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5th Annual Victims and Witnesses Conference comes to Merseyside

Merseyside Criminal Justice partner agencies hosted the 5th Annual Victims and Witnesses conference in Liverpool on 30th October. This was the first time that the conference had been held outside of London.

Chief Constable of Merseyside Police and Chair of Merseyside Criminal Justice Board, Bernard Hogan-Howe said:

"Improving the Criminal Justice System for victims and witnesses continues to be a key government priority. In Merseyside we are very proud of our achievements in respect of the work that we continue to do with victims and witnesses, that is why I am delighted that we are hosting this national event.

We try to provide Total Policing – which includes Total Care for Victims.

The conference is an opportunity for us to share how we have developed support for victims and witnesses and to showcase our successes to the rest of the country".

This important conference considered the continuing programme of reform to victim services and gave delegates an opportunity to hear the latest policy developments. There were opportunities to participate in a range of workshops, some of which included Witness Profiling, Working with Victims of Sexual Assault and Promoting Human Dignity-A Strategic Criminal Justice Response to Hate Crime.

The high calibre line-up of speakers included:

- Maria Eagle MP, Under-Secretary of State for Victims and Witnesses
- Julie Clouder, Head of Witness Intimidation, Office for Criminal Justice Reform and
- Geoffrey Appleton, Area Director, Her Majesty's Courts Service, Cheshire & Merseyside

Paul Whittaker, Chief Crown Prosecutor chaired the conference and Deputy Chief Constable Bernard Lawson, Merseyside Police delivered the opening address.

The conference attracted over 100 delegates from across the country from a range of organisations including Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, Flintshire Youth Justice Service, Northern Ireland Prison Service and Victim Support Isle of Man.

Feature suggestions can be sent to the editor, Carol Davenport by email: carol.davenport@merseyside.pnn.police.uk



Deputy Chief Constable Bernard Lawson
Delivering the Opening Address



Julie Clouder, Head of Witness Intimidation,
Office for Criminal Justice Reform



In the Chair

Sharon Bourne, a Senior Crown Prosecutor and Area Domestic Violence Coordinator for the Crown Prosecution Service Merseyside

This month, Sharon Bourne a Senior Crown Prosecutor and Area Domestic Violence Coordinator for the Crown Prosecution Service Merseyside, spoke to Carol Davenport about her role. Sharon was recently nominated for a National Justice Award for her outstanding work.

Tell me about your background....

I joined the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in June 1988 as a prosecutor and began to specialise in prosecuting cases involving domestic violence in 1991. This was prior to the development of the CPS policy on prosecuting Domestic Violence cases and long before any CPS training on the subject had been developed.

Together with Womens Aid and Merseyside Police, I developed a domestic violence course for prosecutors and domestic violence officers in 2003. This was a big step forward as we did this in advance of the national training course being introduced. We received a commendation for this training at the CPS Equality and Diversity Awards. I am now the Area Domestic Violence Coordinator for the CPS on Merseyside.

What does a typical day involve for you?

I am one of five hate crime prosecutors, so I attend a Police station one day a week to provide pre-charge advice to the Police. All cases have to be assessed to establish whether or not they will pass the tests which are part of the 'Code for Crown Prosecutors'. Ultimately each case proceeding to court must pass the Full Code Test. This consists of 2 parts:

- **Evidential test and**
- **Public interest test**

To pass the evidential test there has to be a realistic prospect of conviction on the evidence presented by the Police. If the case passes this test, the prosecutor will go on to consider the public interest in a prosecution. If the evidence is not strong enough to pass the first test, as a prosecutor I will advise the Police what other evidence is needed to achieve a realistic prospect of conviction if the case is a viable one. If the evidence cannot be improved upon

and it is proving unlikely that there will be a conviction, I advise the Police that no further action should be taken in the case.

Focusing specifically on DV, are there any particular groups of society who are most likely to become victims?

Absolutely not. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone regardless of their age, gender or background. People may automatically conjure up an image of a man abusing a woman when we talk about domestic violence. The reality is that it occurs in same sex relationships and men can be victims at the hands of their female partners.

