



Ministry of
JUSTICE

National Offender
Management Service



Cheshire Probation Trust

Community Payback Annual Report 2010

Foreword



The effective delivery of Community Payback is a key priority for Cheshire Probation Trust. During the 12 month period between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2010 just under 170,000 hours of unpaid labour was performed by supervised offenders on a wide range of projects across the four local authority areas of Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington.

Cheshire Probation is concerned to ensure that all Community Payback projects are well managed and demanding, are responsive to the needs and priorities of our local communities, and bring some tangible benefit. Local beneficiaries of Community Payback include churches, mosques, community centres, schools, charities and voluntary groups, amongst others, and our annual beneficiary survey indicates a very high level of satisfaction at the way our offenders are managed and the quality of the work that is produced. We have also achieved a higher level of visibility through distinctive vans, trailers and the use of A-frames erected at all project sites. Along with extensive media coverage over the past year, this has ensured our positive high profile within the local community and encouraged more local residents to nominate the projects that matter to them.

Innovative partnerships have also enabled Community Payback to be more responsive to local need. Links with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service have been extremely productive, and the partnership between Cheshire Probation and Cheshire Constabulary has resulted in highly effective projects supervised by Cheshire Probation staff working alongside Police Community Support Officers. These projects directly target areas of high crime and anti-social behaviour. Tackling these areas in order to make safer places has a real impact on local residents and their experience of their community.

Cheshire Probation is a high performing trust, and has excellent performance against specific Community Payback targets. It enjoys the confidence of local sentencers and other stakeholders and is establishing a more central place in the local community. The past year has seen many successes, both in terms of individual offenders and completed projects, and this success will be built on with a continued focus on achieving excellent outcomes in the forthcoming year.

Angela Cossins
Chief Executive
Cheshire Probation

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Overview

Probation Trust and Geographic Area

Cheshire Probation

Cheshire Probation moved to Trust status on 1 April 2010. Our work involves serving local people by building safer communities, reducing crime, ensuring public protection and helping to prevent people from becoming victims of crime.

Cheshire Probation is one of 35 Probation Trusts across England and Wales which, together with the Prison Service, form the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice responsible for administering correctional services in England & Wales. We have a duty to protect the public, to ensure the proper punishment of offenders and to rehabilitate offenders. We work closely with other criminal justice agencies including the Police, the Prison Service, Her Majesty's Court Service and the Crown Prosecution Service as part of the Cheshire Criminal Justice Board and with many other partner agencies in the voluntary and private sectors.

To enhance local accountability and engagement across Cheshire, we have restructured our operations into four Local Delivery Units, led by an Assistant Chief Executive, which are designed specifically to match the four Cheshire Unitary Authorities of Cheshire West & Chester, Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington.

We employ approximately 400 staff across nine sites including the Headquarters in Chester and two industrial units in Ellesmere Port and Widnes, for the purposes of Community Payback delivery. The sites are located in:

- Chester x 2 (including the Headquarters)
- Crewe
- Ellesmere Port (Community Payback Unit)
- Macclesfield
- Runcorn
- Warrington
- Widnes (Community Payback Unit)
- Winsford

The Chief Executive, together with five Assistant Chief Executives, form the Trust's Strategic Management Team. In addition to the senior managers, there are two Area managers who have responsibility for Public Protection and Interventions respectively (the latter includes Community Payback) and a middle manager team,



who undertake diverse roles, ranging from Senior Probation Officers in operational locations and prisons to various managerial roles working from the Headquarters building. The middle managers, together with the Strategic managers, form the organisation's Management Team.

Seconded staff also work in the three Cheshire prisons – HMP Risley, HMP & YOI Styal and HMYOI Thorn Cross – and within the Local Authority Youth Offending Teams.

At any one time, we supervise approximately 4,100 offenders over the age of 18*, who are either sentenced to a Community Order by the Court or who are released from prison on Licence. Each year, staff produce approximately 4,000 reports for sentencers in the Magistrates' and Crown Courts and in 2010 supervised the completion of nearly 170,000 hours of Community Payback by offenders sentenced to an Unpaid Work Requirement. We also work closely with victims of serious crimes through our statutory obligation to contact victims of sexual or violent offences, where the offender is sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment or more.

