



Cheap loans and credit cards fed £50k a year habit

A drug addict who fed a £50,000 a year habit on bank loans and credit cards is turning his life round thanks to a scheme operated by Cheshire Probation and Magistrates in South Cheshire. Kevin, now aged 29, was only earning £25,000 a year at his job but he was spending twice that on a daily cocktail of crack cocaine and heroin.

It cost him his job, saw him thrown out of the family home and would probably have cost him his life. But now he is working with Cheshire Probation and the man who sentenced him to a Drug Rehabilitation Requirement (DRR), the Chairman of the South Cheshire Magistrates' Bench, John Bache, and he's been clean for six months.

John Bache said: "This shows that DRRs can be successful but 99 per cent of the work is down to the offender himself although the Probation Service, the Magistrate and the drug treatment services all play a big part."

Part of Kevin's DRR means having to give twice weekly urine samples and so far they have been clear of drugs and he looks much healthier according to Probation Service Officer, Pam Kusiar. She said: "People like Kevin have made a choice at a stage in their life and gone down a wrong path and it's very hard to get back. It's not easy on a DRR either. You have to keep your appointments and for Kevin that's four a week and he's kept every one."

Kevin's drug problems began at the age of 12 in Manchester: "The older kids used to give us cannabis because they thought it was funny,"

he said. "As I got older I was smoking a lot of crack cocaine and the heroin helped when you were coming down from the crack."

"I had a job for three years working in administration but I slowly went downhill - I would spend £80 a day on heroin some days and another £100 on crack. Because I was working and earning I could get credit - I had five or six credit cards and just maxed them out. I still owe that money. After I lost my job I was selling cannabis to support my habit. I could earn £250 a week doing that but I would shop lift or anything to get money. I was sort of hoping the drugs would kill me before everything caught up with me."

Kevin, who had been thrown out of the family home by now, was sleeping rough with friends though he did try and kick the habit with a month at Chester Turning Point. "It did work but there's nothing there for you when you come out. You have to cope with the mental addiction and the physical addiction - it was the insomnia that drove me back to heroin. I just couldn't sleep."

Kevin was sentenced to a 12-month DRR at Crewe last August and he said: "I was glad I got caught. It was the only way I was going to stop. I accepted the DRR because the alternative was going to prison and I would probably have still been able to get drugs inside."

He is now reconciled with his family, living in a flat he shares with his brother and works part-time seven hours a week as a cleaner - which means he has his benefit cut by £6 a week. "I think that's pathetic," he said: "But I've got to keep at it. I



Kevin, clean for six months, is rebuilding his life

want a proper, full-time job and to earn a reasonable living. "I just stay away from everyone I knew who was on drugs because drug addicts don't like to see you clean."

"I'm a lot happier now. I enjoy music and cooking and I've got a spare room which I'd like to sort out as a mixing studio."

A Drug Rehabilitation Requirement provides fast access to a drug treatment programme with the goal of reducing drug related offending. Offenders agree their treatment plan with the probation and treatment services. The plan sets out the level of treatment and testing and what is required at each stage of the order. Lasting from six months to three years it requires offenders to give weekly urine samples to show they are staying off drugs, to meet with an Offender Manager from the Probation Service on at least a weekly basis and hold court reviews with the sentencing magistrate on a monthly basis.

A failure to stick to the DRR will mean a return to court for breach of the order. This could result in re-sentencing which might mean prison.

John Bache, is an enthusiastic proponent of the DRR and he said: "I believe they are very worthwhile but we must encourage the offenders."

Quarterly Employee Awards

Congratulations to the six staff members successfully nominated during Quarter 2 of Year 6 (October – December 2009). All Quarterly winners receive a voucher and may be short-listed for the annual Staff Member of the Year Award.