What (if any) specialist support can be provided to victims to help them through the court process?

If a victim is particularly vulnerable or intimidated, 'special measures' can be applied for at court. Special measures are not automatically provided for DV victims but if they are needed, the facilities in court can be enhanced so that the victim can give evidence behind a screen or even by videolink.

What constitutes domestic abuse?

Domestic violence is about the power and control of one person over another. If a relationship is healthy, one partner does not have the edge over the other, both partners are equal.

It is a common myth that domestic violence is caused by drugs or alcohol, but this isn't the case. These things might trigger a violent incident but the cause of domestic violence is power and control. Abuse isn't always physical; spitting, taunting or making threats also constitute abuse. The 'cycle of abuse' identifies 6 distinct stages.

Can you explain the 'cycle of abuse'?

It is a pattern of behaviour which will culminate in the abuser exercising total power over the victim. Typically, victims endure this cycle 37 times before they first report what is happening to them.

Stage 1 - Isolation of the Victim

The violator might suggest that the victim spends more time with their partner, isolating them from friends and family, or even saying that they *can't* go out.

Stage 2 - Trivial Demands

Perhaps to re-cook a meal or to have it on the table at a certain time.

Stage 3 - Degradation

Comments like 'you're ugly', 'stupid' and 'no-one else would want you' are signs of degradation.

Stage 4 - Threats

Threats to kill or harm the other partner and comments like 'If you leave, I will find you'. Other examples include threatening to withhold care if the partner is old or physically challenged or threatening to harm the family pet.

Stage 5 - Displays of 'Total Power'

Displays of total power often result in serious violent crime i.e. murder, rape or assault.

Stage 6 - 'Honeymoon' Period

Expressions of regret and being sorry, saying it will never happen again, buying gifts and declaring how they couldn't live without the victim.

As stated earlier, statistically, this cycle of abuse will happen 37 times before a victim takes the first step to report what has happened. Some victims I have worked with have said that they often feel relief when the beating comes. The tension that builds leading up to the final stage, is unbearable mental torture.

Over time, incidents of domestic abuse towards a partner will escalate in frequency and seriousness. Victims are most at danger when they have either just left or are on the brink of leaving the relationship, because of the sudden loss of power and control felt by the perpetrator.

Some victims withdraw their statements before a case goes to Court, why does this happen?

Many victims don't want their relationship to end – they just want the abuse to stop. There are lots of reasons why victims withdraw, for example they don't want to break up the family for the sake of the children or there may be financial reasons or housing issues.

The victim may be physically challenged and the abuser may be their carer, or, they don't want their partner to go to prison. If English is not the victim's first language, there may be worries about surviving in a community where communication would be a problem.

How can CPS try to improve the prosecution of domestic violence cases?

We work in conjunction with other agencies, both statutory and voluntary, through our membership of local Domestic Violence Forums and Specialist DV Court Steering Groups across Merseyside.

We continue to train both our own staff and Merseyside Police in the law relating to domestic violence and also the awareness of related issues.

Some Key Statistics about Domestic Abuse*

- 26% of women have experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16
- 15.4 million incidents of DV occur in Britain each year
- 43% of all women murdered have been murdered by their partner or former partner
- 25% of people in same sex relationships experience domestic abuse

The Future

I want to be able to build on the work I have already done, working with victims and continuing to inspire confidence so they feel assured that their case will be dealt with sensitively and appropriately. It is vital that in conjunction with Police, we strive to progress robust case building and charging.

Help and Resources

Anyone who has been affected by issues like those described in this article can contact the following organisations for advice or help:

Worst Kept Secret

0800 028 3398 freephone (number will not appear on your landline bill)
www.worstkeptsecret.co.uk

Womens Aid

0808 2000 247 freephone
www.womensaid.org.uk

*Source: British Crime Survey

POLICE OFFICERS WIN NATIONAL JUSTICE AWARDS



Two Police officers won top national awards for their work within the Criminal Justice System.

