



**West Lothian
Council**

Community Justice

The Newsletter
of West Lothian
Council Criminal
Justice Social
Work Service



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Brave New World Working in the West Lothian Civic Centre

Well, now we're here; nearly all of our staff are based in the Civic Centre.

So what is it like, working in the first fully integrated justice centre in Scotland? Different, to be sure, in a number of ways. We have already seen the benefit from day-to-day contact with all our criminal justice partners, which provides so many more opportunities for working out joint solutions to shared problems.

But that is only the start: our accessibility to staff from all parts of the council means that we have been able to share ideas about service developments, not just affecting the people that we work with, but the whole population of West Lothian. More about these changes in the article on Page 2 by Gillian Oghene.

But what about our visitors,

and in particular the people who we see because of court reports or various types of court orders or post-release licences?

We certainly accept that not everything about the Civic Centre is as we would have it in a dedicated Criminal Justice office. For example a number of people commented on the lack of privacy in the interview rooms, and we have arranged to have blinds installed in some of these.

A very practical issue for us is how to best provide feedback to our service users about how we are developing services – with no waiting room walls, posters are not as effective as they once were!

We will be exploring new ways of finding out what people think about our services, and letting everyone know what changes we have made as a result of your comments and suggestions.

However, looking on the bright side, we are at last able to give the public who visit us access to food and drinks, something that was not feasible in Lomond House!

Operational challenges

A view from Gillian Oghene (Group Manager) who has to make sure it comes together...

What's happening in the Criminal Justice Social Work Service? As we look forward to the year ahead we will have many challenges to overcome. We have now all (well almost all) moved into the Civic Centre. I personally have benefited from being able to have access to our support services such as HR and Payroll which has made operational issues much easier to resolve, and much quicker! It is good to put a face to a name and I hope to be able to develop even stronger links with all our Council colleagues.

Whilst the move at times felt akin to the pressures you experience arranging a full-on wedding and moving house on the same day, we got there in the end. For those of you who know me, the opportunity to have a complete clear out was my 'every cloud has a silver lining' moment. At times, however, I had to resort to bribery!

Most of our staff (and they know who they are) are

now recovering from having an inordinate amount of "resource material" (that's what they called it) sent for recycling, though fortunately no one has reported any serious implications for their practice!

One of the key benefits to the Criminal Justice Social Work Service is the co-location of our key partners such as the Police, the Scottish Court Services and the Procurator Fiscal, to name but a few. Whilst the technology to support this has not developed as we had hoped, both our ability to promptly exchange information and our shared resources are a positive for all concerned.

We now have the Police Offender Management Team located next to us, which enables an enhanced and joined-up approach to managing the high-risk people we work with. CJSWS has worked hard at developing professional working relationships with our Police partners and the move has further enhanced our communication capacity at all levels.

Other areas of joint working are being developed. These include the planned joint-working initiatives with the council's Domestic Abuse service.

With the focus on raising the profile of Community Service high up on the Scottish Government's agenda, we have been

working with our Council colleagues to identify new community initiatives, using the knowledge of the Communities Team and local community councils. At a more practical level, the Community Work Order Team was also involved with organising the clearing of snow during the winter's bad weather.



Housing for offenders is also recognised as a key issue within the risk management agenda. The Criminal Justice Social Work Service is now working alongside our housing colleagues to provide packages of supported accommodation for offenders in the community. Combining our skills and resources in a focused manner will support our aim of keeping higher-risk offenders integrated within their home areas, while planning to reduce the risks posed to the wider community. The new Throughcare Team Manager Robin Allen writes more about this elsewhere in this newsletter.

Criminal Justice Social Work Service has also recently notched up its first

year as provider of Prison-Based Social Work (PBSW) at HMP Addiewell. The prison opened in December 2008 and is now at full capacity. Working with Kalyx (the private sector service provider for HMP Addiewell on behalf of the Scottish Prison Service) has been a new and challenging experience for our service. The commitment of the prison management team to embrace innovative and 'SMART' approaches to service delivery as a community-facing prison is refreshing.