*The Probation Service also supervises a small number of offenders between the ages of 16-18 who are sentenced to an Unpaid Work Requirement by the Court.



Unpaid offender hours 2008-2010

Note: There is no national requirement to monitor the number of hours worked on ETE. Cheshire Probation commenced monitoring ETE hours in July 2010. The data below therefore represents a 6 month period only.

The value of the Community Payback carried out is based upon the minimum wage rate for adults at the 1st January for the whole year. Minimum wage rates are increased on the 1st October and lower rates apply to 16 and 17 year olds, those aged between 18 and 21/22. The value has not been adjusted for these variations.

Data Period 1st January 2010 to 31st December 2010

Team	No. of Orders	No. of hrs Ordered	Avg. Length	Total Hrs Worked	Agency Hrs	% Hours	Crime Reduction Hrs	% Hours	No. of Completions	Hrs Worked in ETE
S/Cheshire	308	40328	130.9	34536.00	10681.50	30.9	12055.75	34.9	254	107.50
E/Cheshire	174	23059	132.5	20988.50	8523.25	40.6	3785.75	18.0	138	11.50
Halton	251	32642	130.0	31634.50	11319.25	35.8	10848.50	34.3	212	157.50
Warrington	255	30128	118.1	27092.75	8297.50	30.6	8556.75	31.6	170	49.25
Vale Royal	188	22800	121.3	18692.25	4405.75	23.6	4091.00	21.9	113	115.25
W/Cheshire	328	41247	125.7	36669.25	10404.75	28.4	20422.00	55.7	210	384.00
Total	1504	190204	126.5	169613.25	53632.00	31.6	59759.75	35.2	1097	825.00
Value (£'s)				£938.8k	£311.1k		£346.6k			

Cheshire East

Team	No. of Orders	No. of hrs Ordered	Avg. Length	Total Hrs Worked	Agency Hrs	% Hours	Crime Reduction Hrs	% Hours	No. of Completions	Hrs Worked in ETE
S/Cheshire	308	40328	130.9	34536.00	10681.50	30.9	12055.75	34.9	254	107.50
E/Cheshire	174	23059	132.5	20988.50	8523.25	40.6	3785.75	18.0	138	11.50
Total	482	63387		55524.50	19204.75		15841.50		392	119.00
Value (£'s)				£322k	£111.4k		£91.9k			

Data Period 1st January 2009 to 31st December 2009

Team	No. of Orders	No. of hrs Ordered	Avg. Length	Total Hrs Worked	Agency Hrs	% Hours	Crime Reduction Hrs	% Hours	No. of Completions	Hrs Worked in ETE
S/Cheshire	319	39661	124.3	34141.00	10079.00	29.5	12174.00	35.7	300	N/A
E/Cheshire	184	23264	126.4	22791.00	8554.00	37.5	8960.00	39.3	159	N/A
Halton	297	37875	127.5	31372.00	11847.00	37.8	7015.00	22.4	215	N/A
Warrington	243	27766	114.3	30312.00	9106.00	30.0	7843.00	25.9	210	N/A
Vale Royal	153	18675	122.1	17016.00	3645.00	21.4	4898.00	28.8	122	N/A
W/Cheshire	365	44103	120.8	40590.00	11161.00	27.5	13108.00	32.3	274	N/A
Total	1561	191344	122.6	176222.00	54392.00	30.9	53998.00	30.6	1280	N/A
Value (£'s)				£1009.8k	£311.7k		£309.4k			

Cheshire East

Team	No. of Orders	No. of hrs Ordered	Avg. Length	Total Hrs Worked	Agency Hrs	% Hours	Crime Reduction Hrs	% Hours	No. of Completions	Hrs Worked in ETE
S/Cheshire	319	39661	124.3	34141.00	10079.00	29.5	12174.00	35.7	300	N/A
E/Cheshire	184	23264	126.4	22791.00	8554.00	37.5	8960.00	39.3	159	N/A
Total	503	62925	125.1	56932.00	18633.00	32.7	21134.00	37.1	459	N/A
Value (£'s)				£326.2k	£106.8k		£121.1k			