Detective Inspector Wendy Afonso and Police constable Stephen Duffy both received individual Justice Awards in Whitehall, London on 21st October.

Wendy has recently retired from the Force Crime Operations Unit having been with Merseyside Police for 30 years. The last 9 years of her career has been supporting witnesses. Wendy won her category of award outright for 'Outstanding Achievement in Caring for Witnesses', her award was presented to her by Jacqui Smith, Home Secretary.

Police constable, Stephen Duffy from Eaton Road station, won his award for the work he has done to improve highly publicised problems with anti-social behaviour in the Old Swan area of Liverpool over recent years. Stephen's awarding category was for 'Outstanding Achievement Engaging Local Communities'.

His approach was to support victims of crime, build trust and explain procedures, as well as asking for opinions about what residents wanted to keep them safe and reassured.

As a result of Stephen's work, enough evidence was gained to secure ASBOs against six key protagonists and eviction notices were served on them. Some of the individual ASBO files contained as many as 30 statements – an outstanding achievement considering that initially no-one from the community felt able to get involved. Reports of anti-social behaviour have reduced from 27 calls in July 2006 to zero in June 2008.

The Justice Awards boasts a top level judging panel including the Home

Secretary, the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney General. Broadcaster Kirsty Young hosted the awards ceremony in the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall, London.

Kensington New Deal Police Team were runners up in the category 'Outstanding Contribution in Engaging Local Communities'.

The Attorney General, Baroness Scotland, who was on the judging panel, said:

"The quality of the work of all the finalists was tremendous. The Justice Awards exemplifies the dedication of staff and volunteers across the Criminal Justice System to making communities better."

The Justice Awards recognise outstanding contributions by teams and individuals to the Criminal Justice System of England and Wales. Staff or volunteers at justice agencies or organisations working with them are eligible to be nominated by their colleagues. This year, finalists across 15 categories were chosen from over 700 nominations across England and Wales.

Part of Inside Justice Week, now its fifth year, the Awards seek to highlight the excellent work being done by committed people throughout the Criminal Justice System the length and breadth of the UK.



Photo of Stephen receiving his award from Alan Campbell, Home Office Minister for Crime and along with Baroness Ruth Henig, President of the Association of Police Authorities.



The Cream of Criminal Justice Get Recognition

Employees from across the Merseyside Criminal Justice System, partner and supporting agencies were brought together at the Anglican Cathedral in September to receive recognition for going 'the extra mile' in their work.

Criminal Justice workers from Merseyside were put forward for National Justice Awards by their colleagues in categories which included Outstanding Achievement Caring for Victims, Outstanding Achievement in Engaging Local Communities and Partnership of the year: best example of joint working across the Criminal Justice System.

Police, Probation, Prison, Crown Prosecution, Court, local authority staff and volunteers were awarded certificates of recognition by Judge Richard Clancy in the presence of Assistant Chief Constable Helen King, Merseyside Police and Paul Whittaker, Chief Crown Prosecutor - both are members of Merseyside Criminal Justice Board.

This event was the first of its kind for Merseyside bringing all of the criminal justice agencies together, and preceded the National Justice Award finals which took

place in London during the recent Inside Justice Week campaign during October.

The photo gallery shows a selection of nominees receiving their Justice Awards nomination certificates from Judge Clancy.



Justice Awards Nominations Event - Photo Gallery

Outstanding Contribution to Working with Offenders

Photo 1 – Patricia Thomas, Probation

Photo 2 – (from left) Chris Gibson Merseyside Police, Judge Clancy, Linda Kent Probation and Mark Garner St Helens Council

Photo 4 - (from left) Kerri Main, Kerry Manson and Michelle O'Rourke from Primary Care Psychological Services, HMP Liverpool

Partnership of the Year: Best Example of Joint Working Across the Criminal Justice System

Photo 5 – Elaine Judge (centre) and Linda Oakley (right), Greenhouse to Table Team, HMP Liverpool

