

With news of... Leigh Council Awards, High Sheriff's Prize Trip to Norway, New Website

Our heritage – and our future – on show

Past and present Probation fully represented at this year's Heritage Day

Handing out Centenary newsletters depicting Probation's history, Cullen Mill's Jane Dewitt and Anne Clarke dressed as turn-of-the-century Probation Officers (or Female Rescue Agents as they were called) to entice the Chelmsford public into Shire Hall (Chelmsford Magistrates Court) on Heritage Day.

MORE INSIDE...



Employment training: Essex bids to deliver across region

Inspire East awaits October announcement



Essex Probation is waiting to hear if it has been chosen to deliver employment training across the Eastern Region, after it was invited by NOMS to bid for a £3.3m contract.

Experienced partners

A positive announcement, due around mid-October, would see us work closely with three preferred

providers, each of whom have years of experience helping offenders. It will also create 20 posts, three of them completely new.

Help back to work

The scheme has been made possible through grants by the European Social Fund, and will last two-and-a-half years.

Colin Davis, Contracts

Manager at Cullen Mill, who played a key role in the bidding process, said: "We've called our scheme Inspire East.

"If we're successful and win the contract, we will be able to help large numbers of offenders get back into work – beginning the process in prison and supporting them as they return to the community.

"Probation's role will be to oversee the delivery of the scheme, co-ordinating work centrally in terms of marketing and recruitment for example, but also providing the Information, Advice and Guidance element.

"This is an entirely new service, aimed at filling in gaps in the current provision," he added.

Heritage Open Day continued...

Anne Clarke (L) and Jane Dewitt:
Edwardian Probation Officers

Once inside the Shire Hall, guests came across Probation present and future, looking not only at the work we do, but our successes. Visitors were left in no doubt as to Probation's contribution to public safety, and our success with short term offenders compared to that of imprisonment.

All the other Criminal Justice agencies were there, promoting their own work. Birds of prey, brought along by serving prisoners, were flown in the building; an old-fashioned public hanging; riot control, and a mock cell were the prisons' contribution; the police allowed children to try on uniforms. Probation held its own, despite all this activity.



Chris Chatten explains the Probation recommendation process during a mock sentencing exercise.



An eagle-owl: one of a number of birds trained by serving prisoners. They flew inside the building.

Gillian Gurney (hidden), Margaret Hurding, Chris Chatten and Careena Nicola at the Probation desk.

Big 'thank you' to Careena Nicola, (Southend) and Chelmsford's Gillian Gurney, Margaret Hurding, Pauline Auguste, and Chris Chatten (who doubled up as a court officer in the sentencing exercise in Court 2). These are always popular, and this time a gratifying number of visitors were questioning why Magistrates didn't follow the Probation Service's recommendations.



Helping you out in time of need

This year marks the 75th Anniversary of the Edridge Fund, named after Sydney George Edridge OBE, the founder and first General Secretary of Napo.

The Edridge Fund is able to provide money, a sympathetic ear, professional support or help to organise stress counselling if you need it. This could mean cash to cope with an immediate crisis and support and advice from one of their representatives.

About 120 applications are received each year, with £40,000 being given in grants. Benefits extend to anyone in the Probation Service who is eligible to be a member of Napo, and their dependents, including

retired staff. Trade Union membership is not necessary.

The Edridge Fund welcomes support and you can become a Friend of Edridge. The aim is to raise £10,000 this year to help colleagues in need.

For more information on the Edridge Fund and how to become a Friend, or to apply for assistance, see their website www.edridgefund.org

The local fund representative is Brian Surtees, who can be contacted to discuss requests in confidence on **01277 363607** or via email at: bsurtees@ntlworld.com.

High Sheriff's winners in the Land of the Midnight Sun

A restored Viking Longboat

Out of the vast numbers of nominations for the High Sheriff's Prize this year, six people whose work was assessed as exceptional were sent to sample the Criminal Justice System in Norway.

