

With news of... Next year's Budget... MAPPA Annual Report launch...

New TRUST NAME announced

Budget decrease less than originally planned

● But local savings still necessary

The Probation Service is set to receive less of a funding cut than originally proposed, following an announcement by the Justice Secretary Jack Straw.

The news follows discussions with Probation Areas and unions, and takes next year's total spending to £870m.

Despite representing a 2.68% decrease on this year's budget, the revised figure provides £26m more than the £844m

originally earmarked for the next financial year.

Protecting frontline jobs

Mr Straw said he was 'very anxious' the money be used, above all, to provide the latest group of newly qualified probation officers with greater job security wherever possible.

"The Probation Service will focus on

getting resources to frontline services," he added.

Responding to the announcement, Mary Archer said: "Obviously the Board and I are very pleased the revised budget will be a bit higher than originally thought.

"However, we will still need to make savings and we are thankful to staff for engaging with us to identify these."

More about next year's budget inside...

Debut for new offenders at Basildon Probation Experience



New 'offender' Angie discusses the ETE Journey with Coral Fallon



Angie learning to drive a forklift truck, as part of her ETE requirement

Visitors got to meet two new 'offenders', when the Probation Experience attracted big crowds to the Basildon office last month.

Newcomer Angie, played by Programmes Tutor Jo Speed, took the audience on a typical Education, Training and Employment journey, in a set-piece encounter with ETE Officer Coral Fallon.

Elsewhere, Basildon-based OM Rich Curtin, embracing the role of offender Lee Cullen for the first time, steered the public through a series of interactive scenes, to tell the Probation story all the way from PSR interview through to victim work and MAPPA.

See inside, for more on the Basildon event...

MAPPA publicity – an added twist this year

Launching the new MAPPA report at Cullen Mill, L to R:

Robin Brennan, Probation Director;
Allan Taplin, Essex MAPPA Manager;
DCI Paul Johnson, Essex Police's Public Protection Unit,
and David O'Neill, Chelmsford Prison



The MAPPA Annual Report was launched this year on the same day as the evening's Panorama programme queried MAPPA's ability to protect the public, using specific examples (not in Essex).

Panorama also claimed that the government was hiding serious further offences committed by MAPPA Level One (single agency management) cases.

This provided an interesting backdrop for the local press, some of whom responded accordingly.

Provided with a Prison Governor (David O'Neill, Lead on Public Protection at Chelmsford), DCI Paul Johnson, Police Public Protection Lead, and Probation Director, Robin Brennan, who also leads on Public Protection, along with the MAPPA Manager, they asked their own questions for half an hour each.

Results, given the context, were more mixed than usual, but

it is always important to maintain engagement with the Press over MAPPA.

A twenty-five minute interview on BBC Essex the next day probed for answers to the Panorama assertions. Essex Probation had no Level One reoffences last year. The Police had one.

Outside Endorsement: the best you can get.

The best outcome from all of this came from a paedophile who phoned Dave Monk at BBC Essex, having heard the MAPPA interview.

He went into the studio, and recorded his own interview, aired the next day, praising the programme he had undergone during imprisonment, and the excellent work done with him by Probation on release.

He is not reoffending, he says, because of the techniques he learned.

Thanks to the MAPPA Leads, who took part in an arduous couple of days to put the message across under more taxing circumstances than they would normally expect.





Rich Curtin introduces himself as offender Lee Cullen



Chris Rowe (seated left) and Ben Childs recreate an induction meeting



Hayley James leads the audience through part of the ART Programme (with local MP Angela Smith seated left)



Ben Childs, Darren Kiggins, Jan Owens and Chris Watson, in the Community Payback show



Debbie Anderson and Jane Dewitt, in the Victim Contact scene



Members of the audience were able to participate in a mock MAPPA meeting

Basildon Probation Experience attracts large audience

Poor weather failed to dampen the public's interest, when more than 80 guests attended the Basildon Probation event on 24 October. Among those to see the show was local MP Angela Smith, Brentwood Borough councillors, local Magistrates, and representatives from a range of charities and other providers.

Media interest

The event, which took place on the final day of Inside Justice Week, also became the subject of several BBC Radio Essex news features, broadcast the following Monday, on the Breakfast, Lunchtime and afternoon Drive-Time programmes.

