



[www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk](http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk)

[www.communityjustice.gov.uk](http://www.communityjustice.gov.uk)

01/06

29 March 2006

## **LOCAL COURT TEAM WINS NATIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD**

The work of the Community Justice Centre team in North Liverpool has been recognised at the first Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS) National Awards ceremony in Birmingham (Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2006).

The team won the award for innovation, for the centre's work in engaging the community and working with other criminal justice agencies. The Community Justice Centre, based in the heart of the community in Kirkdale, tackles crimes that affect the quality of life for local people. It aims to achieve better results for offenders, victims and witnesses and the local community. Through its 'problem-solving' approach it has been developing new systems for managing offenders more effectively, by working in partnership with key agencies.

The innovative practices introduced by the team include an early morning 'pre-court meeting' where all the agencies meet with court staff to discuss any issues in the day's cases. This means that many problems can be solved before the hearing, meaning it is more focused and can often be dealt with more quickly.

The team has also developed 'problem-solving' meetings for offenders, which look at the underlying issues that may be causing them to commit crime. The meeting includes their legal representative, a probation officer, and / or the youth offending team.

Representatives from other agencies on-site that may be able to help, e.g. housing and drug addiction counsellors, are called in where appropriate. This is something that does not happen at any other court in England and Wales and can help people to break out of a pattern of offending behaviour.

The views of the local community have been crucial in the development of the centre. The team continues to listen to their opinions through two community reference groups which meet regularly to help decide the priorities for the centre's work.

Community representatives, the council, probation and youth offending services identify areas where unpaid work could be carried out by offenders to benefit local people. For example, offenders were recently involved in creating a nature trail for children at a local community centre.

Shaun McNally, area director of Court Service for the Merseyside Area said:

“This award is recognition of the effort, achievement, drive and determination within the Community Justice Centre team. Although the award was handed to HMCS staff, it must be recognised that the success of the centre is due to the contribution of all Criminal Justice Agencies, the North Liverpool community and our partners. The team was also short listed in a number of other categories. The Community Justice Centre is a ground-breaking pilot - much has been achieved in a short space of time, and the team is committed to listening to the views of the local community to make a positive difference to their lives.”

Sir Ron De Witt, HMCS chief executive officer, said:

“I am delighted to reward the hard work of the team. This honour marks HMCS' first anniversary. From my visits to courts, I have come away with a real and abiding impression that everything we do is for the public – the victim, witness, juror, defendant and plaintiff – they come first. Building the service around their needs is what defines us and establishes our reputation.”



## NOTES

Her Majesty's Courts Service brought together, on 1st April 2005, 42 independent magistrates' courts committees and the Court Service into one single organisation for the first time. It is an executive agency of the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA). Its purpose is to deliver justice effectively and efficiently to the public. It is responsible for the management of the civil, family and criminal courts in England and Wales.

The Community Justice Centre, North Liverpool, is a pioneering initiative aimed at bringing justice closer to the community. It is the first of its kind in England and Wales. The centre, based on Boundary Street, Kirkdale, works with local residents to tackle crimes and anti-social behaviour, which affect the quality of life of the 80,000 residents in the local authority wards of Anfield, County, Everton and Kirkdale. It provides access to a range of support services for those living and working in the area as well as enabling residents to identify their priorities for the work of the centre and the services it provides.

The courtroom has been operating since December 2004 initially from within Liverpool Magistrates' Court. It moved to its own building within the community in August 2005 together with on-site services.

The local community will be involved in measuring public opinion on the success of the pilot and attitudes towards the criminal justice system and its agencies. This will be completed at the end of 2006.