

SENTENCERFOCUS

Cutting Crime – Protecting the Public – Working in Partnership



In this issue:



Joining forces in a new world of competition



Stepping Stones to improve offender engagement



Community Payback on track to benefit wildlife

Essex Probation




**High Sheriff's Awards
"better than ever"**

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME

CASSIE THOMPSON

FOR CANDID, PROMPT, EFFICIENT WORK IN COVERING FOR ADMIN COLLEAGUES

CHELMSFORD & BASILDON CROWN COURT TEAM

FOR EXCELLENT WORK IN THE CROWN COURTS, AND PROFESSIONALISM ELICITING POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM COURT USERS AND JUDGES

CHRIS CHATTEN

FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE IN WORK WITH THE MILITARY CORRECTIVE TRAINING CENTRE, RESPONSIVE TO NEED AND EXTENDING PROVISION

CHRIS ROWE

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME

CLAIRE CALLENDER

FOR INVARIABLE SUPPORT OF COLLEAGUES AND GOING THE EXTRA MILE TO PRODUCE GOOD RESULTS WITH OFFENDERS

CLARE GRIFFITHS

FOR EXCELLENT WORK WITH HIGH RISK CASES THAT PROTECTS THE PUBLIC AND ENSURES THE ENGAGEMENT OF THE OFFENDER

COLIN DAVIS

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME

CORAL FALLON

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME

COURTNEY ANSON

FOR HARD WORK AND EXEMPLARY PRACTICE PARTICULARLY WITH A SUICIDAL OFFENDER

CULLEN MILL RECEPTION TEAM

FOR SETTING PROFESSIONAL, HANDWORKING AND HELPFUL STANDARDS AS THE FACE OF ESSEX PROBATION

FOR CONSPICUOUS WORKING AND EXCELLENT SUPPORT OF A TEAM MEMBER

ERIC SMITH

FOR SUPPORT OF HIS TEAM AND VISION IN REINTEGRATING THE WORK OF HOSTING LAZARDY

ESSEX RIC TEAM

FOR FLEXIBLY WORKING LONG HOURS, DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY WORK AS A HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL, INSPIRATIONAL TEAM

FINANCE TEAM

FOR FLEXIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY, FACILITATING THE EXTRA TIME NEEDED TO PROVIDE THE BEST USE OF CURRENT RESOURCES

FRAN GILES

FOR EXCELLENCE AS A SENIOR OFFICER AND EXCELLENT SUPPORT IN TRAINING A COLLEAGUE TO MATCH HER SKILLS

FRANCES MASON

FOR VIGILANCE IN MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT OF HER TEAM MANAGERS

GAVIN BALDRY

FOR EXCEPTIONAL SUPPORT OF COLLEAGUES UNDERPINNING ANY TASK REQUIRED TO ENHANCE TEAM PERFORMANCE

GAVIN WILKINSON

FOR A PROJECT TO PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVING AMONGST HEAD OFFICE STAFF

FOR PERSISTENCE, THOROUGHNESS AND FOLLOW-THROUGH AS A WILLING AND HELPFUL TEAM PLAYER

JACQUELINE FISHER

FOR ENTHUSIASTIC WORK WITH COLLEAGUES AND OFFENDERS, PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELD OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

JACQUI HARBON

FOR FOSTERING EXCELLENT COMMUNICATIONS WITH DRUG SERVICES, PROVIDING GOOD SERVICES TO DRUG OFFENDERS, AND GREAT SUPPORT TO COLLEAGUES IN TRAINING AS AN EXPERIENCED TEAM MEMBER

JACQUIE ARCHER

FOR EFFICIENCY, RELIABILITY AND THOROUGH WORK, AND HER COMMITMENT TO ENSURING THAT THE WORK OF THE OFFICE IS MAINTAINED

JAN OWENS

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME

JANE DEWITT

FOR A PROJECT TO PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVING AMONGST HEAD OFFICE STAFF

JANE TAYLOR

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME

JASON BRUNTON

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME

JILL RICHARDSON

FOR STANCH SUPPORT TO BOTH COLLEAGUES AND OFFENDERS AS A CONSTANT FACTOR IN A BUSY RECEPTION AREA

JULIE BURMBY

FOR SUPPORTING HER COLLEAGUES, HER VERSATILITY IN TAKING ON A WIDE RANGE OF ADMIN TASKS, AND FOR HER WORK TO ACHIEVE FEES WHICH ENHANCED THE TRUST'S ABILITY TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC

