



NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE
for England and Wales

West of Midlands Region

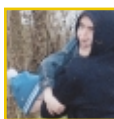


Testing times

A newsletter about peoples time served on drug-related community orders

No 2 • Spring/Summer 2005

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Welcome to the 2nd edition of *Testing Times*, written and produced by people serving their community orders for drug-related crimes with the National Probation Service in the West of Midlands Region.

Calming the traffic

by Hannah Bird

"I've organised a petition for traffic calming measures to be put into an accident black spot round the corner. My head is a million miles away from where it was 18 months ago. Then I was struggling to stay clean from heroin & the drug rings I'd been working for; and proving to social services that I could be trusted to look after my 10 year old daughter again.

I narrowly missed going to prison. I was done for possession and intent to supply class A drugs, and possession of class B too. I was sentenced to a year's Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO). All my previous convictions were drug-related, for possession of class A&B, handling stolen goods and three robberies.

On the DTTO I had to have drug treatment and be tested regularly to check I wasn't still using. I had to attend a drug-counselling group and had to report to my probation officer regularly. I had to go back to court every month to give the judge an update on my progress.

I did exams in English and maths with a tutor at the probation office. I got 95% in my maths. I did further advanced qualifications too. And I did some video-making training.

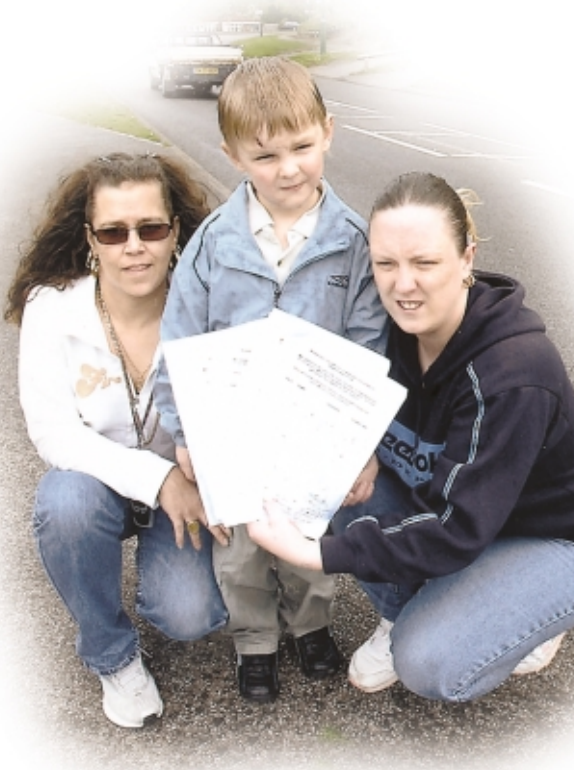
At the end of the order the Judge said congratulations to me because I'd done so well. I'm just so sorry to everyone for everything bad that I did now.

I'm taking it easy now. Enjoying life with no substances in me. I'm a proper mother now. I take my daughter ice-skating. Walks in the parks with the dogs and we go to the pictures and all that.

I went to a parents evening recently. My daughter got an excellent report. She is doing well with her schoolwork and is happy and chatty in the classroom.

So we must be back on the right track."

Hannah can be contacted via margaret.leach@west-midlands.probation.gsx.gov.uk



Pictured (left) is Hannah Bird with her neighbours who organised a local petition for traffic calming measures. Photo reproduced courtesy of the Solihull Times.

Want to give up drugs?

Then a structured day, regular support and treatment really does make a difference.

Timing *by Ben Barber*

A personal account of getting help to come off drugs...



Timing is what I want to talk about. Just over a year ago I was living in a smack flat. Only waking up so I could go out robbing for money to get my gear. I did a lot of crime such as burglaries. Police knew me well.

And look at me now- I have just started working as a DJ on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings at a local club.

I knew deep down a long time ago that drugs wasn't for me. I got on heroin at 14 and was addicted to it until I was 23. From around 18 I was thinking deep about my life of drugs and crime and knew I had to get out of it. But like a moth to the lamppost I kept going back to it.

