

NEWSFOCUS

Cutting Crime – Protecting the Public – Working in Partnership



In this issue:

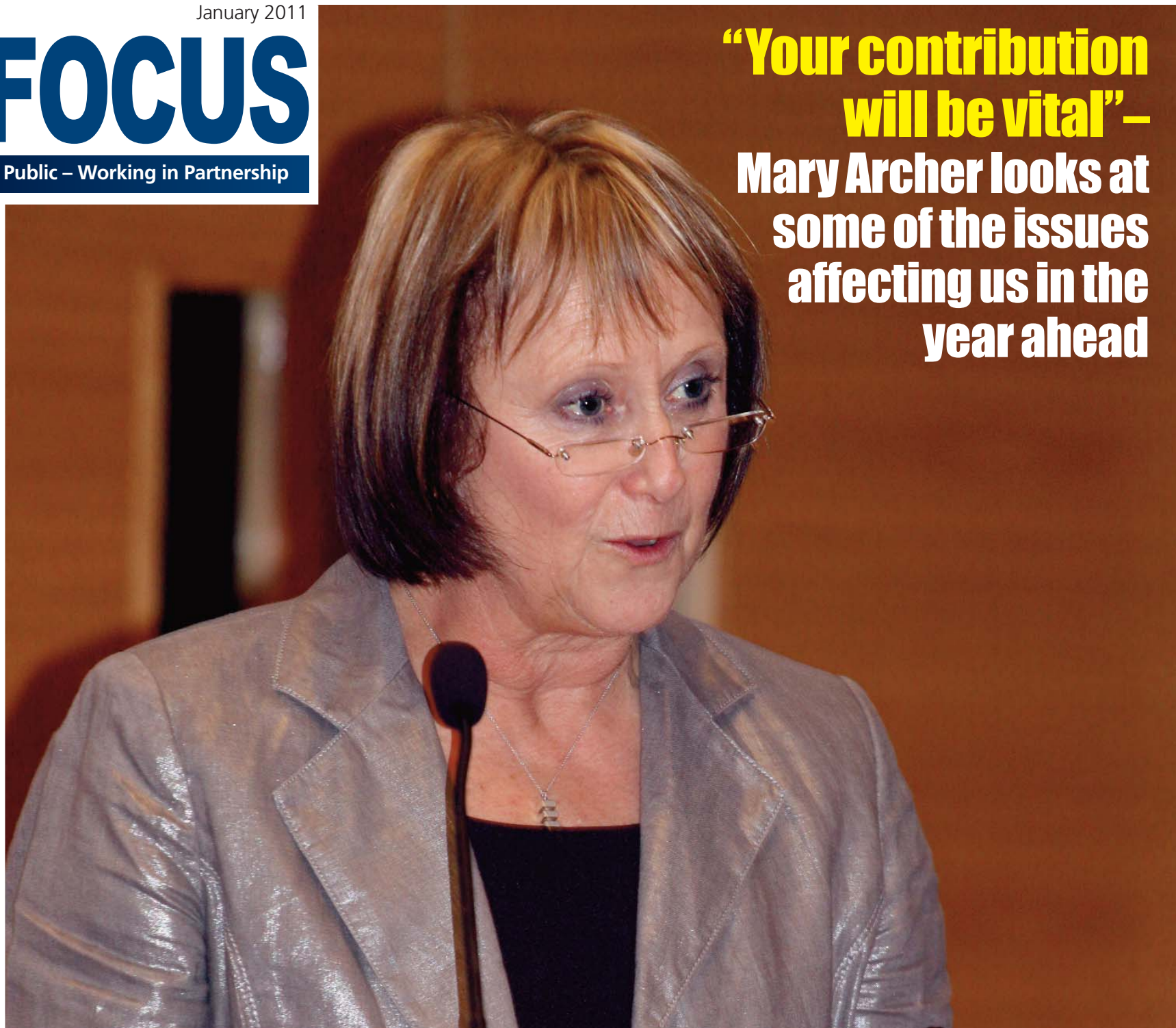


**The WOW! Factor:
Working to improve
the experience of
women offenders**



**Admin Teams – at
the core of our
success**

**Essex
Probation**



**“Your contribution
will be vital” –
Mary Archer looks at
some of the issues
affecting us in the
year ahead**

“Your contribution will be vital in the months ahead”

Chief Executive, Mary Archer, looks ahead to the coming year...

