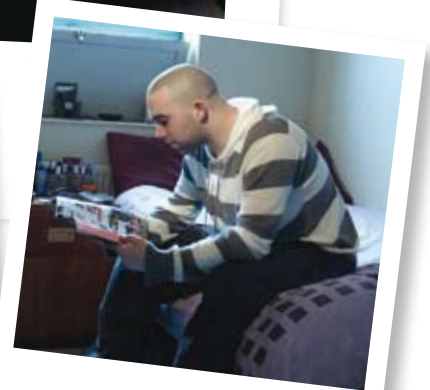




Ministry of
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Community Sentencing – Reducing reoffending, changing lives

Cutting crime in our communities

Foreword



Prison works, but it's not the answer for all offenders. For serious, violent and persistent offenders, a long period behind bars is without doubt the right course of action. But for those who might otherwise receive a short prison term the evidence is clear – a community sentence can be more effective in terms of turning them away from crime. And that's what matters most.

Recent statistics show that the frequency of reoffending for community sentences has fallen sharply by 13%¹.

That means fewer offenders returning to crime and safer streets as a result. It also means resources are used most effectively.

That is why the Government committed £40 million in 2008 to make sure magistrates have tough community sentences at their disposal.

It costs around £37,000 a year to keep one offender in prison – money that for less serious offenders could be better spent on cutting reoffending through community sentences.

We've produced this report to show how community sentences work for everyone: the law-abiding majority who pay the taxes which help the system work, the community and the offenders themselves. It's great news if an offender becomes

an ex-offender thanks to a community sentence. But the people who benefit most are the general public who want to see less crime.

Community sentences are tough, effective and efficient. They include curfews, exclusion, unpaid work and compulsory attendance at specific programmes.

This report sets out how community sentences work and brings together experiences of probation officers, offenders, victims, academics and third parties.

In England and Wales, half of all crimes are committed by 10% of offenders². Bringing them to justice means punishing them, protecting the public and deterring others – but it also means helping them break out of the criminal cycle. If we can achieve this, there will be fewer offenders – which means fewer victims,

and safer communities.

Reoffending is estimated to cost £11 billion every year in England and Wales³, with an additional – and unquantifiable – cost in terms of victim trauma, community suffering and reduced public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Effective community sentencing can help to bring all of these costs down significantly. The latest figures show that reoffending has already reduced by 7.4% since 2000⁴, reflecting the progress made on rehabilitation schemes, both in prisons and in the community.

We believe community sentences work, and the figures bear that out. We've produced this report to better show why they work for everyone.

**Rt Hon David Hanson MP,
Minister of State**

What are community sentences?

Community sentences were first introduced in law in 1907 for the “probation” of offenders. Today their requirements allow judges and magistrates to choose the right mix of punishment, programmes and supervision. They can use any combination of 12 different requirements, each designed to punish, change, control and help the offender turn away from crime.

Sentences can include intensive punishment, tight restrictions on freedom combined with a close focus on rehabilitation or making amends to the community or to victims.

The 12 different requirements of a community sentence are:

PUNISH

- Compulsory unpaid work such as removing graffiti and cleaning up derelict areas (could be between 40 and 300 hours)
- Specific activity, such as community drug centre attendance or literacy and numeracy education
- A curfew, where the offender must stay indoors for two to 12 hours a day, usually monitored with an electronic tag
- Spend between 12 and 36 hours at an attendance centre, addressing their behaviour in a group environment

CHANGE

- Supervision through regular meetings with a probation officer, designed to change attitudes and behaviour
- An accredited programme to tackle issues such as anger management, domestic violence, substance abuse and drink driving

CONTROL

- A prohibited activity, such as being banned from entering pubs or attending football matches
- Exclusion from a place, usually the scene of a crime, such as a town centre or the vicinity of a pub, shop, workplace or person’s house
- Residence with an automatic curfew at a probation hostel or other approved premises