Rebecca Lane, Probation Officer (Crewe) and Performance Improvement Officer (Headquarters) received a nomination covering the excellent supervision of a dangerous offender where “she supervised what might have been an extremely difficult licence with great care and with public protection clearly at the fore.” Rebecca’s nomination was also in relation to the delivery of an OASys briefing where she “remained good-humoured, facilitative and clear in her presentation holding the managers to task.”

Ross Brunton, Information Services Support Officer, Beech House who was nominated for volunteering to undertake a job that was over-and-above his role - tidying up electrical cabling for the benefit of colleagues and staff and doing so with good humour.

Brenda Kinsella, Evening Receptionist, Halton Offender Management Unit, was nominated for providing cover on reception at very short notice and outside of her normal working hours. Brenda also provides additional support to Case Administrators saving them valuable time. “Nothing is too much trouble for Brenda and she never gets stressed or

flustered. It is a pleasure to work with her.”

Gordon Yates, Tools Maintenance, Warrington Community Payback Team has been nominated for organising Probation staff and external suppliers to ensure the delivery of the new vehicles for the Cheshire Probation fleet went smoothly and were fully equipped before being put into use. “Gordon has put a lot of his own time into this project and has performed to the limit and beyond.”

Chris McDonagh, Senior Probation Officer, Court Services was nominated for volunteering to attend a Magistrates’ Association Conference, attending two Court open days and standing in for the Assistant Chief Officer (Pre-Trial Services) to deliver a workshop to the North Wales Constabulary.

Cathy O’Mahony, Senior Probation Officer, Court Services nominated for developing activities for National Offender Management Service staff, organising and escorting Lady Grosvenor around Cheshire on a fact-finding visit, attending a Court open day and acting as co-presenter whilst standing in for the Assistant Chief Officer (Pre-Trial Services) to deliver a workshop to the North Wales Constabulary.

Alan Lilly, Probation Service Officer, Warrington Offender Management Unit received a nomination for the work he has undertaken, in his own time, to create the Veteran’s Support Officer role.

Carolynne meets HRH the Princess Royal

Congratulations to former Mentor Co-ordinator, Carolynne Maddock who has received a Butler Trust Commendation for her work with volunteer mentors. The Butler Trust is an independent charity celebrating and sharing good practice. The annual Butler Trust Awards and Commendations formally recognise outstanding dedication, skill and creativity by individuals and teams across the correctional services.

Carolynne, who retired from Cheshire Probation in September 2009 after 6 years’ service, attended an Awards ceremony in March at St James’s Palace. She was accompanied by David Skyner, Community Payback Manager, where she was presented with her award by HRH the Princess Royal.

Throughout her employment with Cheshire, Carolynne worked tirelessly to develop the Volunteer Mentor Scheme. She built up a pool of active volunteer mentors by developing links with local universities and the voluntary and business sectors by speaking at seminars and University conferences about the benefits of Probation volunteer work. The scope of her engagement across the public, private and voluntary sector enabled her to recruit over 120 volunteer mentors across a wide age range and from diverse communities.

Steve Collett, Chief Executive, said, “During her six years with Cheshire, Carolynne developed a highly motivated group of mentors who not only contribute significantly to Cheshire’s work but also help to enhance the confidence of local communities in the work that we do through this level of engagement.”

Complaint? We listen

Cheshire Probation takes complaints from both offenders and victims seriously and has a clear and accessible complaints procedure which ensures that all complaints are investigated thoroughly, fairly and within agreed timescales.

The nature of complaints can vary and three recent but different complaints are summarised below:

Mr C complained that

1. His Offender Manager had shared confidential information about his intended accommodation with a multi-agency staff group (MAPPA).
2. He thought Approved Premises staff had not acted on information he had given them regarding other residents breaking their alcohol bans.

On investigation into the issues

1. The Offender Manager acted appropriately in sharing information with colleagues. Probation staff from the relevant Offender Management Unit and Approved Premise are obliged to share all resettlement-related information as part of the MAPPA process.
2. The concerns were not ignored. Mr C was informed that it would be inappropriate for the staff member to inform him of actions taken or to be taken. It was explained to Mr C that whilst it is important to make staff aware of such concerns, it is a matter for management to decide how that information is taken forward.