The first of these featured a two-minute interview with Mary Archer, discussing the role of Essex Probation, while the other reports covered the various aspects of the Probation Experience event. We hope to be able to include these programmes as mp3 downloads from our new website, in due course.

The next Probation Experience reaches the Chelmsford office on 30 January, next year.

A big 'Thank You' to all those who made the day such a great success...

Ben Childs, Rich Curtin, Carol Parker, Chris Rowe, Hayley James, Adrian Seward, Chris Watson, Jan Owens, Darren Kiggins, Debbie Anderson, Jane Dewitt, Allan Taplin, Mel Fitch, DCI Paul Johnson, Cassie Hudson, Sheetal Moore, Elaine Ford, Margaret Parratt, Julie Dove, Anita Travis, Nikki Calver, Jo Sibley, Sheila Stone, Terrence Connelly, Claire Gardiner, Sandra Kimber, David Smith, Sue Price, Allen Murray, Heidi Taiani, Rosan Linahan, Natalie Fisher, Terry Tarling, Alex Osler and Penny Rickman, Vanessa Comiskey

C-NOMIS: not a happy outcome

New system already in the planning stage

C-NOMIS and its demise has been the subject of some comment in both the media and Parliament lately.

Plans for the National Offender Management Information System began in 2004 with the aim of allowing the prison and probation services to follow offenders 'end-to-end' through the criminal justice system.



But by July 2007 the project was two years behind schedule and its estimated costs had increased to £690m. It was later abandoned.

The Public Accounts Committee's report finds that neither ministers nor senior management at the Home Office, nor even the project board, were aware of problems until May 2007. Comment on its management was not complimentary.

Revised system on schedule

An MoJ spokesperson said: "The work done so far has not been lost but is being used as the basis of the revised NOMIS programme.

"The prison element of the programme commenced roll out to public sector prisons on 22 May 2009 and is on schedule to complete in summer 2010."

And for us?

Bill Thompson, who manages I&S in Essex, has been on the working party which is developing Delius, a system already used by London and other Areas, which has a good pedigree.

"It will replace CRAMS eventually, with all CRAMS data being migrated onto this new system," he said.

"First, we have upgraded the network and replaced the screens and WIDs to help us connect better to the planned National Data Centres.

"Later, we'll be connecting up to them. Delius, when it comes in, will be faster, quicker, easier to manage than CRAMS."

Budget: money-saving ideas needed

by Debbie Came, Finance Director

There is a lot of activity at present to plan for what we know is going to be a difficult financial year ahead.

While we are still awaiting the detail on our likely funding for 2010-11, we already know that the organisation needs to make some significant budget savings. Please do make your contribution by sending in your savings suggestions, however large or small. The email address is *ESX Saving Suggestions*

Changes to the way we work

The Senior Management Team is reviewing the savings suggestions as they are received, together with proposals identified by SMT and middle managers. It is likely that there will need to be changes made to the way we work, to ensure we are making the most effective use of the resources we have.

Our intention will be to have a firm set of plans and proposals on which work can begin as soon as possible, so that staffing and delivery changes are in place in readiness for April 2010.

New contract

The first draft of the Business Plan and Budget will be drawn up by the end of November, when Middle Managers will take part in a planning meeting to begin this process and identify local priorities and objectives for next year. This will form the basis for contract negotiations with the Regional Offender Manager during the period January to March.



Getting our Prisoners back to Essex

We know that one of the biggest factors in reducing re-offending is maintaining links with home.

We also know that accessibility to the right programme during imprisonment increases the chances of successful rehabilitation later.

The current situation, however, disperses prisoners across the entire country. Wherever they'll fit, prisoners are sent, with little thought to preserving important local links, or providing the work they need.

Some of the short-term prisoners are frequently moved on, and discharged in places they shouldn't be. Some offend on the way home.

New approach

This approach is set to change, however.

OMs will have the facility to ask for prisoners to serve sentences in prisons closer to home, and which provide the programmes needed.

Malcolm working on it

Malcolm Gamble, who leads on the implementation of Prison Population Management, introduced the subject to Managers at the last AMM.

He is keen to visit local offices in the coming weeks to talk to OMs about the logistics of 'getting our boys back home' – the DOM's evocative title for the new way of working. Not everything will happen immediately, but Malcolm is working hard to get all this under way.

