

# Working Together

Quarterly Newsletter – July 2005

## RISING LEVELS OF CONFIDENCE

**Public confidence in the operation of the criminal justice system in the Cleveland area is continuing to rise and progress is also being made in increasing the number of offences brought to justice as well as reducing the number of ineffective trials.**

The latest statistics have been welcomed by the Chair of the Cleveland Criminal Justice Board, Chief Constable Sean Price, as 'very encouraging and a demonstration that the united efforts of all those involved in the local criminal justice system are making a real difference – and that is being recognised by the public.'

Figures from the British Crime Survey show that last year 38.9 per cent of people questioned in the Cleveland area said they had confidence in the criminal justice system, a rise of almost six per cent on the 12 months to the end of March 2003.

*The Cleveland statistics also show:*

- The number of offences brought to justice in 2004 totalled 14,787 – a rise of 2.2 per cent on the year to March 2002.
- The percentage of ineffective trials in magistrates' courts – in other words those that



Chief Constable Sean Price

could not go ahead on the original scheduled date – showed a dramatic reduction, down from 34.8 per cent in July to September 2002 to 20 per cent in October to December last year... and there was also a similar reduction in the number of ineffective crown court trials.

- Throughout 2004 the Cleveland figures for the number of days from arrest to sentence for persistent young offenders was well below the national maximum target of 71 days – and in the final quarter was down to 56 days.
- Value of fines collected as a proportion of the value of fines imposed totalled 91 per cent in the last quarter of last year compared to a national target minimum of 78 per cent.

Said Sean Price "What these figures demonstrate is that right across the criminal justice system in Cleveland we are working together through the Criminal Justice Board to deliver improved performance – and that is being increasingly recognised by the public.

"What law-abiding citizens want to see is that criminals are caught and brought to justice, that the courts system works quickly and effectively, and that victims and witnesses are given proper support and information on how a case is progressing.

"Every agency has been involved in delivering these improvements and introducing a whole range of initiatives... for example the appointment of a case progression officer to help matters move through the courts as efficiently as possible, the establishment of Witness Care Units... and ensuring that victims of the most serious violent and sexual crimes are kept informed of an offender's progress through their sentence and also have the chance to contribute to the conditions under which the offender is released into the community.

"Taken with the very real progress made in reducing crime – down by eight per cent over the past year – and increasing detection rates, we are making significant progress. The challenge now is for us to maintain the momentum, including strengthening our enforcement activity in areas such as executing warrants where, as result of close co-operation between agencies, we have already made great progress... for example outstanding arrest warrants were reduced from 715 in August last year to 255 at the end of January."

## Courts to be integrated

**The creation from April 1st of the new agency known as 'Her Majesty's Courts Service' saw the end the long-standing division between locally-run magistrates courts and the Courts Service which has previously operated all other courts below the House of Lords – in other words County, Crown and Higher Courts.**

The new body has 20,000 staff and works with 30,000 judges and magistrates. Magistrates Courts' Committees have been replaced with 42 non-executive Courts Boards with administration run through seven regional areas and 42 local management units.

One of the key aims of the new structure is to improve local links with other justice agencies and communities, as well as making more effective use of court resources.

Explained Secretary State for Constitutional Affairs and Lord Chancellor Lord Falconer "A single national agency is more flexible in the way services are provided. It removes unnecessary duplication and ensures greater uniformity of approach across all courts.

"The relationship between people and the courts will be improved because it is easier for people to get what they need from one organisation only. It will also be less complicated with just one standard of service so that no matter where you are in the country, when you need to deal with the courts you know what to expect."

Her Majesty's Courts Service will spearhead partnerships between the courts, criminal justice agencies and others involved with tackling the concerns of local communities.

Priorities include:

1. Tackling crime leading to safer communities as the total number of crimes for which offenders are brought to justice rises to 1.25 million by 2008/09
2. Better facilities for victims, witnesses and vulnerable people in all courts, including separate waiting rooms and the ability to testify via video-link

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# Boards' 2nd Birthday

Along with Local Criminal Justice Boards across the country, the Cleveland Board recently celebrated its second 'birthday.' Established on 1st April 2003 it brought together the chief officers of the major CJS organisations with the aim of improving co-operation between agencies and driving progress towards the key aims of becoming more effective at catching, convicting and rehabilitating criminals and providing a more effective service to victims and witnesses.