Last year was both busy and challenging for us – as usual. We became a Trust and had to improve performance quickly to recover to the levels we had previously attained.

Performance is often looked at in terms of the PTRS targets, but we are much more than that and the quality of the work we do continues to be important to us all.

We're in a good position

The good work that we have achieved over the past year has put us in a very good position to deal with the many changes and challenges that lie ahead in the coming months.

The great thing about Essex is the passion and belief we have about what we deliver. Our competitive pride puts us in a really good place to maintain our good performance and meet the planned competition that will come from the Government.

Forming a clear strategy

The Board and I have a clear strategy to reduce risk and re-offending through quality delivery, and, whatever the future brings, that won't change.

The changes brought by the new Government have been difficult, with fast-moving timescales,

but you have engaged with the Board and SMT, contributing to consultations to influence decisions, and worked hard to adapt to new circumstances exceptionally well.

As always, everyone's contribution – frontline staff, Central Services, and at all levels of the Management structure – is vital and of equal importance in any successful strategy.

The best for us

Contract negotiations with the DOM for 2011-12 are under way, and as always we are looking at securing the best contracts for Essex.

My responsibility is to work with the SMT to secure this outcome, with your contributions being essential to securing the final outcome too.

Finally...

There will be some uncertainties for staff in the coming months, until we can finalise the impact that next year's Budget will have. In the meantime, we all need to hold our nerve until I am able to share the final position with you.

We are successful because of our hard work and commitment. I'm certain our passion, belief and competitive pride, which is at the heart of our culture, will continue to stand us in good stead for the future.



AMM News

Notes from January's Area Managers' Meeting

Budget and the new contract – RESULT

Our first dialogue over our next contract took place recently. Mary used part of an impressive video put together by Harlow office for a recent AMM, which seems to have gone down well.

Mary came away feeling pleased with the outcome so far. Targets for next year won't be increased. A reduction in funding of 4.2% is a result, in this context, and we are also putting together a business case for £150,000 extra funding as well.



Staffing: implications.

SMT have been through all the business cases regarding staffing, and are currently working on the budget for next year. There is still quite a bit of uncertainty, but we seem to be in a better position than most Trusts.

More meetings to decide the future

As usual, new stuff is coming our way all the time! Mary has been planning her comments for the consultation meeting on the Green Paper. Alex Bamber, Director for Partnerships and

Business Development, is going to an important event on the competition that will take place for Community Payback work. The work will be competed for in lots, not necessarily on a regional basis. We will know more of the detail soon.

DOMs: gone by April

The regional DOM's office will wind down and won't go until later in the year. Trevor Williams, our East of England Director of Offender Management, has withdrawn from competition for new posts, and is going to retire.

Recruitment, Vacancies, Processes

HR reports that since we changed our application processes, doing more of the work in-house, the numbers of packs sent out, then returned, has vastly increased.

Not all of this can be attributed to more people needing jobs, says Sue Atkinson. This year, over 80% of recruitment packs sent out have come back to us, compared with around 27% last year.

- **Our vacancy factor:** our vacancy target is 5%. It is actually 3%.
- **There were six formal processes**, including disciplinaries, this year, as opposed to eight the previous year. There were no dismissals.
- (For more of this information, go to **S/Performance and Info/ Performance info/HR Performance**)

Snow Problem

Thurrock Borough Council sent us this picture of our Unpaid Workers doing their stuff to help them out during December's Big Freeze.



The **WOW!** factor

Women offenders can present unique and challenging issues for us to manage. That's why the Women Offenders Working Group has been set up to develop strategies to improve the experience of women on probation...

The 2007 Corston Report drew attention to the poor and unequal experiences of women offenders, stating: "Treating men and women the same results in inequality of outcome."