The PBSW Team has been well received within the establishment and the skills and expertise of its members has been recognised and commended. The team has just completed an inspection by the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) and is working with our Kalyx colleagues to ensure their good practice is understood as has previously been the case with West Lothian Council's community-based social work services. Work-load demands there are so great that Linda Probka now works full-time as Prison Social Work Team Manager.

Finally, the things that really matter to me! How many miles do I now walk every day getting things from the printer? Will the café in the Civic Centre still have bacon rolls left when I get to work? The move may result in a leaner fitter

and healthier me, but bacon rolls might just be my downfall!

Changing jobs

Daryl Chin, of the Probation Supervision Team, explains how he had a mid-life change of career direction...

When I started my social work training, I was one of only a small group of people on my course that expressed an interest in work in criminal justice. I'm not sure why I always had this ambition; perhaps it was more a desire not to be a children and families worker! However, as fate would have it, my first post was with a children and families team.

Much to my surprise, I enjoyed the job immensely; but I think this was due to the fact that I was with a Youth Drugs Team and this meant working with young people who were getting into bother due to their substance misuse and difficult behaviour. Outside of a youth justice team, I thought this was as close to criminal justice work as any children and families job could be.

Four years after qualifying, I finally got my opportunity to work in a criminal justice post. Was it worth the wait? Is the job everything I hoped it would be?

I started my first day with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. I felt confident, believing that my time in both Children & Families and Community Care had

The end of an era! November 2010 saw the retirement of Moira Conacher, who was one of the longest-serving Social Workers in West Lothian.



Moira's humour, amazing memory, and commitment to the people she worked with has already been much missed by colleagues and service-users alike.

provided me with a solid grounding in two of the holy trinity of knowledge, skills and values.

Most people will be familiar with the first day at a new workplace. Introductions to an array of new names and faces and inundated with practical information: it's heady stuff. But in addition to all this was a language that was completely foreign to me. Being from Canada and having had to tune my ear to the myriad regional accents of Scotland, I never imagined having any difficulty understanding what was said to me.

But my lack of specific knowledge in the field of criminal justice was made frighteningly clear to me. My earlier comfort of

having a solid grounding in skills and values quickly retreated in the face of what appeared to be an overwhelming task of gaining a competent level of knowledge specific to criminal justice. Even the comforting thought that service users would be attending appointments regularly was dashed with the revelation that a court order didn't necessarily translate into attendance!

But these fears were soon abandoned as quickly as they appeared. Like the small group in my social work course, I have found that the people in criminal justice are a closely-knit family. What I walked into that morning was an environment of support and encouragement that I found inspiring.

Staff are working with a group of people that include: some who are very violent and aggressive; some who present risk of harm not only to others, but also to themselves; and some who are extremely vulnerable. The professionalism with which the people in the office got about their work was equalled by their often rather off-centred humour and also their humanity.

I noticed straight away the increased amount of time spent at my desk. I understand the importance of recording information but there appeared to be significantly more to be done here. Perhaps it is the relationship we have with the Courts, the need for more thorough

recording, or perhaps the demands from the Scottish Government for statistical data. I can definitely say that I prefer spending time working directly with the service users, and I am particularly looking forward to the opportunity of facilitating the Constructs groupwork programme.

I also think that the way risk is considered is different from anything else I've experienced. Risk assessment is a critical part of any social work post, but I never had so many different types of assessment in use at the same time. This was a little unnerving for a new criminal justice worker. I've never been overly concerned for my own safety, perhaps rather naively. I couldn't help but wonder if this apparent increased level of assessment translated into an increased level of risk to myself!

Perhaps the biggest difference I have found in criminal justice is the way the service user is perceived. Child protection in children and families, and adult protection in community care: it's relatively easy to see the service user as a vulnerable person. However the public seems is much less able to view an offender as being a person who is entitled to the same respect.

If anything, some of the people I have encountered in the criminal justice system simply just don't belong here. Though our

colleagues in children and families may often be criticised when things don't turn out well, it is seldom considered that they don't have a job to do. Here in criminal justice, we are routinely questioned about the work we do trying to reduce the risk of reoffending and the rationale behind considering alternatives to custody.

