

# sacroSANCT

March 2011

SAFEGUARDING COMMUNITIES – REDUCING OFFENDING



**WE ARE** in the midst of much contentious debate over whether to allow prisoners the vote. What is clear is a resolution needs to be found if the UK is to preserve its reputation as an upholder of human rights.

**Sacro believes that** it is reasonable to assume that citizens who commit serious offences or pose a danger to the public have forfeited the right to vote by acting with such disregard for civilised society.

Scotland and the UK have justice systems to deal with criminal behaviour that results in a long period in prison. However, those convicted of less serious crimes and imprisoned for a short period have a more urgent and necessary requirement to be rehabilitated during and following their period in custody.

Effective community reintegration requires people to re-establish and reconnect with those elements that constitute a civilised society. The more we marginalise and disenfranchise those who break the law, the more difficult it becomes to reintegrate them successfully.

**Sacro believes that** society needs to be responsible about this. Giving short term prisoners the vote does not harm anyone further; it keeps them closer to ordered society and should comply with our legal obligations as a member of the international community.

**Tom Halpin**  
Chief Executive, Sacro



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## Aberdeen Students Choose Sacro as Their Charity of the Year

**YOUNG** people from Aberdeen schools in S4/S5 have been participating in a programme called *'The Recruit'*, run by the North-east Enterprise Trust. The concept is loosely based on TV programme; *'The Apprentice'* with the successful student winning a year's work placement with a salary of £14,000. Throughout the year, candidates were required to complete assignments and challenges with a business focus with monies raised by the young people going to a charity of their choice.



In order for the young people to choose their 'Charity of the Year', voluntary organisations in Aberdeen were invited to attend a 'Dragon's Den' in September 2010, with the young people being the 'Dragons'. Graeme Pyper, Service Team Leader for the Aberdeen Assertive Outreach Service and Tillydrone Persistent Offenders Initiative, represented Sacro in the Dragon's Den and was very impressed with the standard of questions posed. The focus of his presentation was Sacro's core values and its commitment to Community Safety through the provision of services across the community justice continuum. We are delighted to report that, following Graeme's 'pitch', they chose Sacro as their 'Charity of the Year'!

The young people held a series of sponsored events in 2010/2011 and have raised approximately £1,000 for Sacro to date.

A Gala Dinner took place on 28 January to honour the progress and achievements of the young people. This was attended by representatives from Aberdeen City Council, the Chamber of Commerce and private and voluntary sector organisations. Alex Pirrie and Tracy Mackie represented Sacro and Alex delivered a short presentation on Sacro's activities and thanked the young people on Sacro's behalf. Tracy and Alex were approached by several people at the event who were either responsible for or harmed by crime and were delighted to hear of their positive experience of Sacro's Restorative Justice Services in Aberdeen.

# Managing Risk; Supporting the Individual

**Sacro's Intensive Support and Monitoring Service (ISMS)** is an individualised service which aims to provide high levels of support and monitoring for offenders assessed as being at very high risk or re-offending and/or harm.

## What does the service offer?

- > ISMSs are essentially designed around the individual support needs of the prospective service user and funder/stakeholder requirements.
- > The service provides support and monitoring within properties identified and usually supplied by the relevant local authority.
- > Given the high profile nature of some of the service users, they are, on occasion located within different geographical area from the commission of the offence(s) and/or victims.

## Who is the service for?

- > Service users for ISMS will all be on some form of post-custodial licence and may well be deemed under the MAPPA to be one of the "Critical Cases".
- > Other routes of suitable referral to Sacro's ISMS may include service users who require an intensive support package when returning to the community from state hospitals or other similar institutions.

## How does the service work?

ISMS can provide up to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week support and monitoring for the individual. It is assessed and agreed in accordance to MAPPA requirements.

A typical service will operate with a one-to-one or two-to-one staff/client ratio (depending on risk assessments) and then reduce monitoring and support over a period when instructed to do so by the MAPPA or local authority.

Sacro's intervention will include ongoing feedback to the local authority on how the service user is responding to the service and information/assessment in relation to the perceived risk the service user poses to and within the community.

