

Criminal Justice Service Health Group catches eye of “HMIE”

During a recent HMIE inspection of Arbroath Academy and its surrounding educational links, Angus Council Criminal Justice Service’s Supervised Attendance Order Health Group was praised as being unique in Scotland and an excellent example of community working and good practice.

The health group designed and co-ordinated by Lynn Richards and Maureen Ness, both Criminal Justice Assistants, tailored the group to meet the social and educational needs of offenders on community disposals like supervised attendance orders. These orders are imposed by both sheriff and district courts when an offender cannot afford to pay a fine. This client group are often socially excluded, long term unemployed, poorly housed and have issues regarding poor mental health and substance misuse.

When interviewed by the inspector, offenders highlighted that the practical “One Pot Cooking” sessions organised by Mhairi Dickson and her colleagues from Community Learning and Development were the most popular with offenders stating that they were trying simple recipes at home, and one young offender stated he had “peeled his first tattie, made stovies and liked them”.

Other sessions include dental hygiene, looking at how to clean teeth and for signs of mouth cancer, home safety and how to deal with a drug overdose situation. One group managed to visit the Guide Dog Centre for the Blind at Orchardbank, Forfar and were so enthused that the group has plans afoot to fund raise and sponsor their own dog.

With all sessions being delivered by local authority services, NHS and the voluntary sector the Criminal Justice Service Health Group, indeed, shows an excellent example of community learning in action. As a result of the success of the group it is planned to expand attendance to other offenders sentenced to community sentences.