There is no doubt in my mind that the people who train as social workers are a dedicated bunch, each with their own idea of where they want to be. And each area of social work brings with it a unique set of challenges. Criminal justice is no different. The skills and values I have did provide a solid grounding and I hope to never lose the perspective this gives me. I also realise that my knowledge will increase with experience. But as I am continually being reminded, I'll never know it all, and that is what makes working with people so exciting. It turns out that working in criminal justice has been more than I thought it would be. And that certainly has made it worth the wait.

Support for Offenders in their Tenancies

Robin Allen, manager of the Prison Throughcare Team, reports on a new venture in West Lothian.

The Supported Tenancies Project is a multi-agency

collaboration. West Lothian Council's Criminal Justice Social Work Service, and Housing & Building Services, and Lothian and Borders Police are working together with two aims: public protection; and the safe reintegration of high-risk offenders into the community. It is targeted at high-risk offenders who are managed under the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

The supported tenancies project provides a localised response to the risk management needs of West Lothian offenders. It enables us to plan flexible and individualised risk management packages that take into account both risk issues and support needs. This is achieved through a combination of staff visiting to give support, and electronic monitoring based within the offender's tenancy. CJ Social Work and Housing and Building Services have recruited staff and made sure that these workers can devote all their time and effort to provide this robust and cost effective response to risk management.

There are numerous benefits to this approach including:

- The service user is returning to a familiar locality from outset;
- There is potential to make use of other support networks, such as family and friends;
- We can tailor risk management and support plans to the specific requirements and needs of the offender;
- It becomes more difficult for an offender to develop inappropriate relationships with other offenders (as is possible in a group living situation);
- Reducing disruption to offenders caused by changing addresses. Previously, an offender would reside in a hostel for a period and would then move into a tenancy in another locality. Such changes are often stressful and have the potential to cause increased risk through factors directly linked to offending, such as anxiety and alcohol consumption;
- The needs of younger and more vulnerable offenders can be

managed with more efficiency;

- Flexibility, monitoring and support packages can be easily changed (increased or decreased) in line with changes in level of risk;
- Increased quality control. The project will be managed within West Lothian with oversight from the local MAPPA process;
- The project will have not have a significant impact upon our budget requirements as it can be largely provided within existing financial resources, and replaces the use of expensive hostel accommodation.

In summary, the Supported Tenancies Project enables services to monitor and support offenders through a flexible risk management framework which reflects both the support and monitoring needs of the individual offender. With a total of 72 dedicated staff hours every week, we could have face-to-face contact with an offender seven days a week should this be considered necessary.

How we assess what we do and the way we do it.

Paul Streater considers how the Criminal Justice Social Work Service can demonstrate ways in which it makes a difference

Many aspects of the council's operations are subject to inspection, and Criminal Justice is no exception. The last full Criminal Justice inspection

was in 2005, but staff have also been involved in other inspections, including the inspection of all council Social Work Services in 2007, and most recently,

an inspection of Prison-based Social Work Services, which includes Addiewell Prison. That inspection report should be

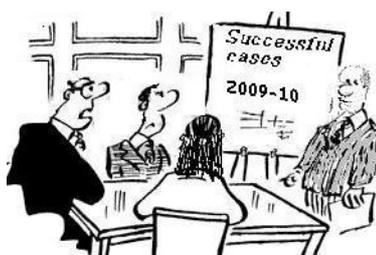
available by the time of the next CJ Newsletter.

There are other ways in which our performance is checked. The council has its own performance measurement system, the West Lothian Assessment Model (usually called WLAM). This considers how well we apply the council's key values:

- Focusing on customers' needs
- Being honest, open and accountable
- Providing equality of opportunity
- Developing employees
- Making the best use of our resources
- Working with other organisations.

Completing a WLAM assessment is a demanding exercise – staff groups consider how well we match up against a range of criteria, and what evidence we possess to prove the points we are making. When all the

sections have been considered fully, we have to decide how well we think we are doing, and the score that we give ourselves is then considered by a grading panel consisting of the Chief Executive, and other heads of council services.



