

Introducing our New Chief Executive

Many staff and partners will have by now met the new Cheshire Probation Chief Executive, Angela Cossins, as she toured Probation offices and met with stakeholders during her first few weeks in post. In a letter to staff announcing Angela's appointment, Leslie Robinson, Cheshire Probation Board Chair said, *"We are very pleased to have been able to appoint a new Chief with considerable experience and look forward to working with her. The service will face significant change as the coalition government finalises its policy on sentencing and rehabilitation of offenders and Angela's record of leading change will be invaluable"*.

Educated at Lancaster and Durham Universities, Angela initially took up a successful career in recruitment. In 1991, Angela joined Northumbria Probation Area. In 2000, she moved to the Community Justice National Training Organisation returning to Probation as Director of the Wales Training Consortium in 2003. In 2006 when she was appointed as the Director of Operations for the South Wales Probation Service, which later became the South Wales Probation Trust. In 2009, Angela took on the role of Interim Chief Executive of the South Wales Probation Trust and was instrumental the merger of the four former Probation Areas across Wales into a single Welsh Trust in April 2010. She was a member of the transitional Executive Team of the Wales Probation Trust, before taking up post as Cheshire Probation's Chief Executive in January 2011.



Angela Cossins, new Chief Executive,
Cheshire Probation

"I want to thank colleagues from Probation and our partner organisations for the warm welcome I have received since moving here from Cardiff in December. I join you at a time of unprecedented change, not just in Probation but across the criminal justice and wider public sector. I am confident that we have here in Cheshire an excellent platform from which to develop a response to these challenges and I am committed to doing so in collaboration and partnership".

This will be final edition of Epic in its current format although new publications will be produced during 2011/12 for staff and stakeholder audiences respectively as part of a wider communications review.

The SAFE Requirement: addressing the needs of women offenders

Halton Women's Centre in Runcorn opened in 2008 and is a three-way partnership between The Relationships Centre, Halton Borough Council and Halton and St Helens Primary Care Trust. The Centre offers a wide range of health and emotional well-being services and aims to promote women's positive mental health and address women's health needs in a comfortable and safe environment.

The Centre is run by a team from The Relationships Centre and volunteers.

Specified Activity for Female Empowerment (SAFE) Requirement

The Specified Activity for Female Empowerment (SAFE) Requirement is a disposal available to sentencers across Halton, Macclesfield and Crewe. It was developed as a direct result of the acclaimed 2007 Corston Report produced by Baroness Jean Corston on the treatment of vulnerable women in prison. The SAFE Requirement is a specified activity aimed at empowering and enabling female offenders to address their offending behaviour. It is a structured package to assist women to make changes to their lives and address any problems linked to their offending, such as:

- Drug and alcohol issues
- Health issues, including emotional and mental health
- Improving confidence and life skills

- Employment and/or education
- Accommodation issues

The Requirement, accessed through Halton Women's Centre since November 2010, is aimed at women offenders aged 18 and over who Cheshire Probation have assessed as suitable for the community based order.

The Requirement was officially launched at an open evening at the Centre in November last year and has proved to be a great success so far, with 13 SAFE Requirements granted at Halton Magistrates' Court to date, with more referrals being proposed. Four of the women given the Order have completed the Requirement successfully and all are still accessing support from the Centre voluntarily, so that positive life changes are sustained into the future.

Katie's story

Katie, aged 22 and a mother of one, is the first offender to successfully complete her SAFE Requirement. She was referred to the Halton Women's Centre SAFE project by Cheshire Probation after being found guilty of benefit fraud. A first-time offender, she was told she could potentially face a custodial sentence.

As the sole carer for her son who displays difficult behaviour in the form of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or ADHD, she feared that should she be given a custodial sentence, her son's behaviour would

worsen and the strong bond they have would be destroyed.

Katie was sentenced to a SAFE Requirement and a Community Order. Like many women offenders, she suffers with depression and is often anxious when having to attend new places or meeting new people so attending the Centre was a milestone for her.