So for anyone who has tried and failed to get off heroin you know how depressed it can make you feel. And you start thinking you're never going to be able to do it.

But you know what? You will. If you really want to get off it what is wrong with trying again? Maybe that will be the day you are in the right

place and the right time and meet someone who can help you – and who wants to help you.

Most people like me who was into drugs often got arrested and convicted and have a Probation Officer. One of the best things I ever done was being TRUTHFUL with my Probation Officer. Because I was truthful she accepted that I really did want to help myself & gave me a lot of support to change. Without her help getting me drug treatment and starting some education I wouldn't be off drugs now and going to college to learn about stuff I really love doing – sound engineering. I am waiting on some applications for full time work too.

I cringe when I think about what I have done to people who I've stolen from. I am so, so sorry to everyone. My advice to anyone out there stuck like I was – is to take the time to ask people for help, they CAN help you change.

*Ben can be contacted via
helen.holt@west-midlands.probation.gsx.gov.uk*

Hard times can't you c?

*Lyrics to a song
composed by Ben Barber*

*Ben can be contacted via
helen.holt@west-midlands.probation.gsx.gov.uk*

*Photo reproduced with the kind permission
of The Solihull Times.*

Verse One
From that, to this
from him, to me
stop da drugs son
they won't let you see
won't let you free
stop you from reaching
places your ment to b
Its never too late, cant you c
we just done it I'm, 23

Chorus
Hard times you get frew em
your not the only one, I new em
and just like you will, I got frew em
there's plenty of paths in life and you chews em

Verse 2
Take a step back, if you relapse
just take 5,
p'haps you can put it down to mishaps
don't feel bad about what you've done
if you don't do mistakes
how you going to learn son?
you no its never 2 late
cant you C
We just dun it, I'm 23

Time Testing

by Benjamin Zephaniah

The mind and body slip and slide
My spirit is protesting
The truth is very hard to hide
The times they are a testing.

There was some happiness in hell
All negative investing,
I knew that in my prison cell
The times they are a testing.

And now I see a little light
I have no time for resting,
I must arise to fight the fight
The times they are a testing.

I know that I can rise and shine
My freedom needs protecting,
I smile but struggle all the time
The times they are a testing.

Benjamin Zephaniah



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Our thanks go to Benjamin, a well-known poet who comes from Birmingham, for donating this poem on request by Hannah Bird (see front page) who he once interviewed on radio.

From his website....

Benjamin who??

My full name is Benjamin Obadiah Iqbal Zephaniah which is Christian, Jewish and Muslim. I was born in the district of Handsworth in Birmingham. My poetry is strongly influenced by the music and poetry of Jamaica and I can't remember a time when I was not creating poetry.

For further details of Benjamin's work visit www.benjaminzephaniah.com

This time round by James Dix

My experience of treatment services this time round has been good. It might have something to do with the fact that this time I really wanted the help they were offering.

I hadn't long finished 18 months of a two year prison sentence and within a few months of release I was facing an extra 12 months...

The probation officer recommended to the court that they try me on a Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO) and I wanted it NOT just because I wanted to get out of jail but also because I had only been out from my 2 year sentence for half a day before I was smoking the gear again.

I needed structure in my life and what probation offered me seemed like the answer. Recovering addicts need a lot of help and support. Some of us though aren't ready to come off the gear. So you got to be ripe for help.

DTTO are heavy going at the start. Your life is basically controlled by probation and drug treatment services.

My first prescription gave me trouble as I was taking 40mls of methadone and I struggled to stay clean. I had a few positive results from my first few

tests but when I explained that the methadone wasn't holding me they adjusted the dose. Since then everything has been fine.

I don't have to see my probation officer as much now as long as I get tested.

I have been working to get a users forum set up for users who are involved with treatment services. So we can get information and feed it back to make improvements. I have also been a support worker in a local hostel.

We don't have to sit there and think we are useless because we've got records and are recovering addicts.

It ain't easy but if I can do it then so can others. So here's something I never thought I would be saying:

'Thanks to the DTTO I got myself sorted. Thank you'

My order was revoked three months early because of my good behaviour and progress. And I have just started working as a fork lift truck driver with a local company.