"Could you perhaps be a little bit more precise than 'umpteenth thousands?'"

We have just completed this process, and by the time of the next CJ Newsletter will be able to tell you the outcome. It is no secret that we are hoping for a strong result.

The other way in which the council considers its performance is by being

assessed through the Customer Service Excellence Standard. The CSE, (formerly known as Charter Mark) is a UK-government sponsored scheme which tests in great depth those areas that research has indicated are a priority for customers, with particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude.

West Lothian Council has a long-standing commitment to demonstrating that customer-service is a real and daily concern. Readers may remember that West Lothian Council was in fact the first unitary council in the UK to achieve the Charter Mark for every part of its service. At the time of writing, the Criminal Justice application has almost been completed, and again, we look forward to passing on positive news in the next edition of this newsletter.

Living Life'

Paul Streater reports on West Lothian's Offender Employability Project

'Living Life' is an exciting project funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) to allow West Lothian College and West Lothian Council's Criminal Justice Social Work Service (CJSWS) to work in partnership until mid-2011 on a particular issue – the promotion of employment skills and opportunities for offenders in West Lothian.

It is widely accepted now that development of employment-related skills is one of the most significant steps that someone with a pattern of offending can take in making life-changes, and it is not a coincidence that in

the standard tool used to assess risk of re-offending, 20% of the questions relate to performance in the realms of education and work.

Using a mixture of techniques – provision of vocational training and qualifications, guidance, enterprise skills, life-coaching, mentoring and support for offenders living in the community – the 'Living Life' project hopes to achieve measurable



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success in improving the employability of a large number of offenders. The possible target group is very large – the majority of offenders placed on court orders or parole licences who are resident in West Lothian. This is potentially about 400 people a year.

There are various stages that need to be considered, of which the first is the starting level of skills and qualifications on which we hope the participants will build. To find out where we need to devote most energy at this stage, the Criminal Justice Social Work Service and the council's Adult Basic Education service (ABE) have worked together to develop a system to assess the skills and educational attainments of our service users. This will be completed as soon as possible after a person is placed on an Order or licence.

Early indications are that the biggest single need is for Adult Basic Education. Our service users have given us several reasons why this features strongly, including their missing out on education through being absent, not paying attention because they did not like the classes or the style of teaching, and in the case of some, because of dyslexia that was not recognised at that time.

While most people with whom the CJSWS is working have limited skills and normally struggle in

their search for work, this is not true of all offenders; others are confident in their employment and do not wish to make substantial change in their working life-style. The challenge for this latter group is to extend their horizons.

So what is the range of opportunities that we hope to provide? Apart from basic reading and writing, we are looking at:

- Work-related skills training. This will be through courses run by West Lothian College, and also through work carried out on Community Service and similar work-based court orders.
- Helping people access more advanced courses at West Lothian College.
- Arranging for specific courses to be run by West Lothian College where we can identify enough people willing to take part.
- Helping service users cope with the other things that make it difficult for them to get jobs. We all know that how people present themselves at interviews makes a difference, and we hope to consider these issues, both as part of our ongoing work with people, and through sessions open to all.
- Working with employers to increase their understanding of people who have

appeared in court. As an organisation, we know that our service users are people who may have sometimes acted unwisely, but who can learn and develop skills. The challenge for us is to explain this to employers and to encourage them not to write our service users off!

- Helping the people who are least confident about following through on change by appointing voluntary mentors – people who are there for the service user, rather than being part of the CJSWS.

So what else do we need to do? While what we plan is related to our continuing work with people who have been through the courts, existing staff are seeing a change in focus of their work. We also need extra hands to make this all happen, including:

- ABE Core Skills tutors based in both the CJSWS and West Lothian College;
- College-based vocational tutors;
- A work-based assessor, working at the College;
- A group of volunteer mentors (such mentors are already a regular part of student support at WL College, and the College will take a lead role in their recruitment and training)
- A mentor co-ordinator, who will work with other

staff to ensure the right levels of support are available.