The stats speak for themselves: 37% of women in custody self-harm, compared to 7% of men; 55 women committed suicide in prison between 2002-2008; the female prison population nearly doubled between 1996 and 2006 (though locally it has fallen recently, again).

What are we doing?

Recognising that different approaches are needed to assist women offenders, WOW has been set up to address the many issues affecting them. The group includes a rep from each LDU and from every function, bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table.

A benchmarking exercise has already started, shining a spotlight on five main areas: court reports, compliance and breach work, case management, Interventions, and

sentence planning.

SPOCs will ensure the WOW agenda is promoted in each LDU and at meetings with partner organisations. Local women's services directories will also provide important information.

Multi-layered solutions

To help WOW draw up a plan of what needs to be improved, we are aiming to involve women offenders themselves, seeking out their views in a semi-structured questionnaire and



A recent meeting of the WOW group at Cullen Mill

within a number of focus groups involving frontline staff. We will promote women offenders' involvement using the Reception plasma screens.

Diversity Officer Helen Pearce and the I&S team at Cullen Mill have also been involved, helping to produce useful diversity data, while the training needs of staff working with women offenders is also being addressed by the Training department.

A vital end-product

WOW's work is ongoing, but is set to deliver a new EP strategy for working with women offenders, with the ultimate aim of providing better and more equal outcomes for women.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mary's trip to the Palace

Chief Executive Mary Archer has been presented with her OBE by Prince Charles, during an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace in December

She received the award in the 2010 Queen's Birthday Honours, for her work on behalf of the Probation Service.

Recognising Essex Probation

Speaking after the ceremony in December, Mary said: "I'm delighted that the work of probation in protecting the public in Essex has been recognised in this way."



Mary, with her son and daughter, Paul and Claire, at Buckingham Palace

Hairy challenge raises money for men's health

Cullen Mill staff who cultivated moustaches throughout November have raised nearly £470 for prostate cancer research.

The month-long challenge, known as Movember, was suggested by Performance Improvement & Information Manager Matt



Mackman (pictured), with other taches for the cause grown by Director Pete Mangan, H&S Manager Andrew Butt, and I&S officer Steven Hodder. They were joined by I&S Officers Dafydd Herbert and Paul English, and Partnerships Administrator Gavin Wilkinson. A big 'thanks' to all those who sponsored them.

Liz leaves

Liz Haxton, whose service in Essex included front-line offices and the Crown Court, completed her twenty-five years back in Colchester, where she'd arrived as a very lively student, all set to put the criminal world to rights. She continued to do so, and we're very grateful for her energetic and spirited contribution to Essex Probation.

Always animated, always with a view, and full of knowledge about the workings of the service, Liz will be missed by her colleagues.



Liz (left) telling Director Alex Bamber what's what

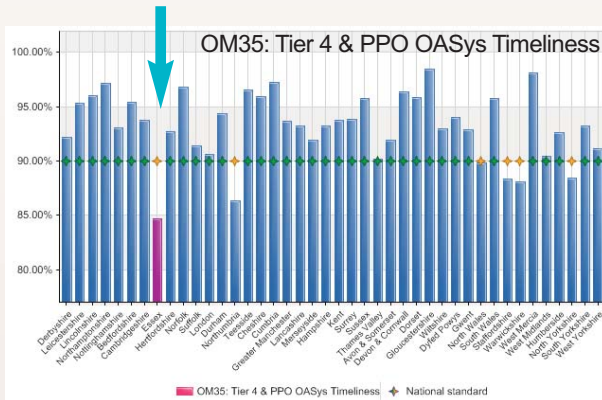
Dropping to Amber status in 2009-10 forced us to reconsider the systems we use to monitor our performance...

The Performance and I&S units joined forces to design and build the **TIM (Timeliness Improvement Monitor)** database, which tracks and records pending and completed assessments as well as commencements. TIM is cemented into our practice and it is hard to imagine life without it. In

reality, though, this amazing leap in performance was the result of the hard work and focus of everyone involved in the process, as well as a change in culture.