It wasn't just a Busman's Holiday. There were also a few opportunities for sightseeing.

Award-winners Erin Charlton, Doug Charlton, Jane Dewitt, Chris Rowe, Penny Thompson and Angie Thorburn, along with Mary Archer, Debbie Came and Pete Mangan, examined Norwegian equivalents to the UK's prison system, during a short break in Oslo. Even the prisons were beautiful!

Busy schedule

Day One saw the group visit KRUS to

learn about Norway's prisons and the training prison staff receive.

Prison officers typically undergo two years training: the first year in a prison, followed by one year of theory back at KRUS.

Alongside Prison Officers, Works Officers undertake the role of tutors and mentors, passing on practical knowledge in carpentry, electrical and decorating skills, and spending up to eight hours a day working with prisoners.

Devil's Island visit

Day Two, and our winners visit the 115-inmate Bastoy Prison – also known as 'Devil's Island' – the largest low-security prison in the country.

Despite being a 'human ecology prison' that permits prisoners a great deal

of personal freedom, 96% of Bastoy's prisoners have committed the most serious crimes.

Prisoner liberties are balanced with personal responsibilities, however. There are random room searches, and prisoners are counted at the end of each day. The emphasis is very much on self-sufficiency, with prisoners undertaking most of the organic farming on the island.

And should a prisoner try to escape? They are asked to contact the Governor, before leaving, and avoid an expensive helicopter search.



Above: one of the prisoner dormitories on Bastoy Island. **Right:** the main prison building containing classrooms and a refectory. Prisoners cook all the meals.



New Team gearing up for Trust transition

People are quietly getting on with preparing for Trust status in April.

A Trust Transition team has been appointed, and leads for the main areas of work: Communications, Finance, Corporate Governance, Business Development, HR issues,

have all been appointed to oversee the activities needed to get us there by April 1st.

Branding, Logos, Website, Housestyle are all being considered: see these outward signs that things are changing as the swan gliding serenely across the pond – while the

TRUST NEWS

furious paddling underneath the surface to get us to the other side is the heavy-end work on what the changes will be and how we'll manage them.

Uncertainties remain as to important issues such as Finance, but all eventualities are being looked at to try to ensure that we can deliver well on the front line. As things move along, we will keep people informed.

Staff Reference Groups – Why do we have them?

by Neelam Pervez, Diversity Manager

Minority group facts:

- One in four people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) have experienced physical abuse. Incidents of verbal abuse are even higher, and experienced by one in three LGBT people.
- Last year, in Essex alone, there were 1095 racially motivated incidents – an average of three race-hate crimes every day.
- Disabled people are less likely to have the same opportunities as non-disabled people. They are twice as likely to be unemployed, on a lower income and have no qualifications.



It's a sad fact that people from minority groups are more likely to face discrimination and negative attitudes. This is one reason why Essex Probation provides staff reference groups:

- The Minority Ethnic Reference Group Essex (MERGE)
- The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Group (LGBT)
- The Staff Enabling and Disability Reference Group (SEDRG)

Receiving support from other colleagues who share an aspect of social identity is invaluable. Someone with a disability, someone black or someone who is gay or a lesbian, will find there's less likely to be someone in their office to approach for support or advice.

Staff reference groups are not just about support – they often make suggestions on how to improve service delivery and can be a useful resource for any queries relating to BME, LGBT or disabled offenders.

Ideas relating to employment are also discussed which often benefit not just staff from minority groups, but all employees.

STAFF REFERENCE GROUPS: A VALUABLE RESOURCE

I left my previous job because of homophobic bullying by a work colleague. If this was to happen at EPA, I know that I could come to colleagues within the LGBT group for support.

Selina Fasulo, RIC SDR Writer, Basildon

I consider my colleagues from MERGE to be true friends I can speak to in confidence, for advice and support. I would encourage any BME member of staff to join MERGE. Even if you can't always attend meetings, by becoming a member of the Group, you have a network of people there to support you at any time.

