

First and second things



Amy Crawford JP

High Sheriff of Northamptonshire 2024-25

How can we, as a community, stop the cycle of violence and better support young people? This was the theme for my year. As a magistrate I knew it was going to be focused on the criminal justice system, particularly youth justice, having sat in youth courts for fifteen years or so. This was the thoughtful debate at my shrieval lecture at the University of Northampton, delivered by John Sutherland, a retired senior police officer in the Met. He focused on knife crime and the importance of prioritising fundamental social values over reactive measures such as harsher punishments and building more prisons. We simply cannot sentence our way out of the problems facing us as a society, so we need to go back upstream and peel away the layers of 'why?' What comes first and what comes second?

Early in my tenure, I worked with Jane Deamer from the Crysalys Foundation, which has pioneered a youth court initiative in Northamptonshire for around the last three years. The Youth Court Solutions project provides immediate 'trauma-informed' support to young offenders, their families and victims

At the Northamptonshire Courts Service with (back row) Nick Rubins (Notts), Richard Coles (Rutland), Ian Morgan (Derbyshire), Alex Barfield (Berks), Kurshida Mirza (Bucks), and (front row) James Macnamara (Oxon), John Chatfeild-Roberts (Leics), James Saunders Watson (Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire; High Sheriff 2018), Raji Gill (Warks) and Bav Shah (Beds) Photo: Ketan Photography



At the launch of the Belonging Charter and Protocol for Decriminalisation of Children in Care with Dominic Goble JP DL, Danielle Stone (Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner), Charlotte Franks (head teacher of the virtual school supporting children in care in North Northamptonshire), Colin Foster (Chief Executive Northamptonshire Children's Trust), Cllr Fiona Baker (Children's Services portfolio holder for West Northamptonshire Council) and Emma James (Assistant Chief Constable)

upon arrival at the courthouse. The results have been significant in driving down re-offending alongside two other problem-solving initiatives that involve

youth magistrates. To expand this approach, I invited my fellow High Sheriffs to a symposium to explore implementing it in their counties. Jane has also



In Towcester for a trek around the county – a High Sheriff and Northamptonshire Community Foundation joint initiative raising awareness of local youth charities and organised by Northamptonshire Walks

presented at the Midlands region High Sheriffs' Association conference and will speak at the seminar for High Sheriffs in nomination later this year to spread the word and upscale this successful model.

Why do a disproportionate number of children in care end up in youth courts? To address this question, I convened the Northamptonshire Children's Trust, our two unitary councils, the police and two outstanding care home providers. Together they have developed a children's Belonging Charter setting minimum standards for care homes and improving support for staff and, most importantly, vulnerable children.

Alongside this, the police have drawn up a new code of practice to help prevent children in care from being unnecessarily criminalised and have given guidance for providers regarding callouts. My visits to care homes and the police child exploitation hub reinforced how our children in care should be treated as well as the need for collaboration to raise

standards and protect at-risk youth. All agencies have worked incredibly hard and I hope this piece of work will have a lasting impact on what should be a given for all children in care.

Otherwise, it has been a busy year where I have been allowed to be 'politely curious'. There are so many occasions and events I savoured, but here are a few:

- Hosting ten High Sheriffs to support the Courts Service
- Sitting with Crown Court and High Court judges on their trials
- Visiting prisons and probation services
- Walking across the county on my High Sheriff's treks with the Northamptonshire Community Foundation and Northamptonshire Walks, meeting many charities with young people at the core of their activities
- Rough sleeping under tarpaulin to raise

awareness for homelessness on the coldest and wettest night imaginable

- Presenting three High Sheriff's Awards to individuals for their outstanding contributions to the Independent Monitoring Board at our local prison, a Referral Order panellist at the Youth Justice Service and a lady running two outstanding children's care homes while providing voluntary advice to the police around trauma-informed practice
- Providing a broadcast on the role of High Sheriff on a local radio station at Christmas

As I return to the Bench, I do so with a deeper understanding of the justice system and with immense respect for those dedicated to maintaining law and order. This year has been an extraordinary privilege, and I will always be grateful for the inspiring people I have met throughout my year.

The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal

High Sheriffs intending to lay wreaths during the Armistice period can order these with the High Sheriffs' badge in the centre from The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.



Orders should be placed (quoting stock code H0018) by calling the Poppy Appeal on **01622 717172** and speaking to a Regional Organiser.

Please order in good time.

