



Lothian and Borders Community Justice Authority

Communications Strategy 2008-11

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PART 1 - Communications Strategy 2008-11

Background

The Scottish Executive's 'Reducing Reoffending' consultation pointed to significant communication gaps within the criminal justice system and a lack of public understanding of how the criminal justice system works.

Following the introduction of the Management of Offenders, etc (Scotland) Act 2005, the Lothian and Borders Community Justice Authority (CJA) was commissioned by the Scottish Executive to create an Area Plan for 2008/11. A task within the Plan is the creation of a Communications Strategy for the CJA.

As the criminal justice reform programme is taken forward, improving communication will be an essential element in promoting public confidence and trust in the efficiency and effectiveness of offender management services. Community Justice Authorities are new statutory bodies created by the Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Act 2005 designed to address the weaknesses and concerns in the management of offenders and in particular the reduction in re-offending.

Purpose of Communications Strategy

The Strategy is aimed at improving the communication capability of Lothian and Borders CJA. The role of the CJA Communications Strategy is to develop and maintain a positive public profile for the work of the CJA and to continually strive to enhance the organisation's reputation by ensuring a consistent, proactive and high quality approach to communications both internally and externally.

The Communications Strategy underpins the shared vision of the CJA and its partner agencies of enabling safer, stronger communities where ordinary people can live their lives free from the fear of crime and where the rights of all members of the community are respected and upheld.

The Leadership Role of CJA as Communicators

An important function for all CJAs will be providing leadership in communicating clear and simple messages about developments in offender management at a local level, and promoting a shared understanding of the different roles individuals have in promoting understanding. Lothian and Borders CJA will:

- include a local communications strategy in their area plans;
- work with partners to deliver the local communications strategy, providing leadership and identifying clear messages;
- build relationships with the local media to promote understanding of the work of offender management services; and
- use the area planning process to explore how communications with offenders and their families can be used to engage them constructively in the development of services.

The Lothian and Borders CJA will use our contact with partner agencies to compliment and build links into the existing communication activities to promote simple, consistent and clear messages in the understanding of offender management services and the benefits to the community of all the relevant partners working together. Partner bodies can themselves play an important role as communicators, with their own staff and through their own experience of working with the media.

The Role of CJA Partner Agencies as Communicators

Partner agencies have a key role in delivering the CJA Communications Strategy. The role of partner agencies in delivering the Communication Strategy will be to:

- Promote understanding of offender services among their staff and the public consistent with the key messages embodied in the National Strategy (outlined below).
- Ensure as appropriate that their staff understand the changes taking place in offender management and are familiar with the national strategy.

Key messages for the CJA and Partner Agencies:

The key messages for communications will be:

- a) the vision for Scotland of safer, stronger communities where people can live their lives free from the fear of crime;
- b) the purpose of Criminal Justice Services in protecting public safety by reducing offending and reoffending;
- c) the public has the right to expect Criminal Justice Services to use their contact with known offenders to reduce the risk that they will offend again and that it is not possible to eradicate risk;
- d) Criminal Justice Services will work together in a more integrated way; provide consistent management of offenders in the community and custody, which takes into account the level of risk in each case;
- e) reducing reoffending cannot be a task for the Criminal Justice System alone. Policies intended to promote social justice should take into account the specific challenges presented by integrating offenders into the community; and
- f) the CJA is committed to supporting the Scottish Strategy for Victims' three key objectives:
 - Better access to information
 - Increased support
 - Greater participation in the Criminal Justice system.

All Communications by the CJA and its Partner Agencies will promote:

- a) increased public awareness and improved understanding of the purpose and vision of the CJA;
- b) increased public confidence in the effectiveness of work with offenders;
- c) improved understanding of community disposals;
- d) improved understanding of the role of prisons;
- e) improved satisfaction for victims, sentencers and beneficiaries of work by offenders; and
- f) the appropriate care of victims, including appropriate and timely information.

