



West Lothian
Council

Community Justice

The Newsletter of West Lothian Council Criminal Justice Social Work Service

No.3 – March 2006

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Welcome to our latest newsletter

Why is it so long since the last one?

The Criminal Justice Social Work service in West Lothian has just had one of the most demanding years in its history. These are only the biggest of the extra tasks that we have been taking on.

- *Inspection by the Social Work Inspection Agency, together with our partners in the Lothians and Scottish Borders Criminal Justice Social Work Consortium*
- *A complete refurbishment of our offices, including expansion across the entire ground floor of Lomond House. (See the pictures scattered through this newsletter.)*
- *The establishment of the Drug Treatment and Testing Team, working alongside existing teams to provide a comprehensive service to the courts.*
- *Developments in our Throughcare and Aftercare services, including the arrival of additional staff, who will now take on the supervision of a larger number of ex-prisoners.*
- *The launching of the 'West Lothian Criminal Justice Project' – a ground-breaking attempt to cut by*

up to 75% the time that it takes someone to appear in court after committing an offence.

- *Training staff in the use of a range of tools for assessing the risk of reoffending and the risk of harmful behaviour – these are increasingly important in managing the risk that certain offenders pose to the community.*
- *Setting up an Inter-agency Risk Management Panel, that meets monthly to develop and monitor strategies for the management of the most dangerous offenders in our communities.*
- *An increasing role for the Youth Justice Family Support Team in the preparation of court reports and management of Probation Orders on 16 and 17 year-olds.*

With all this going on, it is not exactly surprising that other demands, such as the production of this newsletter, fell by the wayside. However, it is good to be back in print again, and we look forward in this edition to telling you about at least some of these developments. We won't manage to discuss all of them in detail in this edition, but will carry our coverage of developments into the next one!

The Performance Inspection of Criminal Justice Social Work Services during spring and summer 2005

The Report on Lothian and Borders Criminal Justice Social Work Services

This was the biggest external inspection ever carried out of Criminal Justice practice in West Lothian and in our partner authorities in the Lothians and Scottish Borders Criminal Justice Social Work Consortium. It required a substantial amount of extra work for all staff in the service. What was involved?

- Collation of examples of all documents used by the Criminal Justice Social Work Service, which for West Lothian alone came to a pile that was nearly 6 inches high!
- An examination of a sample of court reports, which focused particularly on Risk Assessment and Risk Management
- An assessment of the standard of supervision of offenders on probation and community service orders, and parole and non-parole licences.
- The inspectors evaluated 274 court reports, 37 home background reports and 225 case files from across the Consortium, of which about 18% were West Lothian cases, and they observed examples of offender supervision by all staff.
- The inspectors interviewed managers, practitioners and offenders from across the different

services and contacted Sheriffs and the beneficiaries of the community service scheme to gather their views about the quality of the service.



The inspectors reported: 'We found some real successes and achievements in providing services both across the Consortium and within individual authorities, including well-established group work programmes, a specialist service for sex offenders and some Consortium-wide quality assurance practices. We found few examples of poor practice and some examples of very good practice.'



The Criminal Justice Manager, Dave Rowbotham, commented that while we were on the same level as our Consortium colleagues in 29 categories, we showed above average against 25 criteria and were below in only 16.

Dave Rowbotham noted that positives included: supervision planning and evidencing conclusions in SERs; above-average standard of Home Background Reports for Parole; supervising planning and addressing offending behaviour in Probation, as well as National Standards for contact and breach; good risk assessment in Community Service. We were above average for our assessment, planning, supervision, contact and breach of serious violent offenders.

We need to improve on verifying information; matching resources to risk; case planning and addressing offending behaviour and compliance in the actual work



(particularly sex offenders); clearer work instructions for CS.'

While that may appear a daunting list of things to address, it is worth noting that a number of these issues had been highlighted in our internal reviews of our practice in the preceding year, and many of them had already been addressed by the start of the Inspection. Some of the poorer results were certainly due to the fact that some of the work inspected was up to three years old, and such work had not been carried out



at that time in accordance with the most up-to-date thinking and practice.

That is of course not the end of the matter, as the Inspectorate wishes us to provide evidence about the changes that have been made in response to the Inspection Report, and will review these in due course. It seems probable that the present pattern of inspections, which focus on one or two groups of councils each year, may be replaced by a programme that allows for more frequent scrutiny of our work.

Your Comments

We welcome views from you - the readers of this newsletter and the users of our services - about how we deliver our services, and this part of this newsletter is set aside for us to report your views.

All of which brings us on to the office refurbishment, which has improved the environment for users of the service and staff alike.