- Employer engagement work. This is still being planned but may use existing council staff engaged in this activity.

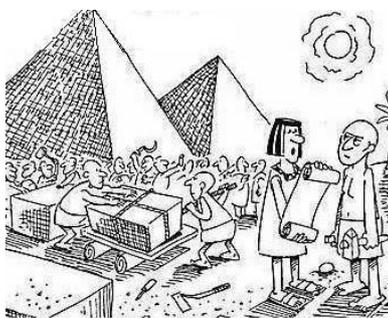
Developmental and managerial oversight comes from Christine Paterson, the newly appointed Project Manager at West Lothian College, and, from the CJSWS, by Paul Streater, seconded to act as Project Manager for the duration of the project.

Success will however depend on a number of factors. The most important is the complete involvement of existing member of staff. While some parts of the CJSWS already are involved directly in increasing relevant skills (i.e. Community Work Order Supervisors), we have still to confront the challenge of demonstrating that we are assisting in measurable change. The challenges are equally great for WL College - although a number of people who may come within the remit of this project are already developing themselves through the college's activities, this is not necessarily known to the college at present, and issues of confidentiality have to be addressed.

We also have to consider how we work with other organisations that have a working interest in offender employability. There are for

example many areas of shared activity and concern between the Criminal Justice Social Work Service and Jobcentre Plus; to make the most of the opportunities that this project offers, we have to harness these energies and reduce areas of duplication.

What is the greatest challenge that we face? Probably, the selling of this concept to offenders who may be engaging with us partly because our involvement is the least worst of the options available. While we may understand that having purposeful and gainful activity in life is an essential part of long-term fulfilment, this may not be easily understood by people who have not had that experience to date.



'You can get SVQs in lots of different subjects these days.'

While this may not be at present officially a core part of our work with offenders, it almost certainly will be in the future! The Scottish Government is at present considering reconstruction of the whole community sentencing structure, and the proposed new Community Payback Order is likely to include an

expectation that people on these orders (which replace Probation, Community Service, Supervised Attendance and Restriction of Liberty Orders) will carry out work related to personal learning and development.

The 'Living Life' Project gives us an exciting opportunity to make lasting change in people's lives; while there are clear challenges, this provides an opportunity for West Lothian to make a significant difference for offenders in our area.

Staffing News

Quite a bit of change in recent months, with workers moving to fresh teams, and a general restructuring of our team management.

Firstly, our new arrivals! We have welcomed: Criminal Justice Assistants Dougie Allan (DTTO), Sharon Cassidy (Community Work Orders) and David Walker (Throughcare Tenancy Support); and admin colleagues: Karen Hannah (Community Work Orders); Harry Cameron (Throughcare) and Natalija Straiziene (Living Life Project). We were however sorry to lose the services of Linda Graham, who left us in May 2010 after a long period of agency work with us.

We have welcomed David Timpany back to the Probation Team – he had

been on secondment for a number of months to help in the planning and development of the Caledonian Programme for men involved in offences of domestic violence.

Linda Ferguson, who had expected to return from her stay in Hong Kong in November, had a change of plan when her husband

was offered an extended contract there, and she resigned in late 2009 from her post of Probation Team Manager.

The current Team Managers are:

John Creighton - Court and Assessment);
Viv Murphy - Probation (operations), and Community Work Orders;

Chris Paxton - Probation (Constructs Groupwork);
Robin Allen - Prison Throughcare;
Linda Probka - (Prison Social Work);
Sharon Oxley - Drug Treatment and Testing Orders;
Fiona Muir - Admin Support.

Your views on how we're doing – feedback from surveys of service users.

Fiona Muir

What we learn from your comments

Since spring 2009, we have been conducting regular snap-shot surveys to find out more about the views of our service users – how they feel about how we work with them, how we explain things to them, and how we treat them.

With four surveys under our belt, we feel we have enough information to offer commentary on trends and on issues. However we are aware that there are limitations on the conclusions we can reasonably draw from this information, and we will explain these in more detail later in this article.

So to summarise the full year's results.