Photo 6 – (from left) Gary Hill, Steve Chambers and Alvina Callister with Judge

Richard Clancy from the Breach Enforcement Group

Outstanding Achievement in Caring for Victims

Photo 7 – Helen Morris, Senior Crown Prosecutor, CPS

Photo 10 – Lynne Comerford, Rape Centre, Victim Support

Outstanding Contribution to Tackling Youth Crime

Photo 8 – (from left) Sharon Broderick, PCSO, Judge Clancy and Con Mandy Hamilton from Woodchurch Dedicated Neighbourhood Team, Merseyside Police

Outstanding Commitment to Diversity

Photo 9 – Karen Griffiths HMP Liverpool

Outstanding Contribution to Engaging Local Communities

Photo 11 – (from left) Inspector Dave Charnock and Sgt Simon Joyce Kensington New Deal Police Team

Photo 3 – (from left) Insp Keith McLachlan, Judge Richard Clancy, PCSO Lucyann Brand and Julian Hanley, Walton Lane Dedicated, Merseyside Police

School Play Puts Spotlight on Knife Crime and Gangs

'You Be the Judge' and 'The Madhouse' at the Community Justice Centre

The North Liverpool Community Justice Centre (CJC) recently invited guests to take part in a sentencing event as part of Inside Justice Week.

Students from Liverpool JMU's psychology, criminal justice and criminology courses, along with representatives from Addaction and Liverpool Drug Intervention Programme were treated to a moving performance called 'The Madhouse' by Perspective Theatre and Counselling Services (in partnership with DAAT and Merseyside Probation Trust). The play portrayed a dysfunctional family whose lives had been destroyed by the use of alcohol and drugs. The story followed the decline of the daughter whose life followed in the desperate footsteps of an older brother who had recently been released from prison for drug dealing. The story went on to contrast with the academic success of an older brother, which was sadly overshadowed by the family's problems.

Guests then moved into the courtroom at the CJC to take part in a sentencing event. Two cases were presented, one for actual bodily harm related to domestic violence and another for possession of a knife. Judges Richard Clancy and David Fletcher both took a part in the mock trials as defence barrister and judge. The audience had the opportunity to discuss elements of each case before voting on the sentence.

Prior to taking part in the sentencing event, guests were asked to indicate the level of confidence that they had in the criminal justice system and also their previous knowledge of sentencing rationale. Once they had been through the sentencing experience, they were asked to re-submit their confidence levels. There was an undisputed increase in confidence and understanding of the criminal justice system.



During Inside Justice Week 14-17 year olds from North Liverpool Academy, visited several Liverpool schools with their own drama production, warning their peers about the dangers of gangs, drugs and knife crime.

The original play, entitled "You, Me or Anyone", follows the fortunes of a girl recruited to a gang who is then duped into carrying drugs into a rival gang's territory. Things go very badly wrong, and she ends up being injured with a knife.

The powerful play was delivered in short scenes, acting as the catalyst for further group discussion with pupils on the day in each school. Representatives from Merseyside Police and the Crown Prosecution Service were joined by a Magistrate, legal advisor and School Police Officer to facilitate debate between the groups about the drama.

Kay Askew, the principal of North Liverpool Academy commented:

"This has been a wonderful opportunity for our students to engage with exploring a real life issue for them. The message is one for all young people of how easy it is to slip into gangs and the serious consequences that ensue. This kind of event – peer to peer – really speaks to young people. We are very grateful to Merseyside Police for their encouragement and the support they have given to our students."

The eight-strong drama group performed at Childwall Sports College, Queens Drive; St John Bosco Arts College, Stonedale Crescent; and New Heys Community Comprehensive School, Allerton during Inside Justice Week, as well as performing at their own school.

Sergeant Alan Thompson of Merseyside Police who was involved with the development of the production added:

"It has been a real delight working with so many motivated, bright young people on this project. They have taken complete ownership of this thought provoking piece of work and it will really challenge the young audience into thinking about the actions of themselves and others in the wider community".



Andy Stelman Retires

Merseyside Criminal Justice Board wishes Andy Stelman best wishes for his retirement when he finishes in December.

