



north wales criminal justice board annual conference

venue cymru, llandudno
20th february 2008

Cymru a Flynnyddol Bwrdd Cyflaw North Wales Criminal Justice Board An Cyflawnder Syml, Cyflym. Cr Simple, Speedy, Summ	
09.30	Cofrestru / Coffi Registration / Coffee
10.00	Croeso / Welcome
10.10	Siaradwr Gwadd Keynote Speaker
10.25	Ffeithiau a Ffigurau Lleol / Cenedlaethol Facts & Figures Local / National
10.40	Heddlu Gogledd Cymru North Wales Police
11.05	Coffi / Coffee
11.25	Gwasanaeth Enghreifftiol Crown Prosecution Service
11.50	Amddiffyniad Defence
12.05	GLIEM HMCS
12.30	Gwasanaeth Prawf Probation Service
12.40	Cefnogaeth i Ddiroddfw Victim Support
12.50	Cwestiwn ac Ateb Question & Answer
13.00	Cinio / Lunch
14.45	Gwasanaeth Enghreifftiol Crown Prosecution Service
14.55	SERCO
15.20	Carchar Altcourse Altcourse Prison
15.35	Prosiect Pheonix Project
15.50	Gwasanaeth Cyflaw Youth Justice



david hanson mp

minister for prisons and reducing reoffending

Justice Minister David Hanson has called on Local Criminal Justice Boards to take the lead in responding to the needs of their communities and delivering improved services.

Mr Hanson, the Labour MP for Delyn, made the plea during a speech delivered to the Annual Conference of the North Wales Local Criminal Justice Board.

In his speech he also gave notice that he intended shortly to announce a list of potential sites for a new prison in North Wales and he urged that in the consultation period to follow that announcement, North Wales should continue to lobby for a prison.

He said: "I will be publishing a short list of potential sites for extra prison capacity in North Wales which will be up for discussion.

"The intention is to look at whether we need extra space and how and where to provide it.

"The list will include sites in both North and South Wales."

He added: "There is an opportunity for you to engage vigorously in the debate and I am

confident you will continue to make the case for a prison in North Wales right up to the end of the consultation period in April."

"an opportunity for you to engage vigorously in the debate"

Mr Hanson pointed out that in the five years since the creation of the boards, significant achievements in the criminal justice system had been made, thanks to their vital contributions and partnerships.

Local initiatives such as Simple Speedy Summary Justice have enabled the speedier resolution of cases, benefiting victims and witnesses alike.

This has led to an increase in early guilty pleas and a decrease in adjournments, which fell in September 2007 to their lowest since 1994.

David Hanson said: "I believe that leadership

by local boards is essential to building a more responsive, efficient and effective system.

"We can - and have - set the overall framework for our vision. Now our role is to provide the ongoing support and information that is needed by the boards to deliver this vision successfully.

"We in central government need to take a step back and have the courage to be more hands-off about how those targets are achieved and to allow the boards to decide, using their knowledge and expertise about their communities."

He highlighted and announced:

- Progress over the last 10 years, resulting in crime falling by a third, new standards set in services for victims and witnesses, improved court facilities, closer work with communities through programmes such as Community Justice and Community Payback, over 40,000 offenders benefiting from education training or employment following release from prison as well as a net 15,000 increase in the number of prison places by 2014 (2,500 this year).

- A new Criminal Justice Strategic Plan for 2008-2011, building on progress and placing new emphasis on local boards taking the lead.
- The roll-out of the Beacon approach more widely in the coming year to build up the tools and ability of local boards to implement change.
- Plans to extend strong criminal justice partnerships to address the needs of youth offenders
- A recent consultation on the Reducing Reoffending Strategic Plan to look at building on good work to date and better reduce reoffending over the next three years.
- The creation of six probation trusts from this April (including Gwent and Dyfed-Powys) giving more freedom to find innovative ways of reducing reoffending.
- The National Offender Management Service taking on agency status in April, bringing together national and regional management of prisons and probation for the first time, strengthening the links between the wider criminal justice system and the work of prison, probation and youth justice services.





ed beltrami

chief crown prosecutor

Case for the prosecution

There was a big pat on the back for North Wales Police from the Crown Prosecution Service for their part in implementing SSSJ in North Wales.

Chief Crown Prosecutor Ed Beltrami, chairman-elect of the North Wales Criminal Justice Board, told the conference that the police's support had been crucial in introducing SSSJ to North Wales.

He said: "I've been very impressed with the police across the whole area in the way they have taken this on and upped their game to improve the quality of files and get them to us at an earlier stage."