HELP

- Mental health treatment
- Drug rehabilitation
- Alcohol treatment



Most frequently used combinations of requirements for Community Orders between Jan – Dec 2007⁵

England and Wales

	Q1 2007	Q2 2007	Q3 2007	Q4 2007
Community Orders	33,165	32,389	33,032	31,988
Unpaid Work	10,371	10,251	10,274	10,031
Supervision	4,368	4,509	4,665	4,355
Supervision & Accredited Programme	4,053	3,696	3,811	3,569
Supervision & Unpaid Work	2,478	2,661	2,467	2,383
Supervision & Drug Treatment	1,608	1,672	1,705	1,686
Supervision, Unpaid Work & Accredited Programme	1,611	1,463	1,366	1,241
Curfew	960	939	977	1,172
Unpaid Work & Unpaid Work	805	763	849	832
Supervision & Specified Activity	712	602	688	605
Supervision, Accredited Programme & Drug Treatment	764	650	661	586
All other combinations of requirements	5,435	5,183	5,569	5,537

How do they work?



Community sentences are able to provide a combination of punishment and rehabilitation which is most effective in terms of reducing reoffending and changing offenders' behaviour.

Risk Assessment

When deciding what sentence to impose, the court may ask the probation service to prepare a written or oral pre-sentence report. The report will describe the circumstances of the crime and any contributing factors, and assess the risks of the offender reoffending and harming the public. It will also propose a sentence but the ultimate decision on sentencing rests with the court.

The probation service uses a system for assessing risk called the Offender Assessment System. It is considered to be one of the most advanced systems of its kind in the world. It takes into account the factors that have

contributed to the offender's criminal behaviour, such as unemployment, homelessness, drug or alcohol abuse, and uses highly sophisticated techniques to assess the threat offenders pose to the public and the risk of them committing more crimes.

Offender Management

An offender manager is professionally trained to identify and deliver what an offender needs to reduce the risk of them reoffending. For example, the offender manager has to find the offender a place on the right programme so that they can continue their rehabilitation and must also make sure that the offender attends. Similarly, the offender manager makes sure that the offender carries out their

unpaid work and will apply sanctions, including sending them back to court, if they fail to comply.

Sentencing

A typical community sentence could consist of two years' supervision, compulsory attendance at an accredited programme and a curfew requirement backed by electronic monitoring. Alternatively they could be given up to 300 hours' compulsory unpaid work and a curfew order of up to six months.

If their offending is fuelled by a drug problem, they might be given 12 months' supervision, be tested for drugs and ordered to attend a drug treatment programme.

Nicholas Moss JP, North Hertfordshire Bench

"I'm aware that sending people to prison for short periods can have damaging consequences, such as the loss of a job, a home and relationships. Sometimes, there is no suitable alternative but, for the right offenders, community sentences – effectively managed – may mean that they can continue working and keep a roof over their head."



Why do they work?

Community sentences work first and foremost because they combine punishment with the opportunity for offenders to turn away from crime. That's good news for them, but more importantly it's good news for the community as a whole.

Reducing Reoffending

Community sentences aim to punish, change, control and help offenders according to their needs. One of the most effective ways to bring about change is for the offender to undergo a comprehensive treatment programme. Research shows that these tried and tested programmes help reduce reoffending.

Professor James McGuire, Professor of Forensic Clinical Psychology at the University of Liverpool, was responsible for developing Think First, one of the first programmes in England and Wales.

According to Professor McGuire:

"The programmes offer offenders ways of overcoming their problems and staying out of trouble in the future. Evidence shows that when used appropriately, these programmes can have a dramatic effect on an individual's life and help reduce reoffending. The probation service in England and Wales uses an evidence-based approach in evaluating, developing and then accrediting new programmes and, as such, is recognised as a world leader in this area."