Our Performance Leaps!

1 January 2010: We were the lowest performing probation area nationally. This powerful graphic shows the level of work that was needed to pull ourselves back to the national standard.



NB: The graphs you see are representative of all the other OASys measures, which saw similarly impressive leaps. For instance: for OM08 Tier 2 & 3 OASys Timeliness we are now ranked 3rd nationally, and for OM16 Risk Management Timeliness we are now ranked 2nd.

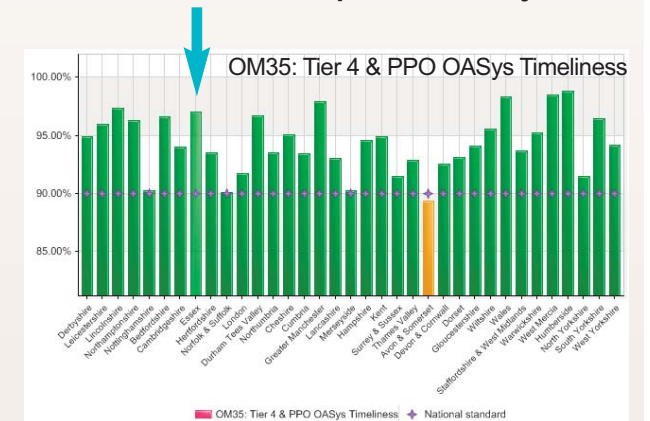
2 April 2010: A massive jump in our performance.



4 The Future: Performance has really improved over the years, but most notably in the last 12 months. Whilst current performance is really good, it has decreased slightly each month since the start of this performance year. This is a trend that needs reversing over the next couple of months, so that we are best placed to attack the new performance year.

A continued drop, however small, could impact on our overall rating at the end of this year.

3 January 2011: This graphic shows the impact of everyone's hard work. We are 6th best nationally, one place off achieving a Level 4 'Exceptional' rating on the PTRS. This gives us something to aim for in the last few months of this performance year.



4

What next?



SMT BRIEFINGS

by Pete Mangan,

Director – Interventions & Performance, Victims, Admin, and I&S

A look at some key Interventions and Performance issues in progress...

Programmes to be audited

- A **quality audit of Programmes is due this year** and will be followed up with a full audit next year. A lot of activity is going on to ensure the quality work we already provide is recorded in a way that enables it to be recognised within these audit processes.
- We have **also been awarded the pilot for the replacement programme to OSAP**, which will be delivered in conjunction with HMP Chelmsford.

CP News: Help during cold weather snap

- We have offered **free labour to both Borough and County Councils** following recent cold weather and disruption caused by snow, including the offer of further snow clearance if required.
- We have successfully **increased our use of individual placements** but need to do more.
- The **Requirement Organiser role has bedded in** and released a lot of work from the OM function.

Staged storage solutions

The I&S team is working hard to deliver new solutions for electronic storage. The **whole S:Drive has been re-designed and further changes to it will be made** incrementally throughout the year. The most fundamental change will be that all documents relating to an offender will no longer be spread out across the Drive, but instead filed under the person's name.

- We are also **getting ready for the migration of all IT resources** and data from our local servers to national servers, known as the National Data Centre

Victims policy rewrite

- The **victims policy has been rewritten** and is a much slimmed-down version. It went to the Impact Assessment Panel on the 14th January and will then be sent out for full staff consultation.
- **Work is ongoing** between myself and OM directors to get consistency in practice amongst OMs over licence conditions which protect victims.

Making new technology pay

Numerous money-saving and efficiency improvement schemes are being examined: The complete **electronic storage of archive case files** is in the final stages of planning with the aim of making it accessible to staff electronically by the end of March. A **Voice-Over-Internet** telephone system is also being investigated. There are pros and cons to this service, so a full cost-benefit analysis is being undertaken.

New funding rescues service

The London Action Trust has been working with offenders undertaking CP, helping them turn the work they're doing into learning opportunities, including gaining qualifications. Changes to funding arrangements had threatened this work, but we now have a temporary reprieve with some additional funding from SEETEC and Ixion.