Carol Hubbard, Women's Safety Worker, Basildon

Having SEDRG within Essex Probation shows that disability matters within our organisation. If something is not working quite right for disabled staff, its reassuring that the right people will listen and do something about it.

Sonja Jarman, Finance Administrator, Cullen Mill

Pictured at a recent SEDRG meeting, seated L to R: Sonja Jarman, Paul Felice, Elaine Ford and Mary Madge.

Standing, L to R: Debbie Came (Director), who consulted with disabled staff about the new CetiskKT and PAM IT systems, Sam Mott (HR Manager) and Neelam Pervez (Diversity Manager)

The staff reference groups also enable EPA to consult with members on such areas as the Single Equality Scheme and new policies and procedures.

If you would like further information about our staff reference groups then please feel free to contact:

Neelam Pervez
Diversity Manager, Cullen Mill

Staff not from a minority group can also attend meetings to observe what goes on. Contact Neelam if you are interested in this opportunity.

NEWS in BRIEF...

Probation Experience Basildon – coming soon

It's the turn of the Basildon office to play host to the next Probation Experience event, on 24 October.

This will be the fourth show to be held in the past year, and again features the story of fictitious offender Lee Cullen and his experience of Probation.

And just like previous events, the emphasis is very much on audience participation, with guests able to take part in an ART session and attend a MAPPA meeting.

A cast-change since the last show in Colchester sees Rich Curtin join Ben Childs as Lee, and Chris Rowe replacing Jenni Hogg as Lee's OM.

Trevor still in the race for national award

ETE officer Trevor Gray picked up a special Judging Panel's award at the regional Learn Direct awards ceremony at Newmarket Racecourse, in July.

"I was presented with two nicely framed certificates, an engraved glass trophy, and a cheque for £250," said Trevor.

Trevor now goes forward to the national finals being held in London, in October.



Quiz on your screen

CetisKT – How's it coming on?

At the moment we have more than 200 policy documents on the system, and it is not always easy to find what you want quickly. CetisKT will change all that:

A reminder:

1 After reading each policy or instruction, you will be asked to complete a short quiz to demonstrate that you understood the key messages. CetisKT will score your answers and indicate if you have passed or not. Only after you have read and passed the test will you be able to accept the policy.

2 From now on, all new and revised policies will be stored on CetisKT. Your manager will notify you when this will happen.

3 CetisKT maintains a list of policies personally assigned to you, which you can see when you log onto the system. They are key to our work, and we need to know about them and have them easily accessible.

making need to carefully target who needs to know what. If you only need to be aware of the policy overview, you will only be assigned this part of a policy. If you need all the detailed instructions you will get these.

■ New staff will automatically have a list of the policy and instructions relevant to their job.

■ All staff have a personalised list of relevant policies. They will already be categorised, so you should be able to access these easily.

■ If small changes need to be made to update a document, these can be clearly highlighted to you.

■ Your Manager will know who in their team has read and accepted an assigned policy or instruction.

■ Scores from each test can be correlated to identify policy areas that are better or less well understood, to help us improve our practice.

It will take time to transfer all policies to CetisKT and ensure they are targeted to the correct people. Once you have had a chance to use the system, please send feedback through your line manager to Debbie Came at Cullen Mill.

Thanks to Doug, Carole, Laura, Louise, Lucy and Shelley at the Colchester Office for testing the system.

What are the benefits?

■ Authors of policies and instructions are

Advice Service meets MATRIX standard – again



A continuing commitment to provide quality Information and Advice services has earned Essex Probation re-accreditation under the MATRIX standard.

The national standard measures eight areas of service performance and delivery, including:

■ How people are made aware of the service and how they are provided with information and support in using it.

■ How the service is planned, maintained and understood.

■ Staff competency.

■ How continuous quality improvement is ensured through the monitoring and evaluation of services.

■ How feedback on the quality of service is obtained and measured.

