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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.

The week kicks off on Saturday 3 November with Operation Impact where agencies, partners and authorities will be working together to make a cleaner, safer and greener place. Two of the crown courts in Staffordshire will be holding open evenings. 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 Magistrates Court in Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent, on Saturday 10 November – which is open to the general public.

Chris Sims, Chair of Staffordshire Criminal Justice Board said: "Justice matters to everyone and the way our agencies work together is all about seeing justice done. The Criminal Justice System must have the confidence of the law-abiding majority, this is why Inside Justice Week is so important. It is a chance for the public in Staffordshire, who may have never come into contact with the justice system, to look behind the scenes, ask questions and find out more."

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, put victims and witnesses at the heart of the Criminal Justice System and how working with communities is of benefit to all.

The Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith said "As Home Secretary I want people to feel safe in their homes and on the streets and we have made great strides to ensure that happens. Violent crime is at its lowest level for more than a decade and the chances of being a victim of crime are at their lowest for 25 years.

"The Criminal Justice System has played a major role in these successes and campaigns like Inside Justice Week really help us highlight just how much progress has been made.

"We are building an efficient, effective and proportionate Criminal Justice System to protect the public from terrorism, crime and anti-social behaviour. It is important that through the Justice Awards we recognise the excellent, often unsung work done on both the frontline and behind the scenes to demonstrate the real difference we are making to people's lives.

Inside Justice Week is now in its fourth 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 Prime Minister, Gordon Brown said "I'm passionate about giving more people the chance to get involved in issues that really matter to them. Justice affects us all. Inside Justice Week gives everyone a chance to see first-hand how the system works, and how it is changing. I hope it will also inspire more people to get involved themselves - perhaps by volunteering or becoming a magistrate.

"Justice depends on the integrity, courage, and hard work of men and women in police stations, courts, prisons, probation services and in communities up and down the country. The Justice Awards recognise the work of these everyday heroes, and I offer all those who have been nominated my congratulations."

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 3-10 November. 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 Magistrates Court in Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent, on Saturday 10 November between 10am – 4pm. This event is open to the general public - giving the opportunity to take a tour of the court buildings including cells and court rooms. They can see what judges, juries, prosecutors and defense solicitors do in the mock trials running throughout the day. 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 'Bobby' the remote control police car. 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 home fire & security safety. 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 Justice Awards will be announced on 5 November. For more information, please visit 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.

Staffordshire Criminal Justice Board is responsible for the running of the Criminal Justice System in the county of Staffordshire. For further information please visit: www.lcjb.cjsonline.gov.uk/Staffordshire