There is a system

The new system will tell us which

prison does which programme. We will have Direct Dial contact numbers for obtaining information and arranging transfer.

The Prison Service will do the logistics for us. The female estate is a bit more tricky, but even there, Malcolm is willing to get involved.

Working on better working

Looking at more integrated offender management, Malcolm will be asking for figures as to where ALL of our prisoners are held.

Do it soon

The key thing is to get Malcolm along to your offices and get the story from the horse's mouth.

Send an invite.

The final version of a new Alcohol Interventions guide is currently being completed by the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Group.

The guide will contain information on all aspects of treatment for offenders with drugs or alcohol problems

Changing our work

Speaking ahead of the Guide's launch, Director Shirley Kennerson said: "We are currently looking at how we can refocus our work with alcohol misuse offenders, in the light of the new guidance.

"Currently we deal with any alcohol misuse offenders as needing ATR, but this in fact can lead to incorrect targeting and an increasing waiting list we simply cannot meet."

The new guidance will be better able to target alcohol offenders and to propose more effective interventions

Complete Guide to Alcohol Interventions coming soon

by:

■ I & S doing an 'alcohol needs analysis' which is able to work out how much intervention work is needed.

■ Re-introducing the OM screening audit tool, AUDIT.

■ Relaunching the Alcohol Information Pack on EPIC, which provides a step-by-step guide for OMs on how to work with alcohol misusers on a daily basis.

■ Introducing a LIAP-

accredited programme to target lower alcohol-need offenders.

■ Adopting a specified activity of Brief Interventions: this is an educational approach using drink diaries and quoting useful facts and figures.

■ Separating OSAP from ATR. ATR was for alcohol dependent offenders, whereas in fact 75% of offenders are 'deemed harmful and hazardous users', and so not suitable for ATR.

Added to all this, we are also re-tendering our contract with CRI to make sure all future alcohol provision is fit-for-purpose and delivers appropriate outcomes for both the Service and offenders alike.

Doing more

To further enhance the quality and effectiveness of our alcohol treatment work, we are also looking at developing new pathways into medical interventions such as detox and rehab, as well as establishing links with AA local groups.



Glad to be Back...

Welcome, Robin Brennan

Director Robin Brennan reflects on his four years with NOMS and his recent return to Cullen Mill

I'm very happy to have returned to Essex after more than four years' secondment to NOMS HQ and delighted to have had such a warm welcome from old friends.

I left here in 2005 to work for the then National Probation Directorate on the introduction of drug testing for prolific and other priority offenders, PPOs. This had become an urgent piece of work – ministers had been promised that we would start testing imminently – and the policy was introduced two months after I began work.

Persuading probation areas to follow it proved to be a longer job, and I rashly embarked on a giant series of performance visits to areas looking at drug testing but also at PPO practice more widely, as well as co-ordinating and funding a national series of conferences (one per region) to share good practice with PPOs.

Testing times

I was responsible for drug- and alcohol-testing policy for approved premises, introduced nationally in 2006. The government had a manifesto commitment to drug test all offenders

under probation supervision, a promise flawed by being ruinously expensive and by driving a coach and four through the European Convention on Human Rights. Drug testing in hostels was a great idea in this context because (a) APs have to be drug-free and you have to police this somehow and (b) everyone was doing it already. *If you want to introduce a policy, find an open door and push at it.*

Project successes

Latterly I worked as Programme Manager for intensive alternatives to custody (IAC), a set of seven generously-funded projects across the country which, in my view, show what can be achieved if you chuck some cash at the Probation Service.

The project in Derbyshire was praised in Parliament last week by the local MP, so it's not just me. (The Essex project with the Bridge is similar.) The programme incorporates a series of evaluations, including a break-even analysis which will compare the cost of the provision with short-term custody and, if numbers are great enough, an outcome study looking at re-offending rates.



Likes and dislikes

What did I enjoy at the centre? I liked writing policy. I always tried to ask myself: Is it succinct, does it make sense, and how will it go down with operational staff? I couldn't always do a lot about the last, but I did try.

I didn't enjoy stuff to do with HR or procurement, an object-lesson for me that centralising your services in one place may give economies of scale, but not better service.

And finally, I enjoyed all the visits I made to probation areas because it felt like coming home to people doing proper jobs in difficult circumstances. And now I have.

The BRIDGE – Have you done your bit?