No part of this complaint was upheld.

Mr D complained that

On release from prison he was informed that he would have to reside at a Probation Approved

During 2009/10 27 complaints were investigated. The outcome of those complaints is as follows:

Complaints received over comparative twelve month periods

	Oct 07/Mar 08	Oct 08/Mar 09	Oct 09/Mar 10
Male	18	24	26
Female	2	3	1
Total	20	27	27
Offender Management			
Offender Management	19	24	22
Approved Premises	1	3	4
HM Prisons	0	0	0
Accredited Programmes	0	0	1
Total	20	27	27

Premise and not at his home due to high risk issues. Mr D's complaint was that no assessment had taken place and he was more likely not to re-offend if he was allowed home.

On investigation into the issue

The decision concerning risk issues was reached after the proper use of the Ministry of Justice risk assessment procedure and taking into account the offender's history of offending.

No part of this complaint was upheld.

Mrs F complained that

1. Her son's Offender Manager was rude to her.
2. The Offender Manager was dismissive of her son's wish to pursue a historic offence in which he was the alleged victim.

On investigation into the issue

1. The Senior Probation Officer believed that although the Offender Manager had not been rude, as Mrs F had perceived the Offender Manager's attitude to be so, then an apology should be given. This apology was carried out by letter and also in person to Mrs F.
2. The Offender Manager believed that Mrs F's son had been told what he needed to do to pursue the historic offence and had not done so. This information was relayed to Mrs F, together with the fact that the Offender Manager would assist Mrs F's son in taking the case forward with the Police.

This complaint was partially upheld (1).

Cheshire warmly welcomes colleagues from Malta

Probation officers from Malta visited Probation units across Cheshire in December 2009 to learn how offenders are managed in England. The 10-strong party spent time with Probation staff across the county on a two-week long European-funded fact-finding visit. They spent time with Offender Management Units at Chester, Warrington, Runcorn, Winsford and Crewe, as well as visiting Crown and Magistrates' courts and prisons and young offenders' institutions.

The link between the Cheshire and Malta probation services was established at the European Probation Service Conference held in Norway in 2005, which provided an opportunity for services across Europe to share different approaches to community sentences and the management of offenders.

Senior Probation Officer Mariella Camilleri was one of the guest speakers at the conference and representatives from Cheshire ran a workshop on offender management. Consequently, the two probation services discovered they shared some similar approaches to practice and an informal link was subsequently established.

Ms Camilleri said the training programme in Cheshire was tailor-made for the needs of the Malta Probation Service. "We formed core groups to further analyse the main topics tackled during the placement – the topics that would be at the basis of good probation and parole practice."

"This does not involve a major overhaul of the current probation setup, but the systems need to be fine-tuned and our structure requires further evolution. The organisational structure backing up the probation and parole services in the UK is impressive."

During the first two days of the placement, which took place at the Cheshire Probation headquarters in Chester, the Maltese delegation was given a detailed overview of the services offered to offenders in the community and in custody.

Ms Camilleri said: "We were given information about the basic tools they use, including their multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA). We were told how they manage dangerous offenders in the community and the risk assessment methods they use.

"Multi-agency networking (which brings together the police, probation and the prisons, as well as other agencies such as the health and housing authorities) is already at the basis of what we do every day at work, but a more structured system would help step up accountability and would result in more efficiency in the pooling of resources, especially in view of the ever increasing number of high risk cases (particularly domestic abuse and sex offending)."

As part of their two-week stay the Maltese probation officers sat in on interviews with offenders as well as gaining insight into how Cheshire Probation works with victims. They visited prisons and young offenders' institutions at Styal, Thorn Cross and Risley to see first-hand how the resettlement of offenders is begun before they are released.

