

# sacroSANCT

October 2007

SAFEGUARDING COMMUNITIES – REDUCING OFFENDING

## Encouraging Potential for Change

**IN SCOTLAND**, there is great potential for change. Sacro is determined to use all opportunities to work with the Government and other agencies to push forward policies that will make a real difference to communities in this country.

Sacro is a community justice voluntary organisation working across Scotland to make communities safer by reducing conflict and offending. It works with those in conflict, victims, accused and offenders.

It is hugely encouraging to see that the new Government has already made some very positive moves in the direction of addressing issues in the community justice system. Sacro is particularly encouraged by their recognition of the causes of crime and the consequent need to tackle them; and by early decisions to set up a Commission to consider the purpose of prison; to review community sentences and also the potential impact of the Custodial Sentences and Weapons (Scotland) Act on the prison population and on the Parole Board, criminal justice social work and others.

“ We must tackle drink, drugs and deprivation ”

*Kenny MacAskill MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Justice.*

This plan to address the problems of drink, drugs and deprivation is grounded in providing appropriate treatment and support for long term good, not quick fix solutions. With our rising prison population it has become increasingly clear that prison is not effective for many offenders, including those with addictions, mental health and learning difficulties. We look forward to the results of the above reviews and the recommended changes in policy that will emerge from them.

With over 35 years experience, Sacro is well placed to advise and promote tried and tested solutions to deal with conflict and crime, and promote community justice. Thus we look forward to contributing to the agenda for change.

This newsletter is intended to increase understanding of Sacro's role and provide useful contact details. Your comments on any issues covered in this publication will be most welcome.

**Susan Matheson**, Chief Executive, Sacro.

### Mediation – You Never Know When You Might Need It!

**HELP** us celebrate Scottish Mediation Week. As Scotland's leading supplier of mediation services, Sacro is excited by this new initiative from Scottish Mediation Network. Designed to promote the benefits and raise awareness of the services available across Scotland, the event will run from 15 to 19 October 2007.

Check [www.scottishmediation.org.uk](http://www.scottishmediation.org.uk) to find out what is going on in your area.

Mediation is a process for handling disputes that assists the people involved to reach an agreement. Involvement is voluntary and confidential and the parties in the dispute, rather than the mediator, decide the terms of any settlement.

Sacro's Community Mediation Service dealt with a total of 1,916 conflicts between April 2006 and March 2007, a clear demonstration of the demand for expertise in this area. Disputes, whether with a neighbour, colleague, friend or relation, can greatly affect the quality of life of those involved and, more often than not, have a knock on health effect. There is free and non-judgemental help available and we want to encourage more people to use it!

Sacro provides mediation services in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Highland, Moray, Orkney, Angus, Dundee, Perth & Kinross, Fife, Edinburgh and East Lothian, North and East Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway, East Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire.



Scottish Mediation Week takes place in October to coincide with International Conflict Resolution Day on 18 October, making the celebration part of a global campaign.

A new community mediation information DVD has just been launched by Sacro. To receive a copy of the DVD please email [info@cmconsultancy.sacro.org.uk](mailto:info@cmconsultancy.sacro.org.uk)

# BEYOND THE PLAYGROUND



**LEARNING** to deal with conflict is a skill that can be taught and one that is needed at every stage of life.

As a leading supplier of restorative approaches for schools, Sacro launched its 'Whole School Approach' early last year with two schools in the Falkirk area. The results have been remarkable and teachers, pupils and parents speak highly of the effect on the whole school community. Sacro now provides an ongoing service to these schools.

The 'Whole School Approach' enables staff and students to build relationships, solve problems, resolve conflict and address harm more effectively than with punitive responses. It improves understanding and communication, and most importantly, has a long-term effect on how those involved behave beyond the playground gates. It is constructive in bringing about real and positive change.

Christine Heron, Pastoral Depute Headteacher, Braes High School, Falkirk said:

"Restorative approaches are having a positive effect on relationships in the school. The school is much calmer and this can be witnessed as you walk around the school. Our school motto "Build Respect and Earn Success" is reinforced at every assembly. Children understand that if they have done something wrong they must take responsibility and do something to repair the harm caused. This is a whole school approach and all staff, teaching and non teaching, have been involved in awareness raising and training in restorative approaches to resolving conflict both in the classroom and in the playground.

Communication has been opened up so that problems do not escalate and difficult situations can be dealt with in a consistent way by all staff."



