

ACROSS THE BOARD

Message from Bill McHugh

Chairman, Northamptonshire Criminal Justice Board

DURING the past 18 months as Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board I have been delighted by the continued improvements in performance and also the way the Board has become increasingly outward looking with a higher profile among partners both within and beyond the criminal justice system.

When I talk to colleagues across the country I am pleased to find that once again Northamptonshire is leading the way; our commitment to innovative and productive links with partners such as Northampton University, the LAA & CDRPs is far in advance of many other areas.

Nationally Northamptonshire is now a top performing area for asset recovery and Persistent Young Offenders. So far over £2 million worth of confiscation orders have been obtained by the Police and CPS, and the time it takes to deal with Persistent Young Offenders has fallen from over 100 days to around 50 days. As a result of improved

processes and better collaboration between agencies we are on track to meet or exceed most of our national targets by the 31st March.

Exceeding targets is not something we strive for as an end in itself. I really believe that a strong and successful LCJB has two direct benefits for criminal justice staff and the residents of Northamptonshire. The first is that all the agencies are better placed to respond to the changing needs of their communities and the demands of central Government; the second and most important is that effective partnerships between the members of the Local Criminal Justice Board play a key role in reducing reoffending, protecting the public and bringing offenders to justice.



WELCOME

THE Local Criminal Justice Board has a new member. We are pleased to welcome Cathy James Director of Rye Hill Prison onto the Board. Cathy attended her first meeting on January 10th. This is a significant appointment as Rye Hill is a contracted out prison so Cathy is able to bring her experience of the private sector to the Board as we continue to widen our horizons.

Cathy arrived at HMP Rye Hill last Summer after serving for over 20 years in HM Prison Service.

During that time, she governed a number of prisons including Stoke Heath Young Offender Institution and HMP Liverpool. She was attracted to work for GSL because of the challenges faced by Rye Hill and its staff and also wanted to try something new.

She is delighted to be here and has been very touched by the warm welcome she has received from other criminal justice agency partners.

NEW YEAR HONOUR FOR BOARD MEMBER

GRACE Ononiwo Board Member and Chief Crown Prosecutor, was recognised in the New Year's honours list with an OBE. Congratulations go to Grace for this well deserved recognition of her achievements.



ASSET RECOVERY

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Police and the CPS working together have so far obtained confiscation orders assets worth £2,198,583.00 making us one of the top performing areas in the country. One high profile order led to over £300,000 being seized from the estate of a convicted drug dealer currently serving 11 years.

CONDITIONAL CAUTIONING

HAS been rolled out across Northamptonshire. It is intended to provide an effective alternative to prosecution for some offences including theft, criminal damage and minor assaults. The Police and CPS work together to decide how and when to use a conditional caution and the views of the victim are taken into consideration.

JUSTICE AWARDS

GLEN Banks Project Co-Ordinator at HMP Wellingborough achieved the runners up position in the country's top awards for the Criminal Justice System.

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

"It was incredibly difficult to differentiate between the winners and the runners-up as the quality of the nominations was so high. They truly demonstrate the excellent work that takes place across the Criminal Justice System."

Work on next years awards is underway. It is planned to expand the scope of the awards locally to allow for nomination from partners across the county who make their communities safer but who may not work directly for one of the Criminal Justice Agencies. Keep an eye on the website for more details.



NEW PLEDGE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

A NEW approach to dealing with victims of domestic violence has been unveiled for Northamptonshire. Agencies from across the Justice System, making up the Local Criminal Justice Board, have pledged that from now on, a domestic violence case will go from report to sentence in just 75 days.

Speeding up the process is key to keeping victims and witnesses engaged in the case, and in ensuring the delivery of swift justice. Victim Support project worker Michelle Grimwood has been seconded as the co-ordinator to oversee the pledge and interagency agreement; she says it is not about having a special courtroom for these cases. "This is about all the criminal justice agencies working together and prioritising these cases, ensuring we give victims the support they need to have the best chance of a successful prosecution."

LCJB CHRISTMAS CARDS

THE Board funded the production and postage of Christmas cards which have been sent to a select group of Northamptonshire residents. The cards were sent to those with outstanding fail to appear warrants to warn them if they did not make contact they risked spending Christmas Day in a police cell.

As a result of the operation over 50 outstanding warrants were executed. Officers visiting addresses which had received a card made a number of arrests on unrelated matters and executed non payment of fine warrants.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PROBATION AREA WINS INNOVATION AWARD

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Probation Area's Pharmacy Project received the prestigious innovation award at the Business Excellence Awards ceremony. The awards recognise and pay tribute to the achievements of businesses that operate within the County. The awards attracted a record number of entries this year and the judges selected just 12

winners, one of which was Northamptonshire Probation Area.

The pharmacy project is a great example of innovative working between the public and private sector. The scheme allows offenders who have been subject to a Drugs Rehabilitation Requirement DRR/DTTO or licence

condition to meet with probation staff for supervision in a private consultation room at Boots the Chemist when picking up their medication. To date the scheme has resulted in at 100% compliance, with previous methods only running at 47%.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SWAN PROJECT WINS AWARD

A MULTI agency project in Northampton which works with substance using prostitutes has been named as the East Midlands Drug Team of the year by the Home Office.

SWAN – Sex Workers around Northampton is a service aimed to provide a safe, supported and sustainable opportunities for sex workers to exit from drugs and prostitution and improve their lives for the better. The service is provided by Northampton Primary Care Trust and is supported by other agencies such as the police, probation, The Maple Access Clinic, CAN DAT and Northamptonshire PCT.