Retiring after 34 years, Andy is Assistant Chief Probation Officer for Merseyside Probation Trust and also the Board's Hate Crime Project Manager.

Over recent years Andy has led many successful initiatives to develop the capability to support the prevention of hate crime across Merseyside.

Simple, Speedy, Summary Justice Comes to Youth Courts (CJSSS)

In an earlier edition of this magazine we reported on CJSSS and how local implementation teams from across the county were developing implementation plans ready for the end of 2008.

CJSSS in the youth courts is aiming for:

- Improved preparation from charge to first hearing
- An expectation that first hearings will be effective in the majority of cases
- A commitment to ensure cases are progressed out of court between first hearing and trial

Every youth case will be dealt with on its own merits with the needs of the Youth remaining paramount to each case. CJSSS is being introduced to tackle inefficiencies in the criminal justice system relating to youth trials.

Implementation began in November 2008, this means that cases charged from that date will appear in court within seven working days of charge.

PUBLIC SEE BEHIND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SCENES IN ST HELENS, SEFTON AND WIRRAL

At locations across Merseyside, the criminal justice agencies worked together during Inside Justice Week in October to dispel a lot of myths that are out in the public arena about how the criminal justice agencies operate. Read on to find out what happened.

St Helens

St Helens police station, court and Town Hall opened their doors to the public for one day "to bring the criminal justice system to life" for local residents.

The Open Day took place on 21 October. It was designed to provide local people with the opportunity to see first hand how agencies are working together to reduce crime and support victims.

Invited groups spent time with Merseyside Police at St Helens Police Station where they had the opportunity to learn more about a range of police activities, armed response, drug testing, automatic number plate recognition technology and mounted police work.



Inspector Ken Foulkes (right) with guests at St. Helens

A "prisoner" was booked into the custody suite at the station and then led through the process of being finger printed, drug tested and having his photograph taken. His journey into court was then explained to the groups as he was led from the police station into St Helens Magistrates' Court. From there, the groups went to the Town Hall to an interactive marketplace featuring displays from a diverse range of statutory and voluntary agencies, including police, hate crime, domestic violence, crime reduction, drug intervention, Crown Prosecution, youth offending team, community volunteers, police cadets and the City Council enforcement departments.

Sefton

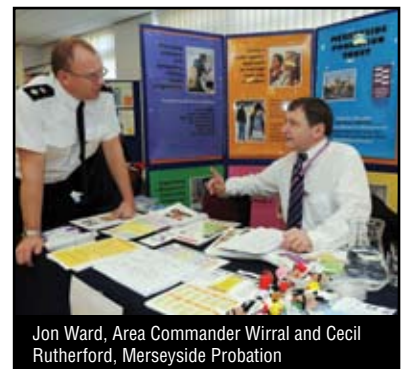
North Sefton Magistrates' Court and Southport police station held their open day as part of Inside Justice Week and saw 500 members of the public pass through their doors.

The police station was emptied of suspects for the day's proceedings, allowing police officers to spend time chatting to mums, dads and kids about what happens if you break the law. The day was also popular with young people wanting to join the legal profession with teenagers using the day to research their career ideas.

Chief Inspector Nicholas Gunatilleke said: "It was a great event. For the police it was a fantastic chance for us to show people what goes on inside the station. The children loved the chance to dress up and meet the police dogs".

The Magistrates' Court ran a 'You be the Judge' event in which the public took part in a trial (a real, depersonalised case). The public were able to vote on the outcome and then, a Magistrate revealed what the actual sentence was in that case. Gill Johnson, Administration team leader for Sefton magistrates said: "The feedback that we received showed us that people definitely felt an increased confidence in the justice system as a result".

Wirral



Jon Ward, Area Commander Wirral and Cecil Rutherford, Merseyside Probation

Stephen Hesford, MP for Wirral West joined hundreds of members of the public at the The Lauries Community Centre in Birkenhead to see the types of support available for victims of hate crime and domestic violence.