"because you do the work they plead guilty"

"Then it's up to the CPS and the courts. It's about getting a plea in early and if it's a not guilty then establishing what's necessary to proceed.

"There have been problems with defendants not

jim neary

cps

consulting with solicitors until they get to court and although criminal justice agencies meet regularly it's more difficult to get feedback from defence solicitors.

"But adjournments used to be part of the process. People didn't expect us to proceed first time and an adjournment was considered a right but the criminal procedure rules have changed that.

"The overriding factor is that cases be dealt with justly which means convicting the guilty and acquitting the innocent and here the defence now has a duty not just to their client but to ensure that justice is done and to assist the court.

"That means criminal trials must no longer be treated as a game where the defence keeps its cards close to its chest and any omission by the prosecution leads to failure.

"To ensure that, we need strong support from magistrates and clerks so that the defence is not able to proceed opportunistically or withhold aspects of their case.

"If we can do that it will see the biggest change we can make in improving summary justice."

Designated Case Worker Jim Nearey of the CPS prosecuted the first case under SSSJ on September 12

phil lloyd jones

defence solicitor

and he said that there were inbuilt delays in the way cases proceeded previously but it was very difficult to explain to the public why it should take so long to bring a case to trial.

"Often victims and witnesses would be fed up and well aware of the delay," he said: "But now the defence gets the file three days before the court sits and is expected to be able to enter a plea and in a not guilty is expected to state the nature of their defence."

He also complimented the police for the way they now prepare the files and added: "An officer said to me, 'We do all this work and then they plead guilty,' and I replied, 'It's because you do the work that they plead guilty.'"

Case for the defence

Defence solicitors have welcomed the principles of SSSJ, according to experienced defender Phil Lloyd Jones – even if some of the old lags are confused.

He said that explaining to them that they would not automatically be entitled to an adjournment had been a culture shock.

He added that he had also canvassed colleagues who took on defence work but had failed to elicit any replies.

"But most of us have embraced the procedure

wholeheartedly," he said: "And we are very keen to be involved in the investigative process while being present at the police interview stage is also good."

"we are very keen to be involved in the investigative process"

"We do have certain concerns. Papers have to be fulsome and in the majority of cases in which I have been involved since November the files have been extremely good.

"But our duty is to our clients. They want to know whether they're going to prison or not and they need the best advice possible.

"If it's going to be a guilty plea then let's do it at the first hearing."

And Mr Lloyd Jones added: "I must also compliment the Probation Service because the preparation of the preliminary report helps the swift resolution of a case and they have been very efficient at doing so."



supt john turton & sgt aled davies

north wales police

A police presence on the streets is still a hugely important part of the criminal justice system, according to Police Superintendent John Turton, of North Wales Police.

But it is how officers respond to incidents that counts: "They are expected to use discretion," he said: "But discretion is not a soft option. It is a reasoned thought process which culminates in an appropriate outcome.

***"it's important to get
restorative justice on
the agenda"***

"That is an outcome that is fair, without prejudice and accountable which is what the outcome looks like to the public.

"That is why it is important to get restorative justice on the agenda because it brings victims,

offenders and communities together to decide on a response to a particular crime."

Where the police operation is closely linked to SSSJ is in the process of preparing cases and here too there has been good progress, Police Sergeant Aled Davies told the conference.

As part of the Western Case Management Team involved in putting files of case information together he had found that in getting files prepared quickly for court they were often prepared poorly and were incomplete.

He said: "In minor offences files were often not good enough, leading to more adjournments when they were sent back to us.

"Under the new system there is an extra three days to prepare files which allows more time to do a better job."

Guilty pleas had risen from 67.2 to 72.5 per cent since the introduction of SSSJ but this had to be maintained if the system was to continue to work.

mike mullis
criminal justice board

hayley wynne
office of criminal justice reform

The implementation of Simple, Speedy Summary Justice has been helped by the provision of special equipment and training, according to North Wales Criminal Justice Board Business Manager Mike Mullis.

***"we can produce the
evidence within two
weeks of charging"***

He reported that after trialling the new process in Central Division in September they had rolled it out across North Wales on November 12, more than six weeks ahead of schedule.

In order to facilitate the system and make it work money had been provided and spent on CCTV copying equipment because across the area there were 19 different formats for CCTV but the 45 laptops

bought for the courts were loaded with all 19.

"That means that whatever happens we can produce the evidence within two weeks of charging.

"We have also bought equipment to enable defendants and their solicitors to confer in court and new digital cameras for the police to photograph evidence and scenes."

Providing more thorough information also speeded up the justice process so that where before defence solicitors might have only seen the charge sheet, they now had more complete information three days before the hearing.