We need more REFERRALS for the Bridge.

Remember: Offending rates for Community Supervision are half those for Prison, with short-term prisoners.

It's up to us to make sure offenders who fit the criteria get the chance!

THINK BRIDGE



TAKING A CONTRACT OUT...?



Contracts and Partnerships Unit

What do our Contracts staff do? What's the job?

We hear about the Contracts Unit, we hear about Best Value, we hear rumours about which of our services might be contracted out. Working away at the centre of all this, doing their best for us, is the Contracts Unit at Cullen Mill.

The job

Their role: to manage and monitor our current contracts and Service Level Agreements with other agencies, carry

out reviews of what provides Best Value, and manage all the commissioning and tendering processes.

Bureaucratic?

It can sound pretty standard. A bit bureaucratic even. But their work is crucial to what and how we are able to provide for offenders. If we are meant to provide a wide range of activity for

an individual, we need to be able to get our hands on the services we need. The Contracts Unit will be doing increasing amounts of work to make sure we get them.

They will regularly look at whether our current partners are providing the service we have specified; whether the service is efficient and effective, and what changes will be needed to improve the service we can offer to offenders.

How they do it

- Manage the referral processes
- Collect information and statistics
- Hold quarterly and monthly review meetings
- Liaise with local offices
- Have day-to-day contact with providers
- Troubleshoot

They will look at:

- Performance Targets
- Staff and Offender satisfaction
- How the service is used (referrals, attendance)
- Communication
- Value for Money
- Do they contribute to reducing the risk of re-offending?

Achieving Best Value: how does it affect us?

Services will not necessarily be contracted out to other agencies. NOMS are clear that they do not see Best Value as separate to Probation, rather that it should be integrated into the day-to-day management of probation services.

How does the unit work on Best Value?

- Identify the process to be analysed
- Agree Objectives and Plan the analysis
- Produce process maps
- Cost the activity
- Find improvement opportunities
- Define the new processes and cost them
- Plan a change process
- Manage it

Currently looking at BV for Unpaid Work and Victims: other functions to follow

Currently contracted out:

- Groupwork and Mentoring Service -- The Bridge
- Alcohol Counselling : CRI
- Volunteer Mentoring Service: SOVA
- PPO Drug Testing: WDP (Essex only)
- Unpaid Work placements: Rainbow Services (Harlow)
- Specialist Housing Advice: Shelter
- Interpreters Agreement: INTRAN

New Vetting and Barring Scheme: What does it mean for us?

A new system for checking staff who work with vulnerable adults or children came into effect on 12 October.

The scheme is designed to ensure that anyone who presents a known risk to vulnerable groups is prevented from working with them.

Under the scheme, EPA and our partners have a duty to refer to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) any information about employees or volunteers who may pose a risk. The ISA is a single vetting authority that maintains a constantly updated list of people who are not allowed to work with children or vulnerable adults – this will incorporate all existing barring lists, and work closely with the Criminal Records Bureau.



How will it affect you?

- **ALL operational staff** working with offenders will have to be ISA registered.
- So too will **SSO staff who undertake meetings with offenders** to complete ETE skills checks and Prem 1 data.
- Staff **cannot refuse** to become ISA registered and continue to carry out regulated activity.
- If an existing member of staff is **barred**, they **must be moved** from the relevant activity immediately.
- **Unsubstantiated or malicious allegations** won't be enough to bar a member of staff.
- In most circumstances, individuals will be able to make **representations** against being barred.

Managing the scheme

Essex Probation will plan for all relevant staff to apply for ISA registration over the next 3-5 years, and will fund the process.

All new staff, however, will be required to apply for registration at their own cost (£28) **before** joining the organisation, with EPA continuing to pay for CRB checks (£36).

The status of individuals will be continuously updated on receipt of any new information, such as recent convictions or referrals from employers.

Employers will be notified, where they have registered an interest, if the status of their employee changes.

- ISA registration is fully portable between jobs, and all relevant EPA staff will be ISA registered by 2015.

**TRUST
UPDATE**

Who are we?

Trust name chosen

The Board has considered options for our new identity when we move to Trust status in April. Whether to create a fancy new title without the Probation link, or use Essex Probation Trust, or somewhere in between: all options were open. They have chosen to stick with the strong brand we already have – and how we're most known: simply Essex Probation. The word 'Trust' will not be in the name.