Cheshire West

Team	No. of Orders	No. of hrs Ordered	Avg. Length	Total Hrs Worked	Agency Hrs	% Hours	Crime Reduction Hrs	% Hours	No. of Completions	Hrs Worked in ETE
Vale Royal	153	18675	122.1	17016.00	3645.00	21.4	4898.00	28.8	122	N/A
W/Cheshire	365	44103	120.8	40590.00	11161.00	27.5	13108.00	32.3	274	N/A
Total	518	62778	121.2	57606.00	14806.00	25.7	18006.00	31.3	396	N/A
Value (£'s)				£330.1k	£84.8k		£103.2k			

Data Period 1st January 2008 to 31st December 2008

Team	No. of Orders	No. of hrs Ordered	Avg. Length	Total Hrs Worked	Agency Hrs	% Hours	Crime Reduction Hrs	% Hours	No. of Completions	Hrs Worked in ETE
S/Cheshire	370	48054	129.9	33475.00	11680.00	34.9	4942.00	14.8	193	N/A
E/Cheshire	182	24236	133.2	18037.00	7213.00	40.0	4235.00	23.5	113	N/A
Halton	291	37394	128.5	27287.00	10778.00	39.5	6373.00	23.4	165	N/A
Warrington	321	39644	123.5	28276.00	8378.00	29.6	7147.00	25.3	154	N/A
Vale Royal	193	26598	137.8	19275.00	5403.00	28.0	4606.00	23.9	112	N/A
W/Cheshire	388	45951	118.4	34711.00	12294.00	35.4	5217.00	15.0	230	N/A
Total	1745	221877	127.1	161061.00	55746.00	34.6	32520.00	20.2	967	N/A
Value (£'s)				£889k	£307.7k		£179.5k			

Cheshire East

Team	No. of Orders	No. of hrs Ordered	Avg. Length	Total Hrs Worked	Agency Hrs	% Hours	Crime Reduction Hrs	% Hours	No. of Completions	Hrs Worked in ETE
S/Cheshire	370	48054	129.9	33475.00	11680.00	34.9	4942.00	14.8	193	N/A
E/Cheshire	182	24236	133.2	18037.00	7213.00	40.0	4235.00	23.5	113	N/A
Total	552	72290	131.0	51512.00	18893.00	36.7	9177.00	17.8	306	N/A
Value (£'s)				£284.3k	£104.3k		£50.7k			

Cheshire West

Team	No. of Orders	No. of hrs Ordered	Avg. Length	Total Hrs Worked	Agency Hrs	% Hours	Crime Reduction Hrs	% Hours	No. of Completions	Hrs Worked in ETE
Vale Royal	193	26598	137.8	19275.00	5403.00	28.0	4606.00	23.9	112	N/A
W/Cheshire	388	45951	118.4	34711.00	12294.00	35.4	5217.00	15.0	230	N/A
Total	581	72549	124.9	53986.00	17697.00	32.8	9823.00	18.2	342	N/A
Value (£'s)				£298k	£97.7k		£54.2k			

Projects Completed

Cheshire Probation completed 90 projects in 2010. It should be noted though that the projects completed figure takes no account of ongoing projects, standing at around 85. Projects are identified in a variety of ways, with the public being able to nominate projects that they would like to see completed in their local community. This can be via Cheshire Probation's website, using a dedicated telephone hotline or promotion at public consultation meetings involving partner agencies (eg. Police, Local Authority).

January 1 - 31 December 2010	Projects completed
Cheshire West and Chester	30
Cheshire East	31
Halton	14
Warrington	16

Successful completion of Community Payback sentences

1097 offenders successfully completed the Community Payback requirement of their Community Order or Suspended Sentence Order in Cheshire during 2010. In doing so, nearly 170,000 hours were worked across a range of small, medium and large projects, often jointly with the Police to improve the local community and to make it a safer place to live. This represents over £900,000 of free labour for the benefit of local people. The latest performance figures show that 80.1% of offenders successfully completed their Community Payback sentence in Cheshire, the highest in the North West and the 4th highest in England and Wales for successful completions.