JULIE WARD

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME

KATHERINE BROWN

FOR GOING THE EXTRA MILE, WORKING EXTRA HOURS IN HER STRONG SUPPORT FOR COLLEAGUES

KATY DOW

FOR REDUCING THE RISK POSED BY AN OFFENDER THROUGH A WIDE RANGE OF ADMIN TASKS, MAPPA, MAPAC, VISUAL AND SOCIAL C

KEELY JARVIS

FOR STRONG ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND POSITIVE GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTNERS TO DELIVER RESULTS FOR OFFENDERS

KETH KINDER

FOR A TEAM PLAYER WHO ACHIEVED RESULTS THROUGH WORK WITH OFFENDERS

KELLY EXPUN

FOR FLEXIBLE WORK, STRONG SUPPORT OF COLLEAGUES AND EXCELLENCE OF DELIVERED PROGRAMMES

KERRY HARRISON

FOR EXCELLENT WORK ENHANCING COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS BETWEEN COURTS AND SUPPORTIVE WORK WITH POLISH COLLEAGUES

KINGA POLITOWSKI

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME

LAURA MCGEE

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME

LAURENCE LANE

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME

LEE COLAUBROOK

FOR WORK WITH A MANIPULATIVE, HIGHLY CHALLENGING OFFENDER GOING THE EXTRA MILE TO ENSURE THE OFFENDER IS PROTECTED

LESLEY SUMMERTHAYES

FOR HER WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST HEAD OFFICE COLLEAGUES, IMPROVING EFFICIENT WORKING IN RECEPTION AS THE PROFESSIONAL FACE OF ESSEX PROBATION

LINDA KERBY

FOR EXCELLENT WORK WHICH RECEIVES PRAISE AND OTHERS

LOUISE

FOR DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTNERSHIPS

LOUISE

FOR EXCELLENT WORK WITH OFFENDERS WHICH THE COMMUNITY

LOUISE

FOR PROVIDING EXCELLENCE CONFIDENCE APPRECIATED BY THE

MARGARET

FOR A CONSISTENTLY COLLEAGUES, RECORD UNIT

MARGARET

FOR ASSISTANCE TO SENIORS HIGH STANDARDS

MICHAEL

FOR HER CANCER AND SUPPORTIVE COLLEAGUES WORKING WITH A BEARING COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC

MICHAEL

FOR RESPONSIVE SUPERVISORY LEADERSHIP IN WEST

MICHAEL

FOR EXCELLENT WORK WITH OFFENDERS

Joining forces in a world of competition

by Chief Executive Mary Archer

I am delighted to be able to announce that Essex Probation and Sodexo Justice Services have formed a strategic alliance for the two organisations to work together as we move forward into the new world of competition.

This alliance is the culmination of a wish to develop a new form of strategic partnership to deliver public services in a competitive environment and to put Essex Probation at the top table as we move forward.

The challenge we are keen to take on is that of engaging with the desire of government to find a new way of delivering public services, fully embracing an innovative 'reform' agenda, while building on the partner's strengths.

I am proud of what we are achieving now in public protection and reducing crime. This move will enable both partners to be increasingly creative in offering the community a new, broader service.

One partner among many

The partnership with Sodexo represents only one part of our future. We will maintain our current relationships with all Probation Trusts and, indeed, we regard these as important to achieving the best outcomes for services in the future. We will also continue to work with other key stakeholders locally – whether partners, commissioners, providers, community organisations –



both individually and in partnerships.

Shared values

Although we are a very different organisation from the one which existed 30 years ago, our values have not diminished and we remain committed to a quality service which has a positive impact. The context may be different, but these values – many of which are shared by Sodexo – remain a key factor. Indeed, it was important to both organisations that an alliance was formed on this basis.

We anticipate a huge amount of benefit accruing to Essex Probation as a result of this partnership and that benefit will assist us by improving the services we provide to the communities we serve. Our vision of the future is to work with our partners in Essex and beyond to deliver what is a shared responsibility: protecting the public and reducing re-offending.



