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Staffordshire shows how justice is done

The public in Staffordshire will have the chance to get a unique glimpse into the Criminal Justice System as this year's Inside Justice Week gets underway across the county between 18 and 24 October.

The week kicks off on Saturday 18 October with Operation Impact where agencies, partners and authorities will be working together to make a cleaner, safer and greener place. The Crown Court in Stafford will be holding an open evening. The police and prison service will be involved in hosting visits from specially invited guests and communities be taking part in mock trials to find out how trials happen in real life, during the Local Crime Community Sentencing events. The main event will be held at the Avon Business and Community Centre in Cannock, on Monday 20 October – which is open to the general public.

Chris Sims, Chair of Staffordshire Criminal Justice Board said: "This is a great opportunity to find out how the Criminal Justice System is working for everyone in Staffordshire. Victims and witnesses of crime are receiving a better service than ever through schemes like Witness Care Units. Offences are being dealt with more efficiently, and crime generally has fallen. So come along and find out how the Criminal Justice System is ensuring justice for Staffordshire."

Last year nearly 150 events were run during Inside Justice Week throughout England and Wales where people were able to learn, contribute and understand about the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and their part in it.

Nominations for the Justice Awards have increased three fold and come from frontline staff. Those recognised as part of the Justice Awards are examples of the very best the CJS has to offer.

However, the figures only tell part of the story; the Criminal Justice System is going through a great deal of change and these initiatives help to demonstrate how more offenders are being brought to justice, how we put victims and witnesses at the heart of the Criminal Justice System and how working with communities is of benefit to all.

The Attorney General, Baroness Scotland, who has championed Inside Justice Week since its inception said:

“Victims and witnesses’ experience of the Criminal Justice System has been transformed in recent years, especially for children and vulnerable adults. All Crown Court centres have video-link equipment so that witnesses don’t have to face the accused when giving evidence. Inside Justice Week is a great opportunity for people to see how victims and witnesses are being served – from reporting a crime to the police right through to a trial and justice being done.”

The Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith said:

“Inside Justice Week helps people to get to know their local Criminal Justice System, to challenge it, and to find out how it works. It also gives people the opportunity to tell criminal justice agencies what they think is needed in their area. It is by meeting the needs of local communities that we can increase public confidence and satisfaction in the Criminal Justice System.”

The Secretary of State for Justice, Jack Straw said:

“All of us rely on the criminal justice service to come to our aid if a crime happens, and to deal firmly with offenders. Whether it is giving high standards of support to victims and witnesses, or making sure offenders repay their debt to society through community payback or prison, Inside Justice Week lets you find out about some of the dedicated work the criminal justice service does. The service is there for all of us, this is your chance to ask questions and find out what it can do for you.”

Inside Justice Week is now in its fifth year where the Criminal Justice System has been opened up to show how justice is done.

Many who come into contact with the CJS do so unwillingly, for example, as a victim of crime. Opening up the system with events such as police open days and mock trials in courts, can help people to understand its inner workings showing how agencies and volunteers within it work together to make the system better.

Ultimately it’s an opportunity to explain why it matters and encourage individuals and communities to engage with the CJS to help the agencies deliver justice.”

The aim of this year’s Inside Justice Week is to open up the justice system to the public in order to:

- *increase people’s knowledge and understanding of the Criminal Justice System*
- *encourage people to get involved by publicising the range of career and volunteering opportunities available in the Criminal Justice System*
- *inform people about the support available should they come into contact with the justice system, either as a victim or witness.*

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Inside Justice Week runs in Staffordshire and across England and Wales from 18-24 October. For more information about the local campaign, please visit: www.lcjb.cjsonline.gov.uk/Staffordshire For information about other regions and the national campaign visit: <http://insidejustice.cjsonline.gov.uk/>
2. The main event will be held at the Avon Business and Community Centre in Cannock, on Monday 20 October between 2 – 4pm. This event is open to the general public - giving the opportunity to talk to Magistrates, Magistrates', prosecutors and defense solicitors do. See how electronic tagging works and how prisoners are transported. See the police sniffer dogs, inside a camera safety and police vehicle and meet their local neighbourhood policing team and Street Warden. They'll also be able to see how victims & witnesses are supported and get information on careers within the Criminal Justice System. All agencies are represented at this event including the local crime & disorder reduction partnership and the Youth Offending Service. It will be a great event – visitors will even have the opportunity to enter our prize draw to win shopping vouchers.
3. The winners of the local Justice Awards will be announced by 17 October. For more information, please visit www.lcjb.cjsonline.gov.uk/Staffordshire and for the national award scheme where winners will be announced on the 21 October please see: www.cjsonline.gov.uk/justiceawards
4. For further details please contact Martine Redpath, Communications and Marketing Manager, Staffordshire LCJB on 01785 235129 or email: martine.redpath@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk
5. The Staffordshire Criminal Justice Board was set up in April 2003 to manage the CJS at a local level. It, along with the other 41 Local Boards covering each county or metropolitan area across England and Wales, reports to the National Criminal Justice Board which supports them in their work to meet Public Service Agreement targets at a local level and reduce crime in Staffordshire.
6. Staffordshire Criminal Justice Board brings together the chief officers of criminal justice agencies including the Courts Service, Crown Prosecution Service, National Probation Service, Police Service, Prison Service and the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Youth Offending Services. The agencies share the responsibilities of reducing crime and the fear of crime in Staffordshire.