Previous comments have covered: the draughty foyer; the poor state of decoration; the lack of windows and of interesting reading matter in the waiting area; the poor levels of sound-proofing in the interview rooms and their dingy décor; and the fact that there was far too much pressure on our two interview rooms, leading to appointments being late starting.

We hope you approve of the changes! We now have five interview rooms instead of two, and because of the increased volume of appointments in the office, we have introduced a new booking system. One of these rooms is set up to deal with the particular demands of Drug Treatment and Testing Orders, while two of the rooms are large enough to take several people at a time.



Group-work, too, has become easier, with the setting up of a dedicated group-work room within the CJ Office. No

longer will we have to carry boxes of equipment to various rooms around West Lothian!

The new, larger waiting area has a loop induction system for people with hearing problems, but the needs of people with other disabilities have been considered in the design of the new offices, which include automatic doors and sufficient room for wheelchair users to easily access interview rooms.

Security for all users of our office is important, and additional CCTV coverage has been installed. The appointment of a receptionist should ensure prompt attention, both for callers to the office, and to telephone enquiries.



Staff too welcome the new facilities; for the first time in ten years, we have separate facilities for making coffee, and we now officially have somewhere other than our desks to eat our lunch!

All this has been complemented by work done on the foyer of the office, now at last a warm and cheerful place to pause, and with much improved disabled access.



Why not let us know what you think of the new office, or alert us to any problems, by completing a Suggestions and

Comments Form, and posting it in the Suggestions Box?

On page 8 of this newsletter, you will see our revised Service Standards, which explains how we hope to work with all people who are in contact with us. Please let us know if these seem suitable, and how well we perform.

Drug Treatment and Testing Orders

A new service for West Lothian

This is one of the most exciting initiatives for the service in recent years and will greatly strengthen the ability of the Council and Health services tackle serious drug misuse in West Lothian. It illustrates the determination of the Scottish Executive and of local organisations to adopt new ways of working together more effectively and efficiently in dealing with new challenges.

Staff in the two main agencies (West Lothian Council and NHS Lothian - West Lothian Healthcare Division), alongside others in the voluntary, statutory and private sector, have worked extremely hard and enthusiastically to bring this project to fruition in a very short development period.

The aims and objectives of DTTO are to reduce drug-related offending by engaging offenders in appropriate and immediately available treatment programmes.

The Team comprises of a Manager, Social Worker and Project Worker with a Service Support officer (WLC) and

Nurses and a Doctor (NHS Lothian).

DTTO will target high tariff, persistent drug offenders. Following a rigorous assessment for suitability, the offender can have an Order imposed by the Courts. Once on an Order, offenders will be seen initially four times a week. This will include two observed drug tests.

All offenders will return to Court on a monthly basis to have their progress reviewed by the sentencing Sheriff. Failure to evidence compliance to treatment or continued offending may result in the Order being Breached. Treatment will include substitute-prescribing, behaviour-change work and employment and vocational training support.

In line with the national community safety agenda, the aims and objectives of a Drug Treatment and Testing Order in West Lothian are to:

- reduce the level of drug related offending behaviour
- reduce or eliminate offenders' dependence on or propensity to misuse drugs

The goal of this unique supervision and treatment order is to assist offenders to overcome their drug dependence and thus end their associated criminal behaviour through court enforced and supervised treatment programmes.

The court will require the offender to deal with and accept responsibility for his or her addictions. It is based on the belief that drug dependency is not only a law enforcement/criminal justice problem but also an overriding public health and societal concern.

The aims of the team are:

- To undertake an assessment of those cases referred, over a maximum of 28 days continuation, and provide reports to the Court covering suitability for sentence and detailing a proposed programme of treatment



- To supervise the offender
- To co-ordinate and case manage the treatment plan
- Provide direct programmes of intervention and integrate the offender into suitable services commissioned from other providers
- To tackle and report on matters of non-compliance or unsatisfactory performance
- To address offending behaviour and through tackling related drug issues as part of a case plan.
- To arrange case transfer to other service locations as appropriate.

- To conduct and report on drugs tests.



- To provide reports to the Court in connection with sentencing, and the review, breach, early discharge, variation, amendment and completion of orders.
- To be in attendance at all Review Hearings.

Since the scheme was launched in July 2005, the team has completed 29 full DTTO assessments for the courts, and has had 21 people placed on Orders.

We will publish a review of the first full year of working in the autumn.

In our next edition...

1. We will look at other recent improvements in our service and how they will benefit you and the community.
 2. Community Service by Offenders – what do offenders actually do, and how does this help the community? We report on some new projects...
 3. The rôle of Social Work in the Parole system.
- And much more!