High Sheriff's Awards "better than ever"

New awards categories and record number of nominations this year

Nominations for this year's High Sheriff Prize were better than ever, demonstrating very solid, focused work. As one of the judges, Board member Rob Everitt said of the huge numbers he read through: "They give a real snapshot of the staff and the myriad of 'stuff' that they have to deal with, and further demonstrate what excellent work is carried out by the folk working for Essex Probation."

Worthy finalists

The Judges had a tough job on their hands, and were pleased to hear the positive reception the winners received from their colleagues. The retiring High Sheriff, Michael Hindmarch, was glowing in his praise of Essex staff. Board Chair Bill Puddicombe pledged his continuing strongest support. Mary's commentary was highly appreciative. And Essex Probation

staff whistled their approval. Well done winners, as well as those staff who didn't make it to the ceremony. It's been a tough year for everyone, and we did well.

A happy evening

In a letter sent to Mary Archer following the awards ceremony, the High Sheriff said:

"It was a very happy evening and it was so uplifting to hear of the high achievements and dedicated work of so many members of the Probation Service.

"The nomination list was impressive and an indication of the team spirit within the organisation, and we loved the enthusiasm shown so genuinely by everyone present when the names of the winners were announced."

Read more about our winners on the following pages...



The 2011 Prize winners...

High Sheriff's Prize: Unpaid Work RO Team



“...there is a real buzz around this team that comes from energy and dedication”

Work, members of the team are working with a significantly large group of offenders in new and innovative ways. It is to their credit that performance in Unpaid Work has increased so significantly.

At the start of the financial year, individual placements were struggling to reach 20%. For the last three months this has been above 30%, with most cases coming from this team's caseloads. Additionally they have become adept at

motivating offenders to attend their Community Payback sessions, despite having limited contact with them.

Mindful supervision is key to all Probation work. Every member of staff is aware of the rogue case that can come out of left field, with no previous

indications, to commit a serious offence. The Requirements Organisers have proved to be vigilant, identifying cases where risk might need further research, and so contributing to the organisation's reputation for managing risk well. To do this competently in the face of an increasing caseload requires alertness and commitment, which this team has in quantity.

Probation staff are used to large caseloads. It is a tribute to this team that they are already reaching targets to increase their caseloads further, are managing cases that can be chaotic, and are contributing strongly to the team effort in the Interventions function. Flourishing, flexible and adaptable, there is a real buzz around this team that comes from energy and dedication. We look forward to their increasing success. ”

“The Unpaid Work Requirements Organiser role was created last year. The need to provide increasing numbers of individual Community Payback placements in each LDU was becoming progressively more important. The new team of six people – one per office – moved from entirely

different roles to that of managing Tier One stand-alone offenders and seeking out large numbers of new placements in the community. A big challenge, but it is thanks to the energy and enthusiasm of this group that the project is thriving. In times of financial constraint, and ever increasing press interest in Unpaid

The 2011 Prize winners...

The Chair's Award: Carol Parker



"...the positive atmosphere she has created around her is tangible..."

"Carol Parker received four nominations this year for her work as a manager. They represent the affection and respect felt for her by many of those she has managed. They routinely mention leadership skills, motivational strength, dedication, passion for the organisation and its values, her stout championing of her team, and her belief that we can change people's lives.

Her willingness to share her offender management experience, her ability to make people feel she gets the best out of them, and her support in the 'down' times has had a major impact on each individual team member, who see her as firm, but fair. Not afraid to make

decisions, she will stand by these and by her team, and the positive atmosphere she has created around her is tangible in a visit to her office.

For her dedication over many years, we thank her and congratulate her. The effect she has on her team is best summed up in this comment from one of her nominators:

"It's like the feeling you get when you are in an aircraft awaiting take off. You know it may be stressful, you know that things might not go as expected, but when the Captain's confident voice comes over the intercom, you know that things will be ok. Carol is my Captain and I am more than happy to be a member of her crew," he says. "



The 2011 Prize winners...

The Chief Executive's Diversity Award: **Kirsty Gibbons**



CITATION



“Kirsty has not shied away from difficult decisions...”

“Kirsty Gibbons is widely recognised as an outstanding member of the team in Chelmsford for her efforts both in offender management and promoting the development of her colleagues.