Thanks from the DOM

"I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continuing hard work and dedication over the past year. The increasing pressure on resources has seen shrinking budgets, but I have been incredibly impressed by your



Trevor Williams, Director of Offender Management for the Eastern Region, praises our work over the past year...

efforts to deliver sizeable efficiencies this year whilst still maintaining a high level of performance.

Award-winning Essex Probation:

I was delighted to see members of staff from our region recognised so publicly for their work at the National Probation Awards, last October. Hayley James and Jenni Hogg from Essex Probation were very deserving winners and a credit to the region. Many others nominated for various other accolades throughout the year, should not be overlooked though. They are the unsung heroes carrying out ordinary jobs exceptionally well, and I would like to congratulate them also.

Difficult times

These are difficult and uncertain times for all staff, but the excellent work being delivered on the ground in the community, day in and day out, to reduce reoffending and protect the public, remains our prime focus, and I thank you for that."

Diversity: Did you know..?

- **The UK population is growing and becoming older. While White British remain the majority ethnic group, the UK is gradually becoming more ethnically diverse.**
- **By 2034, 23% of the population is projected to be aged 65 and over, compared to 18% aged under 16.**
- **The workforce of the future is likely to contain a higher proportion of older workers, because of factors such as an ageing population, low average birth rate, the removal of mandatory retirement ages and raising the state retirement age.**
- **By 2030 ethnic minorities will represent 10% of the UK population**
- **Latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show that over 570,000 NI numbers were issued to foreign-born workers in 2009. Of these, roughly equal proportions came from newer EU member states and from Asia – about 200,000 in each case.**



SMT BRIEFINGS

by Sue Atkinson,
Director – Central Services & Human Resources

A look at some of the key Staff and Training issues...

New Qualifications starting soon

We have now appointed staff due to commence the Honours Degree and the Graduate Diploma in the next few months.

We have also received confirmation from NOMS that **any employee with a joint honours degree in Criminology, Policing Studies, Community Justice or Criminal Justice will be eligible to apply** for the Graduate Diploma in the next round of recruitment. Please speak to the Training Department for further clarification.

More in-house training likely

Following closure of the Regional Training College in October 2010, **we are looking at how training will be delivered from 2011.**

While we anticipate working closely within the East of England, we also plan to deliver as much training as we can locally, in Essex.

Now that the training scheduled for the next few months has been published, we hope to see full attendance at all forthcoming training events.

Bidding for a new office

We have now **submitted a bid for new premises in Colchester** for NE Essex LDU. We have been advised by the MoJ Directorate Probation Estate Team that our bid will be reviewed and prioritised with others across the country. We will update on the progress of this in due course.

Staff Survey - Results published

Analysis of the Staff Survey has now been completed and was presented to the Board in November.

These results are being shared with staff by Managers locally and an Action Plan prepared to address the key issues raised.

This Action Plan will also be shared with staff, again via local Managers, and monitored through LDU Directors. We welcome and appreciate staff involvement in this important process.

Recruitment drive fills posts

Recruitment has been continuing apace, and there were **20 new joiners across Essex Probation between July and September.** From now until 31st March, posts will be filled on Fixed Term Contracts, pending more information about the 2011/12 Budget.

At the core of our success

Finding new ways to improve performance is never far from the minds of Admin colleagues across Essex. During one of Mary's recent office visits to Mid Essex LDU, Gillian Gurney highlighted some of the achievements they're proud of most...

“ **We do a lot of work in the Admin Team, behind the scenes, to help maintain our LDU's current performance....**

For several months, we've shown a zero or very low level of missing information – the best record of Phase II & III of all the LDUs.

👉 **This is something we are very proud of.**

We maintain a separate employment record and liaise with OM's during the month, updating CRAMS accordingly. In the year to date, we are running at 204.1%.

👉 **This is something we are very proud of.**

We monitor PSRs for timeliness and date-accuracy. In the year to date, we achieved 100% in six months out of seven, dipping to 98.6% in only one month.