MATRIX assessors visited Cullen Mill, Southend and Chelmsford offices earlier this year to assess the evidence collected from our IAG services.

Assessors also spoke to managers, ETE officers, OMs, admin staff, tutors, and offenders.

Managing the business of change

It's been all change for Jane Dewitt, recently. Formerly Victim Contact Manager in Basildon, Jane's new role as Business Change Manager (BCM), based at Cullen Mill, is all about ensuring that change made by SMT members actually happens.

Changes ahead

It's the kind of work that Jane relishes. "Being BCM involves a lot of attention to detail, but at the same time an overarching view of how everything in the organisation fits together," she explains.

It's about ensuring that every change we plan within the organisation happens on time and in a good way."

Tools for the job

Promoting change is only one aspect of Jane's work; identifying the risks associated with change is another.

"Directors each create a particular business case for their area and include me in its implementation. I can then assess any risks it might present to the organisation and suggest possible areas for improvement," says Jane.

"We use a project management tool called PAM (Partner Alliance Manager) which contains information about each Director's business case and allows me to monitor whether they are being implemented in the correct way and on schedule.



As well as being involved with the new Communication, Risk Assessment and Contingency plans, as well as timescale planning, Jane has also been closely involved with the introduction of CetusKT (see **Quiz on your screen** article in this issue).

Communication is key

Jane says it is essential she talks to frontline staff regularly, particularly the

Change Champions in each local office, in order to determine what they feel about the changes they are being asked to take on board.

"I'm hoping to be a link between the centre and LDUs, to ensure that change is as smooth as possible," she says.

"That means visiting the LDUs on a regular basis, talking to colleagues and finding out what difficulties they may have. Communication is key."

Gill leaves to join the DOM



Mary presents Gill with a bouquet...

...watched by friends and colleagues (is that Steve Johnson-Proctor tucked away in the corner?)



Director Gill Hirst will be in the office of the Director of Offender Management, working regionally to facilitate the East of England Area's transition to Trusts. We look forward to working with her in her new capacity.

Gill is replaced by Robin Brennan, who is re-joining EPA after his secondment at NOMS.

Southend Community Payback wins environment award

The dedication and hard work of staff and offenders was praised, when Leigh-on-Sea Town Council presented Southend Community Payback with its first “Good for Leigh” Environment Award.

The event, which took place at the council’s offices recently, was attended by councillors and other award winners who had been selected for their efforts to improve the environment and promote a green image of the town.

Wendi Snelling, Unpaid Work Supervisor, who led a team of offenders on regular clean-ups around Leigh, received a certificate on behalf of Probation, as Jan Owens, Unpaid Work Supervisor Manager, and Florence Lewis, Interventions Manager looked on.