Beneficiaries

Cheshire Probation works with a wide range of individuals and groups, known as beneficiaries, who benefit from Community Payback and as at 31 December 2010, was working with 150 beneficiaries. Some require "one-off" projects, with other partnerships being longer standing, in some cases over many years. Cheshire Probation also works in partnership with some beneficiaries, for example, charities, where suitable Community Payback offenders are placed directly with the organisation concerned. These are known as agency placements. Offenders working in agencies are under the supervision of the agency involved whilst they undertake their Community Payback, although they remain managed by the Probation Service.

Examples of beneficiaries include local churches, mosques, community centres, schools, local authorities, charities and voluntary groups. The work carried out for these organisations varies depending on requirements and all offenders and Community Payback projects are the subject of robust risk assessments.

Cheshire Probation undertakes an annual beneficiary survey whereby all Community Payback beneficiaries receive a questionnaire to obtain their views about Community Payback and to gauge satisfaction rates. In 2010, 88% of the respondents were satisfied with the work undertaken by Community Payback. The 2010 survey resulted in 48 replies, a 54% return rate. Comments included:

- The churchyard is very large and was very overgrown in some areas as we do not have the manpower or finance to rectify. The team is doing excellent work and many complimentary comments have been received from local people. It is now a pleasure to visit. They have our heartfelt thanks.
- The Probation Service has done invaluable work for us over many years including looking after and mowing areas around the conservation area and around the village. Also, planting loads of daffodils and maintaining minor repairs, painting and cleaning the Methodist church.
- The groups develop a sense of pride in a job well done because of the firm, and encouraging, attitude of the supervisors. Gardening and inter-personal and social skills improve. Thank you.
- Since working with Community Payback, I would recommend them to anyone.
- Our organisation on the whole has found the service brilliant. We have excellent communication with Probation supervisors and Placement Managers. We would welcome further use of the service in the future.

Cheshire Probation also regularly receives letters of appreciation from beneficiaries and local residents acknowledging the work completed by Community Payback teams. Below are some extracts:

Church, Congleton

“The Community Payback team has completely landscaped the garden, removing roots and restoring overgrown areas, erecting a new fence and repairing, rendering and painting the retaining walls. They have also laid a fantastic patio area, repositioned the children’s equipment, erected a shed, laid turf, plus all the other jobs that have to be done in preparation. It is a real transformation and looks really good. We would welcome you back at any time”.



Local resident, Macclesfield

“On visiting my local church, I was astonished to see a team of men sawing, mowing and tidying up. What a difference!

I spoke to the Supervisor and congratulated him and his team for all their hard work, done in a very professional way. They have done a grand job and I felt I had to put this in writing to you”.

Local resident, Halton

“The work carried out by the Community Payback team to improve the alleyway at the rear of my property was done with little fuss, carried out efficiently, left the alleyway clean and tidy, was well supervised and very appreciated”.



Church, Warrington

“I would like to thank the Probation Service for its continued support in maintaining our graveyard - so much improved in recent years. All Cheshire Probation’s clients are well-behaved and courteous and do not step out of line - this is due to the diligence, organisational competence and professionalism of the supervisor.”

Social club of a national charity

“We have had a contingent of your Community Payback men and women and we cannot praise them enough. The amount of work that they have carried out for us has been to a very high standard; no job was impossible for them. The Club and its surroundings had been left to deteriorate and were in a pretty bad state until your workers came along. They have paved around the bowling green and painted outside and the inside has been transformed beyond recognition. The manners and the respect that these people and their supervisor have shown to us has been second to none.”



Developments

New Initiatives

National Specification for the Delivery of Community Payback/Best Value Review

The National Specification for the Delivery of Community Payback and the Best Value Review was the catalyst for the reorganisation of Community Payback in Cheshire. Following the national model, the Offender Management of stand alone Unpaid Work Requirements, ie those sentences without a Supervision Requirement, was brought within the Community Payback structure, with increased capacity both to manage the new staff and to strengthen the management oversight of the scheme, particularly at its busiest time - the weekend.