During her sentence, Katie completed a number of courses aimed at improving her ability to manage her life and reducing the chances of re-offending in the future. These included a Positive Parenting course and a confidence and self esteem course.

Through her weekly visits to the Centre, Katie's confidence increased as she met new people and developed support networks. She has also been given a volunteer job at the local partnership agency that delivered her parenting course and this will involve her mentoring and facilitating the course to other young mothers in the area.

Katie said, *"I can't say how grateful I am and wish to thank Halton Women's Centre and the staff. Without the support and alternative sentence I would have lost valuable time with my son and the special bond we share. I will continue to access the Centre even when my Order has finished"*.





Steve Collett's retirement Reflections by Leslie Robinson, Board Chair

Steve's retirement ended a ten-year period as Chief Officer and Chief Executive of our service. He led a successful team which enabled Cheshire to become a Trust in April 2010.

I experienced, at first hand, the respect and affection in which he was held by all staff and also became aware of the high esteem in which he was held by the leaders of those many organisations upon whom the service depends for its effectiveness.

Steve had a long career in probation, working in a variety of roles in Merseyside and Greater Manchester before his appointment as Chief Officer of Cheshire under the new national arrangements in April 2001.

His authority was built on a very strong academic foundation. He lectured in Social Policy and Probation studies at Liverpool University (becoming an Honorary Fellow in the Department of Sociology). He was a member of the Editorial Board of the Probation Journal and was a member of the North West Committee of the British Society of Criminology. He also qualified as a social worker.

As a Vice-Chair, Steve was a driving force in the creation of the Probation Chiefs Association.

But it was his personal qualities for which staff will remember him. He was, and I hope will remain, a dedicated and committed public servant. His professional integrity and open-ness made him a joy to work with. Always welcoming

fresh ideas, he presided over a period of very significant change.

You cannot be a senior manager in a service such as ours without a sense of humour and although Steve was not a Liverpoolian by birth, he acquired the "scouser's wit" through residence! Evidence of his ability to see the ridiculous was well evidenced by his enthusiastic support for Everton Football Club.

He left early to nurse his beloved wife Joan and he suffered her recent passing with great dignity and celebration of a long and happy marriage. Steve deserves our thanks and best wishes for a long, fulfilling and active retirement. I cannot believe that he will not be able to make a further contribution to public life. We need him!

Achieving at Thorn Cross HMP&YOI

The Thorn Cross Prison Work Club was created by the European Social Fund 'Achieve' Case Manager, Val Barker, in April 2010 with the support of Governors Mick Povall and John Platt, and further developed with Vanessa Storey of Job Centre Plus.

The Work Club meets in the Prison Library on the first Thursday of every month at 6.30 p.m. There is a specific purpose and theme to each of the club meetings. Particular focus has

been given to completing job applications, accessing community care grants and improving interview techniques. It is intended to broaden the activity of the club by inviting guest speakers from employment organisations such as the Army and retail providers, together with using employer DVD recruitment presentations.

Further information on this work club can be gained by telephoning Val direct on 01925 805276 or by e-mailing him:

val.barker@cheshire.probation.gsi.gov.uk or
val.barker@hmpps.gsi.gov.uk



From l to r: Val Barker, Achieve Case Manager, Mick Povall, Governor and Vanessa Storey, Job Centre Plus

Quarterly Employee Awards

Apology to Julia Foster

Due to a regrettable oversight, **Julia Foster**, a Quarterly Employee Award winner, did not feature in the last edition of Epic.

Julia, a supervisor based at Linden Bank Approved Premise, was successfully nominated for her contribution to the development of three in-house groupwork programmes. Julia's work, which included the preparation of promotional material, had a positive impact on group attendance. She is described by her nominator as being "very committed and professional in all that she does".