## Service Development

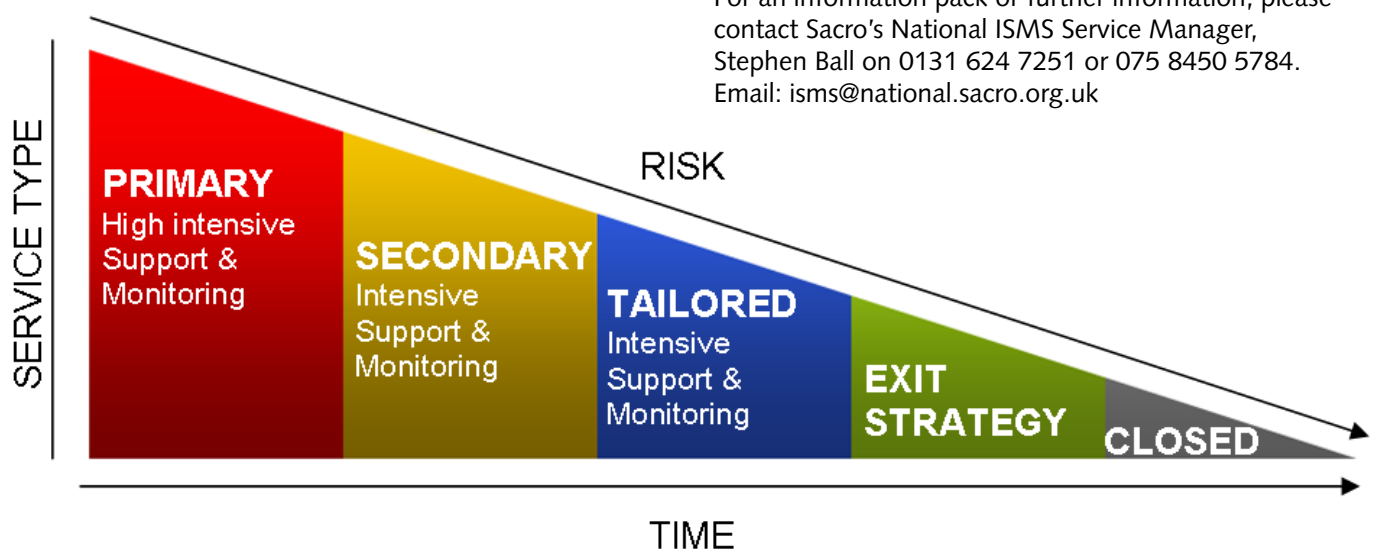
Sacro have been providing this valuable and unique service for a number of years now and have a proven success of managing risk and supporting individuals to re-establish themselves into the community upon release. The service works alongside the Social Work department, Criminal Justice, the Police and the Scottish Government to ensure a multi agency approach is maintained at all times for the benefit of all concerned.

Early in 2010, a strategic review was undertaken of Sacro's ISMS, involving service users and stakeholders. The benefits of this review included the following:

- > A National ISMS Service Manager appointed to have overall responsibility of all ISMS delivery across Scotland
- > A clear standards framework for management and Criminal Justice Workers to ensure service delivery continues to be of a very high standard
- > A new pricing structure
- > Addressed any inconsistency issues and to further develop the service.

Following the review, Sacro believes it is in a much better position to further expand the Intensive Support & Monitoring Service on a national level. It has the resources and skilled staff to continue to provide a very valuable service to a multi-agency approach of providing a tailored support and monitoring service and for Sacro to take the lead role of managing a high risk offender in the community.

For an information pack or further information, please contact Sacro's National ISMS Service Manager, Stephen Ball on 0131 624 7251 or 075 8450 5784. Email: [isms@national.sacro.org.uk](mailto:isms@national.sacro.org.uk)



## Reducing Offending by Women Through Mentoring

**MENTORING** is a widely used method of supporting people in order to assist them to achieve goals in their lives. This voluntary relationship is typically developed at a time of transition in the mentee's life and is of particular benefit to women offenders both prior to and following their release from prison.

In partnership with other agencies, Sacro now provides two Women's Mentoring Services in North & South Lanarkshire and Fife & Forth Valley.

The services provide volunteer mentors with the aim of actively supporting women offenders who are returning to – or already in the community. Sacro is currently recruiting and training mentors to engage with and support women offenders during and after their custodial sentence. The services also work with women offenders subject to community disposals and voluntary throughcare.

By developing a supportive relationship, the services contribute to an overall reduction in offending by increasing the service user's self confidence, self esteem and engagement with those agencies that can assist with their resettlement. Service users themselves often remark on how necessary this support is in stopping them reoffending.

### How it works

At the earliest opportunity, the service worker will meet and discuss the scheme with the potential mentee and an assessment of need is carried out. A mentor is matched to the service user and will support the mentee in a variety of ways. As well as one to one meetings in prison or in the community, they may communicate via letter, phone or even e-mail if authorised. During this early part of the relationship, the mentor and mentee will focus on an action plan which includes support needs and preferences. In the community the mentor will take a lead from the women themselves – and their Supervising Officer if there is one – as to the intervention to take place. It may be that the mentor will accompany the women to appointments; provide an advocacy role; signpost, and provide emotional support to women on the project.



The mentor and mentee will meet on a regular basis, as well as maintain regular phone contact, for (approximately) the first three months. Should the service user be in prison, this period subsequent to release is crucial in terms of reducing/preventing reoffending and maximising community reintegration. As such, it is important that the mentee feels adequately supported during this time. In addition, the relationship will still be developing and both mentor and mentee are required to consolidate their relationship within the community in order to maximise the chances of success.

Sacro and its partner agencies in the voluntary sector worked closely with the local authorities concerned to respond to an identified need and provide a solution within a matter of months.