The Criminal Justice Manager reports...

Big changes in the personnel of the team

Many of the most interesting things that have happened in the last year are recorded in more detail elsewhere in this newsletter.

One of the consequences of all these extra tasks for the Criminal Justice Social Work Service has been the arrival of a number of new staff, and a further restructuring of our teams. The Prison Throughcare services are now managed by our new Throughcare Team, managed by Linda Probka, who also takes on responsibility for the Community Work Order Team (Community Service Orders and Supervised Attendance Orders).

In the last year, we have also welcomed: Gillian Oghene (DTTO Manager and Service Development Officer) and her team of Sharon Oxley and Caroline Campbell (Social Workers), Geoff Pritchard (Project Officer) Alayne Napier (Nurse), and Fiona Muir (Service Support). The DTTO Team also benefits from other input from the Health Service, particularly from Dr Richard Simpson). We would also wish to thank Jane Berkley, Manager of the Social Work Drug Team who undertook the initial develop-

ment of DTTO in West Lothian.

The West Lothian Project (see article on Page 5) has resulted in the arrival of Viv Murphy and Emma Clater (Social Workers) and Kerry McGowan (Service Support)

The expansion of existing services has also resulted in new staff, and we welcome Simo Glumoff and Norma Paterson to the Probation Supervision Team, and Anna Wilkinson to the Throughcare Team.

We feel that we must be offering something worthwhile to student social workers who spend time with us – no less than six of our existing 17 Social Workers were at some stage students in our service!

Colleagues in the Service Support Section have been stretched by all this growth and by the demands of our new office; some of our temps have been with us for quite some time. We are currently pleased to be working with Kate Threlfall and Craig Kirkwood, both of whom deal with reception duties, and will often be your first point of contact with us.

Since the last newsletter we have also seen a departure. Pat Kelly is now living and working in New Zealand, and we all wish him well.

The Team Managers would like to thank the staff of the Criminal Justice Social Work Service for their good-humoured acceptance of the trials and tribulations of the last year. We realise that living out of boxes and crates, and finding your desk frequently migrating around the office is never going to make for an easy working environment!

Finally, we would note that further restructuring of the Criminal Justice Social Work Service at a national level is upon us, with the setting up of Community Justice Authorities (in our case covering the same council area as the existing 'Consortium'. One of the immediate local consequences of this has been the part-time secondment of Dave Rowbotham, Criminal Justice Manager, to organise the setting up of our local Community Justice Authority. During his partial absence Tim Ward (Team Manager for the Probation Supervision Team) is acting up as Criminal Justice Manager (Operations).

The West Lothian Criminal Justice Project. Speeding up the processes of the law.

It is well known to anybody who has dealings with the court system that everything takes a long time. The process

of deciding whether someone should be prosecuted takes time, the setting of a court date takes time, and if someone pleads not guilty, that takes lots of time.

This should be from now a decreasing cause of concern

in West Lothian. The groundbreaking **West Lothian Project** (WLP) has taken the criminal justice system and given it a good shake-up in order to recommend changes that improve speed, efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system. From

the point of arrest to the day of sentencing, every part of the process has been subjected to scrutiny, and wherever possible, the issues causing delays have been eliminated. So what does this mean in practical terms?

Over the life-span of the initial project, currently based at the Livingston Courthouse and intended to continue to autumn 2006, it is expected



that the average time taken for cases handled through the WLP should be reduced to about 25% of the time previously taken. Such huge reductions can only be achieved by all concerned coordinating their efforts to reduce delay, and this starts at the point of a police officer cautioning and charging someone with an offence.

The accused will be released on a Bail Undertaking, requiring attendance at court on a specified day, and the police officer will thereafter make a report direct to the project office, for logging on a database, and for consideration by the Procurator Fiscal. Police Officers have been trained to make these reports as accurate and relevant as possible, and this in itself has reduced delays from enquiries back to the officer at different points in the process. However, the opportunity for direct

discussion with the PF is very helpful to police officers.

The defence solicitor is identified in advance, and by the time solicitors appear at court with their client, they will know in advance what the charges are, and will have received a summary of the evidence, to help them advise their client about how to plead.

If the accused decides to plead Not Guilty, the Intermediate Diet and Trial Diet are both set for the earliest possible dates. The Intermediate Diet represents an earlier attempt to ensure that witnesses do not have to attend court needlessly, and fits perfectly into the new system.