*James can be contacted via
darren.lea@west-midlands.probation.gsx.gov.uk*

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National helplines and websites

Talk to Frank - 0800 77 66 00

Drugs are illegal but talking about them isn't – for more information and advice try 'Talking to Frank'.

www.talktofrank.com

ADFAM

Advice and support for families and friends of people with drug and alcohol problems.

www.adfam.org.uk

Re-Solv

A charity solely dedicated to the prevention of solvent and volatile substance abuse.

www.re-solv.org

Alcoholics Anonymous UK 0845 769 7555 – helpline

Drink problem? Get help from Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain.

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

NHS Direct

24 hour information helpline. For advice and information about a wide range of health matters.

0845 4647

Turning my life around

Stewart Ludlow reports on his stay in an approved hostel in Warwickshire...

I've got 67 convictions for 100s of crimes. I've spent the past ten years in prison so my 11-year-old daughter doesn't really know me. My mum's as ashamed by it all as she could be. They've never been in trouble all their lives. They are proud of how well I am doing on my Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO) now though. I go and see them in Coventry every day.

I'm 27 and now I have come off drugs I can see what I have done. I feel terrible. I sit and think about it all a lot. What I've done to people. How much I've hurt them. The big relationship drift with my daughter. I am so sorry.

The worst I've ever done was kidnap a man in broad daylight off the street. We stopped and threatened him with CS gas and dragged him in the car. Then we drove him to a cash point machine to get money. I used to rob people every day to feed my addiction. I'd spend as much as I could. I'd do anything to get money. I stole a car and burgled a house. I burgled every shop on my estate at one time. I am just so very sorry to everyone I've hurt.

At 17 I was smoking crack and taking heroin. A friend gave it to me to try and I got a taste for it. It was the same with heroin. I took it to get me down off crack.

I went to prison for burglary when I was 17 too. That's when my daughter's mum finished with me. I was in and out of prison from then on.

The police know me well. They still do. I was in Coventry the other day and the police spotted me going into a clothes shop with my girlfriend. They stopped me and did a body and warrant check. But this time I wasn't stealing. I told them I'd gone straight. They shook my hand and told me I looked a lot better now I was off drugs.

I must have served about 22 years in all – they run concurrently though. I got a job last year when I came out of Birmingham Prison via New Deal working as a construction worker. That was in the August. I stayed off drugs for 11 weeks. By Christmas I was back on drugs, my girlfriend had finished with me and I was sent back in prison.

I was expecting six years prison sentence this time because it was my fourth robbery. I robbed a man in the street for forty pounds. It's not a lot to do six years for – that's how desperate I had become. Not thinking about the consequences. I'd go up to people and ask them if they had any change and if they got their purse or wallet out then I'd rob them at knifepoint.

But instead of going to prison, I saw a probation officer and they recommended to the court to try me on a Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO) for 12 months. It's for people like me who keep going in and out of prison and still keep committing crime and taking drugs. It has really helped me. I have to live at this probation hostel in Leamington and go to a group twice a week. We discuss the pros and cons about taking drugs and committing crime. Then three times a week I get tested for drugs. So the staff know if I am still using or not. I am staying right off heroin and other drugs. I'm on medication to help get off drugs. It is a detox programme I take subutex and Valium every day. I see the mental health services regularly for help too.

The staff at the hostel really help me. If I have a problem I can go and talk to them. At the weekend I did have a personal problem. And they helped me a lot. There's a curfew here. You have to be in by 11pm.

I have also started a course called OSAP – offenders substance abuse programme – and this is going well. My girlfriend and I are getting married next month.

I'm hoping to start a college course at some point. I have to stay at the hostel for 6 months and I am on the DTTO for 12 months and on the Community Rehabilitation Order for 18 months.

I can't really get a job right now, it is a bit early I need to settle down. Also because of the medication and detox. programme I am on.

The one thing that will make me make a success of this DTTO is that I want to change for myself. I want to break the cycle of going in and out of prison and give up drugs and crime for good.

