



August 2010

Welcome to the fifteenth edition of the Directory of Resources newsletter written by Cheshire Probation (which covers the Cheshire, Halton and Warrington geographical areas) to all the organisations who agreed to have their details included in Cheshire Probation's Directory of Resources database. The Directory of Resources is a database set up for the use of Cheshire Probation staff only. It includes details of a range of different organisations that can provide additional support when staff are supervising people from BME origins, and from other minority groups. Cheshire Probation amends details of the organisations, and adds new organisations, as it receives details.

Circulation details

Copies of newsletters are also sent to our Board members, staff, Criminal Justice Agency partners, CHAWREC (Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Racial Equality Council), the four unitary authorities - Cheshire West and Cheshire, Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington, as well as the Voluntary Services Councils.

Contact details

Please let us know if there have been changes to your organisation details, or if you are no longer able to offer certain services or assistance. Please also let us know if there is any particular information that you would like us to include in our next newsletter by contacting Annemarie Theilade, Diversity Manager (tel: 01244 394500).

Consulting on our services

At Cheshire Probation we regularly look at how well our policies and practices work. As part of this we look at where there is, or could be, an unfair impact on different groups, including in relation to ethnicity and disability. Sometimes in reviewing our work we will consult with different groups. This can be in the form of questionnaires, surveys or direct consultation events. Consultation around our work has been a regular feature in different editions of this newsletter.

We recently reviewed our policy for promoting equality of opportunity in delivering services. Through CHAWREC (Cheshire, Halton & Warrington Racial Equality Centre) 25 people from a range of different ethnic backgrounds met with us to learn more about our work, ask us questions and look at our work with victims and offenders. It gave us an opportunity to explain about the different ways we work and how we monitor our work and try to ensure that outcomes are fair. We asked the CHAWREC consultation panel to give us their views on our policy. We also wanted to know how confident they were that Cheshire Probation would identify, investigate and address where we found there was inequality in outcomes for different groups.

Some consultees had been to all previous consultation events held by Cheshire Probation, whilst for others this was a first. The majority said they felt glad to be at the consultation event because they felt their opinion was valued and the topic was of interest to them.

The majority of consultees said that the structure of the event was very good with **"interactive activities to engage the panel"** and that it was educational and enjoyable. They appreciated the opportunity given to discuss topics in some depth, **"the groups were divided to maximise discussion and everyone given an opportunity to voice their opinion"**. Many felt it was **"very enlightening"** and **"in-depth"** and said they felt that **"great effort is being made to provide fair and equal services"**. They felt that the policy was useful and explained a great deal about how Cheshire Probation works to provide fair outcomes across all groups.

Consultees all felt that they got the opportunity to ask the questions that they wanted to ask. The overwhelming majority of consultees said that they were confident that Cheshire Probation would investigate inequality where it was found and would work to continue to address inequalities. When asked what else they felt Cheshire Probation could put in place to address inequalities received a range of different comments. These included:

- holding seminars with the broader public, including schools, colleges and community groups;
- advertising jobs more broadly with BME groups (all adverts are currently circulated via CHAWREC);
- personality tests to identify hidden or latent prejudices in those who carry out interviews.

Consulting with the CHAWREC consultation panel reinforced a key message for us - **when we explain our work to members of the public, there is a significant degree of confidence that we work hard to ensure fair outcomes across all groups**. As we continue to improve service delivery, we will reflect on the specific comments made and apply them where we are able.

Veterans under Supervision

The Probation Service at any one time supervises approximately 241,000 offenders¹ nationally - 141,000 under court orders and 102,000 on pre- and post-release supervision (from custody). Out of this number at any one time, there are approximately 12,000² ex-Armed Forces personnel (veterans) supervised by Probation and 83,500² veterans in custody in the UK, following conviction of a criminal offence.

The outcomes of this survey were discussed at meetings in Westminster and led to a number of recommendations, including the creation of a Veterans' Support Officer in each Probation Trust.

A Probation Service Officer from Cheshire Probation, Alan Lilly, based in Warrington attended these meetings. He served with the 13th/18th Royal Hussars (now the Light Dragoons) for 18 years and joined the Probation Service in 2002 after 5 years with the Prison Service.

Alan has now created a veterans' link post at the Probation office in Warrington. This is to assist colleagues working with ex-service personnel to interview those offenders in order to see what their issues and circumstances were. They can then signpost them towards ex-service support agencies if required.

Alan says, "Having served in the Armed Forces and seen active service myself, I believe I have an insight into a lot of the issues and concerns of offending veterans. Often veterans who find themselves on Probation feel isolated and marginalised and if they have other problems such as homelessness, alcohol, drugs or mental health issues, finding themselves in trouble with the law is often the end result. The sooner we can identify the veterans in the system the quicker we can get them signposted to support which may then help reduce the opportunities to re-offend".

Alan is in the process of networking with local service support agencies to help reinforce the links necessary to signpost veterans. He says, "If we can do this work well this may help steer veteran offenders away from re-offending and therefore reduce the numbers in custody".

Alan reports, "Initial feedback from both offenders and colleagues has been positive. To date, I have referred three offenders to Combat Stress and several others to the local British Legion. All those I've interviewed have stated that being encouraged to ask for help has been what's made them seek support, as often pride and going 'cap in hand' has stopped them asking in the first place. I even heard one veteran state that the reason he hadn't used the support agencies was that in his opinion the boys fighting in Afghanistan were more worthy of support because he had only been in Northern Ireland. Having served there myself, I assured him his needs were just as relevant to those fighting today's battles".

Steven Griffiths, the local Regional Welfare Officer for Combat Stress, fully endorses the development of the Veteran Support Officer post. He says, "Any additional link in the support 'chain' for veterans has to be encouraged. Referrals made to us so far by Alan at Warrington may not have been identified until much later in the Criminal Justice System had it not been for his and his colleagues early intervention".

¹(Offender Management Caseload Statistics 2009 - www.justice.gov.uk/prisonandprobation.html)

² National Association of Probation Officers survey

Please let us know if you require this newsletter to be translated into other community languages or want a more accessible version, e.g. large-print, audio-tape, Braille, etc.

A copy of this newsletter will be posted on our website: www.cheshireprobation.org.uk

We would welcome your views about what information you would like to see included.

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