Simplicity and clarity and avoiding confusion is important. As it is, the media and legislators – and public in general – tend still to refer to us as Essex Probation Service, which we stopped being in 2001. Probation Area has unsurprisingly never caught on outside the probation service nationally.

So we'll promote the fact that we are **Essex Probation** officially from April 1 next year.

Logo: nearly there!



Thanks to everybody who contributed suggestions for the logo. The Board is on the point of choosing the key element, then we'll refine it. Then we'll begin the task of introducing it into our publications and printed matter as the old stock runs out.

More news soon

What else is happening?

As for the rest, we're concentrating now on the mundane, but essential, detail to get the admin and planning right. Performance is important, and we're anticipating that it will be back on track imminently.

The first Board meeting in April will officially adopt all

previous policies and papers – they will have no currency unless this happens.

All staff will receive a letter telling them that they are transferred to the Trust.

The work going on at the moment is the busy, detailed back-office stuff – vital, but it doesn't make riveting reading!



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

Fair's Fare

To reduce costs, only pay fares for the first 16 weeks of an offender's Order. This would be explained at induction, if eligible.

Alternatively, once an offender is on monthly reporting, they lose eligibility for fares, as the cost of travel is reduced.

Furthermore, eligibility could be increased from a three mile radius to a five mile radius.

Any offender presenting 'fake' tickets, i.e. tickets with wrong dates, child fares, etc, should be banned from receiving fares.

If we must give offenders fares, is it possible to work with the local transport authority so that the price of warrants is subsidised?

Michael Gana Offender Manager, Grays

Thank you for sending in your suggestion and my apologies for the late response.

The fares to report policy is being reviewed currently as part of the business planning process for next year. Robin Brennan, the Director doing this review, will take your points into account.

Promoting Diversity

Upon preparing and reflecting on our practice in relation to diversity, I feel that Essex's promotion of diversity could be increased by a generic enforcement letter for common nationalities (as selected by Prem 1 Ethnicity data form).

Our current practice experience has included the use of interpreters for one-to-one supervision. However if enforcement action is required, I note that there is no generic letters in a variety of languages applicable to Essex Probation Area.

In the current climate, with budget cuts and a demand for efficiency, these translations would only need to occur once, as dates can be entered numerically. This could have a very positive impact upon motivation and compliance, as well as further increase Essex's positive drive to promote equal opportunities.

Kirsty Gibbons, TPO, Chelmsford

It's taken some time to get there (due to lots of technical problems) but we do now have the

following letters translated into 6 foreign languages:

Formal Warning letter for Licences

Final Warning letter for Licences

Breach Warning Letters

Final Warning Letters

They are available in Albanian, Chinese, French, Polish, Spanish and Turkish and have been set up as templates, so staff know where information such as name, address, appointment time, etc. needs to be inserted. There is a tab under general templates called 'letters-foreign' where these can be found.

I am planning to have the above letters also translated into additional languages and also for the PSR / first appointment letter also to be translated. There are also a number of leaflets for offenders translated into different languages, available to download and print from EPIC.

Printing money

I think a big saving could be made on printer cartridges. I currently get my personal printer cartridges re-filled at a local shop in Grays, and these cost less than half of a brand-new cartridge.

I made enquiries as to what my local shop would charge for re-filling the cartridge of the printer I use at Grays office, which is an HP 38A. Probation pay approx £90 per cartridge, whereas my local shop would charge a maximum of £40 inc VAT. They also said that they re-fill the cartridges with more

ink than that which is in a brand new cartridge. Their cartridges print approx 15,000 pages, although I don't know what the HP ones claim to do.

Considering the number of printers in all the Essex offices, I think this could amount to a substantial saving.

Fiona Bearman, OM, Basildon

Thank you for sending this suggestion for budget savings. This will be added to the list by Debbie Came to be considered and costed.

Car Sharing Offer

To encourage staff to car share, offer drivers 60p per mile if they carry one or more passengers. I understand this is something that ECC do, although they pay 70p per mile for car sharing.

Shirley Taylor, PA, Cullen Mill

We are currently considering mileage rates as part of the budget review work. The use of additional payments for those travelling with passengers will be considered, along with other measures to encourage car sharing.

Interpreter Saving

This may not be a significant saving and it may also be hard to quantify it. However, I thought that it may be worth putting it forward...