MORE GUILTY PLEAS ARE GOOD NEWS

THE number of guilty pleas at first hearing in the Magistrates' Courts has risen significantly over the last year from 16.5 % in January 2007 to 43.7 % in November 2007.

Temporary Superintendent Pete Glover, Head of Criminal Justice Department, said "This is very good news for staff in the Criminal Justice agencies. I do understand that officers can sometimes be frustrated that many hours might be put into building a case that never comes to trial. However a robust case that leads to a guilty plea is an excellent outcome both for victims and witnesses and for staff who can concentrate their efforts on other cases and of course a guilty plea means that officers don't have to attend court at a later date."

RYE HILL PRISON HAS A NEW MEMBER OF STAFF WITH A NOSE FOR TROUBLE

DRUGS can find their way into prisons through a number of routes, carried by visitors, thrown over the walls or sent through the post but at Rye Hill Springer Spaniel Maggie has her nose to the ground to sniff out illegal drugs.

Maggie was a rescued animal and not much is known about her former life. When she was found, she was covered in filth, and had probably been used for intensive breeding and then thrown out when she was no longer of any use.

She joined the prison in November last year and began an intensive training programme with her handler Rob Dann who has been based at Rye Hill for 3½ years.

Maggie clearly enjoys her work, greeting Rob with enthusiasm and Rob values Maggie "I couldn't think of a better job to do, it is really important that I stay cheerful so that Maggie is positive, she thrives on praise".

Rob feels that Maggie's presence is invaluable both for the drugs that she finds and as a deterrent as she and Rob are a familiar sight on the wings.

Cathy James Director of Rye Hill added " It is a pleasure having Maggie on the staff. She and Rob make a real difference both in the dedicated way that they approach their job and their positive attitude which is infectious". After all how many people can honestly say "I couldn't think of a better job"?



DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY GROUP

THE LCJB Diversity and Equality group is chaired by Sue Whittaker from the Probation Service. The next meeting will be at 2.00pm on Tuesday 24th June.

If you would like to be part of this group or to know more about it please email us - northants-cjb@northants.police.uk

DISABILIST HATE CRIME AWARENESS EVENT 9TH MAY 2008

IT is proposed to hold a multi agency event on issues around Disabilist Hate Crime. The agenda is currently being planned and it is hoped to have a series of speakers and workshops covering themes such as victim needs, barriers to reporting and prosecutions and what are effective sentences? Keep an eye on the website for more information or email us at northants-cjb@northants.police.uk

INSIDE JUSTICE WEEK

NOVEMBER 2007
Once again saw the National Inside Justice Week campaign. The aim of the campaign is to give the public information about the workings of the Criminal Justice System with the hope that if people have a better understanding of how the system works they will be more confident that the system works.

In Northamptonshire two successful events were staged. Pupils studying law at Caroline Chisholm School



performed a mock trial in front of fellow pupils ably assisted by Deirdre Newham (Magistrate), Tony Pancost (PCSO), and Brian Johnson (Court Probation Officer).

In the afternoon Glen Banks from HMP Wellingborough talked about the realities of

drugs, violent crime and prison life.

Feedback from the day shows that pupils were more informed and confident as a result of the event.

On Saturday 10th November staff from Wellingborough Prison, the Probation Service and Northamptonshire Criminal Justice Board talked to shoppers at Weston Favell Shopping Centre about the Criminal Justice System while giving away about 500 goodie bags of information, torches and even chocolate!

GOODBYE AND HELLO

THIS issue of Across the Board is brought to you by the new LCJB Communication Manager. Elaine Ketchum joined the support team in October having previously worked for the probation service in Nottinghamshire. Elaine replaces Kath Hardwick who moved in the summer to take up a new post at the Open University.

NEW ROLE IN SUPPORT TEAM

PHIL Wightman, formerly LCJB Performance Manager has been appointed to the new role of LCJB Business Manager.

CJSSS - Delivering Simple, Speedy and Summary Justice in Northamptonshire

SIMPLE, Speedy Summary Justice (CJSSS) is a nationwide initiative, part of the Magistrates' Court streamlining project, to improve the speed and efficiency of case progression through the Magistrates' Court.

The process is now working well in all courts in the County. Northampton Local Implementation Team headed by Baah Opong has worked well and devised a scheme based on the best practice available, with co-operation and a commitment from all agencies.

The initial results since area implementation on the 1st October are very encouraging. Currently there are only 8 trials listed to take place beyond the 6 week target and this is due to the need for specialist medical evidence.

Benefits - Fewer adjournments and faster listing of trials has real and obvious benefits for victims and witnesses. But staff also will see benefits.

HMCS - The courts have significantly improved timeliness and have freed up time from pre trial reviews.

CPS - The CPS have freed up significant time attending courts for pre-trial and other adjourned hearings.

Probation - Opportunity for Probation to increase the number of oral/stand down reports as a result of increased rate for guilty pleas.

Legal Services Commission - Defence solicitors are in a far better position to advise their client and ensuring a plea is entered. Earlier payments can be made as cases are resolved more quickly.

Police - The improved guilty plea rate means that police officers can concentrate on contested cases.

CONTACT US

'Across the Board' is produced quarterly by the LCJB Communications Manager. If you'd like to suggest something for inclusion in the next edition, or have some feedback, please contact us on 01604 667539 or via email: northants-cjb@northants.police.uk