Commented Home Office Criminal Justice Minister, Baroness Scotland "We are currently meeting all our key national criminal justice targets – more offences brought to justice, a more efficient justice process and increased public confidence. There's no doubt in my mind that we would not have achieved these results without Local Criminal Justice Boards.

"It is therefore important to celebrate their achievements since they were set up in 2003 and I'd like to thank everyone involved for all their hard work. At the same time I know that Boards are not being complacent and are looking firmly to the future. Together we need to improve criminal justice services to local communities even further over the next two years."

The current membership of the Cleveland Criminal Justice Board is:

**Sean Price** (CCJB Chair)

Chief Constable  
Cleveland Police

**Martin Goldman**

Chief Crown Prosecutor  
Crown Prosecution Service – Cleveland Area

**Colin Monson**

Area Director  
Her Majesty's Court Service, Cleveland

**Colin Wilson**

Head of Service  
South Tees Youth Offending Service

**Elaine Lumley** (CCJB Vice Chair)

Chief Officer  
National Probation Service – Teesside

**Michael Lees**

Governor  
HMP Holme House

**Margaret Alderdice**

Acting Area Director  
Victim and Witness Support – Teesside

**Adam Briggs** (CCJB Performance & Delivery Group Chair)

Assistant Chief Constable  
Cleveland Police

## Courts to be integrated

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3. Reducing the amount of wasted time for witnesses, jurors, police, families and those needing to resolve their disputes as cases proceed on time and more effectively with better co-operation across all courts and agencies
4. Tougher enforcement providing the home for the newly established National Enforcement Service and more consistent and modern ways for offenders to pay their fines-meaning that there will be no excuse to ignore court orders

Colin Monson is Area Director for HMCS in Cleveland which now has responsibility for the Teesside Combined Court, Hartlepool County Court and magistrates' courts at Hartlepool, Guisborough and Teesside.

Colin Monson, Area Director HMCS Cleveland



Says Colin "I am proud to have been appointed as Area Director for the Cleveland area. I have the support of a strong and committed team of staff, who are looking forward to forging even closer links with court users and others who have an interest in the work of the courts.

"HMCS presents a great opportunity to build a new organisation in which:

1. users of the courts – especially victims, witnesses and jurors – feel confident in the system and the outcomes because of the professional and consistent way they have been treated
2. magistrates, judges and staff all work together to provide a seamless and integrated service; by doing so, HMCS will provide a modern, responsive, first class service to the public
3. our partners in the criminal and civil justice systems are closely involved in determining improvements in the service that we provide
4. staff can achieve their full potential, and feel proud to work for the courts.

"By our success we can ensure that the public has confidence that the court system works effectively. I believe that this is one of the biggest ever changes to the justice system and that there are exciting and challenging times ahead, but I am confident that we have the right people in place to deliver a new, dynamic and modern courts service."

# Inside Justice Week

The spotlight will again be on the criminal justice system when the second Inside Justice Week is staged across the country from 17-24 October.

## Strateg

- Increasing public confidence
- Increasing victim and witness care
- Bringing more offences to justice
- Rigorous enforcement – for both court appearances and penalties
- Rehabilitation – especially for prolific and other priority offenders

Those are the key objectives set out in the Cleveland Strategic Plan.

The ultimate aim of the Criminal Justice Board and all partner agencies is to reduce crime and re-offending.

The objectives set out in the Strategic Plan form the central Government's vision for the kind of criminal justice system we want.

"The public will have confidence that the Criminal Justice System will deliver a high standard of service."

Victims and witnesses will receive a consistent high standard of service.

We will bring more offences to justice through a modern and responsive justice system.

Rigorous enforcement will revolutionise compliance with sentencing orders.

Criminal justice will be a joined up, modern and well run service for all backgrounds."