I am of Romanian nationality/citizenship and I could take up all requests for reports (both SDR and FDR) across the county so that we don't have to pay extra money for interpreters.

I have already completed two in the past six months, and I

understand that there have been quite a few more across the county.

Ioan Gherendi, OM, Grays

Thank you for sending this suggestion for budget savings. This will be added to the list by Debbie Came to be considered and costed.

Working Fewer Hours

How about sending an 'All Essex' email to see if there are people who would like to work fewer hours but up until now have not been able to.

I believe that OMs can either work 37 or 18½ hours. Some may not want to reduce their working hours by half but may, for instance, be interested in working three full days.

Similarly there may be members of the Admin Group who

would be interested in slightly less hours?

Pauline Gambier, SSO, Grays

This will be considered as part of our savings or how to manage the reduction in posts rather than staff, if we need to reduce.

Managing Better

There is a lot of emphasis at the beginning of a Community Order (CO) on meeting process-driven targets, e.g. starting unpaid work within 10 days.

My suggestion takes the Court role a step further and attempts to differentiate the process role from other roles like reducing risk. It involves a group of existing OMs and perhaps SSOs who would be tasked with ensuring all those who have been given a CO have their requirements referred immediately so meeting the National Standards.

An example would be someone who has received Unpaid Work, DID and Supervision. This team would ensure the Unpaid Work assessment form is completed and on CRAMs, the Programme requirement is on IAPs and the relevant paperwork is passed over to the office for allocation, as is the case now.

If this team were also involved with offenders with stand-alone unpaid work orders, it would allow other managers to be involved to look at alternative issues, like risk to the public at the end of their order, because there will be less emphasis on merely meeting process driven challenges, many of which occur at the beginning of an Order.

I can see areas which may cause concern, like: What happens if an offender on a stand-alone order is convicted of another offence and receives a second order with a range of requirements? What if someone receives custody? Perhaps this team may manage some custody cases? What if an offender with a complex offence like DV is given a stand-alone Unpaid Work order?

I believe there may be a number of benefits beyond just assisting, allowing Managers to focus on specific aspects. It could make accountability easier, for instance, as most referrals would originate from one particular source. Secondly it may assist OMs early in their career to become more familiar with all aspects of their role, whilst having responsibility mostly for cases with a punitive requirement, so easing them into the role.

Thirdly, one reason why specific tasks are sometimes not completed as they should is because the manager is often placed in a position where too many short-term targets are required simultaneously, and is then drawn away from one particular task. This may help reduce this issue.

Darren Kiggins, SSO, Southend

The first point regarding the court role and immediate referral should be happening in any event. Perhaps you could speak to Debra Sales to check the position at Southend. For unpaid work stand-alone orders, there is work currently being undertaken to look at moving this across and it will be rolled out across the Area once the business case has been completed. There are times within end-to-end offender management when we move offenders around due to changes in risk levels, but these do need to be kept to a minimum. Thank you for sending this in, and keep an eye open for new developments coming.

Employment Data

Could CRAMS be used for recording the above instead of the Excel spreadsheet?

There is a field on CRAMS for employment and if this was 'tweaked' slightly to include 'start' and 'finish' dates, it would make the monthly task far less laborious and far more accurate.

Pauline Gambier, SSO, Grays Office

We will look into the feasibility of this and consider whether it is possible to pilot the idea. Thank you for your suggestion.

Streamlining Computer Folders

My suggestion is that the way computer folders are managed is reviewed.

At present we have the Functions Folder, followed by Admin, Programmes, Court folders etc., then divided again by office. It makes it very clunky to navigate to files stored in slightly different locations.

*It has also allowed for a **huge** amount of outdated files to amass, which I'm sure is one of the reasons that the hard-drives have been filled so quickly. Certainly, in all of the Harlow-specific folders (be it Admin, OM or Courts), there seems to be many old files and outdated information which should be removed, filed or archived.*

It is also questionable whether all of these folders are needed anymore – most teams are now fully integrated and there is not a separate DRR or Court function, for instance.

I would recommend a separate folder for each office or location, then each folder can be managed as needed, possibly with separate ones for admin, OM, managers, court etc – more for ease of finding and sorting information. That way, most staff would only need to access their local folder

and hunt around for the file they're after, rather than scrabbling through various functions to find an induction diary or duty rota (one is stored in the admin folder, one in case management!).