During 2010 a three-year Service Level Agreement (SLA) was agreed with Cheshire West and Chester Council as part of their 'Respect Action Programme' working with Streetscene officers to remove graffiti, and to improve the local community for the residents. A SLA was also agreed with Halton Borough Council to improve the environment of Halton and in particular to remove illegal fly tipping, which is both a hazard and which quickly leads to the environmental deterioration of the neighbourhood.



To improve the visibility of Community Payback following the national introduction of orange high visibility jackets for offenders in 2008, all Cheshire Probation vehicles carry the distinctive Community Payback logo and all trailers and the 'A' frames erected at project sites carry information on how the public can nominate a Community Payback project.

Criminal Justice Partners

Cheshire Probation works closely with criminal justice partners including Cheshire Constabulary (see Work with other organisations section below). Other criminal justice agencies with whom Cheshire Probation is closely aligned are the two Youth Offending Teams in Cheshire and Warrington/Halton, as Cheshire Probation supervises young offenders aged 16 and 17 who have been sentenced to an Unpaid Work Requirement as part of their Youth Rehabilitation Order.

Work with other organisations

Cheshire Fire and Rescue

Cheshire Probation works closely with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service in a number of ways. The two organisations work jointly to reduce the number of arson incidents, particularly around Bonfire Night, with Community Payback teams dismantling and removing unauthorised fires. Community Payback teams also distribute leaflets to households promoting fire safety and displaying fire safety stickers. Ongoing developments with Cheshire Fire and Rescue include the promotion of Community Payback at a neighbourhood level by local Fire Officers and the development of new Community Payback projects linked directly to the concerns of the local community.

Community Payback Partnership

The Community Payback Partnership initially began in late 2007 as a partnership between Cheshire Constabulary, Cheshire County Council Community Safety and Cheshire Probation in three pilot areas, namely Ellesmere Port, Warrington Central and Western Rural areas. Oversight is provided by Cheshire Constabulary's Public Safety and Reassurance Board. The difference between this project and others operating within England and Wales was that it was designed to address community concerns at a very local level and involved the co-supervision of offenders completing their Community Payback by both Cheshire Probation and Police Community Support Officers. The local community was encouraged to address problems and concerns at Police Forums, Neighbourhood Action Team and Community Action Meetings, which Community Payback could help resolve. The co-supervision of offenders completing Community Payback made the work project highly visible and the relevant Police Community Support Officer reporting back to local residents on the work that had been undertaken. Since 2007, the partnership has gone from strength to strength and during 2010 included the refurbishment of a Community Resource Centre in Ellesmere Port and Clean-up Days, which included the removal of graffiti and fly tipping, and the rejuvenation of abandoned allotments across the county.



Joint work with Skills and Employment or ETE

Education, Training and Employment (ETE) provision is available for those offenders, including Community Payback offenders, with poor employment related skills and a history of worklessness or unstable employment. These offenders are encouraged to take the opportunity to engage in employment and educational opportunities which will increase their employability which in turn will reduce their likelihood of re-offending. For Community Payback offenders, the time spent undertaking these activities counts towards a maximum of 20% of their total Community Payback hours.

During the initial induction with their Offender Manager, all offenders are screened to identify their education and/or training needs using the nationally recognised initial basic skills checker tool. If this checker identifies that the offender has ETE needs, they are referred by their Offender Manager for a more detailed assessment. This will identify what ETE provision is most appropriate for that offender. In addition to this initial screening, when offenders attend Community Payback they are also informed about the ETE provision.

All Offender Managers are kept informed of all ETE initiatives to ensure that referrals are made not just at the initial induction stage but throughout the sentence as and when the need for ETE intervention becomes apparent. Community Payback Placement Managers and Supervisors are also regularly briefed about any local educational or employment opportunities which they can promote when offenders attend to complete their Community Payback and they can refer the offender directly to such provision.

