

sacroSANCT

September 2009

SAFEGUARDING COMMUNITIES – REDUCING OFFENDING

At the Centre of Safer Communities

AS I take up my new role as Sacro Chief Executive, let me first of all say how pleased I am to be offered this opportunity to develop the strategic direction of an organisation that I believe plays a key role in the field of community safety. I am already well aware of the good work that is undertaken by Sacro staff on a daily basis and I look forward to visiting our services and meeting staff to discuss the challenges we face as an organisation.

I recognise that those living in our communities have a right to be safe, and feel safe. I also recognise that if society wants people who offend to confront their behaviour then sentencing, particularly in the community, must be swift and must be effective. Our effort in areas like community restorative and mediation services is so important in making people feel safe while enabling them to flourish.

As an advocate of community-based justice, I welcome the new *Criminal Justice and Licensing Bill*, which I believe has the potential to greatly enhance public confidence in the criminal justice system.

The changes suggested within the bill – new and effective Community Payback Orders, robust protection for victims of crime, and the creation of a Scottish Sentencing Council – are all measures which I wholeheartedly support.

As an organisation, Sacro has a central role to play in respect of the new legislation and I believe that this can be achieved through the continued professionalism of staff, as well as enhanced co-operation with our partner agencies. I strongly support the ethos of partnership working and recognise that a shared vision is crucial if we, along with other agencies, are to effectively tackle the root causes of offending behaviour. The creation of safer communities across Scotland is a goal that is shared by all organisations working in the area of criminal justice, and I firmly believe that this can only be reached through the development of effective partnerships.

While I am confident in Sacro's position as a trusted partner with other agencies and authorities, I also know that we must continue to develop as an organisation if we are to continue to operate effectively. It will be through the quality of the services we provide that we build community confidence in Sacro.

The economic climate in which we currently operate, coupled with compulsory competitive tendering for services, brings financial realities that must be matched with sound business acumen.



As an organisation, we are committed to building on the solid foundations already in place and will continue the drive for excellence across all of our services, in addition to ensuring that we are supporting communities and service users by having a positive influence on public policy. Community sentencing, managing risk while confronting damaging behaviour, and constructively dealing with conflict are all high on my agenda, and I am confident that Sacro can make lasting improvements in these areas.

At this time of change, I am conscious that some of the challenges we face may seem a daunting prospect. Although the demands placed upon all of us in the voluntary sector will increase, I am determined to ensure that we are not overwhelmed by the pace of change. I take great heart from the knowledge that Sacro's staff care deeply about what they do and am confident that this caring professionalism will stand us in good stead during this period.

We must ensure that we build on these strengths to enhance our reputation among our clients and partners, and ensure Sacro continues to occupy a central role within the criminal justice arena. This is a challenge that we must meet as an organisation if we are to honour our obligations to communities across Scotland and I am optimistic as I look forward to working with Sacro as we strive to achieve this goal.

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Chief Executive, Sacro

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The Nuisance of Noisy Neighbours

DUNDEE Community Mediation team have taken their message out onto the street in support of Noise Action Week 2009.

The team manned stands in Dundee's Wellgate Shopping Centre and The Abbeygate Shopping Mall in Arbroath to provide information on methods to help reduce nuisance caused by noise. A short opinion poll was also conducted to explore the general public's awareness of mediation and the service.



Bob Ballantine, Mediation Service Team Leader commented, "as noise is the biggest cause of neighbour disputes it is important that people are aware of the impact noise can have on others and the steps which can be taken to address difficulties caused by it. Often small adjustments and improved communications can make a huge difference in these situations."

Results of the survey revealed that over half of the people petitioned had experienced conflict with their neighbours, though only a small minority had heard of and used the Mediation Service. Encouragingly, after learning about the services provided by the Community Mediation team, almost all said that if need arose they would consider using the service in the future.

