



Fyvie Castle

Newsletter

Issue 1 June 2008



Councillor Anne Robertson
Convener
Northern Community
Justice Authority

Welcome to the first Newsletter of the Northern Community Justice Authority. This will be a regular publication which will keep members and partners up to date with the latest news and developments within our Authority, nationally and further afield. I am determined that we as an Authority make every effort to engage with the public, seek out their views and keep them informed.

One of the main challenges facing the Northern Community Justice Authority is the size and diversity of the area. From the cities of Aberdeen and Inverness to the remotest corners of Scotland in Shetland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles). Compared to other CJA areas we have a significantly higher number of statutory bodies and agencies with 7 Local Authorities, 5 Health Boards, 2 Police forces and the Scottish Prison Service plus all the partner agencies. We will rise to these challenges and do everything across our Authority area to ensure services are being delivered to the right people at the right time.

WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE AUTHORITY?

Community Justice Authorities (CJAs) came into existence with the 2005 Offender Management legislation. It requires local authorities, the Scottish Prison Service, health boards, police forces and other partner agencies to work together to minimise the risks posed to communities by offenders. The main objective for CJAs is to reduce re-offending.

There are 8 CJAs in Scotland. The Northern CJA covers the seven local authority areas of Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Highland, Moray, Orkney and Shetland.

The CJAs are in effect elected members from each of the local authorities. In the Northern area 7 Councillors with identified

deputies form the CJA supported by a Chief Officer and administrative staff. Details of the Northern CJA members can be found at the end of this newsletter.

One of the most important roles for the CJA is to have published plans. The Northern CJA 3 year plan from 2008–2011 has been approved by the Scottish Government and published on our website.

The Northern CJA Chief Officer Philip English has a key role to play in this process,

“One of the most onerous tasks involves the distribution of the Criminal Justice Social Work budget to the 7 local authorities. We are required to identify priorities within the CJA to ensure we reduce re-offending. With such a diverse area making sure that all authorities have the right funding for the right services to address our priorities is a complex business.”

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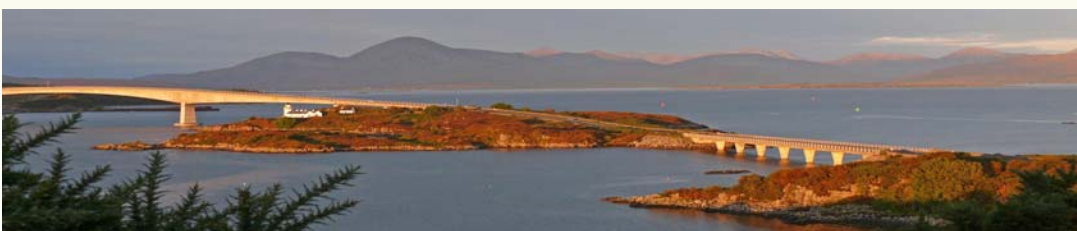
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The Cullins and Skye bridge

Community
Justice

NEW HM PRISON GRAMPIAN ANNOUNCED

On 4 June 2008, Mike Ewart, Chief Executive, Scottish Prison Service announced details of the new HM Prison Grampian to replace Peterhead and Aberdeen Prisons: 'Following the Cabinet Secretary's commitment last year to replace the existing HMP Aberdeen and HMP Peterhead with a new prison (HMP Grampian), SPS conducted a detailed assessment of potential sites within the Peterhead area. This exercise has now been completed and concluded that the preferred site for HMP Grampian is on the site of the existing HMP Peterhead. SPS will seek planning permission from Aberdeenshire Council for the proposed development. Subject to receipt of planning consent, SPS will award a contract for the construction of the proposed HMP Grampian which will be run by the Scottish Prison Service. HMP Aberdeen and HMP Peterhead will close when HMP Grampian opens.

HMP Grampian will provide around 500 prisoner places (roughly the current combined capacity of HMP Aberdeen and HMP Peterhead), supporting the demand for places within the Northern Community Justice Authority (CJA), excluding those accommodated in HMP Inverness. SPS propose to work closely with the Northern CJA to create a community facing prison which supports this objective'.

