

sacroSANCT

December 2008

SAFEGUARDING COMMUNITIES – REDUCING OFFENDING

IT'S ALL ABOUT COMMUNITIES

AT the invitation of Governor, Dan Gunn OBE, I recently visited HMP Glenochil. At a round table discussion with staff representing all functions within the prison, it was reported – in particular – that there is a severe lack of accommodation for prisoners on their release and very limited availability of voluntary throughcare. A vital part of rehabilitating ex-offenders involves helping them to reintegrate with their community and this cannot be done adequately without ensuring they have somewhere to live. Sacro provides throughcare in Edinburgh and Glasgow and supported accommodation services across Scotland. It is clear these services are highly valued and yet their capacity does not match the need.

On my tour of Glenochil, a building was pointed out – just at the prison gates – which would be ideal as a Visitors' Centre for the prison. We would encourage SPS Estates to retain the building for just such a purpose. The organisation Families Outside has also added its voice in support of the project. Visitor Centres offer an opportunity to deliver enhanced and targeted services to prisoner families. Edinburgh and Perth are leading the way here. Evidence to date already suggests these services are much appreciated and valued. Glenochil, because of its location well outwith a major town or city, is not easily accessed by public transport and the indications are that any additional services would be particularly helpful in encouraging the take up of visits.

As we eagerly await the government's response to the Scottish Prisons Commission's recommendations, it has been encouraging to see the Commission's chairman, the Rt. Hon. Henry McLeish, work so hard on highlighting the importance of change in the way Scotland uses imprisonment. Sacro was delighted to welcome him as speaker at our annual lecture in October, chaired by the acclaimed journalist Magnus Linklater, who brought valuable insight the media's view of the debate. Rather than reiterate the recommendations of the report in detail, Mr McLeish turned his attention to how politicians and others could reach consensus on the issues.

UK Home Secretary Jacqui Smith MP dropped in at our Community Mediation Service in Edinburgh's Pilton area, having heard of its excellent reputation. She listened attentively and it was good to hear her speak positively of mediation as an effective way of dealing with conflict.

I also recently met the Labour spokesperson for justice, Richard Baker MSP. Our discussion included the problems faced by all voluntary organisations in securing funding in the current financial climate. He is genuinely interested in our activities and subsequently visited our Aberdeen office and our Community Justice Centre in Edinburgh.

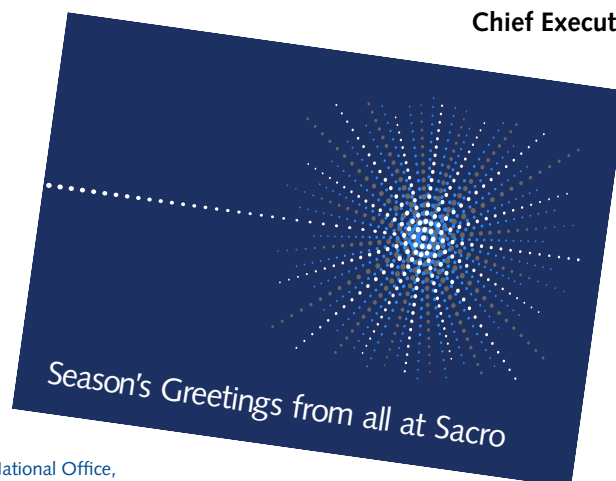
Senior staff and I have recently had very positive meetings with most Convenors of Community Justice Authorities and have scheduled to meet with the remainder. The importance of their contribution to the community justice agenda is vital and I am delighted they are maintaining regular and meaningful contact with us.

I will be retiring as Chief Executive at the end of January 2009 and would like to take this opportunity to wish my successor all the very best in what I regard as one of the most rewarding, fulfilling, exciting and challenging jobs in the voluntary sector.

When I joined Sacro 12 years ago, my vision was to develop the organisation to make communities safer. Safer through seeking to meet the needs of the whole community and offering services ranging from those which are preventative – community mediation and schools work; through to restorative justice in the youth system; to diversion from prosecution to restorative justice in the adult system; and criminal justice support services to reduce reoffending. We have come a long way towards offering this range of services but distribution and accessibility is still patchy. There is still great need for all we do and Sacro is in a good position to provide for these needs, particularly by building on the expertise and commitment of our staff.

I will miss Sacro greatly, particularly because of the enthusiastic Board Members, staff and volunteers who make the organisation such a success. Thank you for all your hard work and support over the years and I wish you all the best for the future.

Susan Matheson
Chief Executive



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Louder Than Words

'16 DAYS OF ACTION' is an international campaign running from 25 November (International Day against Violence against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day) to highlight violence against women as a violation of human rights.