Noise Action Week, co-ordinated by Environmental Protection UK, is an annual initiative that aims to raise awareness of the health implications, such as stress, that excessive noise can trigger. The event is a meeting ground for local authorities, housing providers, mediation services and all those involved in neighbourhood noise management to highlight services available.

Mediators, Mary McDuff and Sue Williamson.

New Health Service for Female Offenders Launched in Edinburgh

A NEW project has been launched by NHS Lothian in partnership with Sacro to deliver life skills to women. *The Willow Project* is aimed at women who have come into contact with the criminal and community justice system or who are at risk of offending.

The project was launched in May at Sacro's Community Justice Centre in central Edinburgh by Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Kenny MacAskill MSP. Mr MacAskill commented, "Clearly those who break the law must face the consequences of their actions but very often the criminal justice system, on its own, can't address the underlying problems behind offending behaviour."

Research has shown that women offenders are more likely, among other things, to have been violently abused from childhood to adulthood,

have poorer mental health, substance misuse problems and lower self esteem. Project leader and Senior Health Promotion Specialist NHS Lothian Jess Evans notes that "women offenders have some of the poorest health of anyone in society today and it can be daunting for them to try and get the help that they need."

The 10-week programme teaches life skills from cookery and nutrition classes to financial and household management. Full healthcare advice is offered in the women's healthcare provision – which includes cervical cancer screening, dental care and sexual health advice.

The project is funded by NHS Lothian and the Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership. In addition to working in close partnership with Sacro, the project also involves NECS and Apex Scotland.



Willow's service users learn valuable life skills in addition to health screening and advice services.



Team Leader Tracy Stewart with pupils from Broughton High School.

Spanning the Generations

THE Sacro-run North Edinburgh Intergenerational Project, based in Pilton, has embarked on a series of conferences and events aimed at addressing intergenerational conflict in the area.

The first conference, held on Thursday 26 March at the Muirhouse Millennium Centre, was hosted and co-ordinated by Service Team Leader, Tracy Stewart. Speakers and participants at the event included Radio Forth's Grant Stott, long standing local Community Beat Officer, Iain Matthews and Cammy Day, Councillor for Edinburgh North.

Young people from Broughton High School mixed with older members of the local community and key stake holders to discuss issues affecting their area, be this young people feeling that they have nowhere to go or older people feeling intimidated by groups of youngsters on the street. Representatives from both generations commented that the conference had given them a greater understanding and respect for the different generations that they didn't have previously. Hannah Turnbull a student at Broughton High School noted that, "nobody owns the streets, people, whoever they are, have the right to not feel intimidated on them", classmate Marie Gilmour agreed and felt that "communication was the way forward".

The next event will be held on the 26 September at Forthquarter Park in Granton from 12 – 4pm. The event will celebrate the communities of North Edinburgh by bringing people of all ages together for a day of fun. There will be plenty to entertain the the whole family and a host of organisations on hand to offer information on their services and programmes.

A film about Intergenerational Conflict has been made by a group of young people from the area and this will be screened on the day. This will be followed by a discussion between the young filmmakers and the local community, focussing on ways in which they can work towards combatting Intergenerational Conflict.

Making Justice Work

THE *Make Justice Work* campaign was officially launched on 29 June 2009 in London and aims to raise public awareness of the ineffectiveness of short term prison sentences (12 months or less). The well supported campaign highlights the true cost of the 'revolving door' of re-offending – both financially and in the cost to society – and details real alternatives to prison that are more effective at reducing re-offending.

The campaign is the work of penal reform campaigner Roma Hooper and brings together a group of leading experts from the criminal justice system including former prison governors and leading academics in the field.

The campaign is focused on England and Wales and was launched with a concise report on short term sentences and the impact on public resources. Ultimately, the campaign aims to change public opinion on sentencing and robust community based reparation and challenge and influence government policy.

More information about the campaign, including a link to the report, *Are short-term prison sentences an efficient and effective use of public resources?* can be found at: www.makejusticework.org.uk.