SACRO RESEARCH PAPER ON THE IMPACT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES ON RE-OFFENDING

In January 2008 a paper produced by Steve Kirkwood a Research Officer with SACRO was published which examines the impact of Criminal Justice Services in re-offending. Between 2003 and 2006 they undertook an evaluation of 5 of their services using reconviction rates in an attempt to measure the impact on re-offending. Considerable difficulties were found in relation to the limitations of using conviction data. Only a small percentage of recorded crimes and offences are detected, prosecuted and proven.

Notwithstanding the difficulties the research concluded that;

- For four out of five services, the proportion convicted within two years dropped following referral to the service for those who completed their planned time with the service;
- For all services, the number of convictions per person dropped following referral to the service for those who completed their planned time with the service;
- For three of the five services, the number of convictions resulting in custodial sentences increased

following referral to the service for those who completed their planned time with the service;

- For all services, reconviction rates were lower for those who completed their planned time with the service compared with those who did not;
- For three of the five services, the reconviction rates for service users who completed their planned time with the service were higher than those of the comparison groups and base-line rates.

STRUCTURED DEFERRED SENTENCE PROJECT

In 2004 the Scottish government invited bids to set up a number of projects across Scotland involving structured deferred sentences (SDS). SDS is a low-tariff intervention providing structured social work intervention for offenders post conviction but prior to sentencing. It is intended for offenders with underlying problems such as drug or alcohol dependency, mental health or learning difficulties or unemployment that might be addressed through social work intervention. Highland were successful in a bid to run a pilot project.

James Maybee, Principal Officer, CJSW, Highland informs us,

"The purpose of SDS was to provide a relatively short period of focussed supervision as part of a deferred sentence. The main aims were,

- Meeting assessed needs and building offender motivation for positive change
- Reducing or restricting the frequency or seriousness of offending behaviour
- Completing the range of available interventions / thus meeting the needs of courts
- Matching more effectively intensity of intervention / supervision to assessed needs and risks"

Persons targeted in Highland were low tariff offenders, especially women, young offenders, offenders with substance misuse and offenders with learning or mental health issues.

The funding provided for one social worker, one NCH Project Worker, a part-time APEX Project Worker, and a part-time CJS Clerical Assistant. During the first 23 months of the pilot SDS was imposed on 68 offenders. The intended duration of the orders was 3 months but on occasion this extended to 5 months.

The recently published Government evaluation of the pilots (April 2008) included the outcome of research interviews with offenders, the feedback was positive.

"Almost all offenders interviewed described benefiting in some way from SDS, including: learning to evaluate actions, changing attitudes or behaviour, getting support, having an opportunity/chance and gaining structure/stability.

James Maybe says, "If structured deferred sentences help to address the offending behaviour of low risk offenders involved in petty offending without the need for a probation order then we fully support it here in Highland; it also means resources can be targeted on higher risk offenders."

THE PRISONS COMMISSION PAYS A VISIT

The recently set up Prisons Commission has paid consultative visits to the Northern CJA calling at Aberdeen on 26 May and Inverness on 27 May.

The Commission, which was formed by the Scottish Government in October last year has been formed to consider how imprisonment is currently used in Scotland and how this fits with the Government's wider strategic objectives; raise the public profile of this issue - providing better information to allow a deeper understanding of the options, outcomes and costs; compare the underpinning rationale with current law and practice, including the impact for courts, prisons and community justice services of early release provisions of the Custodial Sentences and Weapons (Scotland) Act 2007.

The Commission is chaired by former First Minister Henry McLeish and has been asked to report back by the 1st July 2008.

Other members include:

Chief Constable David Strang, Chief Constable of Lothian and Borders Police, Sheriff Alistair Duff, Josephine MacLean, Stipendiary Magistrate, Geraldine Gammell, Director of The Prince's Trust in Scotland, Richard Jeffrey, President of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Lesley Riddoch, broadcaster and journalist and Dr Karin Dotter-Schiller, Deputy Director General of the Austrian Federal Prison Service

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS UPDATE

The Scottish Government's consultation on the policy proposals for the secondary legislation required to deliver a robust vetting and barring scheme that will keep people who would harm children or protected adults out of relevant employment positions attracted 200 written responses.

These are currently being analysed and a full report will be published later this year. The analysis will enable Ministers to make policy decisions on key aspects of the PVG scheme which will be developed through secondary legislation during 2008/2009.