**For further details on the services, contact:  
Liz Duffy (Fife) on 01592 593100 and  
Mary Thomson (Lanarkshires) on 01698 230433.**

## Keith Moves On

**KEITH SIMPSON**, Sacro's Director of Operations (East) will be retiring at the end of March after almost 21 years with the organisation.

A well-known figure throughout the voluntary sector, Keith has played an integral part in expanding Sacro's range of services and made significant progress in advancing the use and acceptance of restorative practices in Scotland.

Sacro's Chief Executive, Tom Halpin said "Keith's contribution to Sacro's development over the past two decades cannot be understated. As a staunch advocate of restorative and community justice, his passion and commitment to Sacro and the wider voluntary sector is an example to us all. On behalf of everyone at Sacro, I wish Keith all the very best in his retirement".

## Q&A



**Joe Griffin**

is Head of the Scottish Government's Reducing Reoffending Programme.

### ■ What is the Reducing Reoffending Programme and who are the key players?

The Reducing Reoffending Programme is a three year, £6m investment in the community justice system. We are making a number of changes to how justice works, so that more people who offend can be dealt with in the community – through Community Payback Orders, diversion or services after their release from prison. We believe that this is more likely to address offending behaviour and reduce Scotland's relatively high rate of reoffending than short term custodial sentences. The whole justice community is involved, with shared commitment from the Scottish Government, local government, ADSW, SCS, SPS, VSS and the third sector – to name but a few.

### ■ What differences will the programme make to criminal justice in Scotland?

When the programme concludes its work (likely to be March 2012), we will have created a lot more options for judges, prosecutors and police to deal with offenders in the community, rather than send them to prison. Information about people who offend will be richer and more consistent, and shared much more effectively across the system, so that their offending behaviour can be targeted in a more sophisticated way. We will also have supported decision makers to make sounder assessments of people's risk to others, so that public safety is not compromised.

### ■ Why the shift from short prison sentences to community sentences?

The evidence suggests that community sentences are more effective at reducing reoffending than short prison sentences. Just under half of those serving a community sentence go on to reoffend within two years, compared to nearly three quarters from prison. Although in some cases this reflects the more serious nature of the offence, we believe that an intensive, targeted sentence that forces an offender to confront their behaviour (while delivering work of benefit to the community), delivers better public value than a short term prison sentence where effective rehabilitative work is difficult to do.

### ■ Why does prison not work for all types of offenders?

Offenders in prison for a very short period of time will not have the opportunity to access rehabilitative programmes that last longer than their sentence. It makes more sense for them to have the continuity and focus of work in the community. In addition, as the 2008 report of Scotland's Prisons Commission (the McLeish Commission) showed, overcrowded prisons are not at all conducive to offender learning or rehabilitation.

### ■ Within the lifespan of the programme will reoffending rates be reduced?

That is unlikely. These changes will take time to bed in and they work together as a package. We do know that even marginal reductions in the frequency of people's reoffending can have a significant impact however, and I would be optimistic that we will start to see results in the medium term, including significant economic and social benefits.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN ABERDEEN

Sacro is an active partner in the Scottish Government funded **Aberdeen Youth Justice Development Programme**. The aim of the Programme is to review and re-design how Youth Justice services are planned and delivered to make sure they are made available to young people who need them at the earliest opportunity, as well as being more flexible and responsive to their needs. Sacro has been committed to the re-design and delivery of new services that aim to improve outcomes for all involved.

As part of improvement work around early and effective intervention, the Aberdeen team is implementing a pre-referral screening approach. Since screening began in June 2010, over 400 young people have been discussed with 35% being referred to the Children's Reporter, a reduction of 23%, and the remainder receiving an alternative intervention. Commenting on the initiative, Tracy Mackie, Service Manager, Sacro said, "We have been involved in pre-referral screening since the service was introduced and value this opportunity to discuss with partners an appropriate course of action. The aim is to improve outcomes for these young people and those harmed by their behaviour and pre-referral screening enables agencies to get together quickly and regularly to respond to individual needs and reach a joint decision on the best course of action."

### MORE NEW SERVICES

An **Intensive Support Service** is about to get underway to provide a package of services based on the individual needs of young people where there is a high risk of re-offending, a high risk of violence, or an identified risk of sexually harmful behaviour. Sacro is delivering Youth Intensive Support Packages that provide access to intensive support and crisis intervention for the child or young person and family/carers 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

A citywide **Assertive Outreach Service** has been introduced. This service is specifically for young people up to 18 years who are involved in persistent offending and/or anti-social behaviour and have disengaged with existing core services. The service will support integrated working for a number of young people with whom it is difficult to engage. It will provide key worker support to assist individual service users to re-engage with 'specialist' services to meet their needs. The ethos of 'stickability' will underpin the approach of the service workers in their efforts to engage with young people.

Sacro is also supporting the court system with the introduction of a dedicated **Court Support Worker** funded by the Development Programme. This post will contribute to ensuring that effective, supportive and transparent systems are available to support young people involved within the court system. By establishing a visible presence within the Courts, we can identify young people in need of support to manage their way through the court process as well as identifying and addressing any additional needs.