She is known for good work with offenders across the board, and several of her cases have expressed their thanks to her for the positive impact she has made on their lives. Her manager cites the case of a high-risk prisoner, who was released on an extended licence. He had mental health problems alongside previous drugs, child protection, employment, accommodation and general instability issues. At the end of his five-year licence he was drug free, with access to his children, stable mental health, an excellent job, and suitable accommodation. He still rings to ‘touch base’ and seek advice. He told her manager that Kirsty had saved his life.

Significant to her winning the Diversity award is her capability with a range of cases, and particularly her multi-agency approach with a prisoner suffering from HIV. She first took the time with the health authorities to

improve her understanding of the virus so as to support the offender’s return to the community. She later recognised that he was developing maladaptive coping strategies and that he posed a risk. Kirsty followed her contingency plan: that of recall proceedings in the interests of public protection. Once he was back in custody she ensured a joined up approach between his care plan and sentence plan, preparing for his re-release.

Kirsty has not shied away from difficult decisions when considering public protection or victims. Her assessments are ‘spot on’ and partly as a result of this she has been threatened in the past by offenders. However, undeterred, she just gets on with the job.

Kirsty is regarded as a ‘supporter’. She supports managers by deputising in Mental Health, MARAC and MAPPA forums. She supports colleagues with advice and the sharing of best practice. Her inclusive attitude to both colleagues and the people she supervises cannot fail to have positive results. ”

The 2011 Prize winners...

Best Manager Award: Neeve Bishop



“Neeve’s energy and enthusiasm is infectious...”

“**R**egarded as an exceptional manager, Neeve Bishop demands a high standard of practice from those she manages. Equally, she puts a lot of effort into developing practice in a supportive and creative manner, with a highly motivational management style. She both celebrates staffs’ achievements with them and holds them accountable to her, driving them to perform to the best of their ability.

Neeve’s energy and enthusiasm is infectious – supervision with her is regarded as energizing and re-motivating. She combines a gift for common-sense analysis with the humanity necessary for understanding and motivating people, be they colleagues or offenders. Neeve makes a point of recognising and celebrating excellence whenever it occurs in the West Essex Delivery Unit. She will go to great lengths to boost morale when issues appear to be difficult ones.

Her involvement has undoubtedly helped to create the positive feel to the changes in practice in West Essex, as well as its improvement in performance. She is a valued member of the Essex Probation management group. ”



The 2011 Prize winners...

Innovative Project Award: Alan Pedley



“This is only one example of the excellent community work that Alan involves himself in...”

Any Offender Manager knows of the difficulties of providing assistance to people in crisis at the time they need it. Apart from the humanitarian aspects of giving help in an emergency, it is often the small things that can tip a wavering offender into more crime. Worrying about where the next meal will come from is an obvious catalyst to yet more petty crime and more victims. Essex Probation for obvious reasons does not act as a routine provider of essentials for offenders. However, knowing how to access them at short notice is useful.

A nifty piece of work by Alan Pedley ensured that Essex Probation was able to provide access to a food bank local to his Delivery Unit in West Essex. He set up the systems for Probation to become Voucher holders for the Harlow Food

Bank. This project assists individuals and families in crisis, by providing free emergency food until appropriate agencies are in a position to assist.

Alan worked to arrange for all the relevant information to be available and for a simple system to approve the giving of a voucher to the Offender to go and collect a food hamper. With the limited resources in the Harlow area, this has been beneficial to our offenders in crisis at no cost to Essex Probation. To date around thirty individuals and families have had assistance from the scheme. Alan also arranged for some Offender Managers, in their lunch hour, to assist with the collection of food. This is only one example of the excellent community work that Alan involves himself in, which fits perfectly with PATCH working.



The 2011 Prize winners...

Interventions Award: **Vanessa Comiskey**



“...she offered the other supervisors support and demonstrated time and again her commitment to the job and ability to deliver with cool efficient assurance.”

“**V**anessa Comiskey has been a **Community Payback placement manager in the South East for a number of years.** Throughout this time she has delivered many a piece of work to a tight deadline, quietly getting on with the job speedily and efficiently.

A period of six weeks, earlier this year, offered an apt demonstration of her all-round competence and good organisation, which form the basis of this citation. It was through Vanessa stepping up to the plate during the absence of a Community Payback Coordinator that the work not only continued systematically, but was extended in various ways.

Attending meetings on behalf of colleagues, she took away action points and dealt with them incredibly quickly, she was proactive in increasing the average Payback group size to 8.1, the highest level for her LDU this year, and she picked up quickly on ideas put to her, and immediately carried them out, saving Essex Probation significant expenditure on fares to report.

