

Working Together

Quarterly Newsletter – December 2004

CLEVELAND
CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD

Criminal Justice System: working together for the public



XHIBIT

On 6th December the Crown Court at Teesside became one of the first courts in the Country to introduce the XHIBIT system following the successful pilot of the system at Snaresbrook Crown Court.

XHIBIT (*Exchanging Hearing Information by Internet Technology*) is a computer system for Crown Courts and will eventually be rolled out in every Crown Court in England and Wales.

XHIBIT improves the daily business of a Crown Court by providing hearing information to those who need it within minutes. Contributing to swifter justice, XHIBIT sends vital information to Police, Victims and Witnesses, Probation, Crown Prosecution Service, Prisons, Magistrates' Courts and Youth Offending Teams faster than ever before.

XHIBIT allows Crown Court Clerks to keep an electronic log of events in the courtroom as they happen. In addition, XHIBIT generates and distributes (via the *Criminal Justice System Exchange XHIBIT Portal*) business critical information such as bail, imprisonment and community orders to Criminal Justice organisations across the Criminal Justice System.

Key information is displayed on public display screens around the court building, in the jury assembly area and on the Court Service website – <http://www.courtservice.gov.uk/index.htm>.

The potential benefits of XHIBIT and the Portal include faster updating of the Police National Computer, fewer unnecessary adjournments, better witness management, improved experience for victims and witnesses, reduced solicitor waiting times and more efficient distribution of information across the Criminal Justice System.

Teesside Combined Court Manager Eric Short said "We at Teesside are pleased and excited to be among



the first courts to "go live" on the new system. It will be a steep learning curve for our staff however I see it as a major step in joining-up the Criminal Justice System that will in time realise benefits for all agencies within that system and for victims and witnesses".

NO WITNESS NO JUSTICE

A major new initiative to support victims and witnesses – and reduce the number of ineffective trials – will get underway in Cleveland early next year.

The '**No Witness, No Justice**' project, which brings together the Crown Prosecution Service and the Police, will see the setting up of new Witness Care Units which will provide both practical help and moral support, including:

- A single point of contact for witnesses.
- Assessment covering support requirements, such as child care, transport, language difficulties and medical issues, as well as highlighting concerns, including intimidation.
- Witness Care Officers who will guide people through the criminal justice system.
- Continuous review of the needs of victims and witnesses throughout the case and improved communication, including the case outcome or trial result.

In the past inadequate support for victims and witnesses has often led to them withdrawing assistance and not turning up at court – national figures for last year show that prosecution witnesses failing to turn up were the reason for 22 per cent of ineffective Crown Court trials and 26 per cent in magistrates' courts.

A Message from the Chairman

A year of 'change, challenge – and achievement' is how Chief Constable Sean Price, Chair of the Cleveland Criminal Justice Board, sums up 2004.

He explains "When we held our first Stakeholder Conference last year the Government's initiative in creating local Criminal Justice Boards to bring together all elements of the criminal justice system had only been up and running for a few months.

"A year later we are seeing real achievements as a direct result of the work of the Board and the recognition by all agencies – and our many partners – that it is only by co-ordinating our efforts and making the best use of resources that we can tackle the major crime and disorder issues which face our local communities.

"I believe that we can genuinely claim that every stage in the criminal justice process has been influenced by the 'joined up' approach we have been promoting and developing... and I am especially pleased that there have been real benefits for the public we all serve.

"Take, for example, our work in developing advice and support services for victims and witnesses – surely the people who should be given our top priority. We now have the Victim and Witness Support Service as a member of our Board, and we have produced our own local advice leaflet which aims to guide victims and witnesses through all stages of the process from reporting a crime right through to court appearance and sentence.

"Improving services to victims and witnesses is crucial if we are to continue the remarkable success achieved in reducing the number of ineffective trials in our courts and early next year the new Witness Care Units will swing into operation.

"This year has seen the launch of many new Government initiatives in the criminal justice field and amongst the most significant has been the strategy to target Prolific and Other Priority Offenders. Led by our local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, with co-ordination from the Criminal Justice Board, this brings together Police, Crown Prosecution Service, Youth Offending Services, Probation, and Prisons in a three-pronged approach to prevent and deter, catch and convict and rehabilitate and resettle.



"The year ahead will be equally challenging with changes such as the introduction of the National Offender Management Service and the Unified Court Administration, coupled with the task of continuing to improve performance in key areas such as the number of offenders brought to justice – and ensuring that justice is delivered as effectively and speedily as possible.