In 2006/07, almost 20,000 programmes were completed, an increase of 18% on the previous year⁶:

Programmes completed by type 2006/07⁶



Overview of Programmes

Drink Impaired Drivers: a programme to educate and change attitudes to drink-driving

Substance Misuse: a programme for offenders who use crime to fund a drug habit

Domestic Violence: a programme that helps offenders break the cycle of domestic violence

Sex Offender Programmes: there are several different versions, all of which aim to reduce reoffending by overcoming distorted attitudes and other factors involved in sex offending

Anger Management Programmes

Aggression Replacement Training (ART): anger management programmes to help offenders change their behaviour

Controlling Anger and Learning to Manage it (CALM): programmes to help offenders improve their handling of social situations without losing their temper

General offender Behaviour Programmes

Enhanced Thinking Skills and Think First: programmes that seek to change offenders' thinking and behaviour

One-to-One: a programme which teaches social skills, problem solving skills, moral reasoning, perspective taking and self-management

Women's Programme: a programme with an emphasis on managing emotions and building healthy relationships developed specifically for women

Changing lives

Since 2001, over 80,000 offenders have completed accredited programmes as part of their Community Sentence⁷.

Harriet: Offender

"I received an 18 month driving ban, and a 12 month Community Rehabilitation Order for driving whilst over the limit the morning after I had been on a night out. I was two and a half times over the limit. My probation officer structured my order so it was addressing the main issues in my life that were contributing to my behaviour and were putting other people's lives in danger. She told me what she had to, but didn't judge me. This meant I could get on with the order and also feel supported.

Number one was my alcohol addiction. She fixed me up to see an alcohol counsellor and, now, I'm off the alcohol and I feel stronger than I've ever been.

I also restarted my education which gave a focus to my life that I hadn't had for years. My probation officer created a programme for me to return to college. At the start I had panic attacks about going back but gradually my confidence grew and I now have 11 certificates in skills like numeracy, literacy, IT and word processing. I attended every appointment with my probation officer, tackled my drink problem and made good use of the support offered to me".

Over the last four years almost 200,000 offenders⁸ have completed unpaid work. This means that with a conservative average of 100 hours per offender, over 20 million hours of unpaid work has been undertaken. 20 million hours represents over £110 million worth of payback to towns, cities and villages in England and Wales.



"The only way to prevent recurrent crime is by showing offenders that the community cares and persuading them that they must also care for the community. This is part of our mission and is reflected in the work Turning Point does with offenders serving sentences in the community."

Harry Walker, Policy Adviser on Criminal Justice and Offender Health, Turning Point

"Youth charity The Prince's Trust works closely with criminal justice agencies and the police to stop young people from entering a life of crime. Through Trust programmes we also help young offenders and ex-offenders develop key work place skills such as confidence, motivation and teamwork, enabling them to become a positive part of society."

Ginny Lunn, Director of Policy and Development, The Prince's Trust

Mike Wells, London Community Payback Scheme

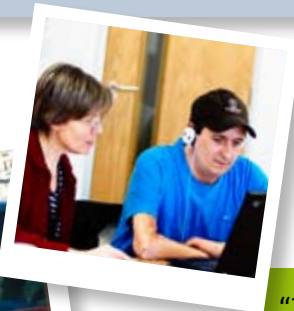
Community Payback projects are carried out by offenders and nominated by members of the public. Projects might include clearing graffiti or fixing buildings

"Community Payback in London involves close co-operation with 630 Safer Neighbourhood teams, 32 local authorities and officers from the Metropolitan Police. There are fortnightly or monthly meetings all around London, attended by individual citizens, neighbourhood watch and residents' association members.

Many of the issues of concern to local people are those where we can make an immediate impact: collecting litter, removing graffiti and refurbishing public spaces. Our priority projects are suggested and chosen by the public.

In January 2008 alone, there were 265 projects a week in operation across all 32 boroughs, involving around 36,000 hours of unpaid work by offenders – worth over £200,000 to the community if paid at the national minimum wage.

