

VALUE FOR MONEY

STUDENT OFFICER COURSE – COURT SIMULATION

Background

The Magistrate Members of the Authority were concerned about occasions when probationary police officers were appearing, often for the first time, in front of magistrates. Officers often appeared very nervous, unconvincing, and their presentation and articulation of verbal evidence did not give magistrates the proof of evidence required.

The Authority adding value

The Magistrate Members of the Authority proposed that student officers received training on appearing in court. They proposed that a court simulation could be developed and included as part of the new student officer course being launched in partnership with Brighton University. Magistrate members of the Authority also volunteered to present this training as qualified and experienced members of the Judiciary.

Outcome

As a direct result of these suggestions, the court simulation now performs an integral part of the student officer training. The University of Brighton also use this simulation as training for trainee solicitors who themselves have very little opportunity to practice their oratory skills and evidence questioning.

Mrs Carole Shaves and Mr Alan Price spend between 12-16 full days per year attending adjudicating and giving written feedback to student officers.

The simulations are run very formally, just as they would be in court, with officers expected to be well presented, clear and concise. The importance of recording evidence in a way that can be easily recounted has been drilled home to probationary officers as a result. The performances in court for real, following student officer graduation, are now less daunting for probation officers and, importantly, the evidence and the style of presentation that is now experienced by magistrates across Sussex is more routinely of a high standard, therefore helping ensure that justice is often done when otherwise the opportunity may well have been lost.

The court simulation element of the student officer training is so well respected, that in any re-design of the course following the decision to bring student officer training within house again, will not be lost. The benefits to officers and to the wider public is clear to see for all. Mrs Carole Shaves, who is also Lead Member for Special Constables, has pushed for Court Simulations to be introduced as part of the training of Special Constables and this is to be implemented soon. Mrs Shaves also attests all Special Constables and all transferees into Sussex.

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