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Congratulations to the 10 staff members in Quarter 1 (July - September) and 12 staff members in Quarter 2 (October - December) successfully nominated for a Quarterly Employee Award during Year 7 of the Reward and Recognition Scheme. All Quarterly winners receive a voucher and may be shortlisted for Employee of the Year.

Quarter 1 - Year 7

Blair Grant, Office Administrator, Crewe - created a range of electronic monitoring tools that have saved management time and are used to improve operational performance.

Beryl Harding, Case Administrator, Macclesfield - providing continuity of service delivery for Community Payback at a time of staffing difficulties.

Stephanie Kewley, Programme Manager, Chester - undertook work over-and-above to attend and give presentations at a community liaison group and Magistrates' Annual General Meeting highlighting the work of Cheshire Probation to positive effect.

Kelly Littler, Probation Service Officer, Chester - demonstrated a level of

commitment and dedication to the role of Drugs Rehabilitation Requirement specialist officer that goes beyond expectations.

Heather Maddocks and Susan Basford, Case Administrators, Warrington - for their support and willingness to take on extra work to assist Offender Managers meet deadlines.

Johanna Merry, Finance Assistant, Headquarters - noticed an anomaly and carried out a detailed audit resulting in a significant budget saving for the organisation.

Peter Rowe, Deputy Manager, Linden Bank Approved Premise - managed both approved premises through a period of sickness absence including changing planned leave and attending on non-scheduled days to ensure a management presence.

Karen Taylor, Senior Probation Officer, Runcorn - sensitively supporting a member of staff through a period of significant illness, enabling the staff member to return to work feeling valued.

Helen Wilson, Human Resources Officer, Headquarters - whose professionalism and approachability enabled a member of staff to return to work after a considerable period of sickness in a positive frame of mind.

Quarter 2 - Year 7

Kerri Bendon, Senior Probation Officer, Warrington - positive action and supportive processes put in place to support staff members through reorganisation of workplace "pods" into specialist teams.

Chris Devine, Michelle Plumb, Nicola Elwin, Samantha McFadden and Shane Ferris, Programme staff, county-wide - volunteered to present six briefings across the county to Local Delivery Unit teams and undertook this over-and-above activity in a professional and motivated manner.

Chris Ferguson, Information Service Support & Development Officer, Headquarters - worked solidly for 17 hours to resolve a problem with CRAMS.

Janina Miklasewicz, Probation Manager, HMP&YOI Styal - effective and efficient organisation and management of the Women Offenders Conference resulting in a well-received and positive experience for delegates.

Jacqui O'Rourke, Senior Probation Officer, Crewe - retaining management responsibility for a member of staff who no longer came under her supervision in order to ease the staff member through a Human Resources process.

Heather Snow, Case Manager Achieve, Runcorn - delivering GOALS courses (courses to encourage Employment, Training & Education engagement) in such a way as to maximise take-up and simplify procedures.

Danielle Whitwell, Probation Officer, Crewe - developing OASys Risk Management and Sentence Plans to such a high level that they are to be used as 'Best Practice Models'.

Emma Winney, Probation Service Officer, Macclesfield - developed a bespoke, one-to-one package in relation to the SAFE (Specified Activity for Female Empowerment) Requirement and promoted this at Magistrates' fora.

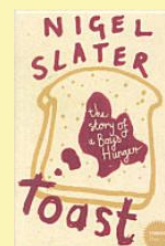
Please submit your Quarterly Employee nominations for Year 7, Quarter 4 - closing date Friday, 15th April 2011. Please use the nomination forms held on the Key Policy and Documents database - Documents section.



Reward & Recognition Scheme

World Book Night: Book give away

Ann Crawford, Cheshire Probation's Employment, Training and Education (ETE) Manager, was selected as a book giver in celebration of World Book Night*. Ann explained, "*As ETE Manager and a book lover myself, I applied to be a book giver to enable me to pass my allocation of books onto offenders both in prison or in the community who had literacy/ETE needs identified.*"



From the 25 titles available for selection, I chose "Toast" by Nigel Slater as I thought his story might appeal to others who faced barriers because of their background or sexual orientation'.