"If we can educate the defendants to go to their solicitors before the day of their appearance they will be even better prepared," he said.

The system certainly seems to be working nationally as well, according to Hayley Wynne, who reported that 66 per cent of cases were now being dealt with at first hearing: "That's a really positive finding and very encouraging," she said.



iolo thomas, olwen ruscoe & daphne swale courts service

Seeing was believing in terms of the effectiveness of SSSJ for Iolo Thomas, Clerk to the Justices in North Wales, the man who runs the courts in the area.

"I've been doing the job since 1975 and I'd never seen anything like it"

He said: "I don't often officiate in court these days but I did stand in last month and was very pleasantly shocked.

"It was a complex case of affray in a pub, the first hearing had been at the beginning of December, there were numerous witnesses, several police officers and CCTV evidence.

"But there was no adjournment, prosecution and defence moved forward, the probation officer drew up a report there and then and the defendant was sentenced that day.

"I've been doing the job since 1975 and I'd never seen anything like it.

"Prior to SSSJ it would have taken up to ten adjournments before we were able to move on to a trial."

Olwen Ruscoe, Deputy Clerk to the Justices, said training for magistrates and the provision of equipment had been vital in moving the process forward.

She said: "Magistrates must be inquisitorial and robust at the first hearing, all the time focusing on the need to proceed without delay.

"All the agencies work together more effectively and everyone benefits, most importantly the victims and the witnesses."

Daphne Swale, Bench Chair, Conwy, said: "We aim for one hearing for a guilty plea and two for a not guilty.

"Magistrates have been very committed and solicitors are finding it very difficult to get adjournments.

"The fact that the Probation Service had already put in place a system to provide faster delivery of reports supported us in implementing SSSJ."

reducing re-offending

Electronic tagging devices are now widely used in North Wales and **Scott Murphy**, of SERCO, which provides the devices, said: "These provide an effective punishment by restricting liberty, interrupting the pattern of offending and removing external pressures.

"It doesn't stop the offender walking out of the door but it does remind them there are consequences to doing so."

Many North Wales prisoners are housed at Altcourse Prison, in Liverpool, and part of their rehabilitation programme there focuses on training on the prison's own radio station.

Dave McAlly, of Altcourse, said: "They might not become the next Chris Moyles but there are many other jobs they can do.

"They may have made mistakes in the past but there are many new skills they can learn and they can change and become valuable members of their community."

Stuart Jones, of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, who co-ordinates the Phoenix Project, told the conference how they had used the skills and disciplines of fire fighting to help youngsters with problems.

They have particularly targeted those young people with a pre-disposition towards problems involving fires

and they have now run 50 courses for 600 students.

"We want to promote the values of respect, trust and communication and teach the benefits of teamwork and help them use operational fire services personnel as role models."

Lesley Bayley, Operations Manager for the Youth Justice Service in Flintshire, described how they are trying to reduce the number of young people entering the criminal justice system.

"Prevention is better than cure," she said: "If we can identify significantly earlier such things as bullying and substance abuse then there's a better chance of preventing them becoming a problem.

"But the police have detection targets and have not got a discretion about what to do with lower levels of offences which means we're in danger of criminalising a large proportion of young people."

Steve Wood, of the Youth Justice Service, said: "The age by which if a young person has not offended they're unlikely to do so in the future is 14.

"But there is a danger that forming an identity can be attractive for young people so that wearing a tag or getting a yellow card or an ASBO can be a badge they're proud of."

Dave McAlly

Lesley Bayley

Steve Wood

Stuart Jones

Scott Murphy



yvonne thomas

director noms

The National Offender Management Scheme in Wales has a threefold aim, according to Director Yvonne Thomas, to protect the public, reduce re-offending and manage the delivery of sentences.

She said: "NOMS is the commissioning structure within the Ministry of Justice, the third largest department in government and from April will bring together all public and private prisons, probation services and commissioning activities into a unified structure."

"NOMS has a threefold aim in Wales"

To accomplish that it will have a budget of £120m for operational expenditure and £50m for capital expenditure.

Its many duties include developing robust information for Needs Assessments, the roll out of the Offender Management Model, matching demand with better targeted services, Service Reviews and providing better feedback to

stakeholders, partners and providers as well as developing a prison strategy for Wales.

Ms Thomas added that the All-Wales Reducing Re-offending Strategy Board was responsible for setting and driving strategy to improve public protection and reduce levels of re-offending.

She added that the Board was underpinned by seven Reducing Re-offending Pathway Groups which provided the engine room to deliver joint actions relating to areas such as accommodation, Health and Social Care, Substance Misuse, ETE, Children and Families of Offenders, Finance, Benefit and Debt and Attitudes, Thinking and Behaviour.