A full timetable of events has been organised to mark the occasion by a sub group* of three local Domestic Abuse Multi Agency Fora in the Forth Valley.

Proceedings kicked off at the Lesser Hall, Falkirk with the Geese Theatre Company's performance of their play, *Stay* – an educational play about domestic violence and abuse. With over 20 years experience, the company has built an international reputation for their innovative work with offenders and youth at risk. Sacro contributed to putting on the production and are delighted to be associated with the event.

Further events around Stirling, Falkirk and Clackmannanshire include Domestic Abuse Awareness training for teachers and other professionals, Child Protection workshops and a conference to raise awareness of forced marriages. Also included are workshops to give women advice on keeping safe and for first aid in the home. Students from Graeme High School will also perform in a play at Bannockburn High School about domestic abuse and there will be a girls' football tournament running throughout the event at Forthbank, Stirling.

Throughout the event, symbolic white ribbons are on sale at various locations. The ribbons are worn by all but are specifically aimed at men to pledge never to condone, commit or stay silent about men's violence towards women.

www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk

* The sub-group consists of Forth Valley Councils Domestic Abuse Policy Co-ordinator Gail Cook and Violence Against Women Policy Co-ordinator (Stirling) Anne Salter, representatives from the local councils Housing, Child Protection and Education departments, Sacro, NHS, Rape Crisis, Women's Aid, Relationships Scotland and Central Scotland Police.

Restorative Justice in Practice

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE (RJ) is a proven method of intervention that can provide an alternative to court prosecution. The restorative process involves communication between the person harmed – this can also be a corporate body such as a business organisation or the council – and the person responsible. Participation is entirely voluntary. People harmed by crime often feel removed from the process and RJ gives the person harmed an opportunity to discuss their case, to express their feelings and to give input into how they would like the harm caused by the crime to be addressed. The person responsible also has the opportunity to acknowledge the harm done which can help them to positively move forward.

The RJ team have recently embarked on a number of successful cases with high profile organisations which have helped to validate the effectiveness of the service.

Two students were recently charged with setting off the fire alarm at Pollock Halls of Residence at the University of Edinburgh which resulted in wasting fire service resources. Both the students acknowledged their wrongdoing and expressed regret for their actions. Following a discussion with the fire service, it was requested that the students went down to the station involved in the call out. After a successful meeting where the students apologised for their actions, they were played recordings of both hoax and real calls where it was evident that people were in distress. This had a profound impact on the students who were given the chance to see the effect of their time-wasting. To further pay back their debt to the community, they were asked to take part in a community exercise at the Halls of Residence. The fire service was pleased with this outcome and hope it will reduce nuisance calls from this area in the future.

Similarly, work is currently being undertaken to provide reparation to Network Rail. In a recent case, two youths were charged after defacing an area at Dalmeny train station. The Transport Police were keen to proceed with prosecution, as with previous cases. However, Network Rail, who have an ongoing campaign to reduce rail track abuse and promote public safety, were keen to explore new options and expressed a desire to try to gain something positive from the incident. As a means to making amends they requested the pair get involved with their clean up team and take part in a promotional DVD targeting school age children. Network Rail hope that this will help in reducing similar offences whilst raising awareness to the dangers around a rail track. Craig Millard, RJ Team Leader, who facilitated this case felt that it "highlighted the creativity of an RJ meeting where those involved have shown openness and flexibility". Network Rail stated that they felt it would have been "harsh and unfortunate" if the pair had received criminal convictions at this early stage in their lives and were happy with the prospect of producing a valuable promotional tool. The two youths felt that they had also learned a valuable lesson.

The Kids Are Alright

PEER MEDIATION schemes in schools are currently attracting attention in the media as being a real solution to conflict and disputes in our schools.

In March 2007, two members of staff and 19 voluntary students from Keith Grammar School in Banffshire completed Peer Mediation training delivered by Sacro Highland. A mediation team has been in place since May 2007 and has enjoyed a high success rate in resolving disputes without the need for teacher intervention.

Mediators at the school have explained that the training has given them confidence and has taught them a valuable life skill. One mediator explained that, "we have been learning how to listen to people, how to deal with arguments, not from our point of view but from their side so they are responsible for resolving it." Another believed that, "young people find it easier to resolve conflict by talking to their peers rather than adults"

The scheme has been deemed such a success that senior mediators will be training the next generation of volunteers to continue the work the team has developed. Future plans are to roll out the scheme in Keith Grammar's feeder primary schools. In preparation for this, senior mediators have given PowerPoint presentations to staff at two of these schools.

The success being reported from schools both north and south of the border could also soon be recreated in our universities. Dundee University are currently piloting a scheme that will see them as the first UK University to introduce Peer Mediation into their practice.