So what is the West Lothian Project doing to ensure that people do turn up at court? There are various ways in which non-attendance has been reduced: Police Officers now take more details of the accused, including place of work, and the accused is advised that in the event of non-attendance, places of employment will be included in the locations checked by the police. Most importantly, accused persons are advised that in the event of non-attendance, a warrant will be issued immediately, and that police officers will implement it right then. In the past, action might not be taken on warrants for some weeks; now police officers from the Divisional Support team are ready in court, and leave as soon as the warrant is printed to arrest the absent person. Simply advising the accused person that this will happen

has had a considerable effect on attendance.

But what about the role of the Criminal Justice Social Work Service in this project? We have appointed additional staff to work within the Livingston Courthouse, where our responsibilities, while not greatly different from those of Court and Assessment Team staff at Linlithgow, should be carried out within shorter time-scales.

Before the court decides whether a report is required, we will already have identified what information we hold on the accused, and will have a view about how quickly we can prepare the report.

If all the circumstances are right, it may be possible to prepare the report on the same day that the report is requested. The project management group has accepted that such reports not likely to be prepared often, but starting the interview process as soon as the report is requested has allowed us to reduce the time taken by half.

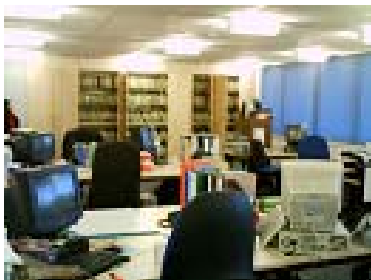
All this is of course labour-intensive at present, but is likely to set the standard for the way in which most court work will eventually be carried out.

At the time of writing, it has been agreed that more police officers will be reporting cases in this new way, and, in future newsletters, we should be able to report in more detail on the work that this exciting project has done.

Throughcare for prisoners

Some of the developments that we will explore more fully in our next edition.

Tim Ward, Acting Criminal Justice Manager (Operations) reports:



Among the many developments that have come about in the last year is a new emphasis on effective practice in relation to serving prisoners and ex-prisoners. These will require us to consider the needs of prisoners and of the community from the point of sentence, rather than when they approach their release date. We are now expected to take a stronger role in promoting voluntary assistance for prisoners, and we are now visiting more prisoners to discuss with them the sort of help and support they might wish for when back in the community.

Extension of the arrangements for compulsory supervision of sexual offenders means that all sex offenders sentenced to six months or more will now be on compulsory supervision following their release. This was previously at the court's discretion.

This increased role in relation to Throughcare and Aftercare has led to us splitting this work off from the Monitoring and Supervision Team; all post-custody work is now managed by the Throughcare Team, while Probation is managed by the Probation Supervision Team.

For a list of our revised Service Standards, please see Page 8.

We would welcome your views on this newsletter. If you would like to comment on the information we have given, or if you would like to suggest items for future newsletters, why not fill in the form below?

You can reply in any of the following ways:

1. By returning the form to the *Criminal Justice Office, Lomond House, Beveridge Square, Livingston EH54 6QF.*

*You can either post it in the normal fashion, or hand it in (**unstamped**) to any West Lothian Council public office, when it will be sent to us by the internal mail service.*

2. You can e-mail us on CriminalJusticeTeam@westlothian.gov.uk.

We aim to reply to all comments within one week. If you are interested in writing a piece for the newsletter, why not phone the current editor, Paul Streater, on 01506 775900 to discuss this further?

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Community Justice #2

I would like to say...

Please continue overleaf:

Customer Care Service Standards

We consider that it is important that you know how we plan to work with all users of our service. Following comment about the standards that we have previously applied, we have rewritten these to reflect more accurately the work that we do, and the environment that we work in.

West Lothian Council Criminal Justice Social Work Service aims to:

- Treat all service users fairly and with courtesy and respect their confidentiality.
- Consult users on a regular basis about service provision through completion questionnaires and comments forms. We will report improvements through newsletter, posters and the Criminal Justice Team website.
- Respond promptly to telephone enquiries If person required is not available, we aim to have another worker available to speak to you.
- Communicate clearly with you, and check that you have understood what we are saying.
- Offer appointments at times and venues which are suitable for our service users. These will take account of any reasonable work or other commitments.
- Ensure that you are seen within 15 minutes of your appointed time. We will report how we performed on an annual basis.
- Respond to any complaints or comments about our service within three working days.
- Prepare all Court reports for the date requested.
- Provide you with a full explanation of the demands we will make on you at the start of your order or licence.
- Provide services at least to the standards required of us by the Scottish Executive.

It would be useful for us to know how helpful you find these standards. Please feel free to use the comment form below to give us your views.

Comment Form

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Name: Telephone Number:

Address:

E-mail address: Please put my name on your mailing list: **Yes / No**