Stewart can be contacted via bev.evans@warwickshire.probation.gsx.gov.uk



Smokey Jo's Downfall or my way round Di Clements Wheel of Change theory....

Jo Earley, a registered mental health nurse working at Stafford DTTO gives a rare glimpse of how professionals beat their addictions too....*

Pre-contemplation

I would give up one day.....
I knew I could
I'd done it before ...
Whenever ...
I am definitely giving up, NOW ... but how?

All my friends smoked. We will be ok. We won't get sick. Colds always go to my chest, nothing to do with smoking. On and on went the denials and excuses. It was a bad cough though. I didn't want to, but friends insisted I went to the doctor for antibiotics. To my horror he prescribed me an inhaler and requested I have further tests to assess the damage to my lungs.

Contemplation

My family were horrified. My sister Lousie said she'd quit with me. Three other friends said they would too. I was really touched by their support. So we decided there and then – to quit.. Lousie, Emma, Cath, Anne and me were stopping... for good.

- Louise - Cold Turkey
- Emma - Zyban (drug to reduce cravings, Prescribed by GP)
- Cath - Nicotine Patches
- Anne - Cold Turkey - but keeping a packet in the cupboard
- Me - Nicotine Lozengers

end under your tongue. But it got me through the day and feeling really proud of myself. Kept busy in the evening talking to other quitters. All doing okay so far. By Thursday I'm an emotional wreck. Sleep pattern disturbed by weird dreams. Mood swings from insane laughter, to agitation to tears in moments. Cath, Emma, Louise doing O.K. Anne's had 3 cigarettes this week. Me: stopped lozengers after 5 days.

Week 2

Feeling really low. Back to doctors as antibiotics have finished but chest still bad, really breathless and lethargic. Thought I'd be better by now. Doctor gives me a sick note, which is just as well as my mood swings might turn me into a demon. Still getting lots of support from family and friends. Am trying to eat healthy and buying myself treats galore. Spent £38 on c.d.'s, sandals and make up in one shopping trip. The cigs only cost £4.70.! Oh well, I'm worth it! Louise smoking, Emma some lapses, me: no lapses. Cath no lapses – mood swings. Anne smoking reduced.

Week 3

Back to work. 9.00 I'm sure I'll be better this week 10.30 Have just threatened poor Daniel.... And if that Thomas contradicts me again I swear I'll ... oh! I'm going to get sacked at this rate. Work colleagues being really good and giving me lots of space. Still not sleeping well and eating in the middle of the night. Weight gain evident all ready. Cath doing O.K, Mood swings – but no lapses. Emma very agitated, has left boyfriend and had a couple of lapses. Louise relapses – but gonna try again. Anne relapses, but hey, she's at home all day with 3 kids.

Me: Fat, angry, irrational but hangin' on in there just.

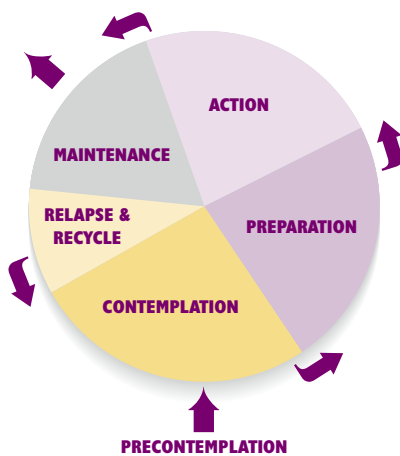
Week 4

Poor clients are seeing a new side to me as mood swings continue. Sometimes elated and cheerful, next moment from no where without warning comes this angry bull. Weight gain continues despite attempts to eat healthy. Cath still on patches, mood swings, road rage - a horrible incident with lollipop man, no-one died in the incident, but don't ask where the lollipop is. Emma, off Zyban, smoking, back with boyfriend. Louise: Smoking, doesn't want to talk about it. Anne smoking back to normal. Me Fat, paranoid, tearful, no lapses.