"I am convinced that we can deliver the changes and meet the challenges if all those involved at local level work together with common objectives, a clear understanding of each other's roles and a willingness to listen and respond to their local communities."

Prevent & Deter



In March 2004 the Prime Minister announced the Prolific and Other Priority Offenders Strategy. It is estimated that out of half a million active offenders, 100,000 have three or more convictions and are responsible for half of all crime.

Led by local Crime and Disorder Partnerships, the strategy has three elements:

- Prevent and Deter
- Catch and Convict
- Rehabilitate and Resettle

The Youth Offending Services in Cleveland are involved in all three levels of activity, with strong emphasis placed on working to prevent young people becoming the prolific offenders of the future.

Youth Offending Services are established by local authorities, in co-operation with police, probation, social services, education and health services, to co-ordinate the provision of youth justice services, prevent offending and re-offending by young people, work with offenders between the ages of 10 and 17, respond to court ordered interventions and work with partners to develop effective interventions to deter young people from criminal activity.

Explains Colin Wilson, speaking on behalf of the Youth Offending Services in the area

“Our work in Prevent and Deter involves working with CDRPs to identify those most at risk, including auditing of levels of youth crime and disorder, pinpointing for example youngsters who are active but not yet prolific offenders and those who may be on the verge of a criminal career – and ensuring that we have the right intervention programmes in place.

“This involves ensuring that a young person’s contact with the youth justice system, the sentence of the court and any package of interventions attached to the sentence, are managed in a way which maximises the chance of reducing their continued offending.”

PPOS

Supported by the Criminal Justice Board, the four Crime and Disorder Partnerships are leading the way in implementing the PPO (Prolific and other Priority Offenders) strategy and the criminal justice agencies have agreed a protocol on how to deal with such offenders across the whole Cleveland area.

So far the Crime and Disorder Partnerships within Cleveland have identified a total of 85 PPO offenders and the Criminal Justice Board has established a sub-group with specific responsibility for ensuring that systems are in place to effectively implement the strategy.

A conference, organised by Safe in Tees Valley, will be held in the New Year to examine how the Partnerships are developing their programmes.

INSIDE JUSTICE WEEK

From the launch of the new advice leaflet for victims and witnesses and a major conference on alcohol-related crime and disorder to strengthening links with the business community and a demonstration of how agencies work together in the management of sex offenders – these were just some of the local highlights during the first-ever Inside Justice Week staged in October.

All 42 Criminal Justice boards across England and Wales were involved in the initiative which aimed to give the public a better understanding of how all aspects of the criminal justice system operate and how they work together.

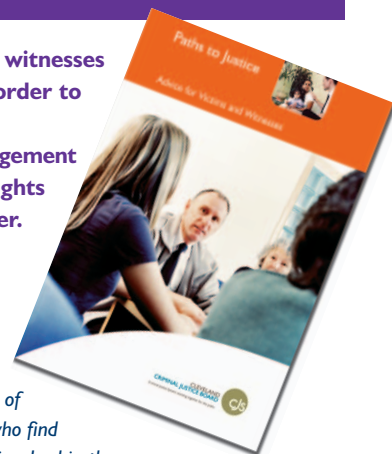
Says Elaine Lumley, Vice Chair of the Criminal Justice Board *“What was especially encouraging was the effort made by all the Board’s member organisations to support Inside Justice Week and I believe we were successful in demonstrating to the public – and indeed the local media – that we are working to harness all our collective resources and energies to bring more offenders to justice, support victims of crime and witnesses...and provide rehabilitation services which persuade people to turn away from a criminal lifestyle.*

“It was fortunate that Inside Justice Week coincided with the launch of an important local initiative by the Board – an eight-page leaflet which is aimed at

providing information, advice and reassurance to members of the public who find themselves involved in the criminal justice system as either victims or witnesses.

“The leaflet, which is now widely available across the area, covers everything from the initial reporting of a crime and interviewing of victims and witnesses to going to court and giving evidence...it even includes graphics showing the layout of a typical Magistrates Court and Crown Court.”

Versions of this and a general leaflet explaining the role of the Criminal Justice Board have been produced in a range of different languages.



Making Contact...

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 the Area Performance Officer:

Cleveland Criminal Justice Board
Police Headquarters, PO Box 70
Ladgate Lane, Middlesbrough TS8 9EH
T 01642 301493 F 01642 301462
E CCJBAdmin@cleveland.pnn.police.uk