Vanessa would modestly say that she had done nothing out of the ordinary, but even on her non-working days, she offered the other supervisors support and demonstrated time and again her commitment to the job and ability to deliver with cool efficient assurance. ”

The 2011 Prize winners...

Offender Management Award: **Fiona Bearman**

CITATION

“Fiona met a very difficult challenge with one of Basildon’s more serious prolific offenders .”

“**F**iona Bearman’s work in persuading a prolific offender to put effort into his rehabilitation has been acknowledged by his subsequent Offender Manager. Probably the most challenging and difficult aspect of offender management is that of motivating those who are reluctant to engage with what looks like a tough programme, and for whom reverting to old habits is a more attractive option.

Fiona met a very difficult challenge with one of Basildon’s more serious prolific offenders, whose high level of violence and poor attitude indicated a worrying future. The impact of Fiona’s persistence and tenacious hard work on this young man, however, was long-lasting. Even when a case transfer (which is a risk factor in itself) eventually proved

unavoidable, the offender made a decision to carry on working hard with his new Offender Manager because, as he put it, “That’s what Fiona would want him to do.” His attendance was 100%, and he went on to complete 60 days at the intensive project, The Bridge. Such an achievement, in such a case, is a strong reflection on the work done with him earlier on.

He has been de-registered as a Prolific Offender due to the reduction in his offending patterns. He is not totally out of the woods, and a further, lesser offence took place recently. But perseverance in the face of the odd set-back is one of Probation’s strengths, demonstrated amply here by the dogged nature of Fiona’s work in successfully turning this young man around. He now has a future. ”



The 2011 Prize winners...

Public Protection Award: Rich Curtin



“His work with high-risk cases...has been of a consistently high standard.”

“Rich Curtin demonstrates in his work a strong commitment to protect the public, which has been sustained over the whole of his career to date. His work with high-risk cases, including detailed risk assessments, regular use of ViSOR, and excellent liaison with the Police and other agencies, has been of a consistently high standard.

He is cited for a particular piece of work in relation to a set of high-risk factors and complex inter-personal relationships, spanning a range of offenders, serious crimes, and dysfunctional family relationships. In essence, he has highlighted an established network of high-risk offenders in South Essex.

Following an allegation of sexual abuse which split the family in two, the offender in question had made threats to kill certain members of the family. Rich called a professionals’ meeting, including the Police

and other colleagues, to map out the risks posed by the offender. This meeting ultimately produced a document outlining the details of who was at risk and why. Rich dedicated personal time to collating a raft of information. With the support of a colleague, this enabled the creation of a genogram which successfully showed the inter-relationships between several warring families, mapping the past and present associations of hitherto unconnected offenders. He illustrated the risk to prisoners, offenders in the community and members of the public, and subsequently informed prison-based security staff of the potential for serious harm to prisoners and staff alike. The family tree was distributed to colleagues supervising offenders who were part of the extended family, or who were at risk.

This piece of work, which proved invaluable in managing the risk posed, is an illustration of this officer’s commitment to his work with high-risk offenders. ”

The 2011 Prize winners...

Supporting the Work Award: **Andy Pickering**


 CITATION

“He is industrious, innovative and a leading example to his colleagues and those he supervises.”

“In his role as Senior Information and Systems Officer, Andy Pickering has been instrumental in creating a Unit that is more responsive and customer focused than it has ever been. He is industrious, innovative and a leading example to his colleagues and those he supervises.

During the year he has also been instrumental in creating three tools that will be central to the work undertaken by staff:

TIM – an excellent tool for assisting with the timeliness and reporting of OASys assessments and CRAMS commencements. It provides early warning to staff that an assessment is expected whilst recording all failures which provide invaluable learning points. This database has been instrumental in improving some measures on the scorecard by over 10%.

Automated NSMART – Andy has been central to designing and facilitating the creation of a tool that has removed laborious processes usually undertaken by Inspections staff on a monthly basis. This has not only driven up performance, which is reflected in an ever improving scorecard, but has also allowed staff to focus their attentions on improving quality.

NWMT – National Workload Management Tool. This is a tool that monitors the workload of practitioners and is used by SMT to assess staffing levels within each LDU. Whilst on face value this tool may seem simplistic, the front end belies the complexity of the work that has gone into creating such a sophisticated application. This is true of much of the work Andy completes and we count him as one of Essex Probation’s hidden but much-appreciated assets. **”**



The 2011 Prize winners...