Key Questions: Are we confident that our key audiences have a sound understanding of the roles and responsibilities performed the CJA/partner agency?

- a) Are we collecting and distributing the right information?
- b) Are the messages we are communicating clear and consistent with the National Strategy?
- c) Are the messages we are communicating relevant and meaningful to our target audiences?
- d) Are we confident that we are reaching our optimum audience through communication activity, including identified segments of our audience base and 'hard to reach' groups?

Target audiences

The community

Public opinion sets a powerful context for the work of offender managers. Locally and nationally, the CJA and partners have a duty under the modernising government agenda to provide the public with balanced information and actively involve citizens in the decision making and direction of what happens in prisons, what community sentences involve and how well services are performing. CJAs will be expected to build links with the local media, while service deliverers need to build relationships with local communities and to listen to their concerns.

Victims of crime

Communications links with the victims of crime are improving and the enhanced partnership and information sharing arrangements created within the CJA will assist in ensuring that case specific information and the general awareness of the needs of victims of crime will be met more effectively. Current legislative proposals seek to enhance the provision of information on release dates of offenders and the CJA and partners will work to ensure that victims of crime receive the appropriate advice and support when offenders are about to be released into the local community.

Partner bodies

CJAs will use their contact with partner agencies to promote understanding of offender management services and the benefits to the community of all the relevant partners working together. Partner bodies can themselves play an important role as communicators, with their own staff and through their own experience of working with the media.

Offenders and their families

Communicating clearly to offenders and their families and seeking their views on the system is an area that needs to be developed.

Judiciary

Good communications are needed with sentencers at local and national level, to ensure that we benefit from their experience. As the agendas of the Criminal Justice Board and CJA's develop opportunities to consolidate links may be beneficial

Partner organisations

Who are the “partner bodies”?

The organisations that are to be designated partner bodies are:

- Scottish Borders, City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Mid Lothian and West Lothian councils
- Scottish Prison Service
- Lothian & Borders Police
- NHS Lothian & NHS Borders

- SACRO, NCH, APEX (Scotland), Includem, Venture Trust, Families Outside
- Scottish Court Service
- Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
- Victim Support Scotland

Links with other agencies

It is recognised that while Criminal Justice Social Work and the Scottish Prison Service have specific responsibilities for the management of offenders, these agencies alone will be unable to achieve the broad aims of the National Strategy for the Management of Offenders and reduce re-offending.

It is recognised that support and liaison will be required with a number of national and local agencies. These include:

National

- The Scottish Government
- The Parole Board
- The Risk Management Authority
- Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA)
- HM Chief Inspector of Prisons
- The Sentencing Commission
- Jobcentre Plus
- The State Hospital
- Scottish Children's Reporters Administration

Local

- Community Planning Partnerships
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Community Health Partnerships
- Other local voluntary groups as judged appropriate by the CJA, including community and faith groups
- Criminal justice boards
- Further Education Colleges
- Prison Visiting Committees
- Area Child Protection Committees
- Youth Justice Services
- Drug and Alcohol Teams
- Housing Representatives
- Education and training and employment bodies

Part 2 - Strategy and Action Plan

1. Promote a strong, consistent brand for Lothian and Borders CJA

- Produce a corporate visual identity.
- Create standard templates for corporate presentations, leaflets, posters and exhibition stands.
- Adopt a 'Plain English' style for all communications with the public.
- Ensure a greater focus on the CJA's key messages in communications activity.

2. Build relationships with the local media to promote understanding of the work of Offender Management Services

- Produce a media response protocol between CJA and local authority press offices.
- Ensure key staff receive adequate media training.

3. Develop Online Communications

- Develop a website for Lothian and Borders CJA that can provide information for the public, practitioners and stakeholders .
- Ensure that we link to any national CJA website hub created.

4. Be more proactive and strategic in engaging with, consulting and seeking feedback from target audiences

- Ensure key staff receive adequate media training.
- Host an annual meeting of communications practitioners from community planning partners/key partner agencies to focus on key communications issues facing CJAs.

