



Northumbria Focus

*The Customer Service Newsletter of the Courts in
the Northumbria Area*

Welcome to the first edition of our Newsletter

On the first of April 2005 Her Majesty's Courts service was launched linking the administration of the Magistrates', Crown, County and Supreme Court together for the first time. The organisation has 42 areas each charged with providing services that meet your needs and priorities within the framework of national standards of service delivery.

Her Majesty's Courts Service's purpose is to deliver justice efficiently and effectively. Our aim is to:

- bring offenders to justice through efficient and effective partnerships between the courts and other criminal justice agencies
- put the public at the heart of what we do so victims, witnesses and jurors feel confident in the system
- work in partnership with the judiciary to support their vital role.



Sheila Proudlock – Area Director for Northumbria

The Area Director's Office is on the third floor of Merchant House, 30 Cloth Market, Newcastle upon Tyne

Inside Justice Week

Judge David Hodson, the Recorder of Newcastle, faced tough questioning when he and members of the Northumbria Local Criminal Justice Board were quizzed by school pupils as part of inside Justice week. Pupils from Gateshead's Kingsmeadow and Heworth Grange schools and St Benet Biscop School in Bedlington, Northumberland took part in the event and questions ranged from what qualifications and training judges needed to why wigs are worn in Court.



**Gateshead Magistrates Court in Warwick Street
Gateshead**

Inside Justice week (the week of the 17th of October) also saw Gateshead Magistrates Court open it's doors to the public for a look behind the scenes.

Nicola Reasbeck, Chair of Northumbria LCJB, said: "The event was a great success. It gave us a great opportunity to show the public how all agencies in the criminal justice service work together to achieve some of the positive results which all contribute to crime reduction and making Northumbria one of the safest places to live and work."

Customer Service Standards

Each of our Courts will display-

- Their Customer Service Plan
- Details of the complaints procedure
- Leaflets on general procedure
- The Courts Charter
- Information on performance and financial costs
- Information on how to contact the Customer Service Officer

Each Court Office will have-

- tidy notice boards with up-to-date and relevant information
- clear signage within the building
- visitors books or comments cards

All staff will-

- wear their ID badge (once available)
- answer the telephone within 30 seconds and identify themselves
- be aware of how to handle Holy books and respect the sensitivities of people who use them
- be courteous and polite at all times and treat customers in the way they would wish to be treated
- use simple and clear language and ensure all technical terms are explained
- if the customer is dissatisfied treat it as a complaint provide the customer with details of where they can obtain legal advice

We are constantly reviewing our standards and welcome comments and suggestions from Court Users.

Contact Norman Hepple, the Customer Service Officer for the Northumbria Area on 0191478 6765 or e-mail him at-
Norman.hepple@hmcourts-service.qsi.gov.uk

You can write to him care of
Gateshead County Court
5th floor, Chad House
Sunderland Road
GATESHEAD NE8 3HY

Outreach into the Community

We are committed to providing justice to the people of Northumbria and we go out into the community to explain about the work that we do.



Three members of staff attended the Sunderland Mela on a wet and windy Sunday in June

We also attend Careers Fairs, offer work experience placements, organise school visits and encourage our staff to take part in the Business Ambassador Scheme.

Charter Mark

Charter mark is the government's national standard for customer service for organizations delivering public services. It is independently evaluated and rigorously assessed. Some of our Courts already have Charter mark accreditation and we are currently preparing an Area application for all Courts in the Northumbria Area.

The six criteria are

1. set standards and perform well
2. actively engage with your customers, partners and staff
3. be fair and accessible to everyone and promote choice
4. continuously develop and improve
5. use your resources effectively and imaginatively
6. contribute to improving opportunities and qualities of life in the community you serve.

Newcastle Crown Court prepares for XHIBIT

Alan Jewers is the XHIBIT Change Co-ordinator at Newcastle Crown Court, he explains what XHIBIT is.

XHIBIT (eXchanging Hearing Information By Internet Technology) is a computer-based system that will improve the method of communication within the court and with our Criminal Justice System (CJS) partners and the general public.