The visit to Cheshire was organised by Mariella Camilleri and her colleague, Probation Officer Carmen Nygaard. Carmen explained: "In Malta the Government is thinking about introducing a parole system and the probation service will be the main stakeholder in that."



Representatives from the Malta Probation Service with Linda Dougherty, Personal Assistant to John Davidson (standing, second left)

“We decided it would be a good idea to take the initiative and organise some training and we were able to access European funding for it through the Leonardo Da Vinci programme.”

“We have been able to bring a party from the Malta Probation Service after making contact with Cheshire Probation’s Assistant Chief Executive John Davidson.

“It has been a very worthwhile trip and we have learned a great deal about many aspects of how the Probation Service operates here in Cheshire.”

“People have been very kind and the Probation Service here has been wonderful and when we visited Crown Court the judge also showed a great deal of interest in us and our work.”

Cheshire Probation supervises more than 4,000 offenders at any one time. Approximately 75 per cent of these will be subject to community orders, with the remaining number being subject to some form of prison licence.

John Davidson said, “As a service we prioritise the management of dangerous offenders and those who we identify as prolific offenders.” He added, “We plan to maintain good links with the Malta Probation Service. Whilst we, on this occasion, provided the training placement, we also benefited greatly from the experience of sharing practice information and developing an understanding of the Maltese approach to managing offenders”.

“The Maltese Probation delegates were a credit to their service and were wonderful guests. They were very professional in their approach to the training placement and were clearly keen to make the most of the experience. We enjoyed the time we spent with them and hope we can assist each other in developing our services in the future.”

The Permanent Secretary, Mario Debattista, at the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs wrote to Steve Collett, Chief Executive expressing his “sincere thanks to Cheshire Probation for making possible the training placement for the Maltese Probation Service.” He acknowledged that it has had a positive impact on the development of their service and looked forward to further collaboration.

The Edridge Fund

**By Francis Sanders,
Probation Officer and
Edridge Representative**

The Edridge Fund was set up in 1934 by Sidney Edridge, the first Chair of the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO). It is a national fund approved by the Charity Commission and is set up to financially assist staff in the Probation Service in times of need, giving about £30,000 annually to staff in need. It is generously funded by NAPO, with further resources received through donations, frequently gift aided, a monthly raffle (50/50 club), fund-raising events and Christmas card sales. In Cheshire, Francis Sanders is the current local representative though it is timely to thank John Pazio, the previous Edridge rep, for all he has done to raise money for the fund by organising concerts over the last few years.

The Charity Commission is keen for the Fund to use its resources rather than build up its savings and there is certainly scope for more applications. It requires the completion of only one form laying out income and expenditure and is entirely confidential. It can be completed with or without the Edridge rep, but I am always willing to assist if you wish. The application is then considered alongside others at the bi-monthly meetings of the five trustees of the Fund - but in emergencies a decision will be made much more quickly.

Typically grants are given to assist with unexpected costs, sudden hardship, or to assist those off work longer term with ill-health or stress. Grants are usually approved and tend to vary between £200 and £500. In Cheshire we have had three successful applications over the previous year with a fourth under consideration at present.

Most staff are eligible - they DO NOT need to be a member of NAPO, simply eligible to become one, therefore administrative staff are also eligible to apply as PSOs, Trainees, POs and SPOs.

It is an excellent and underused service, and I would encourage staff to assist the Fund by voluntarily donating a small amount of their salary each month (say £2 - £5) or by joining the 50/50 Club in which you donate £12 per year to Edridge, half of which goes towards a monthly raffle and the other half towards the resources of the Fund. In the past we have raised funds through concerts arranged by John Pazio and at the Staff Conference stall, but new ideas are always appreciated.

Please do not hesitate to apply if you are in real difficulty, or call me to set up a donation or join the raffle.