Some people are nervous about the idea of offenders being used in such a public way but members of the Safer Communities team and in some cases the Metropolitan Police are present to provide a reassuring presence. The offenders wear yellow jackets and the supervisor has an orange one. We put a board up saying it's a Community Payback scheme. And we leaflet the area so that everyone knows we are there and can see justice in action."



"This is a fitting way for offenders to pay something back to their communities for their crimes. This project will breathe new life into a much loved and well used facility, right in the heart of a thriving local community."

Councillor John O'Brien, Mayor of Wigan

Gabrielle Amahwe, Senior Probation Manager, Thames Valley

"Do I support community sentencing? Absolutely. The bottom line is that most offenders don't want to face up to the consequences of their actions. Prison may give them time to reflect but a short sentence doesn't often change their attitudes.

Community Orders combine punishment with treatment – teaching people how to cope with social pressures and learn new skills. Now that they can be tailored to the needs of the offender, they are much more robust, especially for crimes which have a high impact on the community – like burglary, shoplifting and motor theft.

We show offenders what they need to do to stop being a risk to the public and start being a useful and functioning part of the community. That's a very tough job. We are helping offenders end their cycle of crime. If they don't take it seriously, then they get breached.

We have to get them to address their attitudes alongside all the other social factors in their lives. They haven't just woken up one morning and decided to become prolific offenders. The way they live their lives is based on looking after number one: if you can't get what you want, nick it from someone else. We have to make them understand that this is wrong, show them the world from the other side."

What next?

Positive achievements but there is more to be done.

Intensive Alternatives to Custody

A number of intensive 'Alternative to Custody' projects have been developed, the first of which commenced in Derbyshire on 25th March 2008. Others will begin across the country during 2008 and 2009.

The projects are designed to encourage greater use of community sentences. By enabling sentencers to order increased levels of supervision as part of the sentence, it is hoped to boost confidence in their effectiveness and so lead to more widespread use wherever appropriate. There are two types of project:

- Intensive Control Sentences include at least 20 hours of supervision a week, attendance at an accredited programme, an activity such as Skills for Life training, and other requirements such as regular drug testing or electronic monitoring.
- Intensive Punitive Sentences involve a programme of compulsory unpaid work combined with curfew restrictions and three to six months of supervision.

Offender Compacts

A Compact will be introduced which sets out what the community can expect in return for offenders being given opportunities to learn new skills. They will explain the responsibilities of offenders and of the probation officers supervising them. They are designed to secure offenders' compliance with their sentencing plan by emphasising that effort and good faith are required on both sides for successful rehabilitation.

Citizen Panels

As announced in the Prison Policy update in January 2008, we are working with the Department of Communities and Local Government to further build on Community Payback. For example, we are looking at options like citizens' panels to decide on which unpaid work projects offenders should undertake in their local area.

Mayors' Community Payback Scheme

The Mayors' Community Payback Scheme, launched in 2007, enables a mayor in each of the 42 probation areas to nominate a project for offenders to work on. The scheme has been so

successful that extra projects will be nominated and begun during 2008.

Community Justice

Thirteen Community Justice Courts are now in operation, offering a faster approach to tackling crimes such as graffiti, petty theft, vandalism and anti-social behaviour, and helping to improve local quality of life.

This new approach involves extensive team work between the courts, police, Crown Prosecution Service and probation services. It also keeps victims and witnesses informed and supported. It involves consultation with local people on the impact of crime in their neighbourhood.



Unpaid work teams have been working in partnership with South Kesteven District Council, Lincolnshire, after local Councillor Linda Neal nominated Grantham Sports Stadium to be a Community Payback project.