## Europe looks to Sacro for best practice in Restorative Justice

**Sacro** provides a beacon of good practice in the highly specialised field of Restorative Justice.

The organisation has long championed its effectiveness in dealing with victims and offenders and now real notice is being taken of the hugely important role it can play in helping victims to come to terms with a crime, and offenders to be rehabilitated.

Sacro is Scotland's leading provider of Restorative Justice services and receives over 600 referrals per year. The expertise that the organisation employs has resulted in Niall Kearney, Restorative Justice Development Officer and Board Member of the European Forum for Restorative Justice, being in great demand across Europe. Among other key appointments, Niall was contracted to lecture at a summer school in Latvia to representatives of nine European countries, he has led training initiatives in Portugal, and both the European Forum for Restorative Justice and the European Commission direct those seeking best practice in this field, to Scotland and Sacro.

### So, what exactly is restorative justice?

Restorative Justice gives a voice to the victim, reduces re-offending and gives confidence in the justice system. As defined by the UN hand book on Restorative Justice programmes 2006 – "It is a process in which the victim and the offender and, where appropriate, any other individuals or community members affected by a crime participate together actively in the resolution of matters arising from the crime, generally with the help of a facilitator". Although it is readily available in the youth justice system in Scotland, in the criminal justice system it is only offered as a diversion from prosecution in five local authority areas. Restorative Justice offers an alternative to prosecution, thereby freeing up court time and leaving greater resources to deal with serious crime and those who are a danger to the public. It can be used at pre and post sentencing stages.

Niall Kearney, Restorative Justice Development Officer said:

“There is no doubt that restorative measures, where the victim and the offender are brought together by mutual consent, offer enormous benefits for both parties. In 2005, out of 236 cases considered suitable for diversion to Sacro services, 191 (over 80%) ended in a positive way for both sides. Experience in this field has only made us more committed to expanding these services so they are available at all stage of the criminal justice system. We will be working hard to persuade the new administration to support this, through legislation if necessary.”

Sacro operates Restorative Justice services in Edinburgh, Midlothian, North and South Lanarkshire and Aberdeen City. The organisation has been heavily involved with the Scottish Executive in drawing up the Best Practice Guidelines for Restorative Justice, due to be finalised in 2007.



# “The Sacro Interview”

## Catryn Yousefi,

Senior Research and Campaign Officer,  
The Howard League for Penal Reform.

Sacro has won three awards in the Howard League Community Programme Awards. Here, the League's Catryn Yousefi, Senior Research and Campaign officer, talks to Sacro about what the awards mean.

FOR the second year running, The Howard League for Penal Reform has recognised and rewarded Sacro for its exceptional service provision. The organisation's 'Another Way' service, for drug-using, street sex workers, won a Special Merit Award in the League's Community Programme Awards 2007 – as Sacro's Alcohol Education Programme had done in 2006.

Sacro's Domestic Abuse Group Work programme, which works with men who have been convicted of a domestic abuse or related offence, was also recognised as an 'Outstanding Scheme', confirming the organisation's position as a provider of best practice.

“... like Sacro, we have long championed the appropriate use of community sentences”

Delighted to be awarding Sacro again this year, Catryn said, “Sacro continues to provide exceptional services to the criminal justice and youth justice systems. As anyone who is familiar with the work of the Howard League for Penal Reform will know, like Sacro, we have long championed the appropriate use of community sentences and these awards are part of our 'Community Sentences Cut Crime' campaign”.

“Now in their third year and part of a partnership campaign with the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Howard League for Penal Reform, the awards are aimed

at increasing public protection by recognising outstanding community programmes that help to reduce the seriousness and frequency of re-offending. The response to the awards has been amazing. We are producing a handbook over a three-year period, which will feature these projects – a list of the most efficient and effective community programmes and sentences available in the country”.

“Providing community sentences with these qualities (restorative principles) is the only way to make communities safer in the long term”

Catryn believes this publication will fill a critical gap in the justice system.

“It will provide those in charge of sentencing, policy makers and practitioners, with a comprehensive list of alternative options to imprisonment. Not only that, but it should give confidence in the quality and effectiveness of these services, having been recognised by our expert panel of judges. To qualify for entry, programmes had to demonstrate that they were rehabilitative, would prevent further offending and could encourage offenders to take responsibility for the harm caused. The programmes had to have strong restorative principles. Providing community sentences with these qualities is the only way to make communities safer in the long term.”