Francis Sanders
Mobile no: 07894-601172

Problem Solving Courts

In April 2010 Runcorn Magistrates' Court will operate the Problem Solving Court - a new approach to tackling re-offending. Offenders are offered the opportunity to work with a Problem Solving Probation Officer (PSPO) and Brendan O'Hea has been appointed to this role. He will work with other agencies to examine a range of issues including housing, money matters, drink or drug dependency, mental health, employment and education.

At the first Court appearance cases are identified as suitable to be dealt with by the Problem Solving Court, if:

- ⇒ there is a guilty plea,
- ⇒ the offences are linked to particular problems in the offender's life,
- ⇒ the offender agrees to be dealt with by the Problem Solving Court.

The PSPO arranges a meeting with the agencies and prepares a report. The case is reviewed every 5 weeks by the Sentencing Magistrates and any failure on the part of the offender will result in a



return to Court.

Marie Orrell, Assistant Chief Executive says, "This is an exciting initiative which offers targeted resources to address offending and hold offenders to account. The multi-agency approach is innovative and we have been pleased with the high level of responses from local agencies".

Happy Retirement

Under Cheshire Probation's Reward and Recognition Policy, EPIC marks the retirement of staff who have devoted at least 10 years' to Cheshire Probation.

Gratitude for valued service and best wishes for a long and happy retirement go to the following seven staff members who, between them, have accrued an impressive 149 years' service to the organisation.

Peter Butler, Senior Probation Officer, HMP Styal, retired in March 2010 after 32 years' service. Peter joined Cheshire Probation as a Probation Officer in August 1977 and was promoted to the role of Programmes Treatment Manager in March 2002. The following year, Peter became a Senior Probation Officer, initially based at Halton and subsequently Winsford. In July 2007, Peter moved to HMP Styal as the Head of Offender Management, where he remained until his retirement.

Bea Holmes, Court Officer, Macclesfield, who retired in April 2010 after 15 years' with Cheshire. Bea joined the organisation in August 1994 as a Personal Assistant based at the former Northwich office. She became a Court Officer in November 1999, working from both the Macclesfield and Chester Magistrates' Courts, with the majority of her time spent at Macclesfield.

Brian Jones, Probation Officer, Cheshire Youth Offending Team, who retired in March 2010 after 17 years' service. Brian joined Cheshire in August 1992, based at Linden Bank Approved Premise. Between January 1995 and September 2003 Brian worked across three sites - the former Wilmslow office, Crewe and Winsford. In September 2003 Brian was seconded to the Cheshire Youth Offending Team based at Macclesfield, until his retirement.

Peter Jones, Senior Probation Officer/Substance Misuse Manager, who retired in March 2010 after 23 years' service. Peter joined Cheshire Probation as a Probation Officer in August 1986 and in October 2003, was promoted to the role of Senior Probation Officer based at the Halton Offender Management Unit. Peter subsequently undertook various Senior Probation Officer roles including the role of Substance Misuse Manager. During his time employed with Cheshire Probation, Peter worked across four Offender Management Units - Crewe, Chester, Halton and Vale Royal - as well as Thorn Cross YOI.

Colin Maskell, Senior Probation Officer/Approved Premises Manager, retired in March 2010 after 22 years' service. Colin was first appointed to the role of Senior Probation Officer in

November 1987, based at Macclesfield. He worked across three other Offender Management Units - Chester, Winsford and Halton. Colin took on the then part-time Approved Premises Manager role in April 2002, covering both Bunbury House and Linden Bank Approved Premises, moving to the role on a full-time basis in January 2003, until his retirement.

Eddie Mayo, Senior Probation Officer, who also retired in March 2010 after 11 years' with Cheshire, based on two separate periods of service. Eddie was first employed as a Probation Officer at the Warrington Offender Management Unit from March 1993 until February 2000. Eddie returned to Cheshire in December 2005 to the post of Senior Probation Officer based at the Warrington Offender Management Unit, with his period of re-employment including a nine-month spell covering both the Warrington and Cheshire West (Cheshire) Offender Management Units.