Working in Partnership Award: John Hawkins


 CITATION


“...relentless and inspiring work...”

John Hawkins became responsible for the supervision of a woman offender who had committed offences of Violent Assault and Battery. Sexually abused as a child, raped as a teenager, Dana was entirely distrusting of others, particularly professional workers. Her alcohol consumption was described as “seismic”. She would frequently fail appointments, often because she was too intoxicated, the very reason she had lost custody of her three-year-old child to her mother. Repeated self-harming was evident through blade marks on Dana’s arms and ankles. She disclosed having attempted to overdose on anti-depressants on three occasions.

John immediately referred Dana to the Criminal Justice Mental Health Team, arranging for her to be assessed that very afternoon. The two-hour gap between her supervision appointment and the CJMHT assessment was unsustainable and she instead disappeared to the nearest pub. John accordingly arranged a Police welfare visit for that afternoon, where she was found holding a knife to her wrists. Police were forced to use CS gas to restrain her.

This eventful beginning to John’s supervision of this

young woman was only the start of a busy period of hard work which involved liaison with solicitors; explaining to magistrates her drunken assault on a police constable, then a court official; constantly re-negotiating contact with partner agencies, and breaking down their resistance to her flouting the rules, lacking commitment, failing appointments and being abusive. He encouraged them to share his integrity and commitment to a joint goal. They agreed a treatment plan of constructive daily activities including basic skills, CDAT & ADAS interventions, alternative therapies, psychiatric and probation appointments.

Over a despondent Christmas period, when Dana’s mental health caused real concern, John persuaded Dana to Section herself, then again set about making new arrangements for supporting her in the community on discharge from hospital.

When she eventually became sufficiently stable, contact with her mother and son was re-instated. Dana continues on her programme of recovery. She is supported by a network of agencies from her local community, and ultimately by the relentless and inspiring work of her offender manager. ”

“Working in partnership is fundamental to reducing re-offending and managing risk. It relies on effective communication and a coming together of often opposing values and objectives. The tenacity of those involved, in retaining the offender as the central focus at all times, is critical to achieving successful outcomes.



Stepping stones to improve offender engagement

SE ESSEX & SOUTHEND DELIVERY UNIT TO PILOT SENTENCE PLANNING TOOL



by **Director David Messam**

Stepping Stones is a sentence planning tool that Southeast Essex and Southend DU is piloting.

A key aspect of Stepping Stones is to identify both long- and short-term outcomes that an offender wants to, and can, realistically achieve. These are then linked together in a step-by-step approach.

Boosting engagement

It is a collaborative process designed to improve the offender's

engagement in their community sentence. Goals are identified and set by the offender and should lead to positive outcomes. As the alternative is objectives set by the Offender Manager, Stepping Stones is a "do with" rather than "done to" approach.

The pilot will only apply to Community Orders with a supervision requirement and licences commencing on or after 1 April. It will **NOT** include:

- Stand alone UPW and all other OM Tier 1 cases
- MAPPA Level 2 and Level 3 cases

Testing it out

The pilot will run for 12 months, during which identified cases will incorporate Stepping Stones as the tool for sentence planning, in addition to the sentence planning tool integral to OASys.

A sufficient number of cases will commence within the pilot, over a

six month period, to allow for meaningful evaluation.

Greater flexibility for OMs

Offender Managers have recently completed training to deliver Stepping Stones, which enables a degree of autonomy and flexibility in using their professional judgement to decide appropriate time frames for completion of individual assessments..

Station on track to benefit wildlife

Essex Probation teams up for major renovation project

A project to improve an Essex railway station is steaming ahead thanks to Community Payback.

Newport Station, on the main Liverpool Street to Cambridge line in North Essex, is undergoing long-term renovation work following complaints by the local community that years of neglect had left the place run-down and unfriendly for passengers.

Partnership effort

The Newport Business Association asked us to join local schools and businesses in an alliance to improve the station's surroundings. Our Community Payback teams are now helping to redecorate the historic railway buildings and landscape and re-plant wild flower areas with up to 2000 bee- and butterfly-friendly plants.

Work is set to continue over the next three years.



