

Communities developing solutions to issues



Dr Naomi Maynard, Director at Feeding Liverpool, receiving a High Sheriff's Certificate



Afrah Qassim, CEO Savera UK, receiving a High Sheriff's Certificate for work on tackling culturally specific abuse in the UK, including forced marriage, 'honour-based' abuse and female genital mutilation

Dr Ruth Hussey CB OBE DL

High Sheriff of Merseyside 2023-24

It has been a great honour to serve as the 50th High Sheriff for the County of Merseyside. During the year, the range of activities that I have been involved with has been remarkable and very enjoyable.

There are five councils in Merseyside and mayoral activities are always interesting and varied. I have attended Freedom of the City/Borough awards, flag-raising for memorial days, civic services, charitable fundraising events and the Lord Mayor's Civic Day which showcased Liverpool at its best, featuring St George's Hall, Speke Hall and Strawberry Field.

It was also a pleasure to go on board ship with the Liverpool Seafarers Centre to give Christmas presents to merchant sailors. Hearing their stories about being away from home and their families was very moving and the support provided by the centre is greatly appreciated. The carol concert at the Savoy Chapel was very special and it was fascinating to be shown the hassock used during 'pricking the lites' when the bodkin is pushed through the paper (when appointing High Sheriffs for the three ceremonial counties of Lancashire, Greater Manchester, and Merseyside).

My theme for the year was health inequalities, recognising the link between crime and disorder and disadvantaged circumstances. It was particularly evident when sitting in the family court with His Honour Judge Steven Parker,

highlighting the impact of addictions and mental ill health and in visiting charities addressing domestic violence.

The Judges' Service to mark the start of the legal year is held at Liverpool Cathedral. In her sermon, Professor Dame Carol Black DBE spoke powerfully, based on her national report, advocating that vulnerable people with substance misuse problems get the support they need to recover and turn their lives around, both in the community and in prison. The Crown Court in Liverpool is trialling a new approach to sentencing for substance misuse which will help people find a new path in life.

Another example of how communities are responding to current challenges is in relation to the cost of living and the need for affordable and sustainable food production. Feeding Liverpool is the City of Liverpool's food alliance, connecting and equipping people and organisations to work towards good food for all. I visited the Kindling Trust which is starting regenerative farming and educational sessions; an RHS award-winning Brickyard garden at Everton in the Community which is growing food with the community; Emmaus in Sefton which provides services for those who are homeless with its allotment garden and community space; a YMCA farm which supports people in recovery; and many food providers including St Matthew's community pantry in St Helens which provides affordable food and holistic support. It is very encouraging to see communities

developing their own solutions to issues.

Someone who has done precisely that is 16-year-old Khan Odira, to whom I awarded my first High Sheriff's Award Certificate for the work he has done to create a community garden and to eliminate fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour in his neighbourhood. I was delighted to attend the National Crimebeat Awards in March and to witness Khan winning first prize as well as an award for best presentation!

As the year draws to a close, it has been a privilege to learn about the fantastic work done by organisations and charities on Merseyside. In order to highlight the issues and efforts being made to reduce health inequalities, I have spoken at conferences on child poverty, housing, food, the economy and health and I will do more of that once the year is over. My sincere thanks go to all who have supported me through the year. It has been an immense privilege to serve as High Sheriff.



With Professor Dame Carol Black at the Judges' Service, Liverpool Cathedral