

**Community Justice Panel
Case Statistics - June 08 – June 09**

Offences	
Arson	1
Neighbour dispute	21
Public Order	2
Speeding	23
School bad behaviour	2
Criminal Damage	18
Assault	41
Theft	6
Racially aggravated crime	5
Threatening language	1
Fear of provocation of violence	1
Death threat	1
Shoplifting	1
Nuisance	2
Driving Offence	1
Burglary	1
Harassment	4
GBH	1
Failure to keep dog under control	1
Handling Stolen goods	1
Possession air rifle	1
Town location	
Chard	61
Crewkerne	17
Iminster	27
Outside West	13
Yeovil	17
Adults	98
Children	89

Community Justice Panel Case Studies

Case Study 1 – Criminal Damage Shop Window

An 18-year-old male, out drinking with his girlfriend in a nightclub in Town. As the night progresses the girlfriend decides to inform him that she doesn't want to be with him any more and introduces the new man in her life. The young male obviously very angry with this leaves the nightclub and decides to take his anger out on a shop window.

Unfortunately for him the window that he chose is a re-enforced plate glass window and as he punched the window, which broke, a shard of glass cuts the main artery in his right arm. Police and Ambulance arrive, stem the bleeding and get him off to hospital.

The damage to the window is £160.00, the damage to the male's right arm is severe and he has to undergo microsurgery to repair the artery and tendons.

After consulting with the shop owner and the male it is agreed that Restorative Justice is the way forward with the case.

Prior to the panel hearing, which is about 3 weeks after the incident due to hospital appointments, the male attends the shop and apologises to the shop owner and pays the £160.00 in full.

At the panel the young male is extremely remorseful about what he has done. One of the most interesting outcomes at the panel was the male's changed perception of the police. He said "When the 2 police officers arrived they were not interested in the smashed window they just wanted to stop the bleeding coming from my arm".

The male involved had no previous convictions prior to the incident and none since.

Case Study 2 – Assault & Criminal Damage

A 17-year-old male, was at home with his mum, his father was in hospital. The mother informed the son that his father had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. The young male became extremely emotional at hearing this news and pushed past his mum, pushing her into the wall and went into the garden and kicked out at several fence panels causing them to break. On hearing this disturbance the neighbours dialled 999 and requested the police.

Upon the police arrival the situation was quiet but the mother made allegations of Criminal Damage and assault; because of ethical crime recording the officers were duty bound to record it as such. Bearing in mind the news that the young male had just been given the officers felt that it was unnecessary to deal with this under the Criminal Justice System and suggested Restorative Justice as a more appropriate way to deal with it thereby reducing the stress on the young male and his family.

The case was referred to the Community Justice Panel.

A panel was held and the young male replaced the damaged fence panels and both he and his mum found the whole process a healing experience for them to both understand each other's emotions and to acknowledge that people deal with bad news differently. The male had never offended previously and has never offended since.

Case Study 3 – Assault

26 year-old female, having had a baby 10 months earlier, decided to go out with some female friends, having not been out socially for 18 months. She asked her partner, the father of the baby, whom she was living with to baby-sit, he agreed.

On the Saturday night she went out with several of her friends and as the evening progressed she was shocked to see her partner at the bar talking with another unknown female. She immediately asked him who was looking after their baby and he informed her that his mother was. She then obviously asked him what he was playing at and who was the girl on his arm. An argument then ensued and she struck him on the head with the bottle that she had been drinking from causing a nasty gash on his forehead. The door staff immediately intervened and the police were called. The female's partner was reluctant to supply any personal details to the police and also refused any medical assistance.

The police now had a suspect for an assault but no victim and as this was alcohol-fuelled violence on licensed premises, something needed to be done.

The female was sorry for what she had done and was very remorseful. She agreed that the CJP was the most appropriate way to bring the incident to a satisfactory conclusion. The victims in this case would be the door staff, the pub landlady and the community as a whole.

Prior to the panel and due to the facilitator's interview skills, the rapport and the trust that was built between them it was established that this girl had been the victim of Domestic Abuse and Violence over a number of years at the hands of this partner. She had never reported this to police or any other agency and like many victims of Domestic Abuse had suffered in silence.

A panel was held and the female agreed to work for 2 nights (Unpaid) in the pub where the incident happened. This would give her an insight into how difficult it is for staff working in this environment. She completed both nights at the pub and the landlady and staff were so impressed with her that she was offered a full time post.

She had not offended before or since the incident. She also found the courage to leave her partner and get on with her life and that of her child.

Case Study 4 – Race Hate Crime

Early one afternoon a 54 year old female customer (the Offender) of a local bank tried to get some money out of the cash machine. She had the normal 3 attempts to enter the correct pin number; unfortunately after the third attempt the machine retained her card. She entered the main banking hall of the bank and waited in a small queue. After a short wait she went to the next available tellers window. This teller was a young female of Asian appearance and origin, (the Victim). The Offender then explained what had just happened to her card and that she needed money out urgently. The Offender having used the ATM for a number of years and having not entered the bank for the same amount of time was not recognised by the Victim. The Victim asked her for some identification before any transaction could be completed.

At this point the Offender became very abusive and told the Victim "Go and get someone who speaks English" and made some other derogatory comments to her. This upset the Victim immensely, so much so that the manager was called and he requested the Offender to leave, which she did. Police were called and an investigation was conducted. Having conducted this investigation and heard what had gone on prior to the incident,

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police asked the Victim and the Offender if they were willing to go through the CJP using the Restorative Justice methods. Both parties readily agreed, the Victim wanted answers and the Offender wanted to apologise.

A panel was held and all parties participated. The Offender was extremely emotional and kept apologising to the Victim stating, "I am not a Racist, I am so sorry".

Eventually she composed herself and explained what had happened just prior to the incident, the Offender continued:

" 20 minutes prior to the incident at the bank, I had received a call from my elderly mum telling me that my father had been rushed into hospital at Exeter and was really bad. I had to get myself to the hospital as quickly as possible. I told her I was on my way. I needed petrol in my car and had no money, so I went to the bank to get some so I could pay for the petrol and I forgot my number".

The Offender all through this, continued to be very emotional. She was asked by the Facilitator "What happened next?" She continued apologising for her behaviour and stated that it was because she was under a lot of pressure with her dad being ill.

At this point the Facilitator asked "What happened then?" The Offender stated that she went to a friend's house, borrowed £20.00 and put petrol in her car. She eventually arrived at the hospital in Exeter to be told by her mum that her father had died 10 minutes earlier.

At this point in the conference you could hear a pin drop. The Victim then got up, walked over to the Offender and gave her a hug. The panel had to have a 30-minute recess to allow for the emotions to be expressed freely and sufficiently.

Eventually the conference reconvened and an Acceptable Behaviour Contract was agreed.

The Victim got the closure that she wanted, the Offender was able to tell her side of the story and she was not criminalized. The Offender was of previous good character and has never offended since.

The Victim was so impressed with the process and the outcome that she is now one of our trained Facilitators with the Community Justice Panel.

This is just 4 examples of how the Community Justice Panel aims to help Develop Communities and to manage Conflict and Tensions by repairing harm and building relationships in line with the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) Guidelines.

Although ages and gender are correct, names, locations etc have been omitted for reasons of confidentiality.

(Bill Geddes, Val Keitch, CJP July 2009)