During the consultation period (1 November 2007 until 12 February 2008) the Scottish Government ran a series of information events in the six Scottish cities and Perth and supported a road show to rural areas hosted by the Central Registered Body in Scotland. The events and the road show attracted over 1000 people, representing a wide range of groups and organisations. Participants

discussed and explored a range of issues and answered polling questions relating to the policy proposals for secondary legislation. The results from the polling will be considered along with the consultation



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responses as part of the overall analysis. The questions and answers from all the information events are at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/children-families/pvglegislation>.

A date for the vetting and barring scheme to go live is still to be determined and the Scottish Government.

ANNUAL REPORT TIME

The Scottish Government Criminal Justice Directorate has requested that all CJAs submit their first Annual Reports by 4 July 2008. The NCJA report will detail the progress made against the 2007/08 area plan and will demonstrate how the CJA and partners are working together to achieve the aims of the National Strategy. All local authorities and partner agencies have been asked to contribute towards the Report for the area to ensure that it accurately reflects the work being done across our very large and diverse area.

REDUCING COURT TIME FOR PETTY OFFENCES

Alleged offenders who are too poor to be considered for a fine could be offered community-based reparation.

From June 2008 Fiscal Work Order pilots will run in South Lanarkshire, West Lothian, West Dunbartonshire and Highland Council. The Scottish Government is to provide £200,000 per annum to fund the schemes. Fiscal work orders will provide prosecutors with the additional option of offering an alleged offender a period of community-based reparative work as an alternative to prosecution for an accused who, but for their lack of financial means, might otherwise have received a fiscal fine.

Work Orders are specifically designed to deal with low level offences such as vandalism and minor shoplifting - helping to free up court time for more serious cases.

The pilots will allow for 400 fiscal work orders per year, 100 in each local authority participating. Across Scotland in 2005/06, there were 18,000 fiscal fines imposed.

Completion of the order will discharge the right to prosecute the accused for the offence, in like manner to acceptance of a financial alternative to prosecution.

It will also allow the prosecutor to suggest a community based penalty where the nature of the alleged offence in question makes such a disposal more appropriate than a financial penalty.

The main objectives of Work Orders are to:

- ⇒ Provide an opportunity for persons generally accused of relatively minor offences and where it would otherwise not be in the public interest to prosecute, to be dealt with outwith the court system
- ⇒ Extend the range of measures available to prosecutors in dealing with offences which do not require a court hearing
- ⇒ Be of benefit to victims and communities through more speedy and appropriate resolution of cases
- ⇒ Enable and require persons who are alleged to have engaged in minor criminal behaviour to undertake prescribed activities designed to make reparation for that behaviour and to reduce the likelihood of re-occurrence of the alleged offending behaviour
- ⇒ Provide constructive community work activities or programmes for alleged offenders with the aim of encouraging personal and social responsibility and self respect
- ⇒ Provide supervision to alleged offenders which is both firm and fair and follow-up compliance promptly
- ⇒ Reduce the demands on the court system by removing cases which do not need to be taken to court thereby reducing the backlog of serious cases

Watch out for updates as the Pilot in Highland progresses.

YOUR CJA MEMBERS



Councillor Anne Robertson
Convener
Aberdeenshire



Councillor Roderick McLeod
Deputy Convener
Orkney



Cllr Florence Grains
Shetland



Cllr John Divers
Moray



Cllr Margaret Davidson
Highland



Cllr Gordon Leslie
Aberdeen



Cllr Norman A Macdonald
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

NEW INFORMATION OFFICER FOR THE NORTHERN CJA

As reported at the last NCJA meeting Peter Willox has been appointed as NCJA Information Officer. He commenced work in this new job on 12 May 2008. Prior to joining the NCJA he was an Inspector within Grampian Police's Community Partnerships Division. He is looking forward to the challenge of working in this new environment.

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE

Have you got a story to tell? Are you involved in a new project? Something new on the horizon? Share it with your colleagues, partners and the wider public by contributing to this newsletter – send your information, pictures, ideas or suggestions to

peter.willox@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Visit the Northern CJA website at:-

www.northerncja.org.uk

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS



Cllr Nan Cullinane
Aberdeenshire



Cllr Russ Madge
Orkney



Cllr Leslie Angus
Shetland



Cllr Ron Shepherd
Moray



Cllr Liz MacDonald
Highland



Cllr James Kiddie
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Cllr Kenneth Murray
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