Working with ETE colleagues, Ann distributed her allocation of 48 copies of "Toast" across the six Offender Management Units and the three Cheshire prisons, HMP Risley, Thorn Cross YOI and HMP & YOI Styal for Offender Managers to pass on to offenders and prisoners.

The books were well received. One delighted offender said, "*My wife has recently learnt to read and is going from strength to strength. Reading has become such a hobby of hers. I will read the book so that I can pass it on to her to read'.*"

*World Book Night took place on Saturday 5 March 2011, two days after World Book Day. The massive book give-away involved 40,000 copies of each of the 25 titles being given away during the preceding week leading up to the Night itself, with each selected book giver receiving an allocation of 48 books of their chosen title. The aim of World Book Night is to encourage givers to pass their books onto others who either may be reluctant readers or who are part of communities with less access to books, bookshops and libraries.

Thanks for half a century of service

Congratulations to Community Payback staff Grenville Millington, Placement Manager and Ged Barlow, Supervisor, who have been successfully nominated for a Local Justice Award. The Awards, which formally recognise their long service to Cheshire Probation, were organised by the Local Criminal Justice Board. Grenville and Ged were presented with their Awards by Angela Cossins, Chief Executive, at Headquarters during March.

Both staff members have spent their entire 25-year Probation career with the Community Payback team.

Grenville has worked for Cheshire Probation since 1986 and was initially appointed as a Community Service Officer. During his lengthy career he has worked across Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford. Grenville's nomination describes him as being "an outstanding mentor to offenders, motivating them to complete their Community Payback by encouraging them to learn new skills to increase their employability and help rehabilitate them". His nomination also states that as a former goalkeeper for Chester City Football Club, he has developed many community links enabling a wide range of charities, church groups and not-for-profit organisations to benefit from Community Payback.

Ged has also been employed by Cheshire Probation for 25 years as a Community Payback supervisor. He is described as having the ability to develop a "special bond" with whoever he works with and as such is admired and respected by colleagues and offenders alike. In working with Community Payback offenders, Ged always goes the "extra mile", motivating and encouraging them to develop new skills and improve existing skills. With his vast experience, Ged has "always been willing to help, support and nurture new staff as well as develop many community links".

Angela Cossins said, "It was a pleasure to present these Awards to Ged and Grenville. In their acceptance speeches, both acknowledged the team approach in Community Payback which has contributed to their success in their respective roles. I also want to pay tribute to David Skyner, the Community Payback Scheme Manager, who submitted the nominations. It is important that we take the time to celebrate positive work of staff and this is a very real example of a manager doing just that".



Angela Cossins, Chief Executive presenting Grenville with his Local Justice Award for Long Service



Ged receiving his Local Justice Award for Long Service from Angela Cossins, Chief Executive

Mentoring: a valuable contribution

Cheshire Probation's mentoring programme now has over sixty mentors and includes a broader range of referrals, including Employment, Training and Education (ETE) support, welfare and benefit advice and supporting women offenders sentenced to the Specified Activity for Female Empowerment (SAFE) Requirement.

The most recent recruitment drive resulted in sixteen mentors specifically recruited to complement the work of the Veteran Support Programme and to offer mentoring support to the increasing number of veteran offenders under Probation supervision. As part of a wider European initiative, the Veteran

Support Mentoring Programme uses both ex-service peer mentors and non-peer mentors and will evaluate the difference between peer and non-peer mentoring.

Understanding the barriers and challenges facing veterans on their return to 'civvy street' is central to the mentors' induction training, even when the mentor working with a veteran offender do not come from an armed forces background. Rose Paul, Mentor Coordinator, based at Beech House, requests that Offender Managers identify and refer veteran offenders in need of mentor support in order to make use of this valuable resource.

