UK Helpline across the County.

Merseyside Criminal Justice Board has provided funding for the Stop Hate UK Helpline to encourage the reporting of hate crime across the County.

Stop Hate UK is an independent charity that supports people affected by all types of hate crime via a unique 24-hour Stop Hate Helpline. The helpline is free and can be used as an alternative to calling the police by those who are either victims or witnesses of these crimes. All calls are confidential and details are only shared with the police and other agencies with the consent of the caller. The caller can remain anonymous. In addition to taking reports of Hate Crime, Stop Hate UK is able to provide free advice on Hate Crime issues.

Hate crime is any crime that the victim or any other person perceives is motivated by hatred because of a persons disability, gender, race, age, religion, sexual orientation or transgender status. It can include verbal abuse, physical attack, offensive literature, graffiti, damage to property, arson and murder.

Mr Hogan-Howe, Chief Constable of Merseyside Police and the Chair of Merseyside Criminal Justice Board said: 'The fact that the Stop Hate UK Helpline is independent should boost confidence in those people who have historically shown reluctance to report to the police. We will not tolerate hate crime in Merseyside and want to encourage the reporting of such crimes. The launch of the Stop Hate UK helpline gives the victims and witnesses the opportunity to report hate incidents without calling the police directly'.

The helpline is being launched throughout Merseyside in April and May.

Stop Hate UK has been successfully running this service in West Yorkshire, Humberside, Oldham, Peterborough and Wolverhampton.

Encourage victims and witnesses to call Stop Hate UK to report hate crime on 0800 138 1625.



STOP HATE CRIME
0800 138 1625
24 HOUR HELP LINE

What's Your Story?

There are more than 400,000 frontline practitioners working in the Criminal Justice System, from prisons and probation staff to police and those involved in youth justice, as well as staff in courts and volunteers working in Victim Support and witness care, to name just some of the professionals working together to cut crime and deliver justice.

Do you want the great work you're doing and the difference that you're making to be shared across criminal justice agencies and organisations in England and Wales? We just need some basic information from you. Contact Eileen Cumiskey on 0151 777 1978 or eileen.cumiskey@merseyside.police.uk for more information on having your story published nationally.

Let's share the good practice that we have developed in Merseyside with the rest of the country and help to raise the profile of our region.