👉 **This is something we are very proud of.**

We constantly strive to find better methods of working to improve efficiency. When we do, we forward them to Cullen Mill for approval. For example, OMU1 and DRR assessment forms are now on CRAMS as a result of one of our suggestions. The failure code for sustained employment has been created for CRAMS – another Mid Essex suggestion. And of course...

👉 **This is something we are very proud of.**

Since Pauline Auguste decided to involve us in performance awareness there has been a significant and consistent improvement, which we are sure will continue.

And it goes without saying that....

👉 **This is something we are very proud of.**

We, in Admin, are the essential backup that makes for a well-informed Probation team and efficient working in every local office.



(L to R): Case Management administrators: Yvonne Lusher, Margaret Hurding, Gillian Gurney, along with M-OM Pauline Auguste

Staff SUGGESTIONS

Thanks to all staff who have taken the time to send in suggestions. Keep your ideas coming. All are discussed with the Senior Management Team.

Mary Archer, Chief Executive



Back to School

In our capacity as SDOs, Michelle Frost and I recently delivered a two-hour workshop on the CJA to a class of 16-17 year-olds undertaking a "General Studies" qualification. We talked about the Court process, sentencing options, various interventions, and dealt with some of the more practical and topical questions asked which related to the realities of prison – as opposed to some "myths".

While we both felt we could make the session more interactive, it appeared to be well received by the students, who were keen to ask questions and get involved.

As senior schools already appear to have lessons and qualifications around "Social Studies", could we look at the option to go into schools and deliver similar workshops or ones related to drugs and alcohol, etc.

Tony Jones, OM, Southend

Thank you for sending this in. I recall you mentioned some of your work when I visited you all. We have discussed this and agree that contact with schools is a good idea.

Lynne McKay and I are in the process of preparing an Engagement Strategy, so that we can utilise what we have learned and developed during the course of the Probation Experience events.

It is likely that contact with schools will be part of that, and when we are drafting the document we will take into account your idea.

New staff, new ideas

I know that Essex Probation recruits from a broad marketplace and employs colleagues who offer a wealth of talent and transferable skills.

May I suggest that we invite colleagues who have been with Essex Probation for less than a year to meet as a group with senior managers to discuss how we, as an organisation, can work more effectively, efficiently or smarter. I believe colleagues entering the service from different backgrounds will be able to offer alternative views based on their experience and knowledge, and hopefully improve our best practice along with savings in both time and money.

Laurence Lane, Partnerships & Business Development Officer, Cullen Mill

We have now discussed this and agree that all staff, including new staff, need to be able to send in ideas. The staff suggestion box was set up for that very purpose – and it is important to us – which is why I promote it at each new staff induction day. We do not feel a separate process is needed, but will continue to encourage all staff to use the existing one.

A commitment to reduce costs

When Essex Probation initiate Breach Proceedings and return offenders to Court, this incurs a cost. Why not, through continuing our trend of compliance, introduce a re-commitment panel (using perhaps three members of staff) who would look at the offender's attendance/failure to attend and encourage them to recommit to their Order.

By doing so, we would be taking action through encouraging the offender to comply with their Order and, at same time, prevent unnecessary cost by returning the offender to Court. Obviously, if the offender fails to recommit to the Order, then they would have to be returned to Court.

Jason Brunton, OM, Harlow

We like the idea of a recommitment from the offender and feel this is an important part of the

Offender Management role as soon as a potential problem is identified. National Standards requires us to return the matter to the Court at particular times, and we are unable to change that, so we could not reduce the number of breaches unless we pick up a reduced commitment at an early stage.

Involving more staff in the way you suggest is not feasible, due to the cost of it, but I do think if an offender is struggling and they are on a programme, close-working with the Tutor and perhaps a joint meeting to re-engage may go some way towards what you have in mind.