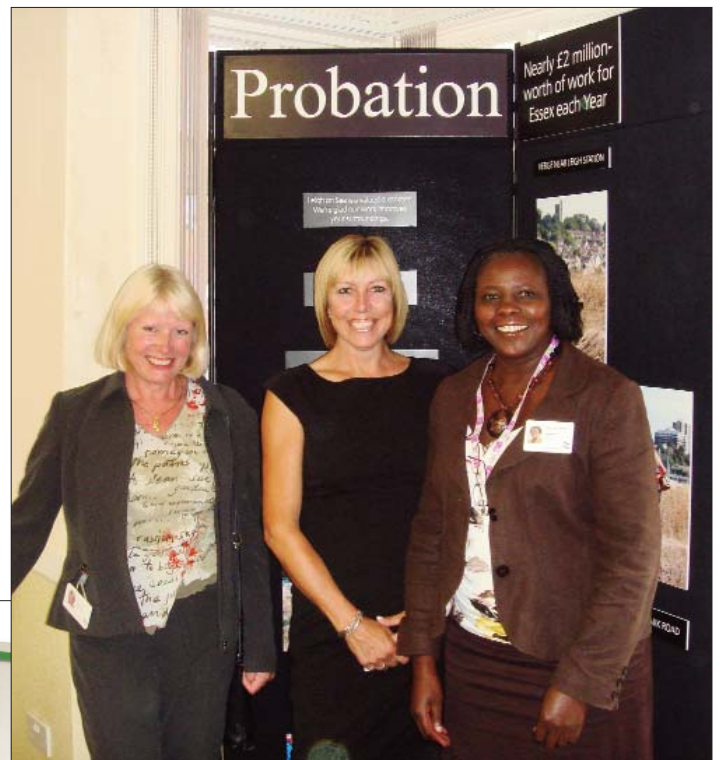
Improving life in Leigh

Presenting the award, Leader of the council Margaret Cotgrove said: “We would like to thank you once again, on behalf of the local community, for your tremendous efforts and time spent helping to improve the environment of Leigh-on-Sea.

“We want to make Leigh a more attractive place to live work, shop and visit, and you have helped us do that.”

Lots of work to do

Speaking before the event, Jan Owens Unpaid Work Supervisor Manager, said: “We’re delighted to have received recognition for our efforts to help the



Jan Owens, Wendi Snelling and Florence Lewis, before the start of the awards ceremony

council make the town a safer and more pleasant place in which to live. Offenders have put in a lot of work over some considerable time.

“We’ve cleared up all around the town – by the Railway Station, in the skateboard park, on Two Tree Island – clearing paths and roads, picking up litter, strimming – in fact, anything messy gets the Community Payback treatment.

“Normally we’re in Leigh every week, but in the summer months it has to be reduced to once a fortnight, as everyone is clamouring for our services.”

Business as usual at the Hostel

After an offender due for recall climbed onto the hostel roof recently, causing serious damage to the roof and some staff cars, the hostel was operating as usual within 24 hours. All residents had been moved overnight in a well-managed operation with the local police. They were then returned

the next day. Amey Construction also responded quickly, assessing the damage and making plans for the roof’s repair.

Congratulations to Malcolm Werry and all hostel staff for the professional way they approached their work on a busy weekend.

HR to issue regular reports

Keep an eye out for quarterly reports being published by the HR team.

The reports cover a wide range of staff issues including recruitment, outcomes of grievance / discipline / capability issues, flexible working and special leave requests, sickness absence by function, Occupational Health Employee Assistance Programme referrals, and more.

Managers will share this information with staff, but reports can also be found at: S:\0 Performance\Performance Information\HR Performance Information



Matt (pictured left) chats with Research Officer Tim Basham

Matt is new Performance Improvement Manager

We welcome Matt Mackman, who became the new Performance Improvement Manager in July.

Matt, a former art teacher and charity fundraising manager, is based at Cullen Mill and takes over from Garry Moon who left the service in June.

In addition to monitoring standards and meeting performance targets, Matt has an ambition to make the business of statistics more relevant and interesting to staff.

“All too often performance figures seem dry and disconnected from actual events. I want to recognise the human side of statistics and data so that we can all achieve a high level of success.”

On your bikes...

Cycle to Work Scheme – we need your views

Do you want to get fit, save money and help protect the environment all at the same time? If so, then the Cycle to Work Scheme should interest you.

The scheme, which is part of the Government’s Green Transport Plan to encourage a healthier workforce, allows staff to purchase new bikes and accessories at a substantial discount if they agree to use them for 50% of work journeys. Employers also benefit from National Insurance relief.

Who’s eligible?

All PAYE staff should be eligible, as long as they are over-18, have completed a probationary period and earn more than the minimum wage.

To purchase new bikes and equipment (limited to £1000 in value), staff enter into a loan agreement with either their employer or a nominated loan company, which they pay back from gross rather than net pay within the hire period, which is usually 12 months.

Typical savings are between 30-50%, but the final amount depends on an individual’s tax band and the way the employer runs the scheme. If a finance scheme is adopted, savings are about 5% lower.

How does it work?

