

JUSTICE JOTTINGS

Newsletter of the Cumbria Criminal Justice Board

Spring 2007

Criminal Justice System: working together for the public



CUMBRIA
CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD



VISION STATEMENT

'Working together for a safe Cumbria by delivering fair and effective services that:

- ❖ Reduce offending and anti-social behaviour
- ❖ Meet the needs of victims and witnesses
- ❖ Inspire confidence in the criminal justice system'

Welcome to Justice Jottings, the public newsletter reporting the activities and performance of the Cumbria Criminal Justice Board and its partner justice agencies.

Justice Jottings is produced four times per year and distributed electronically (as a PDF document) to our mailing list and also posted on the Board's website.

If you would like to receive an e-copy directly, please send your request by e-mail to: ccjbenquiries@cumbria.police.uk



PERFORMANCE UPDATE 2006/2007

The Board has a number of performance targets to meet for the year ending 31st March 2007. However, there are **two key performance measures:**

- ❖ To increase the number of offences brought to justice to at least 11,285;
- ❖ To increase the proportion of people in Cumbria who are 'very or 'fairly' confident that the criminal justice system is effective in bringing offenders to justice to at least 51%.

As at December 2006, the number of offences brought to justice stood at 12,843.

From the quarterly British Crime Survey data as at September 2006, the public confidence figure was 47%.

The confidence figure is a drop compared to the previous quarter, although it is important to note that virtually every other area of the country experienced a fall in confidence over the same period. These falls may possibly be accounted for by the fairly extensive negative publicity that appeared during the summer of 2006, predominantly in the national press, and arising out of concerns about anti-social behaviour, uncertainties about the restructuring of police forces and other criminal justice agencies, and various offender management issues.

Other Board targets include;

- ❖ Reducing the number of ineffective trials at Magistrates' Courts and the Crown Court;
- ❖ Reducing the time taken to deal with persistent young offenders between arrest and sentencing;
- ❖ Reducing the time taken to process warrants for the arrest of people who fail to appear in court when required;
- ❖ Improving the payment rate of fines that are imposed on offenders;
- ❖ To pursue and recover the proceeds of crime from offenders;
- ❖ To more quickly pursue offenders who breach the terms of community penalties.

A more extensive report on Board performance will appear later in the year, when full data is available.

CUMBRIA CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD MEMBER AGENCIES





AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A major national media campaign is being run by the Home Office in March and April on the theme of domestic violence, linked to the launch of further new domestic violence courts around the country. **One of these will be in Carlisle**, with the first hearings scheduled for Monday, 12th March.

This campaign is being launched by Baroness Scotland and aims to:

- ❖ Foster a **zero tolerance attitude to domestic violence** among the general public (and particularly among friends/relatives of perpetrators);
- ❖ Promote the benefits locally of **new specialist domestic violence courts**;
- ❖ **Encourage victims to seek help**, which includes reporting to the police;
- ❖ Raise awareness of police pro-arrest policy;
- ❖ Show how the onus of prosecution can be removed from the victim;
- ❖ **Highlight the 'Enough' helpline 0845 122 8609.**



Some key facts (supplied by the Home Office)

Domestic violence claims the lives of two women a week and 30 men a year. It accounts for 16% of all violent crime and has more repeat victims than any other crime. It costs society an estimated £23 billion a year and is the biggest cause of deaths among 19-44 year-old women (more than cancer or traffic accidents). Over half of victims tell a friend or relative – three times higher than telling the police or medical profession. In 31% of cases the police are informed by someone other than the victim.

Victims

Statistics from the British Crime Survey reveal that the highest volume of domestic violence occurs among women 18-34 with children. Victims are more likely to be a housewife, work part time or be low income earner. Often with limited education, they are also most likely to live in social or rented accommodation in urban/inner city areas. They are likely to have partners who fall

into the 'unskilled' category of employment and, therefore, their households may be under severe financial pressures.

Previous research on domestic violence victims show that they often suffer from low self esteem. It has also been reported that many victims do not always want to leave their partner – they simply want the violence to stop. In fact 42% of victims of violence (in the last 12 months) still live with their assailant despite the fact in over a third of domestic violence cases, a second incident occurs within five weeks of the first. **Domestic violence has the highest repeat victimisation rates of any other crime**, with the average number of incidences per victim being twenty.

Perpetrators

Unsurprisingly, perpetrators have a very similar social & economic profile to their partners (the victim). Perpetrators are just as likely to be between 18-35 and they are likely to be between 35-60. A study of 336 convicted offenders found that 83% had previous convictions (54% for violent offences), and in 73% of the cases alcohol had been consumed prior to the incident (in fact of the sample 48% had a history of alcohol abuse)

Some common characteristics have been identified among this group, however this list is by no means definitive:

- ❖ Witnessing domestic violence in childhood
- ❖ High levels of dependency/jealousy
- ❖ Low level of education
- ❖ Negative attitude towards women

The most frequently cited contexts for abuse were jealousy, separation and issues concerning the kids (e.g. access)

Witnesses

Witnesses to domestic violence are typically family, neighbours and friends. Sixty percent of chronic victims and 50% of intermittent victims of domestic violence tell a friend or a relative. In 31% of domestic violence cases, the police are informed by someone other than the victim. New laws mean that a prosecution can take place without any evidence from the victim. This means that witnesses will play a key role in bringing more offences to justice.