Mentors formally recognised

Bolesworth Castle, Tattenhall was the venue for the Cheshire Probation Mentor Awards evening. The High Sheriff of Cheshire, Diana Barbour, hosted and mentors were formally recognised for their "Valuable Contribution to the Community". Presenting the certificates, the High Sheriff said, "*Your time and efforts are much valued and this certificate is a token of my appreciation for the work that you do on behalf of the Probation Service*".



Happy Retirement

Under Cheshire Probation's Reward and Recognition Policy, EPIC marks the retirement of staff who have devoted at least 10 years' service to Cheshire Probation. Gratitude for valued service and commitment and best wishes for a long and happy retirement go to:

Angela Alcock, Probation Service Officer, Cheshire West (Winsford) Offender Management Unit, who retired in January after 16 years' service. Angela joined Cheshire Probation in July 1994 as a Clerical Assistant based in Crewe moving to former Community Service Support Officer role in April 1997. She initially remained at Crewe, moving to Macclesfield in November 2008. In June 2005, Angela relocated to Winsford as a Probation Service Officer, where she remained until her retirement.

Alana Brayshaw who retired in February after 24 years' service. Alana joined Cheshire Probation in September 1984 as a Probation Officer. After a 2 year break in service from September 1994 to January 1997, she re-joined the organisation, initially based at the Halton Offender Management Unit, transferring to Chester in August the same year. In July 2004 she moved to Bunbury House Approved Premise as a Deputy Warden where she remained until her retirement.

Pat Bowe, Office Administrator, Cheshire West (Winsford) Offender Management Unit, who retired in March after 18 years' service. Pat joined the organisation in December 1992 as a Clerical Assistant based at the former Northwich office, relocating to Warrington as a Personal Assistant in July 1994. In January 1997 Pat moved to

Crewe in the role of Case Administrator, and became a Personal Assistant in January 1999. In November 2004 Pat was promoted to the role of Office Administrator and in April 2008 moved to Winsford in the same role until her retirement.

Barry Rutter, Evening Receptionist, Warrington Offender Management Unit, retires in April after 21 years' service. Barry has been based in Warrington for the duration of his employment. He joined Cheshire Probation in January 1990 as a Community Payback Supervisor, and became a Projects Officer between April 1994 and March 2003. In September 2001 he took on the additional role of Evening Receptionist, and in April 2006 continued his employment solely in this role, where he remained until his retirement.

Celebrating Achievement

The North West Training Consortium held a Regional Award Ceremony in November 2010 at Aintree Racecourse, Liverpool and all successful staff were invited to receive their certificates.

Congratulations to the following staff who achieved qualifications as follows (some of whom are pictured below):

NORTH WEST PSO FOUNDATION DEVELOPMENT AWARD

Susan Ayers, Trudy Bowman, Emma Gomme, Carol Lloyd, Samantha McFadden, Karen Howell, Veronica Phillips and Katy Stevens.



NVQ LEVEL 3 - WORK WITH OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR



Susan Anderson, Trudy Bowman, Gillian Buckley, Eileen Cavallaro, Lisa Davies, Joanne Done, Stephen Hewitt, Victoria Hutt, Andrew Johnson, Susan Johnson, Emma Jooste, Pam Kusiar, Dianne Lowe, Dennis Mahar, Angela McGuinness, Sandra Meredith, Tristram Pearce, Michelle Plumb, Gemma Prior, Claire Powell, Andrew Pownall, Rachel Rose, Penny Simpson, Kaye Stoneley, Anthony Tickle, Elizabeth Whittle, David Wilton, and Emma Winney.

CERTIFICATE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Caroline Ballard-East, Clare Burrell, Rachel Collier, Helen Esegbona, Andrea Hamlett, Kirsty Jones, Pam Kusiar, Kelly Littler, Angela McGuinness and Sarah Perez.



DIPLOMA IN PROBATION STUDIES

Caroline Bryson, Stephanie Hall, Lisa Jenkins and Deborah McKeith.