Against each of its strategic aims the Board has set deliverable objectives:

- Increasing the number of offences brought to justice
- Raising public confidence in the criminal justice system – the public confidence figure stood at 38.9 per cent – a rise of almost six percentage points since the final quarter of 2004 the figure was down to 56 days)
- Maintaining the average time from arrest to sentence – in the final quarter of 2004 the figure was down to 56 days)
- Increasing compliance with court orders and sentencing orders and enforcement of financial penalties and increasing the number of people who attend court

# IMPROVING VICTIM SERVICES

**A three-month Government consultation over levels of support offered to victims of crime has recently been completed in preparation for the implementation later this year of the Victims' Code of Practice which will set out the information and support services which should be provided to victims right through the criminal justice system, from the police to the courts.**

Vice Chair of the Criminal Justice Board – which aims to improve co-ordination between agencies and increase confidence amongst local communities – is Chief Probation Officer Elaine Lumley and she stresses that already a great deal of work has been carried out locally to support both victims and witnesses of crime.

She explained “It is good news that, when it comes into effect, the Victims' Code of Practice will set the standards of care to be applied across the country.

“I believe that within Cleveland we can claim to have taken a number of initiatives which demonstrate the importance all agencies attach to the needs of victims and witnesses. For example the Criminal Justice Board was responsible for producing its own user-friendly guide which explains what happens from the point at which a crime is committed to the case being dealt with in court.

“We have also worked hard to support people when they find themselves having to give

evidence – in the Teesside Combined Courts Centre in Middlesbrough we have facilities specifically provided for witnesses whilst video link equipment offers the chance for children and other vulnerable people to give evidence without the ordeal of being present in the court itself.

“The efforts of all those involved in the system are demonstrated by the fact that the number of trials which cannot take place on the allotted day because of the non-appearance of witnesses has dropped very significantly over the past two to three years.

“In addition the Probation Service on Teesside performs well ahead of the Government's targets for ensuring that victims of the most serious violent and sexual crimes are kept informed of an offender's progress through their sentence and also have the chance to contribute to the conditions under which these offenders are released into the community.

“Victim Support Teesside is now represented on our board and this year we will be establishing Witness Care units covering all our local courts. These will be able to provide all victims and witnesses with an assessment of their needs, as well as a single point of contact and up-to-date information throughout the progress of a case.”

All local criminal justice boards are now working on drawing up plans to make this year even more successful than last year's inaugural event.

The aim of the week will be to organise events and media coverage which will give the public a better understanding of the system and all its elements such as court processes and sentencing, encouraging local communities to get involved and promoting the improvements which are being made within the system to cut down on crime, bring offenders to justice and reduce re-offending.

In Cleveland the week will be an opportunity to explain many of changes which are taking place in the way the system works – such as the new organisation which brings all the area's courts together under Her Majesty's Courts Service – and show how action is being taken to step up enforcement measures and target the prolific offenders who cause a high proportion of local crime.

## ic Aims



### and Criminal Justice Board's three year

er agencies is to improve public confidence by reducing

'building blocks' for achieving that aim and reflect the we should be delivering by 2008:

system is effective and that it serves all communities fairly.

rd of service from all criminal justice agencies.

nd efficient justice process.

ntences and orders of the court.

rvice, and an excellent place to work for people from

le targets which in the current year 2005/6 include:

by 13.7 per cent from the 'baseline' position in 2001/2.

per cent (latest figures in fact show that in 2004 the cent on the previous 12 months).

for Persistent Young Offenders at 71 days or less (In the

es through reducing the period to execute warrants, number of confiscation orders.

## WITNESS CARE UNITS

**One of the major developments now under way in Cleveland is the development of Witness Care Units which will cover all our local courts and are seen as a key element in ensuring that cases are handled quickly and effectively.**



The main task of the units is to provide all victims and witnesses of any crime with:

- **An initial assessment of each individual's potential needs at the start of a case.**
- **A choice of what level of contact and information they want.**
- **A single point of contact throughout a case.**
- **Up-to-date information.**
- **An assessment of needs before any court appearance.**

An independent evaluation of the pilot phase for Witness Care Units showed that they improved witness attendance at court by almost 20 per cent. In the five pilot areas – Essex, Gwent, South Yorkshire, North Wales and West Midlands – there was also a 27 per cent decrease in the number of trials which had to be adjourned to a later date as a result of witness difficulties.