Continued overleaf



STAGES OF CHANGE



The Di Clements Wheel of Change Theory

Over the weekend I prepared myself. Paul McKenna's hypnotic tape. Alan Carr's book "The Easy Way to Stop Smoking". Positive thoughts, lists of Pro's and Con's etc. Sunday night 12.00 am 7 cigs left in the packet, too mean to throw them away, too scared to keep them..... So I completely covered the pack in sellotape and put them in an envelope addressed to my friend Marie (She was still in pre contemplation). Ashtray's washed and thrown in the back of the cupboard.

Week 1

Hey I'm a non-smoker. Took lozengers to work. Posted letter to Marie. Feeling quite elated and excited. Lozengers are taken under the tongue, just like Subutex. They felt really big and after a while it feels like you've got a soggy fag

Week 5

Should be in Spain with Pam, but she's a 20 a day smoking party animal and despite her vows not to smoke in front of me I have decided not to go with her as I feel too vulnerable. Got big bouquet of flowers from my family to say well done for 1 month of non smoking. Really lovely and what's more I can smell them. Weird dreams and mood swings continue. Really high in shopping trip to ASDA. Went up to cig counter to say hi to shop assistant. "Hello, have you missed me" I beamed at her "I haven't smoked for a month now". It soon becomes clear she hadn't missed me, didn't know me from Adam and didn't give a damn if I smoked or not. I sloped off, really embarrassed and feeling very foolish. Must have entered maintenance phase by now. Cath, still not smoking, mood swings reduced. Emma, Louise and Anne smoking. My mood swings reduced but craving continue.

Week 6: Maintenance

Finally mood swings have settled. All physical

withdrawals have gone. Beginning to feel the benefits. I feel cleaner, improved energy levels and more money in my purse. Still getting urges to smoke and mad impulses from time to time. A little voice in my head says "Go on, just one," or sometimes I truly forget I've stopped and I look for the packet in my bag or pocket. It seems to me the maintenance phase is the hardest of all as you don't know when it's going to end. Friends and family support has greatly reduced and no-one (except other quitters) really know how you feel. Have now joined Weight Watchers as weight gain has become the new enemy to tackle.

So I will leave you with this final thought from Mark Twain: "Stopping Smoking is easy, I've done it hundreds of times". It is the staying stopped that is difficult and perhaps what friends and family of substance misusers least understand. So hats off to me and all other quitters out there – whatever your addiction is. It is worth it, we are worth it. We can do it.

Jo can be contacted via
Catherine.hay@staffordshire.probation.gsx.gov.uk

* DTTO –
Drug Treatment
and Testing Order



Doctors Are Tested Too

Dr. Andy Inglis reflects on how family doctors working with drug addiction can be tested too...

I see a lot of drug misuse at our busy surgery. It usually involves cannabis and alcohol in people's early teens and can graduate to ecstasy and heroin by late teens. Many are involved in crime.

Patients with drug addiction can be difficult to help as they may develop manipulative tendencies and lie to their carers. It's a challenge to maintain respect & a helpful doctor/patient relationship.

Our priority is to treat the addiction & we run a shared-care programme with a community substance misuse team, which supports about 25 people at any one time.

The substance misuse staff assesses the patients social needs and helps them cope with difficulties of modern life. The doctor & substance misuse staff work together at alternate consultations to assess the patients situation and to help them detoxify or go on a maintenance regime if needed. In the case of heroin addiction, we use methadone or subutex (an opiate blocker). Patients are seen fortnightly and are often involved in the supervised daily taking of methadone at one of the local chemists.

Probation staff liaise with the doctor, the substance misuse staff and the patient to prevent them re-offending and in some cases being sent back to prison. Setbacks occur, whether through crisis such as the end of a relationship, or ending up back in prison. We try to maintain our relationship with

the patient whenever possible, but occasionally it isn't possible due to either theft within the practice or due to illegal changes being made to prescriptions by the patient.

Occasionally tempers can flare when the doctors will not prescribe as the patients want and sometimes the patients leave our list and go to a GP elsewhere. But often the patients come back to us and we build on our previous work and hope that things will improve.

Some patients move on from daily-supervised consumption to twice weekly pick-ups when they have become stabilised and we feel confident that this is right for them. With support from the Probation Officer we can get them into independent housing, support them with getting a job and enable them to re-integrate themselves into the community.