I'm aware this would be a huge piece of work and would require input from people across functions and in various offices, but it would certainly help free-up a great deal of memory and ensure there are no outdated policies/practices etc. running.

Caroline Grace, OM-Courts, Harlow

We realise that our system for organising folders is not the most efficient or user-friendly, and Pete Mangan is in the process of reviewing these across the board. As you will appreciate, it is a big task and will take some time, as we have to preserve our use of the system in the meantime.

However, I am sure Pete will be grateful to receive your thoughts on this, as someone out there who has to access the data.

SDOs for All

The training of admin staff is often left to other admin colleagues, who may themselves not be 100% sure about what they are doing.

Admin staff play such an important role in helping to achieve performance targets, I think a more consistent approach is needed. My suggestion would be for something along the lines of the staff development officers currently in place for OM3 and OM4 grades.

If an experienced OMA was given a reduced workload with the specific task of continuously mentoring admin staff I am sure this would both meet the training needs of admin staff and reduce the frustrations of those staff continually being expected to offer help as well as dealing with a heavy workload.

Pauline Lambert, ISSO, Harlow

You are right that admin staff play a crucial role in us achieving our targets. It is also important that alongside peer coaching, which all staff do for each other, there is adequate training. We have a clear training programme for admin staff along with all staff, that Helen McCann puts together each year, and this should be available to administrators as it is to all.

The SDO posts are not just for OM staff, but must be across all groups within the LDUs. I will ask Directors to speak with LDU management groups to ensure that they all know that this is the case and that the SDO resource is available to all staff groups, as some tasks are common to all functions.

Saving on Parking Fees

We currently store five minibuses at a nursery opposite Basildon Office – this storage costs £1,000 per vehicle, per year.

My suggestion is that an area be marked off in the Basildon car park, next to the lock-up, and the vans parked there at no cost, thus saving us £5,000 per year.

Chris Watson, Unpaid Work Supervisor Manager, Grays

Thank you for sending this suggestion for budget savings. This will be added to the list by Debbie Came to be considered.

Crime down, but public thinks it's up, says Straw

People believe crime has fallen in local communities, but more feel it has gone up nationally, said Minister of Justice Jack Straw in a recent speech.



Public Misconceptions

High profile but relatively rare offences – gun and knife crime in particular – attract the kind of media coverage which will promote this view, he said. Anxiety about low-level antisocial behaviour can also lead to an assumption that serious crime is more prevalent than it is.

“Getting across what sentences actually mean is a challenge,” he said.

“People often serve far longer than their minimum tariff; the moment a prisoner walks out of prison is not the end of his sentence. Licensees are still serving their sentence, and onerous demands are made upon them – facts that are ignored,” said Mr. Straw.

A bigger stake for communities

Quoting Louise Casey’s recent report, his answer is to give victims and communities a bigger stake in delivering justice.

“The public don’t believe that their voice is heard, don’t believe wrongdoers face adequate consequences, don’t believe they are told enough about what happens in the system, and perhaps because of this, don’t believe that crime has fallen when they are told so.”

JUSTICE AWARDS Winners



Contratulations to Chris Rowe, Peter Hathaway and Jane Dewitt, who received recognition of their work at the Essex Criminal Justice Board Justice Awards

recently. Jane and Chris received commendations, and Peter, a former magistrate and long-time volunteer in Grays office, won his category outright.

Search for new prison sites begins

Justice Minister Maria Eagle has announced that more prisons are to be built, in a national drive to create an additional 7,500 new prison places.

So far plans for two new prisons, housing 1,500 prisoners, have been proposed for Essex – one on the site of the former Runwell Secure Psychiatric Hospital and one at Beam Park West, Dagenham.

The remaining new prisons are likely to be located in London, the North West, North Wales and West Yorkshire.

Ms Eagle, said: “They should be located in those areas where there is the greatest need, areas where the greatest number of prisoners come from. This will allow us to keep prisoners closer to their home areas and will help ensure that important family and other links can be maintained, which help prisoner rehabilitation.”



Breach Tracker moves to CRAMS

The final piece of the jigsaw, to ensure offenders comply with the terms of their sentence, was recently put in place when Breach Tracker became available to use on CRAMS.

