

SASO\* GLASGOW BRANCH  
STRATHCLYDE POLICE HEADQUARTERS  
PITT STREET GLASGOW

5th November 2009

HOME DETECTION CURFEWS (HDC)

Sheriff Kearney welcomed everyone as Sheriff Rita Rae was on judicial business in Edinburgh. He introduced the three speakers :- Stefan Kromker from Serco, Professor Mike Nellis Professor of Criminal and Community Justice at Glasgow School of Social Work and Dr Nancy Loucks Chief Executive of Families Outside.

First to speak was Stefan Kromker who has had for over 20 years, a wide variety of work in Social Work both in this country, including residential work in Ayrshire, and abroad. Stefan advised that he was going to concentrate on the practical aspects of the work Serco do. They were awarded the contract by the government in April 2006. They are the tool and all they do is determined and controlled by government dictate. He explained how the tag works before passing one around for everyone to see. The bracelet is fitted to the individual and the monitor placed with the agreement of the parties. This is important as any movement is triggered are Serco. The monitors have a battery backup which continues to monitor during power cuts and the information, which is time recorded, is then downloaded when power is restored. There is also a panic button which goes straight through to Serco. The tag is designed to enable the clients to lead as normal a life as possible and can be adapted to a wrist if a medical certificate is provided. The tag is only used with the agreement of all concerned and can be adapted to allow for many things including shift working. It is not a tracking device. It can only record that they are at home base during curfew hours.

Mike Nellis then spoke about early release. It is still considered controversial in many quarters. The time scale is dependant on the length of service. In many quarters it is perceived as aiding repeat offending. The police don't like it as it gives them more work. However it is massive value for money. It is growing internationally being the preferred mode of prison release in America though some of the use is not early release. It is a great aid to reintegration of offenders. He then said that he would leave it there and answer questions at the end.

Nancy Loucks then spoke to the impact on families. HDCs have a massive impact on families. Family support plays a massive impact on the rehabilitation of offenders. Families are often dealing with the chaotic lifestyle created by the offender and there is a lack of acknowledgment of this support and the rights of these family members. They often do not seek support due to the stigma and often don't get access to information. There is a lack of involvement with the risk assessment, often only asked if they will provide a bed and their needs not considered. They are not usually aware of the family policing role that they will have to take onboard. Serco do provide a leaflet but information from prisons is very patchy. Most family members do not want to be responsible for them being recalled. The Families Outside helpline has received a massive increase in use mainly due to HDCs.

\* The Scottish Association for the Study of Offending

One caller was unable to tell the prison that she was scared of her partner and wanted them to stop the HDC without him finding out that she didn't want him out.  
A father called as he wanted his daughter taken back as she was back dealing drugs.  
A call left on the answer machine by a mother who didn't feel that her son was ready due to his mental health was answered the next morning but it was too late as he had killed himself the night before.

Nancy believed that more research is required with the emphasis on family experience and more support in place for all concerned.

The floor was then opened for questions. Some topics covered were:-

Many don't choose early release as they have to serve full sentence even when breach is out with their control.

Support provided for young people on movement restriction orders but this is not provided with HDC.

Emergency procedures not always known.

Lack of research on domestic violence incidents

Lack of consultation with children, though this is always done in South Africa .

Lack of clarity on risk assessment decisions

Government criteria on breaches

Criticism from sheriffs who don't believe it is punitive enough

Not all bad news there are positive outcomes.

Stefan advised that Serco welcomed arranged visits for anyone who wishes to see them in operation.

Sheriff Kearney then thanked everyone for their attendance.

A report compiled for SACP by Margaret Gaughan