Baroness Linklater of Butterstone, Chairman of Rethinking Crime and Punishment, an Esmée Fairbairn Initiative, presents the award to Susan Matheson, Chief Executive, Sacro, (left)

### A group of eminent representatives formed the Awards' judging panel, including:

- Professor David Wilson (chair), University of Central England in Birmingham and vice-chair, The Howard League for Penal Reform.
- Kevin Lockyer, Regional Offender Manager SW, Ministry of Justice National Offender Management Service.
- John Thornhill, Deputy Chair, The Magistrates Association.
- Christine Leeson, Communication & Information Manager, Probation Boards' Association.
- His Honour Judge John Samuels QC.
- Catryn Yousefi, Research and Campaign Officer, The Howard League for Penal Reform.

## Sex Offending In the Community – Sacro Aims to Complete the Circle

**THERE** is never going to be a simple answer to the best way to deal with the inevitable release of sex offenders back into the community.

Much public, professional and political concern has been focused on this issue and, correctly, much attention has been given to the development of effective programmes within prison and communities, and the protocols and systems for community safety.

The need to improve the range and effectiveness of means of monitoring and reducing the risk posed by convicted sex offenders in the community needs no justification. Sacro believes there is a system, already operational in England and Canada, called 'Circles of Support and Accountability,' which will go a long way to address this need.

Sacro's Research Officer, Steve Kirkwood, has recently completed an examination of the effectiveness of 'Circles' in work with high-risk sex offenders.

His report concludes: "there is strong evidence to suggest that they have a part to play in assisting risk management and community re-integration of certain high risk sexual offenders".

The findings have been welcomed by the inter-agency Circles steering group on which Sacro is represented and will be used as part of a renewed attempt to persuade the Scottish Government to support the introduction of Circles into Scotland.

*For further information on Circles of Support and Accountability please contact Sacro's Keith Simpson on 0131 624 7268.*

## What We Do

**IN ADDITION** to direct service provision across the country in youth justice, criminal justice and mediation, Sacro has an active research department, analysing its work and issues of interest in related fields. The organisation has lobbying expertise to influence policy and legislation and provides consultancy and training services to the Scottish Executive, Children's Hearing System, Housing Associations, the police and other public and charitable bodies. For further information on any of the above please use the contact numbers below:

**Telephone:** 0131 624 7270

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

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

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## Event Calendar Highlights

### > Cabinet Secretary for Justice to Address Sacro Annual Conference

<b>Sacro Annual Conference</b>	5 March 2008
<i>'Community Justice – Making Scotland Safer'</i>	
Kenny MacAskill, MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Justice, will address the conference. Other speakers include Julius Lang, Director, Technical Assistance Centre for Court Innovation in New York.	
<b>Venue:</b> Royal College of Physicians, 9 Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1JQ	
For further information please call 0131 624 7270 or email <a href="mailto:events@national.sacro.org.uk">events@national.sacro.org.uk</a> .	

### > Other Events

<b>MacKay Hannah Conference</b>	21 November 2007
<i>'Young Offenders in Scotland: is Prevention the Cure?'</i>	
Chair: Keith Simpson, Head of Development and Research, Sacro	
<b>Venue:</b> Edinburgh First, South Halls, University of Edinburgh	
For further information please visit <a href="http://www.mackayhannah.com">www.mackayhannah.com</a> or telephone 0131 556 1500.	

## Sacro's Centre of Excellence

**AN** Open Day will mark the official launch of the Pathfinder Community Links Centre in Edinburgh.

The Community Links Centre, funded by Scottish Government through the City of Edinburgh Council, provides a vital link in the process of rehabilitation for short-term prisoners returning to the community. It is the first of its kind in the country, giving practical support and guidance to this vulnerable group at a critical time. It has been chosen as a Centre of Excellence by the Lothian and Borders Community Justice Authority.

The event will take place in early December. Please check Sacro website on [www.sacro.org.uk](http://www.sacro.org.uk) for further details.

## Sacro Welcomes New Chairman

**AS** we go to press, Paul Morron MBE has just been confirmed as Sacro's new Chairman. Paul was a founder member of both Sacro and Victim Support Scotland and a consultant to the Scottish Executive on the introduction of Drug Courts in Scotland.

Sacro also welcomes Board member, Robert Marshall, Director of Planning and External Marketing at The University of Glasgow, in his new role as Treasurer.

Paul and Robert will be carrying the torch from Niall Campbell and Jandy Stevenson respectively. Niall and Jandy's contribution to Sacro's growth over the last six years is immense and both their legacy and the hopes and aspirations of their successors will be featured in the next issue of Sacrosant.