Councillor Neal

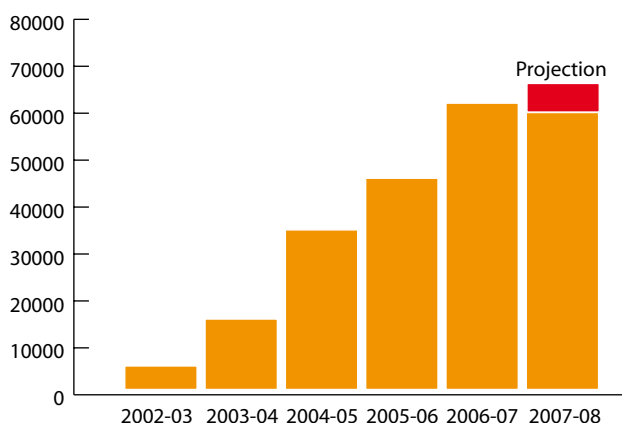
"I am delighted to be the first civic leader to be invited to back an unpaid work project in Grantham. It is important that offenders pay something back to communities for their crimes, and that communities are aware of this. The refurbished sports facility will be a wonderful asset for the people of the area."

Tim Godwin, Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) lead for Criminal Justice

"ACPO welcomes this report which lays out clearly and concisely the various community sentencing options available to the judiciary. Many community sentences are an effective way of tackling offender behaviour but often the general public are unaware of what they are and their achievements in reducing reoffending. This is part of the national criminal justice strategy which we support. One element of this strategy has the objective of opening up the criminal justice debate within communities to achieve greater understanding and involvement. We see this report as a first step in commencing that debate."

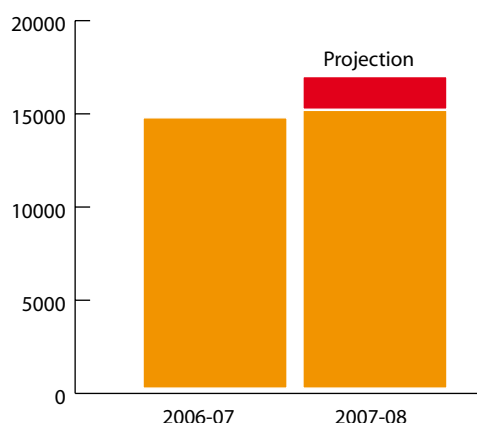
Literacy and Numeracy Referrals⁹

The number of referrals to a Skills for Life course from 2002 to 2008



Sustained Employment⁹

The number of offenders finding and sustaining employment for four weeks or more – 2006-07 to 2007-08



Prolific and Priority Offenders

It is estimated that around 10% of the active offender population accounts for half of all crime and that around 0.5% of these offenders are responsible for one in ten offences. The Prolific and other Priority Offender strategy aims to manage this group, recognising that they need intensive intervention and support if they are to change their lifestyle and stop offending.¹⁰

Offenders are seen by police and probation officers a minimum of four times every week and are subject to curfews, increased police surveillance and other Community Order requirements. They may also receive drug treatment, housing, education and training on the express understanding that they accept the help they are given as a golden opportunity to stop reoffending or they face a swift return to court for a more severe sentence.

Women Offenders

In a UK-wide ICM survey of more than 1,000 respondents on women and offending, 86% supported community alternatives to prison, such as centres where women are sent to address the causes of their crimes whilst also having to do compulsory work in the community.¹¹

The 2007 report by Baroness Corston has called for a radically different and integrated approach to the treatment of women within the criminal justice system.

The Government is committed to looking specifically at how to tackle women's offending and addressing the adverse

impact of imprisonment on women and their families, particularly their children. The majority of women are convicted of non violent and sexual crime and their behaviour can be best addressed in the community.

The consequence of a mothers imprisonment for the children and the risk that their lives will be disadvantaged as a result, makes it all the more important that women offenders are dealt with as far as possible using community sentences.

Mental Health and Drugs Courts

Pilot courts will be introduced to test the effectiveness of treating offenders with mental health problems or learning disabilities away from the conventional justice system. Two drugs court pilots have been running in West London and Leeds since December 2005 for drug-misusing offenders who persistently commit low-level crime. The model is due to be extended to four more pilot sites in October 2008.

