

PRESS RELEASE

Date 18 February 2008

HIGH COURT JUDGE VISITS PROBATION SERVICE

The Honourable Mr Justice Jackson, a visiting High Court Judge, paid a visit to the South Cheshire Probation Unpaid Work Unit last week. This visit was arranged at short notice.

The Judge commenced his visit by meeting Probation staff at the South Cheshire Offender Management Unit in Delamere Street, Crewe. He also met Jack Butterworth from City College, Manchester and Ian Benison from Reaseheath College who spoke about learning opportunities available to offenders sentenced to an Unpaid Work Requirement by the Court. Skills acquired by offenders on Unpaid Work are formally assessed and certified as nationally recognised qualifications to assist offenders in obtaining employment.

The Judge visited two Unpaid Work projects during the morning. Marshfield Bank Community Centre in Crewe, is a long standing beneficiary of Unpaid Work and here the Judge learnt about the Centre's purpose and use as a valuable community resource by Manager, Yvonne Partridge, who also declared, "without the invaluable work undertaken by the Probation Unpaid Work team, it would be difficult for the Centre to carry on in the way it does". The Judge also spoke to an offender carrying out Unpaid Work at the Centre and an ex-offender now employed as a volunteer at the Centre.

The second visit was to The Hill, a Leonard Cheshire Home in Sandbach, which provides residential accommodation for adults with physical disabilities. The Probation Service has a long standing relationship with The Hill as the South Cheshire Unpaid Work team maintains the Home's grounds. The Judge met staff from The Hill, as well as Probation staff and offenders working there on the day. One offender told the Judge, "I have a brother who is disabled so I like to think I can put a smile on the faces of the people who live here when they look at the nice garden". Jane Carolan, Project Manager at The Hill said, "The Probation Service has worked closely with The Hill for many years now. They have provided landscaping services and maintain our gardens. This is a valuable resource for our charity and adds to the lives of people with disabilities."

The Honourable Mr Justice Jackson concluded his visit to South Cheshire by saying "it is wonderful to see Unpaid Work working so well. I have been most impressed by what I have seen today".

Press Release contact: Liz Gaughran, Corporate Services Manager
Tel 01244 394500, email liz.gaughran@cheshire.probation.gsi.gov.uk

Notes for Editors:

1. During 2007, 28,782 hours of Unpaid Work were successfully completed for the benefit of the South Cheshire.
2. Unpaid Work projects combine hard work with the prospect of offenders achieving vocational and crucial life skills. These help to reduce the risk of re-offending and make our communities safer places. Local residents can play their part by nominating projects within their local communities which they would like to see undertaken – this initiative is known as Community Payback, more details of which are available on the Cheshire Probation Area's website (www.cheshireprobation.org.uk).
3. Photo caption for photograph:

The Hill, a Leonard Cheshire Home in Sandbach, one of two Unpaid Work projects visited by the Honourable Mr Justice Jackson