Restorative Justice Seminar heads for Inverness

INVERNESS will be the setting of a Restorative Practice Scotland Seminar "*Developing and Sustaining Practical Approaches for Restorative Practice in Our Work Settings*" on 1 October.

The seminar at the city's Craigmonie Hotel will be a forum to share best practice and experience of Restorative Practices in the workplace. With an objective of fostering a supportive restorative practice community in Scotland the seminar will focus on four broad sectors, namely prisons, adults, schools and Youth Justice.

Introductory speaker at the conference will be Sacro's Restorative Practices Advisor, Billy Nicol who has worked in Restorative Justice Services with young people and adults since 1998.

Anyone connected with Restorative Justice or Restorative Practice practitioners, academics, policy makers, police, prison service or researchers are welcome to attend the seminar which will be a mix of large group discussions and focussed group activity.

Further details and booking forms can be found at: www.restorativepracticescotland.co.uk

The view from Sacro

THOSE familiar with Sacro's website may have noticed a new resource that features links to news items of interest and provides a platform for Sacro to air its views online.

Viewpoint offers a forum for Sacro to put forward its views on current issues and comment on developments affecting community justice and safety in Scotland.

Viewpoint can be accessed from the homepage at www.sacro.org.uk



Information resource on addiction is now online

THE Film Exchange on Alcohol and Drugs (FEAD) is an online resource of short video presentations from leading figures in the alcohol and drugs field. The contributors cover a range of topics honestly and directly – including: achievements, problem areas, and reflections on the field's history.

There is a great deal of content on the site, all of which is free to use as a useful aid to discussions, training events, and group work.

FEAD is an initiative of the *Lifeline Project*. Since its foundation in Manchester in 1971, Lifeline's purpose is to relieve poverty, sickness and distress among those persons affected by addiction to drugs of any kind, and to educate the public on matters relating to drug misuse.

www.fead.org.uk



Event Calendar Highlights

➤ Drugs and Criminal Justice in Scotland

➤ Tuesday 15 September 2009

➤ Apex City Hotel, Edinburgh

THIS conference, organised by Scottish Drugs Forum, will look at:

- > lessons to be learned from the various responses to date
- > how resources could be harnessed to make a bigger impact on reducing the consequences of damaging drug use.

The event features key speakers with extensive experience in the criminal justice field including Sheriff Michael O'Grady QC, formerly of Glasgow Drug Court, and Santosh Dade of the award-winning Lanarkshire DTO Team, which won a Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) Excellence Award in 2008.

The conference will also provide an opportunity to explore some practice issues in more depth including:

- > Working with prolific offenders
- > Working with younger male offenders in the criminal justice system
- > Improving the linkages between criminal justice services and mainstream drug services
- > The future development of testing within the criminal justice system
- > Good practice in prescribing – in prison and in the community

For further information and booking details, please visit: www.sdf.org.uk/sdf/3088.html or contact Lisa McKibben at the Scottish Drugs Forum on 0141 221 1175, email lisa@sdf.org.uk

Alastair MacDonald. 1946 – 2009

It is with sorrow that we report the death on Tuesday 11 August 2009 of Alastair MacDonald, Sacro's Service Manager in Highland and Moray. Alastair joined Sacro in August 2008 following his retirement as Prison Governor with the Scottish Prison Service. Though with us for barely a year, Alastair quickly endeared himself to Sacro colleagues with his ready wit and incisive observations.

Alastair demonstrated a longstanding commitment to the reintegration and rehabilitation of former prisoners throughout his career as well as being a keen advocate of means to reduce inappropriate use of imprisonment by development of such services as our recently established Bail Supervision service in Highland. He also embraced new experiences at Sacro, as evidenced by his recent accreditation as a Mediator.

Alastair will be sadly missed by colleagues, family and friends. He leaves a large gap in our lives but will retain a place in our hearts and memories for a long time to come.