MAGISTRATES' COURTS GET NEW IT SYSTEM

The courts in Cumbria have a new IT system, 'LIBRA', designed to provide new and improved links with other criminal justice organisations and, hence, play a key part in supporting central government's joined-up justice programme.

The LIBRA application replaces a variety of different existing systems with a single, modern national infrastructure, and case and accounts management system. Through a link to the criminal justice system exchange, it will allow staff in the police and magistrates' courts to have a standard electronic interface that provides immediate and accurate transfer of charging information.

LIBRA links with other systems now include:

- ❖ Police
- ❖ Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)
- ❖ Home Office
- ❖ Television Licence Office (TVLO)
- ❖ Vehicle Procedures/Fixed Penalty Office
- ❖ Bankers Automated Clearing System

These connections will help to avoid duplication of data entry, reduce data error and speed up a number of justice processes. This will result in a better service for court users and improve the wider criminal justice system.

LIBRA went live in Cumbria on 12th February.



NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE - A HUNDRED YEARS IN THE MAKING

[Based on extracts from an article appearing in 'The Guardian' newspaper on 29th January 2007]

This year marks the centenary of the probation service in Britain. This anniversary stems from the passage of the **1907 Probation of Offenders Act, which put the appointment and pay of probation officers onto a statutory footing for the first time.** On 8th May 1907, the Liberal home office minister, Herbert Samuel, told MPs the measure was needed so that offenders "whom the court did not think fit to imprison on account of their age, character, or antecedents might be placed on probation under the supervision of these officers whose duty it would be to **guide, admonish and befriend them.**"



NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE
for England and Wales

The Rainer Foundation, a keystone of third-sector activity in the criminal justice system, rightfully and proudly points to the role of its founder, Frederick Rainer, in establishing **the first court missionary.** Their traditional tasks were said to include exhorting offenders to give up the drink, distributing uplifting tracts and taking pledges of abstinence.

The breadth of the missionary work was impressive: working with habitual inebriates, matrimonial disputes, prison aftercare, helping people to find work and the making of inquiries for the court. In fact it is surprising to learn that even as late as the 1960s and 1970s probation officers were engaged in general adoption work.

It was not until the **1948 Criminal Justice Act**, which officially dismantled much of the machinery of the Victorian penal system, that a conviction was required for the sentence of probation to be imposed. It was no longer a task to be done only with the offender's consent.

There are now around 1,100 voluntary and other organisations providing programmes and courses for the prison and probation services, often on small, short-term contracts. **The government is looking to increase the amount of contracted work available to the private and voluntary sectors.** Organisations such as Crime Concern, Rainer and NACRO, the crime reduction charity, say they have the skills and expertise needed and have strongly welcomed the chance to get far more involved in the direct provision of probation services and so end the 100-year-old monopoly of the public probation service. The social care charity Turning Point has even announced a link-up with Serco, the private security company, to provide employment projects for offenders.

In this centenary year, it will be interesting to see how the probation service responds to fresh challenges, and how the government ensures that broadening the offender management market does not result in a fragmented and poorer service to the courts and public.



NACRO CELEBRATES 40TH BIRTHDAY



NACRO, the crime reduction charity, has just celebrated its 40th birthday. Formed in 1966, and originally known as the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, the organisation has grown markedly from the early days when it had just a handful of employees. According to its recently released Annual Review 2005/2006, it now has around 1,400 staff and about 1,100 volunteers, working with over 81,000 service users and an annual turnover of almost £60million.

The original aim of the charity was to set up practical services to help ex-offenders resettle, work with individuals at risk of getting involved in crime and with communities to help prevent crime. In 1999, the organisation re-branded and changed its name simply to 'NACRO' to reflect the way it had evolved. Whilst the resettlement of prisoners and ex-offenders is still central to its work, the organisation's role has widened considerably.

NACRO now has six main areas of work:

Resettlement

Over 70 projects inside prisons and in the community to help prisoners and people on release find accommodation, employment, access benefits and, if needed, rebuild links with their family, in order to make a fresh start.

Housing

Accommodation projects for ex-offenders and other excluded people, to give them a stable foundation for building a new life.

Education and employment

Running projects for offenders and people who may be at risk to help them create new opportunities and live more productive and settled lives.

Activities for young people

Projects for young people excluded from school or living in disadvantaged areas where youth facilities are scarce, to engage and inspire them so they are less likely to drift into antisocial behaviour and crime.

Community and family schemes

Community and neighbourhood development projects to offer support for individuals and families, and so help reduce crime.

Finding better ways to reduce crime

Carrying out consultancy and training and develop policy, to promote and assess effective approaches to crime reduction.

In Cumbria, NACRO has a number of projects running, including Barrow, Carlisle ('Extra-Time Football Project') and Workington ('Onside Football Project').