Each week a Work Club is held at each Probation Office. At these sessions offenders are assessed for their job readiness and they are given advice and guidance with regard to gaining skills and qualifications and helped to complete job searches. Cheshire Probation has a long term partnership with the European Social Fund 'Achieve North-West' project. This project is designed to improve the employment prospects of offenders. In addition to this provision, Offender Learning and Skills Service and Skills for Jobs staff provide sessions for offenders which are regularly attended by specialist staff from a number of key employment partners such as Connexions, Next Step, Citizens Advice Bureau, Job Centre Plus and a range of education providers. At the end of each session, Offender Managers receive a written report about the attendance and progress of their offender and, if they are on Community Payback, the number of hours which can be counted towards their requirement.

During 2010 there has been a Community Payback specific ETE contract held by the Achieve North-West project operating with Barrowmore Industries. This has involved a significant amount of cooperation and liaison between Community Payback staff and the staff at Barrowmore to ensure the consistent attendance of offenders on a weekly bases at this specialist ETE provision and tracking their ETE progress. The partnership has facilitated offenders to improve their employment



related skills, gaining externally validated awards as well as completing demanding work for the benefit of the community. Of the first cohort, 6 Community Payback offenders passed either the full qualification or the ICT element and from the November 2010 cohort a further 3 completed the course and are awaiting verification of their results.

In partnership with Manchester College, Cheshire Probation has also run a number of day and half day courses on a range of employment related subjects such as First Aid, Health and Safety, Manual Handling, COSHH, Working at Heights, Fork Lift Truck training and awards through the Construction Skills Certification Scheme. These courses have been delivered across Cheshire and have been available to Community Payback offenders. In recognising that gaining



employment can reduce the likelihood of re-offending, ETE staff and Community Payback staff have worked closely with unemployed offenders and ran two training courses specifically for unemployed offenders on Community Payback. Between October and December 2010 a total of 29 offenders on Community Payback achieved 56 recognised certificates.

Achievements

Media Coverage

The media is an important communication medium for Cheshire Probation at increasing public awareness and confidence regarding Community Payback, for informing the public about the type of work which is completed in their local community and also providing an opportunity for the public to nominate Community Payback projects.

Cheshire Probation secured a large amount of positive local media coverage during 2010, as follows:

Date	Newspaper(s)	Project
February 2010	Ellesmere Port Standard	Allotment scheme, Mill Court, Ellesmere Port
February 2010	Ellesmere Port Standard	Drop In Centre refurbishment, Tarporley Road, Ellesmere Port
March 2010	Ellesmere Port Standard	Bickley Hall Farm, Cheshire Wildlife Trust Headquarters: grounds maintenance

April 2010	Winsford / Middlewich Guardian	Middlewich Clean Up: various projects including graffiti removal
May 2010	Crewe Chronicle	Ruskin Road allotments
July 2010	Winsford / Northwich Guardian	Whitley Park: grounds maintenance
August 2010	Warrington Guardian	Fairfield and Hawley Community Centre: refurbishment
August 2010	Warrington Guardian	Stockton Heath park: grounds maintenance
September 2010	Chester Chronicle	Overleigh Cemetery, Chester: grounds maintenance

NOMS Wildlife Award

Whitley Park, Warrington

Cheshire Probation was shortlisted for a National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Wildlife Award for a Community Payback project at Whitley Park, during 2010. The winner(s) will be announced in 2011. The area in question is a former sand quarry filled to form a lake with extensive grounds and now home to a variety of native wildlife, flora and fauna. Before the Community Payback team's intervention, the site had deteriorated due to long term neglect. Thanks to the Community Payback team, fencing has been installed around the top of the waterway, dead tree stumps removed and existing native Birch and Beech trees re-planted.

Performance

The performance of Cheshire Probation is measured by the National Offender Management Service on behalf of the government to ensure that frontline services are being delivered to the required quality standards, that it represents good value to the public purse, and that the service it provides is delivered effectively. Cheshire's performance is regularly reviewed by the Director of Offender Management against the Service Level Agreement that the Director has with Cheshire Probation.

Performance measures include:

- the number of planned work sessions per offender (in line with Probation National Standards, offenders are offered work at least once per week (3 times for an Intensive Community Payback Requirement));



- sickness absence;
- attendance rates;
- completion rates.