## Made to pay

As rigorous enforcement is now one of the key objectives in the Criminal Justice Board Strategic Plan for the next three years, the Government has given a firm lead with the announcement by the Lord Chancellor Lord Falconer of the National Enforcement Service.

The 4,000 officers to be employed by the new service will work alongside local agencies to make ensure that fines are paid, community penalties are served, and defendants who fail to attend court are tracked down.

The new service will build on the strenuous efforts which have already seen the national level of fines enforcement increase from 55 to 80 per cent over the past two years – Government figures show that in Cleveland the payment rate was 84 per cent from April to December 2004.

Said Lord Falconer “Much has already been achieved to drive up enforcement performance but we need to do better. The National Enforcement Service will provide a much more professional consistent and rigorous enforcement regime.

“Working with other criminal justice agencies, the NES will be in a better position to tackle hard core offenders and increase compliance by persistent defaulters.

“This will help increase public confidence in the criminal justice system and satisfy victims that criminals will have to pay for their actions.”

The National Enforcement Service will be piloted from April next year and should be operating nationally by April 2007. Meanwhile Cleveland Criminal Justice Board is developing local enforcement targets, including execution of Warrants, financial penalties, asset recovery and community penalties.

## Justice on Video

A new video designed to give the public a ‘walk through’ the criminal justice system will shortly be available. Entitled ‘Justice in Action’ it runs for about 15 minutes and has been designed so it can be used for a variety of audiences, including schools.

Meanwhile a new booklet providing a short guide to the community sentencing system has recently been produced, taking the reader through an explanation of who gets which sentence, the sentencing process and options, before looking at the range of actions which can form part of a combined community order sentence.

## Making Contact...

## — RAISING AWARENESS —

**Cleveland Criminal Justice Board has received Government backing for the development of an initiative to raise awareness and understanding amongst young people about how the criminal justice system works – and their role as citizens.**

Explains Elaine Lumley, Vice Chair of the Board “We are delighted that funding has been allocated for this project because we believe it is very important – not just in Cleveland but across the country – to engage young people and make them aware of how important a role the criminal justice system plays in all our lives.

“The project involves the planning, creation and distribution of an Educational Curriculum Pack which will be available for local schools and may also be of use for other organisations involved with young people.

“As well as increasing awareness and confidence amongst young people, it will also underline the impact which criminal and anti-social behaviour has on both individuals and the community as a whole. It will be an opportunity to stress to a very important group within our local community that they have a part to play, for example in reporting crimes and acting as witnesses.”

The Board has established a working group to oversee the project and it is also seeking the support and involvement of the local educational community.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Stakeholders' Conference



*Support for victims and witnesses, reducing the number of ineffective trials, preventing young people from becoming involved in criminal activity and the development of programmes to target persistent offenders – these were amongst the key issues highlighted during Cleveland Criminal Justice Board's second annual Stakeholders' Conference.*

Keynote speaker at the conference held at the Samsung Centre Wynyard was Home Office Minister Baroness Scotland who underlined the important role played by local Criminal Justice Boards in co-ordinating the work of different agencies.

She commented “The public in Cleveland needs to receive a seamless and high quality service from their local Criminal Justice System, whether they are simply reporting

a crime or attending a court to give evidence as a witness. This means that the local criminal justice agencies must work closely together. I was delighted to attend the conference and hear about the progress made by the Cleveland Criminal Justice board in the last year.”

During the conference presentations were given on a number of important initiatives, including the work of the ‘No Witness No Justice’ project, the work of local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, with co-ordination from the Criminal Justice Board, in dealing with Persistent and Prolific Offenders and the ‘Prevent and Deter’ programme, led by Youth Offending Services, which aims to ensure that ‘at risk’ young people do not become the persistent offenders of the future.

If you want to know more about the work of the Cleveland Criminal Justice Board or you have any comments and suggestions about our local criminal justice service please contact:

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