For the coming year they were to carry out a strategic review of substance misuse and domestic abuse provision and evaluate their effectiveness.

As well as considering an extension to Parc prison, they were to look at a prison estate strategy for Wales, support the new Probation Trusts in their first year of operation, and extend turnaround into an all-Wales service specification for women offenders.

making a difference

Ros Cameron, North Wales Regional Manager for Community Justice Interventions Wales: "Many offenders have voluntarily engaged in restorative justice projects, particularly environmental projects which dramatically benefit the areas in which they live."

"Some of the projects we run are well worth a visit, ranging from voluntary work to learning how to cook a delicious pizza from scratch."

Stif Richards, Prolific and other Priority Offender Co-ordinator: "We target the 0.5 per cent of offenders who commit nine per cent of all crime and if we do that successfully statistics show that we can reduce the offending rate among that group by 43 per cent."

"But we also need to stop them becoming prolific in the first place and the next stage is to develop more consistency and closer inter-agency working."

"We also address the accommodation issue because if we can't house these people then their basic needs are not being met."

Andy Jones, North Wales Probation Service: "The faster delivery of reports put in place by the Probation Service has proved very effective. It was so successful as a pilot that we decided to introduce it across the area."

"We have also put case administrators into courts to help with reports and installed computer equipment to help with accessing records and using e-mail."

"The statistics have been impressive but there is a real human element in terms of the victims and witnesses because they view the sentencing of offenders as a real milestone."

"It is still about delivering quality assessments based on offenders' needs and the risk of re-offending."

Carolyn Hodrien, Area Manager North Wales Victim Support: "For victims the experience of being involved in the criminal justice system can be worse than the crime."

"The system is focused on the offender rather than the victim although there are steps in place to change this and SSSJ should increase victim satisfaction with the process."

IT'S WORKED FOR ME

Patrick Cahill, ex-offender: "Two years ago I had it all, very good job, wonderful girlfriend, nice place to live, but I was dependent on alcohol and a drink-driving offence saw me lose it all."

"I became homeless, lost my job, lost my car, lost my self-esteem."

"I was made aware of what I had done and what the consequences of my actions might have been."

"Through my contact with Louise Kelly of the North Wales Probation Service I now want to move forward and I look at life in a positive way."

"I have attained the Bronze Endeavour Award and hope to follow through with Silver and Gold and now I want to remain alcohol-free and make a positive contribution to the greater community I am part of."

David Shinn, 23, from Wrexham, ex-offender: "I was a heavy drinker, smoking cannabis, causing trouble and generally being a menace – I spent my 20th birthday in court."

"NACRO contacted me and through them I got involved with the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Now I've got my Bronze Award and am on course for Gold."

"It gave me the opportunity to take part in the Fastnet Race and through that I learned a lot about myself and proved to myself and others that I could perform under pressure."

"Now I have been accepted as a volunteer with the Tall Ships Crew and that is giving me the opportunity to gain sailing and other qualifications."

Patrick Cahill

Carolyn Hodrien

Stif Richards

David Shinn

Ros Cameron

Andy Jones



clare pillman

director hmcs wales

The criminal justice system in North Wales has embraced the concept of Simple, Speedy Summary Justice wholeheartedly, according to the woman in charge of the courts system in Wales.

Clare Pillman, Director of Her Majesty's Courts Service Wales, told the conference: "Initially I was sceptical of SSSJ, I felt it was something that had been round before and had not made big strides and I wasn't sure it was going to work.

"It's about doing our jobs and doing them well"

"It has to be right that we make it much quicker between the time a crime is committed and the final outcome.

"But what we have heard today is that the criminal justice system in North Wales believes in SSSJ and believes in a system that works for all its different component parts.

"Someone said, 'It's just another initiative from London,' but what has been different is that it has been implemented with local leadership and support in a way that works for us locally.

"That's why people feel it's working and why people feel confident about it.

"It's about doing our jobs and doing them well.

"The challenges ahead are how do we learn our lessons and learn them well and how do we make it business as usual.

"It's also about how we build the principles we've established into the youth courts and Crown courts systems."

Ms Pillman, who is stepping down as chairman of the North Wales Criminal Justice Board, also pointed up that while there had been significant gains for the Board since its inception in 2003, there were also major challenges ahead.

That meant that while there have been major reductions in burglary, robbery, sexual and car crime, other areas were on the increase.

She added: "The big challenges are drugs crime and violent crime but I am confident with all agencies working together we can address them."