The latest performance figures from the National Offender Management Service places Cheshire as the third highest performing Probation Trust in England and Wales in relation to the delivery of Community Payback. This is measured by a number of performance indicators which collectively rate a Probation Trust's performance. A key indicator is the number of occasions that an offender is instructed to undertake their Community Payback and indicates the Probation Trust's efficiency of delivery and its ability to meet Probation National Standards. Falling short on this indicator suggests that offenders are not being instructed to attend each week or of having significant numbers of offenders who are failing to comply and who are not being managed effectively. Cheshire Probation did particularly well in relation to this measure, achieving the highest performance in the North West region of 14.9 days planned per offender and significantly above the national average of 10.2 days.

One performance issue that has attracted a lot of attention in recent years and feeds into the public and political confidence agenda relates to offenders being sent home after they have reported without being instructed to carry out their Community Payback, also known as Stand Downs. Whilst all Probation Trusts have made considerable efforts in relation to this and nationally the number being sent home in such circumstances has been reduced to a very low level, Cheshire's 'Stand Down' performance has improved quarter on quarter and Cheshire is now the joint top performing Probation Trust across England and Wales.

Ultimately the aim of sentencing offenders to Community Payback is to have them complete the hours ordered by the court for the benefit of the community and high attendance rates are key to this. Cheshire has again shone in this respect being the highest performer within the North West region and consistently higher than the average performance across the remaining 34 Probation Trusts in England and Wales. In the last national performance report prepared by the National Offender Management Service, Cheshire's performance was the third highest in England and Wales and only 1% away from the top performing Probation Trust.



Case Studies

Case Study 1 - Punishment

North Cheshire

Background

Gary* (*name has been changed) was made subject to a Community Order with a 300 hour Unpaid Work Requirement in June 2010 for an offence of assault. The attack was perpetrated by a group of youths who had been drinking. The only mitigation in Gary's case was that his co-accused was the main protagonist. The purpose of this sentence was to provide an effective punishment in the community, as was clearly stated on the Magistrates' Court Sentencing form.

Activity

Maintenance of church grounds.

Result

The Community Payback Practice Manager interviewed Gary to ascertain whether the order fulfilled its objective in terms of providing an effective punishment. Gary said that he had worked on various group projects but the ones that he remembered best were when he had worked at St Thomas's Church and at St Bede's church.

Gary reported that whilst he had found the work worthwhile he also felt that he had been well and truly punished. He stated that the loss of three days a week had impacted on his social time and that working for no pay had really made him think about offending in the future. Gary confirmed that working without pay is an effective punishment and that the effect it had had on him was that it had made him sure that he did not want to offend in the future. He said, "It makes you think when you're grafting for nothing. Makes you think about what you've done and not doing it again".

Beneficiary views

Gary said that one of the beneficiaries at St Thomas, the lady who brings the milk and biscuits for the tea break, had commented to the group about how well they were working and how they would be "lost without the lads".

Public views

Gary remembers that members of the public using the footpaths through the site would often stop to comment about the work and to thank the group for keeping the church grounds looking so nice. The Community Payback Placement Manager confirmed witnessing such interactions when undertaking site visits.



Case Study 2 - Community Benefit

Chester West and Chester - The Respect Action Programme (RAP)

Background

The Respect Action Programme (RAP) is a joint initiative between the former Vale Royal Council and Cheshire Probation Trust. The RAP was launched in 2008 and one of its aims is to make lives better for the community of Vale Royal by tackling projects that do not fall within the statutory remit of the local authority. Originally the operational area of the RAP was the former local authority area of Vale Royal, however when the new authority of Cheshire West & Chester was created in April 2009, the remit of the programme extended to cover the far larger area of Cheshire West & Chester.