Community sentences are widely recognised as a more effective way of treating offenders with a drug problem than short prison sentences, as confirmed by a recent report by the Independent UK Drug Policy Commission.

Skills and Employment

More employers from the corporate, public and voluntary sectors are getting involved in training offenders during their sentences and subsequently offering them jobs. For example, Bovis Lend Lease has launched Be Onsite, an initiative to address skills shortages in the construction industry through employer-led training. This will offer job brokerage, supported employment and skills training to offenders and others.

- 5,000 more offenders are projected to be referred onto a Skills for Life course during 2007/08. This means 65,000 offenders will embark on a course to improve their English or maths skills
- It is projected that, in 2007/08, 16,500 offenders will be placed in employment for four weeks or longer. This is an increase of 2,000 offenders from the previous year
- In the four years from 2002 to 2006 almost 30,000 offenders (29,614) achieved a Skills for Life award
- In the last three years 32,640 offenders have found a job and kept it¹²

Mick Lillico, Chief Inspector, Northumbria Police

"The combined efforts of the Police and Probation PPO (Prolific and Priority Offender) Scheme, has led to a dramatic reduction in reoffending amongst some of the most active and problematic offenders across Northumbria. Northumbria Police is committed to total policing which does not end at conviction and we see the benefit to using intensive multi-layered community based penalties to help break the cycle of offending. Only by investing time with offenders can we hope to effect positive and lasting change in their lives. This will ultimately benefit not only the individual but also the communities in which they live, by reducing the number of victims of crime in our area."

Who benefits?

Community sentences are not a soft option. Offenders punished with a community sentence do not walk free from court, but face up to three years of restrictions on their liberty as well as unpaid work and other demanding requirements.



The Government strongly supports the use of community sentences alongside – not instead of – prisons as they deliver clear benefits to society not only in terms of community payback but also from their success in reducing offending.

Potential Victims of Crime

For many offenders, community-based punishments are proven to be more effective at reducing reoffending than short term prison sentences. This means the use of community sentences for these type of offenders can potentially mean fewer victims and crime in our communities.

Local Communities

Offenders can be required to do compulsory unpaid work of real benefit, and provide some payback to the communities they have wronged. Unpaid work can involve bringing derelict areas and buildings back into public use, such as by clearing church yards, repairing park benches and removing graffiti. This involves hard work to make communities better places to live in and is often work that would otherwise not be done.

Community Payback was launched in 2005. It lets local communities make suggestions and nominate projects they would like to be done by offenders in their local area.

The scheme was extended in 2007 with the launch of the Mayors' Community Payback Scheme, in which mayors were approached to nominate a project for offenders to work on. The Mayors' Community Payback Scheme is such a success that extra projects will be selected and started during 2008/09.

In 2006/07, nearly 20,000 offenders successfully completed offending behaviour programmes, while more than 55,000 completed compulsory unpaid work. In all, local facilities benefited from over six million hours of free labour – worth £33 million if paid at the national minimum wage – and made offenders pay something back to the communities they had wronged.

The Tax-paying Public

It costs around £37,000 to lock an offender up for a year. But a prison sentence isn't always the most effective way of dealing with an offender. Community sentences can be more effective than short prison sentences in terms of reducing reoffending. We have a duty to ensure that we provide punishments which are most effective both in terms of cutting reoffending and how we use taxpayers' money.

The Offenders Themselves

Persistent offenders often lack any understanding of the devastating effect of their crimes on the victims, and can only begin the slow process of reform when they are forced to confront the damage and distress they have caused. Others lack any capacity for self-help, and can only look forward to a crime-free future when they have been made to deal with the problems and chaos in their own lives.

For many offenders, being made to face up, through programmes, to the consequences of their crime and the root causes of their offending behaviour, are the toughest and most painful parts of their punishment. They are also the most essential.



"In the case of community sentences, victims need to know they will be kept informed and protected. Processes should be in place to make sure victims feel confident that they are not at risk. What victims want are effective measures to stop reoffending and in the case of non-violent crime, victims are extremely responsive to community sentences."