First, the good news:

- You are generally quite satisfied with the quality of our reception facilities – over ¾ of our respondents rated these as good or excellent. Although our

move to the Civic Centre meant uncomfortable chairs in Reception, there seem to have been compensations in the form of the food and drinks facilities, something we had been unable to install in our previous office despite regular requests!

- You consider that in general we treat you fairly – between 70% and 80% of the people who answer this question score us as either excellent or good.
- 75% considered that we had been good or excellent at keeping them informed about what was happening during our contact with them.
- 81% told us that we had been good or excellent at giving them clear and accurate information.
- 86% felt that the professionalism and knowledge of the worker who saw them

was either good or excellent.

What areas did we not come out so well in?

- You felt that our leaflets were not as helpful as we would like them to be. There is a practical problem about this. The Scottish Government expects us to give you all the information about the sentences that the court may use through explanation by the worker who is meeting with you, as well as in writing. There is a lot of information to give you. We will consider if there are ways that this could be done better. While 57% felt that the leaflets were good or excellent, 43% (more than 2 out of every 5 people) were less satisfied.
- People who have had to use the complaints process were also not entirely happy, with only 54% considering the system to be good or excellent. However, of

the people who did use the system, a higher proportion (average 67%) felt that the actions we took to resolve issues were good or excellent.

What are the issues in getting these statistics?

The way we collect this information (from people who attend appointments) means that we do not tend to get views from the people who are less satisfied with our service, and who therefore do not keep appointments! We are currently considering ways to find out what these people feel about the services we offer them.

We understand that, at times, disapproval caused

by changes in our working practices may result in negative feedback. Where sample sizes are small, this may cause quite large swings in results. Across the year, questions were each answered by an average of 53 people, which we feel is enough to draw statistical conclusions. The lowest response rate was in December 2009, with about 28 responses per question; the highest was August 2009, with 89.

While this has not been a significant problem in relation to these questionnaires, we do find that some questions change as time passes. This can be for a number of reasons:

- We sometimes realise that we have not made the question as clear as it could be
- The information that we obtain may not be particularly useful
- We may find a new question that is more relevant
- We need to keep the questionnaire reasonably short, so that people completing it are not discouraged
- We understand that many of the people who use our services have problems in reading and writing. We are currently thinking how we can make it easier for everyone to give their views.

How to help

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, you can contact us in any of the following ways:

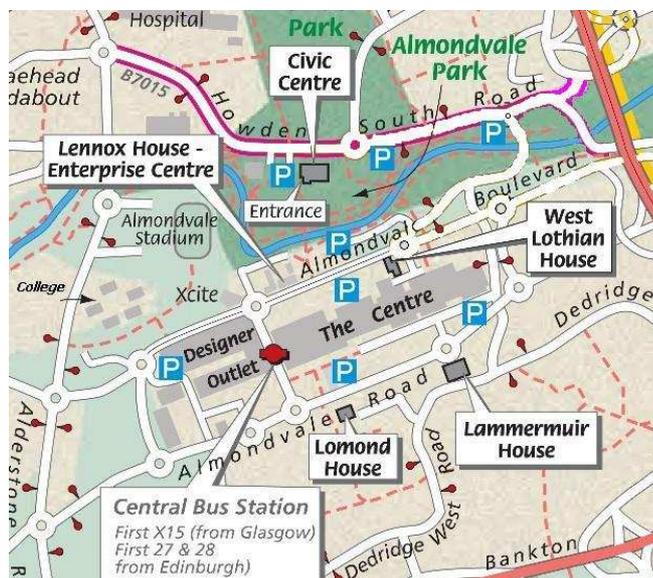
1. By writing to the **Criminal Justice Social Work Service, West Lothian Civic Centre, Howden South Road, Livingston EH54 6FF.**

*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 editor, Paul Streater, on 01506 280999 to discuss this further?



Map showing location of the West Lothian Civic Centre. Please note that parking is available on the south (town-centre) side of the River Almond. Access to the Civic Centre is at the west end (at football stadium end)

More information on travel to the Civic Centre from the West Lothian Council website at <http://www.westlothian.gov.uk>