Planting the first of 2000 bee and butterfly plants

Sir Alan Haselhurst MP, next to West Essex Interventions Manager Min Stiles and Community Payback Coordinator Adele Hill.



Right: Min Stiles and Adele Hill survey some of the landscape areas cleared by our CP teams

You asked us...

A selection of questions from Probation-Courts events

Q. Last year the criteria for attending ATRs was changed. A lot of offenders have alcohol problems but, unless deemed to be alcoholic, cannot now access the treatment. This doesn't seem fair.

A. PCTs have reviewed their provision and now provide the treatment element of an ATR. ATRs are only suitable for those offenders who are alcohol dependant. However, offender managers in EP have all been trained in alcohol relapse prevention and provide brief interventions to offenders who misuse alcohol, as part of the supervision requirement.

Q. What counts as a successful ATR completion?

A. When an offender engages and successfully completes the treatment objectives in the care plan.

Q. Can unpaid work be undertaken in association with local businesses?

A. We are not permitted to undertake work for profit-making organisations. The criteria for choosing a project are: that it must benefit the local community; it must not take paid work away from others; no-one must make a profit from the work; it must be challenging and constructive, and offenders must be seen to be putting something back into the community.

Q. Do you ever receive negative feedback from beneficiaries, regarding unpaid work?

A. Very rarely, as we supervise our offenders carefully.

If work is not up to scratch, then we will send the group back to complete the project to the required standard.

Q. How soon after commencement on The Bridge does it become obvious that an offender is not going to engage successfully with the programme?

A. It all depends on the offender, of course. Every effort is made to engage offenders straight away. Once they commence the programme we would normally know pretty quickly if an offender is going to engage or not. The challenge for the Bridge staff and the offender manager is to motivate the offender to comply with their requirement.

Q. What is the maximum number of offenders The Bridge can work with at any one time?

A. Roughly 75. That equates to around 323 offenders per annum.

Q. Will the success of The Bridge see it expand throughout the country?

A. There are no plans to do so, at present.

Q. Offenders attending The Bridge are expected to travel out of their area, to Witham. Is travel a big issue?

A. It can be for some. Generally, however, offenders say attending the service outside of their usual area can be helpful, as it temporarily removes them from the negative influences of their local peer group.

Q. Two-and-a half-hours a day are spent at The Bridge. The remainder of the time can be spent travelling. How can sitting on a train be seen as 'punishment'?

A. While taking away an offender's free time is seen by them as punishment, the purpose of The Bridge is to re-engage the offender with the work he has yet to do during supervision. The Bridge is too precious a resource to be used just for punishment. (Getting on a train and making their way regularly across Essex to Witham, can actually be quite an achievement for some offenders.)

Q. Are those who fail to complete the Bridge sent to custody straight away – since The Bridge is described as 'an alternative to custody'?

A. For those subject to licence, probation staff would propose recall to prison. For those on a community order, it would mean a return to court for you to re-sentence.

Q. Is The Bridge only for 'revolving door' offenders?

A. Not exclusively. It can be recommended for any offender who would clearly benefit from the opportunities The Bridge provides.

Q. Is the Bridge targeted to a particular age group?

A. No. The Bridge is available for all age groups and both male and female offenders – so please consider The Bridge for female offenders.

You asked us...

Q. Do offenders referred to The Bridge continue to have contact with Essex Probation?

A. They have both – activity with The Bridge and supervision from Essex Probation.

Q. In terms of dealing with the victim's perspective, what support is provided for male victims?

A. So far, the programmes we currently provide have been developed around male heterosexual relationships with women and challenge the concept of male entitlement. Thus, the work we undertake is with heterosexual males who commit violence towards female partners.

Q. In cases where the victim goes on to form another relationship, is there a tendency to form the same sort of abusive relationship?

A. The stronger the victim becomes, the less likely that abuse by a new partner will take place. It should also be said that victims in new relationships tend to believe that any previous abuse was the ex-partner's fault, so may not take up the offer of support unless they experience further abuse.

Q. What about supporting victims who are not victims of domestic violence, e.g. a senior citizen who has been robbed?

A. Such cases are not currently covered by our services, but would instead be referred to Victim Support.

Q. When an offender breaches a court order, how do we find out what the original offence was?

A. This information would appear in the Statement of Facts, which is provided to the bench to consider in

cases that have breached.

Q. If we are considering sentencing an offender and have the precons detailing previous offences, how would we know how an offender was progressing with a current order?

