



Focussing on crime prevention

ONE OF my principal points of focus for the year is to work with local projects concentrating on crime prevention, and my chosen charity for the year is Switch Up which operates in Nottingham and the Mansfield area.

Switch Up works with young people – often from difficult backgrounds and often over a period of years – to encourage them to break the cycle of offending and reoffending, and to help them understand that with focus and a little discipline they can do well, get a job, and make a meaningful and productive contribution to society. It has also been working in Mansfield this summer to provide a midday meal for many children who might otherwise have gone hungry over the school holidays.

I felt privileged to have taken part in the grand opening of the new joint Nottinghamshire Police and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, officially opened by Vicky McClure from *Line of Duty*. The new HQ is a state-of-the-art facility and – while most local people will never see it – the people of Nottinghamshire should be proud of it and reassured that our local police and fire services have modern and resilient facilities with which to serve and protect our community. The grand opening accompanied the passing out



With Marcellus Baz from Switch Up, Jonny Owen, TV producer, actor, writer and fiancé of Vicky McClure, Chief Constable Craig Guildford, and Vicky McClure at the grand opening of the new joint headquarters

parade of a large cohort of newly qualified police officers, and a new experience for me was to carry out an inspection of the parade; from my conversations with the new officers, it was clear that they are a great bunch of people determined to serve our local community well.

Over the first half of my year I have become increasingly occupied by the fact that so many of the young people at risk of entering the criminal justice system have significant but undiagnosed speech, language and literacy needs with – locally – 82 per cent having difficulty understanding information, and often lacking sufficient linguistic skills to understand what is happening to them within the system; and 54 per cent having poor social communication skills rendering them more vulnerable to gang involvement and exploitation. In Nottinghamshire we have a brilliant pilot scheme called Divert Plus, working alongside our county's Violence Reduction Unit. Divert Plus works with children and young people who have entered the youth justice system, and aims – among other things – to provide multi-disciplinary support and specialist services including mentoring and speech and language therapy to those most in need, with a view to equipping them with the tools to make better choices in future and to understand the consequences of their



Right: With fellow Sheriffs Niamh and Maisie at the Abbey Gates Primary School performance of *Robin and the Sherwood Hoodies*



At a visit to Switch Up Mansfield



With PCC Caroline Henry and the Divert Plus team at the Nottingham Custody Suite

behaviour. I recently visited the fantastic and dedicated Divert Plus team at the new Nottingham Custody Suite with our Police and Crime Commissioner, Caroline Henry.

On a lighter note, it was a pleasure to be invited by two fellow sheriffs, Niamh and Maisie, to the Years 5 and 6 production of *Robin and the Sherwood Hoodies* at Abbey Gates Primary School, Ravenshead. I had met the girls at our village picnic for the Platinum Jubilee, and their parents and teacher subsequently invited me to see their performance. It was a great evening and it was an honour to note that the girls had modelled their costumes on my uniform... although I found myself feeling a little envious of the fact that – on one of the warmest days of the year – they had sensibly incorporated shorts into their costumes. Thank goodness thick black velvet is so absorbent!

Paul Southby
High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire 2022-23