Victim Support

"We were distraught when vandals wrecked the tables, chairs, playground furniture and bird boxes in the butterfly garden that our children had raised money to create. Then Stockport's Unpaid Work unit came to our rescue – making new tables and seating, a climbing frame, bird boxes and planters, as well as digging an allotment and making raised beds, which we have wanted for a long time."

Gail Hillier, Learning Mentor, Tame Valley Primary School,

How to get involved

You can get more information or get involved in a number of ways by contacting your local probation office, contact details for which are overleaf.

- Put forward suggestions for a community payback project
- Become a volunteer with your local probation office
- Become a magistrate or Special Constable, or volunteer to sit on a Youth Offender Panel. Contact Direct Gov for more information <http://www.direct.gov.uk>
- Get involved with Victim Support or the Witness Service by calling their local office

Magistrates

For more information on the activity or to find out how you can get involved in any of the initiatives mentioned in the report, contact criminaljusticegroup@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Local Councils

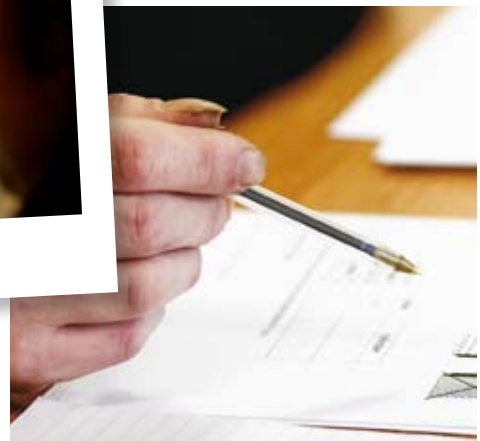
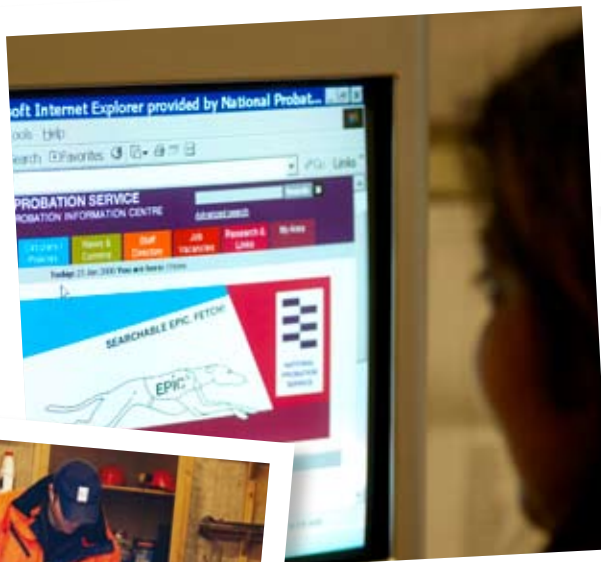
Unpaid work schemes are making a visible difference to cities, towns, boroughs and districts throughout England and Wales. If you would like to get more information or nominate a scheme in your local area, contact your local probation office.

Businesses

It is widely recognised that two of the biggest barriers to rehabilitation faced by offenders are getting work, and acquiring the skills and training they need to get work. Offenders embarking

on community sentences including an employment focussed programme are 35% less likely to reoffend¹³.

If your business can provide one or more offenders with employment, work experience or on-the-job-training, it could be all they need to leave their past behind and start a new life. Businesses can nominate an unpaid work project to their local probation office, or offer to mentor offenders in the workplace. Contact your local probation office for more information, details overleaf.





"Recent statistics show that the frequency of reoffending for community sentences has fallen sharply by 13%.

That means fewer offenders returning to crime and safer streets as a result. It also means resources are used most effectively".



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Thames Valley	01869 255300
North Wales	01492 513413
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Warwickshire	01926 405800
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