

# COMMUNITYLINKSCENTRE

January 2008 Newsletter

SAFEGUARDING COMMUNITIES – REDUCING OFFENDING

## Fergus Ewing MSP, Minister for Community Safety officially opens the Community Links Centre

**EDINBURGH'S** Community Links Centre (CLC), the only one of its kind in the country and the initiative chosen as a Centre of Excellence by the Lothian and Borders Community Justice Authority, was officially opened on 4 December 2007, by Fergus Ewing MSP, Minister for Community Safety.

A commemorative plaque was jointly unveiled by the Minister and service user, Neil Meads.



Service user, Neil Meads and Fergus Ewing MSP officially opened the Centre.

The CLC provides valuable support services to enable ex-prisoners to reintegrate into their communities.

At the official opening, Fergus Ewing, MSP, Minister for Community Safety, said,

“It’s a tremendous honour to launch the ‘Pathfinder’ Community Links Centre, the first of its kind and a one-stop shop that will provide the continuity and support that so many short term prisoners require at the crucial point of release.

“A smooth transition from prison to the community provides offenders with the opportunity to rebuild their lives and avoid further offending. Effective support mechanisms in the community are vital in order for that transition to prove successful.

“Currently too many prisoners are caught in the “revolving door” of short-term prison sentences. We are determined to break that cycle of criminality but while we will make every effort to reduce crime, we will never completely eliminate it. Therefore we must support prisoners and offer them a positive alternative – a positive path out of repeat offending.

“This facility is a perfect example of what is required in terms of providing the support of a wide range of agencies who will work with ex-prisoners to help them put their lives back together again.”

“I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the very valuable work by Sacro and the other voluntary sector organisations who in partnership with the statutory agencies are delivering this and other services to offenders and their families.”

### Scottish Prison Service PR2 System

The secondment of an SPS staff member to the CLC continues to build bridges between HMP Edinburgh, Cornton Vale, Polmont YOI and the Community Links Centre.

All Sacro Throughcare staff now have in their offices what is known as ‘Global Access’ to the PR2 (Prison Record version two) system within the prison estate. This positive development means that staff can have full access to PR2 to update the system and have fairly unfettered access to the system as a whole. Sacro are currently trialling this arrangement to establish whether records for Cornton Vale and Polmont YOI can be accessed via Edinburgh and vice versa.



Sacro's Chief Executive, Susan Matheson and CLC Manager, Ian Norman showed the Minister around the Centre. They are pictured here talking to Throughcare Team Leaders, David Jeffrey (above) and Alfie Smyth (below). Sacro's Chair, Paul Morron can also be seen below.



## > Need somewhere to meet?

The CLC now has several rooms of different sizes available for your use.

Of particular interest to partner agencies will be the two large meeting rooms with tables and seating for 18 people in each room – ideal for steering group/ management committee/multi-agency meetings.

The rooms are cost-free to partner agencies and can be reserved by contacting the CLC.

## > Voluntary Throughcare/ Throughcare Addictions Service Referrals

The Sacro Throughcare Addiction Service (TAS) now have an agreement with Phoenix Futures in HMP Edinburgh whereby they will refer 100% of eligible individuals, three months prior to their release. This positive development matches the existing arrangements with Phoenix Futures in HMPs Polmont YOI and Cornton Vale. Part of the new arrangements will see Sacro's Throughcare Addiction Service receiving a list of individuals, eligible to receive a service from Phoenix Futures and Sacro's TAS via the Prison Links Centre. This will allow both service providers to monitor the effectiveness of this new arrangement over the coming months.

## > CLC agencies

Partnership agencies currently present at CLC include:

- > **Caledonia Youth Offender's Project** (Relationships and sexual health education, support and advice to young people aged up to 25. Training and advice to parents and carers aged over 25)
- > **Housing Options Team** (Sustaining tenancies, accessing emergency accommodation)
- > **NHS – Edinburgh Homelessness Practice** (Cowgate Clinic)
- > **PATH – NHS** (meeting health needs of prison leavers, consultants to staff within CLC, assisting users in GP registration)
- > **Progress to Work – Apex** (Employability issues relating to drug misuse)
- > **South Bridge Literacy and Innumeracy Project** (assistance with form-filling etc)
- > **Spectrum** (Employment)
- > **Streetwork Lawyers** (homelessness lawyer, legal advice pertaining to accommodation issues)

## > Opening hours

**The CLC is open between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.**

Arrangements can be made with Sacro staff should any agency require access to facilities outwith normal opening hours.

An induction pack covering a wide range of information about using the CLC is now given to all agency staff using the Centre.

General enquiries on the operation of the Community Links Centre should be forwarded to: Ian Norman, CLC/Throughcare Service Manager.

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The CLC is funded by City of Edinburgh Council and delivered by the community justice voluntary organisation, Sacro.

For further information or to arrange a visit to the CLC, please contact the Centre staff on **0131 622 7500**.

### **Community Links Centre**

Epworth Halls, 25 Nicolson Square, Edinburgh EH8 9BX

Tel: 0131 622 7500

Fax: 0131 622 7525

Email: [info@lothiancjs.sacro.org.uk](mailto:info@lothiancjs.sacro.org.uk)

Web: [www.sacro.org.uk](http://www.sacro.org.uk)