The scheme is likely to use a voucher system. The employer enters into a contract with the cycle scheme, and the employee signs a hire agreement before visiting their local bike shop for a quote on a bike and accessories. When the cycle scheme providers receive the quote, they invoice the employer and provide a secure voucher which the employee uses to collect the bike.



It is important to note that if a bike is stolen, the employee remains liable for any outstanding monies, so it is essential to take out appropriate insurance and obtain locks as part of the scheme. The agreement to pay the loan is non-cancellable, so employees are obliged to pay the remaining loan in full without tax exemptions if they leave their employment or are made redundant.

At the end of the loan period, most employers opt to sell the employee the bike and accessories for around five per cent of the original voucher value plus VAT.

Interested? Then feedback.

We need as much feedback as possible before deciding whether to introduce the scheme. To register your interest or request further information, please email **ESX HR Consultation** and include ‘Cycle to Work Scheme’ in the subject line.



Staff Suggestions

"Thanks to all staff who have taken the time to send suggestions in. Keep your views and suggestions coming. All are discussed with the Strategic Management Team."

Mary Archer, Chief Officer

Apprenticeships

My suggestion arises from listening to an impressive presentation on Apprenticeships at the Essex Partnership Conference in July. It was presented as a cost effective way of gaining staff retention by creating a 'homegrown' workforce who grow within the organisation. There is no age limit and it was promoted as leading to lower overall costs in relation to agency use, recruitment and training.

As we have specialised staff this would not necessarily be appropriate across the board, but perhaps we can think in terms of administration (I know our IT already does something in this area).

It was interesting to learn that so many more people are gaining the experience and opportunities they need through volunteering which is completely unpaid. I visited the website

and Apprenticeships seem no longer to be the 'cheap labour' which came from its use a few years ago. It has evolved into a very structured training programme for people of all ages, and it would seem that an employer gains dividends when they invest in staff in this way.

Pauline Auguste, M-AOM, Chelmsford

Thank you for your suggestion which has now been discussed at SMT. We felt that this was a good idea and Sue Atkinson will look at how the scheme could be considered more widely within EPA and will incorporate it into our Succession Planning Strategy which she is currently drafting.

Transferring info to OASys

We receive several cases who have been subject to previous Youth Offending Team orders but YOTs do not e-mail asset/PSR information – YOTs tend to send information via fax – which means transcribing all relevant information from ASSET/PSR manually into each relevant section of OASys. This can be time consuming, and there is also the added concern that a full OASys and ISP could not be completed and locked within National Standards timeframe.

When employed at Chelmsford Probation, myself and a colleague did consult with our respective line managers to see if YOTs were permitted to send info via e-mail instead, as this was very effective, because the relevant information could be cut and pasted into each section of OASys.

We do have access to a scanning facility, but scanned documents convert to Adobe PDF format, which means any scanned documents saved to our PCs can't be cut and pasted. Adobe PDF package does not have "optical character recognition", which converts scans and files, making the documents more editable in other formats.

Could there be scope for amendments to the current Adobe PDF format to include optical character recognition, or could scanned documents be sent via e-mail to a main point of contact at Cullen Mill who could convert documents to appropriate and more user friendly format? Alternatively YOTs could be consulted to see if they are willing to send relevant information via e-mail as was the case at Chelmsford.

Laura Moore, Offender Manager, Colchester

1. ASSET documentation may not be forthcoming for cases being transferred to you by YOTs. If this is the case, please let your manager know so that they can take it up with the local link YOT manager. If it emerges that there is a countywide problem with this, the Director who links with YOTs (Alex Bamber) can take it up.

2. ASSET documentation may not be transmitted in electronic format. Ideally it would be sent from YOTs through the secure email connection. Again, the local link YOT manager can check with your local YOT team whether there is any reason not to use this.

3. 'Freezing' documents in pdf is often an option that is consciously chosen to avoid any changes being made to the document. However, the option (where it exists) to save a document in a word version can be useful and so we are referring this part of your suggestion to Pete Mangan as Director for I&S to check whether our PDF functionality could usefully be extended to address this option.