Bill Scragg, Community Payback Placement Manager, Cheshire East (Crewe) Offender Management Unit, who retired in December 2009 after 29 years' service working across Crewe and Winsford. Bill was a Community Payback Supervisor from March 1980 until July 1995. He was then promoted to the role of Community Service Officer and more latterly he became a Placement Manager, a role he remained in until his retirement.

A Day in the Life of ...

Elaine Hamlett, Community Payback Placement Manager (Crewe and Winsford)

When did you join the organisation?

I am coming up to 10 years' in the Service.

What attracted you to the role of Placement Manager?

From the first time I went out on site I knew I wanted to work alongside the offenders doing the work that made a difference to the community and to offenders also.

What particular skills are required for the role of Placement Manager?

You need a broad mind and even broader shoulders as you deal with the many different characters, attitudes and opinions. You need the ability to converse at all levels and market the work and the workers to all areas of the public and its governing bodies.

Describe a working day

After arrival at the unit, I speak with the Supervisors about the work for that day, remain available whilst the workers sign in, and answer any questions they or the Supervisors may have.

Once workers are allocated to a Supervisor and a specific project I can then turn to the task of preparing the next project and answering any enquiries that have come in from the internet or telephone. I aim to respond within two days of any enquiry and visit the site to discuss the work with the beneficiary then I can prepare the project folder which will give the Supervisor all the details required to ensure the workers', beneficiaries', public and visitors'

safety.

I also visit the Supervisors out on site to gauge if all the work is going as planned and address the need for changes. This also gives me an opportunity to speak with the workers and Supervisors and if I time it right for their break, I get offered a cuppa into the bargain! It is a useful session as I get to hear the offenders' opinion of the work they are doing, which in turn helps me make decisions on future work and the benefits to the offenders.

Briefly tell us about the range of people you may be in contact with

I come into regular contact with the Police, Fire Brigade, Local Authority and Parish Councils and Councillors, Charitable Organisations, Residents' Associations, local Neighbourhood Action Teams, Social Services, Voluntary Services and concerned members of the public - the list is endless.

What are the most rewarding aspects of your job?

When I see a group of offenders on a project throwing themselves into the work because of the empathy they have found with the cause they are working for or the fact that they are learning new skills or just because they are in a team that is working well together. This is reinforced when a beneficiary thanks them for all their hard work and explains the difference they have made.

What frustrates you the most?

You may regret asking this! People's lack of understanding of Community Payback and what a difference it can make to the community and the offenders. Over the last couple of years Cheshire Probation has worked hard to enlighten the public



Elaine Hamlett, Placement Manager, makes a difference to communities and offenders

through press coverage about the difference offenders can make with the reparation they carry out. There are failures and we as a team try our hardest to help change an offender's wrong way of thinking, teach them skills and even ways of working as a team which for some this may never have happened until now.

We in Community Payback do this even when there are constant changes being made to legislation and systems constantly being updated, but it is still 'work as usual' we can't stop as the offenders don't stop coming in! Whatever the gripes or grievances we still turn up and do the job we love and you can only do it because you love it. As a Supervisor once said to me, "When I am out here on site it's a completely different job, I can't imagine doing anything else".

What do you enjoy doing away from work?

I love fly fishing, my husband taught me to fish and has taken me around Great Britain to some spectacular fishing spots for both trout and salmon. There is nothing to compare with the peacefulness of a loch, lake or river, with birds singing, beautiful scenery and tranquillity. Just like my job, fly fishing requires patience, a good eye for detail and the ability to leap into action when needed; oh, and

EPIC Editorial Board thank everyone who sent in contributions and ideas for this issue.

Any suggestions, articles or ideas for the next issue are invited. Copy date for the next issue is Friday, 12th June 2010. Please email to: Liz.Gaughran@cheshire.probation.gsi.gov.uk or post to Liz Gaughran at Beech House, Park West, Sealand Road, Chester, CH1 4RJ; tel 01244 394500, fax 01244 394507

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