5. Use the area planning process to explore how communications with offenders and their families can be used to engage them constructively in the development of services

- Ensure partners routinely evaluate services provision and act on findings.
- Ensure that hard to reach groups such as victims and families are considered specifically in consultation and communication, commissioning specific approaches where required.

6. Develop a strategic programme of CJA events

- Produce a programme of events with input from partner agencies that reflect the CJA's area plan priorities.

7. Monitoring and evaluation

- The CJA Communications Strategy will be reviewed annually by the CJA and partner agencies as part of annual performance management and forward planning.

Part 3 - Media protocol

1. Background

Following the introduction of the Management of Offenders, etc (Scotland) Act 2005, the Lothian and Borders Community Justice Authority (CJA) was commissioned by the Scottish Executive to create an Area Plan for 2008/11. A key task within the Plan is the creation of a Communications Strategy for the CJA. This Protocol forms part of the strategy.

2. Aim

The aim of the protocol is to enable a consistent approach to communications

3. Protocol

This protocol has been agreed and accepted by the CJA and all statutory partners.

Spokesperson:

- a) The opportunity to represent the CJA to the media or respond should be offered first to the Convener.
- b) No officer of the CJA will speak on behalf of the CJA to any media organisation unless specifically authorised by the Convener of the CJA
- c) The spokespeople for the CJA, to be included in press releases, will be:
 - Cllr John Muir, Convener of CJA
 - Cllr Sandy Scott, Deputy Convener of CJA
 - Mr Chris Hawkes, Chief Officer

4. Key messages:

- a) The vision for Scotland is safer, stronger communities where people can live their lives free from the fear of crime.
- b) It is the purpose of Criminal Justice Services to protect public safety by reducing offending and reoffending.
- c) The public has the right to expect Criminal Justice Services to use their contact with known offenders to reduce the risk that they will offend again. It is not possible to eradicate risk.

- d) Criminal Justice Services will work together in a more integrated way; provide consistent management of offenders in the community and custody, which takes into account the level of risk in each case.
- e) Reducing re-offending cannot be a task for the Criminal Justice system alone. Policies intended to promote social justice should take into account the specific challenges presented by integrating offenders into the community.
- f) The CJA is committed to supporting the Scottish Strategy for Victims three key objectives:
 - Better access to information
 - Increased support
 - Greater participation in the Criminal Justice system

5. All Communications by the CJA and its Partner Agencies will Promote:

- a) increased public awareness and improved understanding of the purpose and vision of the CJA;
- b) increased public confidence in the effectiveness of work with offenders;
- c) improved understanding of community disposals;
- d) improved understanding of the role of prisons;
- e) improved satisfaction for victims, sentencers and beneficiaries of work by offenders; and
- f) the appropriate care of victims, including appropriate and timely information.

8. Local Media:

- a) All press releases to local media on behalf of the CJA will be shared with the Local Authority Communication Officers, SPS Communication Officer, Lothian & Borders Police Communication Officer, NHS Lothian and NHS Borders.
- b) Local media includes:
 - Local newspapers
 - Local radio & television
 - Local Authority website

9. National Media:

- a) All press releases to national media on behalf of the CJA will be shared with the Local Authority Communication Officers, SPS Communication Officer, Lothian & Borders Police Communication Officer, NHS Lothian and NHS Borders
- b) National media includes:
 - National newspapers
 - National radio
 - Television

10. Partner Agencies

The following is a list of Communication contacts within each organisation that will send and receive information for release:

Organisation	Contact and job title	Telephone	Email
Action for Children			
Apex			
City of Edinburgh Council			
East Lothian Council			
Families Outside			
Includem			
Midlothian Council			
NHS Borders			
NHS Lothian			
Procurator Fiscal			
SACRO			
Scottish Borders Council			
Scottish Court Service			
Scottish Prison Service			
Venture Trust			
Victim Support Scotland			
West Lothian Council			