A copy of the latest Annual Review 2005/2006 - 'A Chance to Change' - can be downloaded in PDF format free of charge from the NACRO website:
<http://www.nacro.org.uk/>





NEW MEASURES TO INCREASE PUBLIC PROTECTION

New measures to strengthen police powers to deal with sex offenders and further protect the public from crime came into force on 12th February 2007. The measures, from the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006, mean that:

- ❖ More offenders can be placed on the sex offenders' register for life;
- ❖ The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) can prosecute an offender for a sexual offence, even if the date of the offence is unknown;
- ❖ Courts can seize any vehicle used in connection with people trafficking;
- ❖ Anybody found in possession of a knife or blade in a public place or school faces a maximum prison sentence of four years.

Sex offenders' register

Indeterminate sentences for public protection were introduced on 1 April 2005, increasing the numbers of offences that attracted a potential life sentence. Many of these offences would only merit an offender being placed on the sex offenders' register for five years, but with effect from the implementation of the Act any sexual offender given an indeterminate sentence for public protection will automatically be placed on the sex offenders' register for life.

Prosecutions

A small number of cases have arisen where the victim of a sexual offence has been unable to establish whether the offence took place before or after the implementation of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the courts have been uncertain whether to prosecute under that Act or under previous legislation. From now on the CPS will be able to prosecute under either piece of legislation, providing there is evidence that an offence took place.

Vehicle seizures

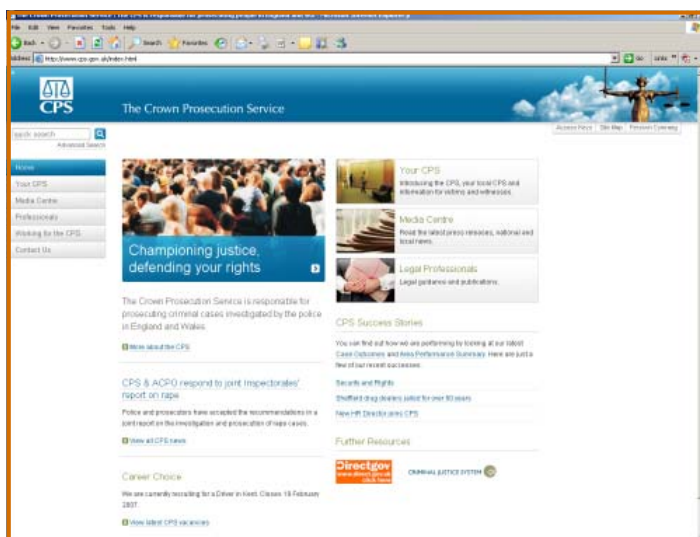
This will give courts the power to order the forfeiture or detention of a vehicle, ship or aircraft used, or intended to be used, in connection with a number of offences relating to people trafficking for sexual exploitation and will assist in the fight against those who seek to profit from the vile and brutal crime of human trafficking by enabling the courts to seize the tools of those crimes to both preserve evidence and to prevent the commission of further crime.

Knife sentencing

The government wants to reduce the incidences of knife crime and ensure that courts have the power to give tougher sentences to those convicted of carrying a knife or blade in a public place. Consequently, the maximum sentence for carrying a knife in public has been doubled to four years.

Announcing the implementation of the Act, Home Office Minister Vernon Coaker said:

"Protecting the public is at the heart of Home Office priorities. Crime has fallen by over a third in the last nine years, but I recognise we will always do more where necessary to enhance community safety. Taken together, these new measures will help to make people safer in their communities."



CPS WEBSITE RE-LAUNCHED

The Crown Prosecution Service website has been revamped and re-launched. Head of the CPS, Ken McDonald, described the new site as **"fresh thinking"** and **"modern"**. He added:

"The site now supports the CPS vision of becoming a world-class prosecuting authority and I commend those involved in making the change."

The website has been repositioned to address the needs of **four key audiences**: the media, legal professionals, the general public and potential new recruits to the service. It maintains the Worldwide Web Consortium priority AA award for accessibility.

The website address is: www.cps.gov.uk



CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM ONLINE

There is a wealth of information about the criminal justice system available online. A wide range of sites provides support and assistance aimed at different users of the system i.e. victims, witnesses, defendants, jurors and professionals.

If you have access to the Internet, try some of these:

Office for Criminal Justice Reform

www.cjsonline.gov.uk

Crown Prosecution Service

www.cps.gov.uk

Cumbria Constabulary

www.cumbria.police.uk

HM Courts Service

www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk

HM Prison Service

www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk

Legal Services Commission (criminal defence and civil legal assistance)

www.legalservices.gov.uk

National Probation Service

www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk

Victim Support

www.victimsupport.org.uk

Youth Justice Board

www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk

Home Office - British Crime Survey

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/bcs1

Department for Constitutional Affairs

www.dca.gov.uk

The Board has a support team to help deliver its work programme:

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NEXT EDITION

The next edition of Justice Jottings (Summer .2007) will appear in early June.

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Ideas and comments are always welcomed.