A. The Court Officer has access to this information and collates this as part of their pre-court preparation. This information should then be relayed to the court.

Q. Under the Patch system of working, is the responsibility for making partnership arrangements allocated to one particular officer?

A. No, all members of the Patch team work with local partners / services / resources. The Patch structure (which breaks down Local Delivery Unit areas into even smaller geographical areas) helps Offender Managers focus on the resources and agencies which are available locally.

Q. What are your criteria for doing an SDR?

A. More complex cases, such as where we need to make enquiries into treatment options, or where there are domestic violence, child protection or mental health issues. We also need longer to consider sex offenders. We aim to produce fast delivery reports whenever we can, but it is not always appropriate.

Q. Are DRRs breached if they do not complete?

A. Yes, but that does not mean we give up on an offender. The best outcome will often be that the court marks the breach but does not revoke the order. In most cases, we would aim to re-motivate the offender to try again. Where the community order

includes a supervision requirement longer than the treatment requirement, we will continue to reinforce the message from the DRR. Treatment will continue to be available to them.

Q. Could the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) be speeded up for offenders on suspended sentences and community orders of 12 months?

A. The programme consists of 27 weekly sessions covering nine modules plus pre-group work, and the guidance is that community orders should be a minimum of 24 months. Although offenders will start the IDAP process soon after they are sentenced with pre-group work that gets them ready for the programme, there is often a need to improve their learning skills and other problems, i.e. motivation.

Q. Do education requirements ever continue beyond the end of a sentence?

A. Yes, in some cases by directing offenders into further education or training.

Q. Can an Order ever be too long?

A. No. The Order is as long as is necessary, but we would look to revoke it for good progress, if applicable.

Q. Why do you recommend curfew as a 'revoke and resentence' proposal in response to non-compliance at breach?

A. We revisit the original issues of the case and the original purpose of sentencing, and if the offender will not comply with probation then a curfew can be suitable for some.

You asked us...

Q. How do you ensure offenders are not telling lies during interviews?

A. By being prepared, having read all the available information relating to the offender, including the circumstances of the offence and previous history. In a longer interview in a more complex case, it soon becomes clear when an offender is evasive, or making false claims about themselves, or the offence. There are no guarantees, but experience shows us that it is rare that offenders put one past us! Also we ensure clear recording of the situation if the offender is obviously not prepared to engage with us.

Q. Is OGRS really a reliable tool when it comes to making recommendations?

A. Yes. We use assessment tools like OGRS and OASys which are designed to inform reports. It is not a matter of usurping the power of sentencers, but providing them with proposals that best fits the aim of reducing reoffending.

Q. Do offenders need to agree to do an ATR or DRR?

A. Yes, offenders need to give their consent in order to ensure some motivation, and that they know and acknowledge what is required of them.

Q. Why are some supervision recommendations quite short, sometimes as little as six to nine months?

A. Some elements of supervision are given to offer purely practical support for offenders with things like housing, benefits or even registering with a GP.

Q. How long should an adjournment be for an RIC report?

A. The target time is 10 days.

NEWS in BRIEF

Training and Recruitment

Essex has sixteen candidates undertaking the new Honours Degree in Community Justice. We have recently advertised similar training opportunities for 2011 - 12.

We are also seeking interest from all operational staff in completing the VQ3 award. There are twenty-six currently involved, and another twenty-four on a waiting list. We aim to ensure all staff are able to deliver in the ever-changing workplace.

New qualifications for Essex Probation staff; no redundancies currently planned

We aim to manage resources without redundancies. No external recruitment has taken place since April 1st. We are managing our budget by redeploying staff to fill vacancies and ensure that work is covered. Colleagues are rising to the challenge of being flexible when asked to transfer in order to rebalance resources across the county. Our aim is to provide the same level of service to courts as usual.

Big Quiz event raises funds for hospice

Staff at our Cullen Mill Head Office engaged brains for a good cause in March, by holding a Quiz Evening for Farleigh Hospice. Just over £120 was raised as part of the hospice's Big Quiz charity drive. The quiz winners were the Information & Systems unit, known for the evening as 'The IT Crowd'.

Walk for life

Three Cullen Mill staffers raised another £100 for the hospice, in May, after trekking 14 arduous miles around the Heybridge Basin on a sponsored walk.