We have been recognised locally as the leader of this excellence model, which is now being rolled out across Telford, We've hosted national visits too and operate a system where our successes can be audited.

Everyone in our surgery sees it as rewarding & valuable work and the patients clearly appreciate us taking their addiction needs in such a serious manner.

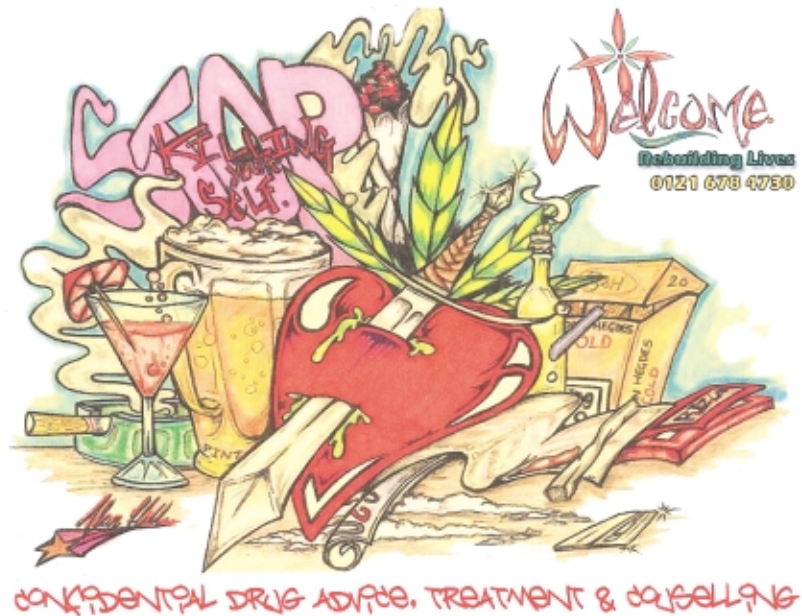
For further information about this project please contact Andy via wendy@armour3535.fsnet.co.uk

Sutton Hill is a large housing estate at the southern tip of Telford, Shropshire. The practice has been there for more than 30 years and serves about 9,000 patients. There are five full-time General Practitioners and one Registrar.



Designs for a New Life

Alan Hill used drawing to help in his quest to be free of drugs and crime. Proof that there is hope for others too.



Graphic design by Alan Hill, who has been free of drugs and crime for four months now after eight years entrenched in serious drug use and crime – including burglary, blackmail, shop lifting and car crime.

Alan is currently serving a drug treatment and testing order (DTTO).

"I started drawing again to help get off drugs. And I designed this poster for a local drug centre 'Welcome' which is being used in local youth clubs. I am going to have a normal life from now

on. I have a beautiful girlfriend, I'm starting work and even planning to go on holiday.

"I am so very sorry for all the bad things I have done and hurt I have caused people.

"I'd like to pass on these words of hope to other people stuck in the cycle of drugs and crime: It can be done. You can stop. Believe in yourself and have the strength to stop and change."

Alan can be contacted via:
margaret.leach@west-midlands.probation.gsx.gov.uk

We would like to give special thanks to the following people for their contributions and help in producing this publication:

- Benjamin Zephaniah, A People's Poet
- Dr Andy Inglis, GP, Telford Primary Care Trust
- Jo Earley, Registered Nurse, South Staffordshire NHS Trust

If you have any comments about this publication or would like further information about drug-related probation work, please contact Wendy Armour, Editorial Co-ordinator, Tel: 07881 811916 or email wendy@armour3535.fsnet.co.uk

The aims of the National Probation Service for England and Wales are:

- the protection of the public
- the reduction of offending
- the proper punishment of offenders
- ensuring offenders' awareness of the effects of crime on the victims of crime & the public
- the rehabilitation of offenders



NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE
for England and Wales

Enforcement, rehabilitation and public protection
West of Midlands Region



The Case Study Project enables offenders and former offenders to promote positive accounts of their community sentences and supervision. For further details of the project, contact Wendy Armour, Editorial Co-ordinator, Tel: 07881 811916 or via email wendy@armour3535.fsnet.co.uk