4. Cutting and pasting from ASSET to OASys. We do not feel that this is desirable. ASSET is designed specifically to assess young people and based on evidence of triggers and protective factors in relation to offending by them. OASys is similarly designed for adults. It is important, therefore, to do a fresh assessment of the person's circumstances as they make the transition from youth to adult.

This raised a number of possible issues:

Training records

Following AMM yesterday it occurred to me that we needed a back-up, held locally, of staff attendances at events. My suggestion is an additional page on the appraisal form, where staff can list all the events that they attend and any mentoring that they have received during the year. This could then be cross referenced with training records at the end of the appraisal year to ensure that all training had been noted on the central record.

An additional benefit would be that staff could cross reference this into the evidences in their appraisal document as a whole and will solve the searching for evidence at the end of the year which some staff still seem to need to do.

Jo Routh, Manager Interventions, Basildon

We have discussed this at SMT and think it is a good idea. Once rolled out the HR intranet will deliver this.

Unpaid Work completion report

The monthly UW Completion Report never accurately records all offenders who have completed in Southend each month. On a regular basis approximately 25% of the offenders who have completed are not on the report. I have noticed that a good number of these offenders have been revoked on application with offence code 54, which code is not an option on the report. I understand that our income is generated from completions and I have concerns that because this report is not accurate, it may have an affect on our income.

The UW completion report, in its present format, has no worth, because of its inaccuracies. My suggestion is that a

piece of work is done, firstly to ensure that this does not affect our income and secondly to make the report a document that is useful to UW.

Jan Owens, Unpaid Work Supervisor Manager, Southend

We have discussed this at SMT and agree that this is an important issue as our data needs to be correct. Pete Mangan will discuss this with the Interventions Managers to see how to move forward and make improvements and it will also be listed on the LDU agendas for Directors to ensure that it is discussed in each location.

Cycle to Work Scheme

I would like to suggest that Essex Probation run this scheme as it would be beneficial to staff in regards to their health and stress. It would help financially with Probation's budget as car users would not need car parking. From what I have briefly read, it looks like it would not cost Probation anything.

If you look on the government website, you will find all the

information you need in regards to this scheme.

Jackie Manton, OM, Southend

This has now been discussed at SMT and we think it is an idea worthy of investigation. HR will look into it further and bring a report back to SMT at the end of October.

Simplified Travel Warrants

As you are aware, we have many offenders going to other offices for various types of programmes and courses where we need to supply them with travel warrants.

These sessions are mainly from Monday to Friday, for two weeks or more. Instead of supplying our offenders with daily tickets, would it be possible to supply them with a weekly ticket? The warrant books we have at the moment are not valid for that purpose, only for daily tickets. Could each office have the facility of a weekly season ticket book, to cover these occasions?

I know it would save money, as we are charged the princely sum of £10 for each warrant book supplied. By not issuing so many daily warrants, the books would last longer; we would also save money, as the weekly fares ticket would be far cheaper than five daily fares tickets. Finally, it would be

more user-friendly for everyone, by saving time not having to write out lots of tickets in one go.

Tina Sweetman, Deputy MSS, Southend

This is a good idea and, having followed up on the current arrangements, it appears that we already have this facility for DRR offenders.

Emma Vaudrey at Cullen Mill has ordered further warrant books which can be used for weekly tickets, and these will be issued to Deputy MSSs when they arrive. These can sit alongside the existing daily warrant books. There will be an initial set-up cost for the additional books, but as you suggest this will undoubtedly save us both money on fares and staff time.

FDR / Oral Report Packs

My suggestion involves the creation of FDR and Oral PSR packs to be used by colleagues working in Court. These packs would not only include the Report itself, a Prem1 form, an EOAsys and a Self Assessment form, but also a DRR referral form, or an ATR form, or any other form deemed appropriate.

Having these packs at hand would act as a tool to maintain

a relatively high score in relation to the requirements of National Standards.