Activity

The RAP is operational for up to five days per week. The project takes five offenders and has one supervisor in control of the group. The projects undertaken are varied and have included graffiti removal, litter picks, rubbish removal and the painting of fences. One project of note was the painting of subways in Chester City Centre in 2010. This project was identified due to the concerns expressed by members of the public regarding the poor lighting conditions in the subways. To address this, the RAP painted thousands of square metres of the subways with white paint, which had the added bonus of covering graffiti on the walls. This project brightened up the subways and made them a more pleasant environment for members of the public. Other tasks completed in 2010 include the painting of children's play areas.

Result

The result of the work undertaken by the RAP has been a number of areas in the county having been effectively given "facelifts" for the good and benefit of the community.

Offender Views

One offender who worked on the RAP project was interviewed regarding her views of this project. This offender worked as part of the RAP on seven occasions. She felt that the work that she was required to undertake whilst on the RAP was "challenging" and was for her the epitome of Community Payback. She believes that she was making reparation to the community by being a part of a project which was highly visible and always in the public eye. The RAP also helped her not to re-offend. This rehabilitative effect was on two levels:



1. Whilst on Community Payback she was not able to re-offend as her time was being usefully occupied.
2. She was motivated by the structure and work ethic of the RAP to return to employment.

Beneficiary Views

The views of the staff member from the Local Authority involved in the project have been sought on a number of occasions. He has commented time and again about the positive aspects of the project, describing it as “a win-win situation” as the local authority is able to demonstrate to the community that their concerns about any problems in their neighbourhoods are being taken seriously and that something concrete is being carried out for their benefit. In addition, the work undertaken does not fall within the statutory remit of the local authority. Furthermore, the work undertaken by Community Payback offenders has had a real positive and lasting effect on the lives of people within the local community.

Public Views

In terms of the public viewpoint regarding the RAP, the beneficiary has mentioned that the public are very positive when making comments about the project. Indeed, local councillors have praised the RAP after having themselves received positive comments from members of the public about the good work being undertaken by the Community Payback team.

The offender interviewed for this report also mentioned that she had been praised by members of the public and in particular when carrying out work on the Marina in Winsford.

One supervisor states that whilst painting the subways in Chester city centre that she and the offenders received numerous positive comments from passing members of the public on a daily basis.



Case Study 3 - Rehabilitation

Cheshire East - Agency Placement

Background

A female offender called Tracy* (*name has been changed) received a Community Order with Supervision and an Unpaid Work Requirement for a first time offence of benefit fraud. Tracy had severe depression and other associated psychiatric issues as well as literacy and numeracy issues.

Activity

Tracy was placed on an Agency Placement in a charity shop. This placement was identified to enable Tracy to complete a couple of hours' work each day to benefit her and the agency. Tracy needed to get out of the home and mix with others gradually without pushing her to her limits, which would have exacerbated her health issues.

Tracy assisted in the unpacking of donations and steam cleaning them ready for sale. She also cleaned the upstairs store where all new goods were initially received. Tracy labelled and priced all goods that were to go on sale and put them out on the shop floor.

Result

Tracy had support throughout this Order from both the beneficiary and her Offender Manager. She gained skills in money management, which assisted her at home, and social skills through the work she was completing at the charity shop increasing her confidence. Tracy was very unwell when she arrived at Probation, with little or no support. Now after successfully completing her Order, she has gained new friends and experiences to assist her with the general running of her own home. In addition she has returned to the charity shop as a permanent volunteer worker. She has the confidence to work on the shop floor, conversing with both staff and customers alike.

Offender Views

Tracy feels grateful for the support she has received and believes that going to the charity shop has been the best thing that could have happened. It has given her a new lease of life and enabled her to communicate with other people instead of hiding away at home afraid to go out. She is now confident enough to deal with money matters head on and will speak to officials for support or clarification. The Order made her address her poor reasoning, which is what led her into stealing, and has taught her how to constructively resolve problems.



Beneficiary Views

The charity shop manageress was very grateful to Tracy for the way she undertook her work. She stated that Tracy was very quiet at first but when she settled in she became a valued part of the team, saying, "I am pleased that Tracy decided to stay on with us after her Order had finished. She has changed dramatically since the day she first came here."

Public Views

This can only be measured by the number of shoppers who regularly return to this agency. It has been described as "one of the most organised in its layout and dramatic in its displays".

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