FALKIRK CONFERENCE PROMOTES UNDERSTANDING ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

ON Tuesday 11 November, Sacro hosted an interactive event to address negative stereotypes of young and old people and highlight the impact they have on communities. This innovative event, the first of its kind in the area, was co-ordinated by Development Officer Tony Brown and aimed to break down barriers and open channels of communication between the different generations.

The day was facilitated by Creative Training Unlimited, whose drama based group work ensured that everyone kept talking.

The event was opened by Falkirk-born author Alan Bissett, whose previous novels include the acclaimed *Boyracers* and *The Incredible Adam Spark*. Alan, who is passionate about lending his experience and skills to early intervention for young people, talked about his own experiences of growing up on a housing scheme in Falkirk and participated in group work throughout the day.

The conference was attended by 40 young people from four high schools in the Falkirk area. Also in attendance were approximately 30 older members of the local community including delegates from Age Concern. A number of key stakeholders, including representatives from Falkirk Council, the local police force and social workers were also in attendance.

The event was deemed a great success by all in attendance. Both generations welcomed the opportunity to meet with each other and discuss the issues prevalent in their community. Ryan Aitken, 14 from Grangemouth High School summed up the general feeling of the day in stating that, "we'd have a better society if there were more chances for different people to talk".



Everybody needs good neighbours

Dundee and Angus Community Mediation Services have invited local residents to nominate someone who has been a particularly good neighbour over the past year for their inaugural "Good Neighbour" award. The winner in each area will receive a Christmas hamper.

Team Leader Bob Ballantine commented:

"Amidst all the talk about anti-social neighbours, it's easy to overlook the people who go out of their way to help their neighbours. These people set a good example to others and deserve recognition for this."



The award winners will be announced in early December.

Sacro AGM

Following the AGM on 7 October, the Board of Sacro co-opted two new Directors:

Sheriff Michael G O'Grady QC

Mike graduated from Glasgow University with degrees in Law and Politics. He then practised as a solicitor in Edinburgh for 10 years before being called to the bar, where he focused mainly on criminal cases. He worked as a prosecutor in Crown Office for about four years and became a Queen's Counsel in 1997.

He has been on the bench for eight years, serving as one of the first Sheriffs in the Glasgow Drug Court, before moving to Edinburgh two years ago. He has been a part time High Court Judge for five years and now divides his time almost equally between that and the Sheriff Court. He is a member of the only rock band in the country made up of Judges!

Jandy M Stevenson BSc (Econ) FCA

Jandy Stevenson trained as a chartered accountant and is partner in charge of the Edinburgh office of chartered accountants, Henderson Loggie where she specialises in audit and business advisory work. She was previously with KPMG, joining in 1989 after having managed her own firm of accountants for eight years prior to that date.

Between 1985 and 1991 she was a non-executive director at the Dunfermline Building Society and is also a Governor of St Margaret's School, Edinburgh. Jandy served as Sacro's Treasurer from 2001–2007 and has a special interest in charity governance and accounting.

At the same meeting Elizabeth Carmichael was appointed Depute Chair and Robert Marshall was re-appointed as Treasurer.



Margo MacDonald MSP recently visited Sacro's Community Justice Centre in Edinburgh. She was there to see the Extreme Makeover project, a course created by Access to Industry and delivered by Jewel & Esk College. The objective of the course is to provide vulnerable women with a supported route out of an offending lifestyle by providing access to education and employment opportunities in the area of beauty therapy and also by providing essential 'moving on' skills to get women back into education and work.

Pictured Left-Right: Vikki King, Learning Manager (Service Industries) Jewel & Esk College; Sian Fiddimore, Access to Industry; Margo MacDonald MSP; Howard McKenzie, Principal Jewel & Esk College; Erin Keeley-Messier, Access to Industry.

Repairing the Harm

FOR OUR 2009 annual conference, Sacro will partner with Victim Support Scotland to focus on restorative practices. The conference will highlight the many areas in which restorative practices can be applied to meet the needs of victims and address the harm caused by anti-social behaviour and offending.

Solicitor General, Frank Mulholland; Victim Support Scotland's Director of Development, Susan Gallagher and Keith Simpson, Sacro's Head of Development and Research will be joined on the day by Prof. Dr. Ivo Aertsen, of the Department of Criminal Law and Criminology at University of Leuven, Belgium.

In addition to these key presentations, the conference will hold a series of dedicated "practice focus" sessions. Each session will concentrate on a specific application of restorative practice and will show how this innovative approach to repairing harm can benefit our communities and address the needs of those harmed and affected by offending.

A full programme and booking details will be announced shortly. Please visit www.sacro.org.uk for the most up to date information.

To register your interest or to book a place at this important event in the community justice calendar, please contact Sacro on 0131 624 7270 or email events@national.sacro.org.uk.