Features of current system

- Lots of paper
- Whispered phone calls during hearings
- Form filling
- Data entry from hand-written forms
- Sending the same information to different recipients
- Answering the same question
- Delay in getting information to final recipient
- Manual faxing

How XHIBIT will change this

- Court log available to authorised staff anywhere in the building
- Instant messaging facility to colleagues within the building
- CREST automatically updated with hearing details and results
- Information distributed automatically and immediately

Progress of hearings available to all users and the public on display screens outside the courtroom

The benefits

The Police, Probation, the Crown Prosecution Service, Cells and Witness Service will each be provided with an additional computer to access specific information from XHIBIT. They will also receive lists electronically, automatically, from the List Office.

They will be able to choose the method by which they receive alerts for key business events, as soon as they arise in court.

- A message can be sent to a Probation Officer's pager whenever a Pre Sentence Report has been ordered or

- Witness Service can automatically be notified of a sentence in a particular case so they can pass the information on to witnesses in that case.

In addition, XHIBIT has been specifically developed for the CPS, Police and Witness Service to manage witness attendance. Courts will be encouraged to promote this facility to improve performance against their witness waiting-time targets.

XHIBIT also has a facility to assist Probation in processing Pre Sentence Report requests.

For further information regarding Xhibit, contact Alan Jewers at Newcastle Law Courts on 0191 2012000 or e-mail him at Alan.jewers@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk

Mediation Awareness Week W/C 24 October 2005

The Department for Constitutional Affairs' (DCA) aim is to organise a series of activities at the end of October 2005 - in conjunction with the European Day of Civil Justice - to increase the awareness and understanding of mediation amongst Court users, potential Court users, practitioners and members of the judiciary.

At the Quayside Law Courts in Newcastle there will be a range of mediation awareness events. During the week of the 24 October 2005 the emphasis will be on civil work and the following week the emphasis will switch to family work.

For further information contact John Mackay on 0191 201 2040

Visit our website

www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk
For Court addresses, telephone numbers, performance figures, career opportunities and the latest news.

You can find information on the Northumbria Local Criminal Justice Board at:
http://lcjb.cjsonline.org/northumbria/home_new.html

Focus on Sunderland County Court

We will be taking a look at each of our Courts in turn and we begin with Sunderland County Court. The Court was built in the late nineteenth century in John Street in the centre of Sunderland.

The Court has family, insolvency and High Court District Registry jurisdiction and it is a Family Care Centre.



The Court is a busy Trial Centre and Shaun Malarkey recently took over as Court Manager. Shaun moved across from the Magistrates Court in Sunderland and says that, after 18 years of crime, it was time to move on. He is enjoying the challenge of his new role and Shaun is also a member of the Area Charter Mark Steering Group.



Shaun Malarkey

Tell us what you think

Did you find this Newsletter useful?
What else would you like to see included?
Any comments, good or bad, to:

Norman Hepple, Area Customer Service Officer on
0191 478 6765
Norman.hepple@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk

The Courts of the Northumbria Area

Berwick upon Tweed Magistrates Court
Tel. 01289 306885

Alnwick Magistrates Court
Tel. 01665 602727

Morpeth & Berwick County Court
Tel. 01670 512221

South East Northumberland (Bedlington) Magistrates Court
Tel. 01670 531100

Tynedale (Hexham) Magistrates Court
Tel. 01434 603248

North Tyneside Magistrates Court
Tel. 0191 2960099

North Shields County Court
Tel. 0191 2982339

Newcastle upon Tyne Magistrates Court
Tel 0191 2327326

Newcastle upon Tyne Combined Court
Tel. 0191 201 2000

Gateshead Magistrates Court
Tel. 0191 4775821

Gateshead County Court
Tel. 0191 477 2445

South Tyneside Magistrates Court
Tel. 0191 4274410

South Shields County Court
Tel. 0191 4563343

Sunderland Magistrates Court
Tel. 0191 5141621

Sunderland County Court
Tel. 0191 5680750

Houghton le Spring Magistrates Court
Tel. 0191 5842392