As an administrator it appears that we often fail in terms of REM data, due to full reports having not taken place (either the PREM 1 was not completed when the FDR was undertaken or the case was a transfer in).

In relation to our requirements for starting certain requirements like a DRR requirement, having a readily available assessment form will help ensure the offender can make contact with our partners within 24-hours (as is the case with DRR cases) in such a way that the meeting will be more productive because some awareness of the case will be available. Once the Order has been made, the DRR referral can be sent by Fax, and this could include any reporting instructions given to the offender while at court.

Given that we are attempting to substitute Standard PSRs with more FDRs, this may help the Service during a time of transition, as it would not only act as a reminder to those undertaking the report of the requirements placed upon them, but would also act as a prompt, thus reducing the need to keep such a rigorous check that these documents are

undertaken within the limits expected.

I don't believe it would cause substantial extra work in creating these packs, as they are simply replacing the existing standard PSR packs already operating in areas with FDR/oral report packs. Staff will simply replace production of one pack with another. The packs themselves could be kept secure at the Court itself so they would always be available.

Darren Kiggins, SSO, Southend

We feel this is a good idea and would like to take this forward. It would be really useful as you are working with Debra Sales to create a pack if you could send a copy of what you include to me and Peter Jones and then we can pass this onto other offices for them to use.

Thank you for taking the time to send this in.

Issues with tissues

I understand that it is now policy that no tissues be placed in interview rooms. I can understand that members of staff should not be issued with tissues, but they are often necessary in interview rooms as I find that when completing interviews for, some people will become tearful and may need to blow their nose. This can also arise during meetings with Offender Managers.

In the past I have given my own tissues to offenders. Perhaps we could use toilet paper, but then do we leave the interview room to collect toilet paper or would we return the tearful person to the waiting room in order to do so?

With the current issue with cleanliness (Swine Flu), perhaps we could reconsider this decision?

Carole Teather, Offender Manager, Chelmsford

Thank you for sending in your suggestion, which has now been considered by SMT. The reason the provision of tissues was withdrawn was to make some of the essential savings that we need to make this year and for the future.

However, as a result of the Swine Flu pandemic, consideration has been given to this and tissues will be provided to public areas of offices, with bins also provided to ensure safe disposal due to potential infection. This will be limited and for this specific issue only. Once the pandemic is over, we will need to focus on making the necessary savings again.

Translating words into savings

Recently I have had a number of new cases where the offender is Polish or from Eastern Europe, for which they needed interpreter services.

I know that these are costly and that we are hoping as an organisation to make savings across the board.

I wondered if it would be possible to employ one or possibly two full-time translators? I think it would be beneficial if one of the interpreters could speak Polish / Slovak / Czech etc, and maybe the other would speak Spanish / French / Italian or Mandarin Chinese?

These employees could work around the county and help with supervision sessions and pre-placement workshops.

I know that there would be occasions when we would still need to use interpreter services outside of these two employees, but I can imagine employing interpreters would save a small fortune in the long term!

Larissa Farrey, OM, Southend Probation Office

Thank you for sending in the suggestions which we have now discussed at SMT. Unfortunately due to nature of Service requirements and the likelihood of being able to source a translator with the required number of languages it is not possible to take this idea forward.

Gathering offender info at the earliest opportunity

At their first appointment, offenders should be asked to sign a document from the Programmes team. This document would detail their availability to attend any offending behaviour programmes and would assist in the allocation of offenders to offending behaviour groups at the earliest opportunity.

The form could outline their responsibility to inform their Offender Manager of any changes in availability, e.g. due to employment, and this may also help us identify relevant

individuals in order to meet employment targets.

Careena Nicola, Staff Dev Officer/OM, Southend

SMT have considered this but feel that another form would add to the bureaucracy which we want to keep to a minimum. We do feel that staff need to work closely together and ensure that there is good communication between all those involved in managing an offender, not forgetting external providers also.