Savings idea

Instead of calling back archived files just to marry-up with a new "terminated" case, e.g. a fine or conditional discharge, we could just send the new case off as usual. If a further event comes up where we have to call for the archiving (provided these are called-for correctly by CRAMS number) then they should all be sent back together anyway. The savings should be clear.

Teresa Adams, SSO, Harlow

We think this is an entirely sensible solution which you can implement locally. It may however be helpful to know that there is a major project under way at this time, by Director Pete Mangan, to look at electronic storage across EP, which may resolve the issues you raise.

Auto-text timesaver

Could consideration be given to sentencing options being made part of "drop-down boxes with autofill", for insertion of autotext on reports? This would save so much time.

Lesley Summerhayes, OM, Southend

Thank you for your suggestion which we have now discussed. We thought it was a good idea and it will be taken forward

Automated reminders

In accordance with policy, when an Offender has more than four failures (unacceptable or acceptable) this needs to be reviewed by a Manager for compliance. This is sometimes forgotten.

In order to avoid this, would it be possible for CRAMS to send an automatic email to the OM and Manager when the fourth failure to attend is logged, so then the Manager can do a compliance review?

Caroline Beveridge, OM, Harlow

Thank you for sending this suggestion. It was the subject of quite a bit of debate at SMT. The issues which were considered were that it is good to assist staff in making things happen with automated systems and we could see the potential benefit of this.

However, over time, we have become concerned that we are too automated and this detracts from OMs being able to set up their own systems and having the autonomy and responsibility to meet what is required in a way that suits them.

We have decided that we will look to set up such a system as an option for use but will not impose it on everyone – being clear that the responsibility for making this happen at the right time remains with the OM and Manager and that they can, if they wish, use a different system to ensure that they meet this requirement.

We believe that in this way we meet the needs of everyone. Thank you for sending this interesting idea to us.

Risk Screening

When a case is a stand-alone Tier 1 UPW case, sometimes the Risk of Harm screening can be overlooked. This is helpful to everyone when looking at risk issues and when inspecting files. Would it be possible to have this document attached to

the Unpaid Work assessment form that is completed in General Templates, to ensure that the RoH screening is completed at all times, also keeping it in its original place?

Caroline Beveridge, OM, Harlow

The Operational Directors feel that this issue is related to the review of OASys that we are completing, and it will be discussed at the next meeting. We are clear that these reviews – whilst standard-alone and Tier 1 are as important as any other reviews – must not be missed. We are also aware, as I am sure you are, that not all stand-alone T1 orders are Unpaid Work, so we need to take account of curfews, etc. It is therefore not likely that we will add it to the UW assessment form as you suggest.

Court work: some interesting facts

Alun Gower had two issues to report at the most recent AMM: the first was that after years with virtually no hair, he is now growing it to a significant length.

Possibly of slightly more importance is that our work in the courts is improving. **Oral and FDR reports done by the Crown Court team have more than doubled.** (July–Sept 2009 = 33; July–Sept 2010 = 69)

We're now more pro-active in the courts, said Alun. We're making a point of speaking to judges and barristers in the morning. Breach Officers came in for particular mention as the diamond in the crown, with their **high quality breach-work enhancing our reputation.** The two Breach Officers had 50–60 breaches each, per month, which were uncontested. Over three months, 34 were contested breaches, but we won every one. This is putting offenders off going not guilty to try their luck: cracked trials, where they cave in on the day, are fewer.



Alun Gower, Manager – Courts

Hitting the 10-day target for RIC reports is producing a mixed picture. In July–October, we hit 100%. There were none recorded in November. In December there were only two, BUT WE ONLY ACHIEVED 50%. No prizes for guessing why: one wasn't recorded. This again points to the importance of recording.

LATE REPORTS: NOT DELIVERED ON TIME? CAN THIS BE? Answer: **yes.** Completed on time? **Yes.** But there's no point in completing them on time if they're not delivered in good time for the court, says Alun. They need to be sent to court admin teams in Basildon and Chelmsford Crown Courts **as soon as they're completed, not waiting for the day of the hearing.**

Harangue over. Alun's grateful to the LDUs for their work, in particular their help with RIC PSRs.