

THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SNOW BUSINESS

Welcome to the third Lothian & Borders Community Service Newsletter

This Newsletter is designed to provide readers not just with articles about the work that is going on across our area by our Community Service teams but to also give an insight into what Community Service actually is.

Community Service does offer a real alternative to short term prison sentences and is designed to provide payback to the community.



This edition includes articles by Community Service staff with many years of experience between them and they have used this to describe the technicalities behind a Community Service Order and what a typical day can look like.

Individual placements are a key component of Community Service and there are many organisations across Lothian & Borders who provide their support. The support of these organisations is invaluable and in this edition, Midlothian Advice and Resource Centre tell us about the benefits these placements can offer their organisation.

Whilst the Order is not primarily intended to be rehabilitative or to be seen as a form of "treatment", many ex-offenders do greatly benefit from the experience.

This is demonstrated in Pages 5 & 6 by clients who have continued with their voluntary work or found employment as a result of their community service work. We will all remember the "fantastic" snow falls over Christmas and New Year and we would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to the Community Service staff and clients who helped with the snow clearing across our region – see Page 3

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Ian Stewart has been involved in the organisation and delivery of Community Service by Offenders since 1978 as a Criminal Justice Social Worker, a Senior Social Worker and for the last 9 years as a Team Manager of a busy Criminal Justice Social Work Team in Edinburgh. Ian has taken time out to tell us what Community Service is all about.

Community Service was first introduced in 1978 as an additional requirement of a Probation Order. Though there have been a number of changes to Community Service over the intervening 31 years, it remains unchanged at its core and can be defined as the carrying out of unpaid work for the benefit of the community by an offender, under the supervision of Criminal Justice Social Work Services.

Research has indicated that those subject to Community Service are statistically less likely to re-offend in future compared with those sentenced to prison. A Community Service Order is a sentence of the Court which in law is an alternative to imprisonment. The Court can currently impose Community Service either as an Order in its own right (a Community Service Order), or as one of the conditions of a Probation Order.

The type of work individuals undertake can vary depending on the work available locally and the skills and aptitudes of those placed on Community Service. It is a central feature of work undertaken on Community Service, that whilst it is useful to the local community it must not involve taking away work from paid employees. The work will often take place in a project group which is directly supervised by a Community Service Supervisor.

Typical practical tasks include landscape gardening, painting and decorating and the collection and reno-

vation of furniture and toys for local charitable or social/ voluntary agencies. Some individuals, after appropriate assessment and preparation may

be placed directly with voluntary and charitable groups and agencies, working alongside other volunteers and under the supervision of the agency concerned.

All individuals placed on Community Service are given clear instructions on what is expected of them, including where required, appropriate health and safety training etc.

Failure to comply with their work instructions without reasonable excuse will result in their return to Court for Breach of their Order. The Scottish Government National Standards stipulate that after two formal warnings for misconduct, individuals must be returned to Court. The Court also has the power to deal more seriously with any offender who commits a further offence whilst undertaking Community Service (known as an aggravated offence).

Community Service Orders can be from 80 hours up to 300 hours in length and since July 2009 all Orders must be completed within 6 months of the Order being made.

The new National Standards, introduced in July 2009 also require offenders to:

Report to the Court Social Work Office immediately following their Court appearance.

Attend their first Work Appointment within five working days of their Court Appearance.

continued...

AND HOW IT WORKS

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Under the proposed new Community Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Bill, Probation Orders and Community Service Orders will be replaced by a new Payback Order which can include a variety of requirements, one of which will be an unpaid work/community service requirement.

The new legislation also proposes that part of the community service must include a vocational, educational or training element. This is a constructive and flexible addition to Community Service and will aid the process of rehabilitation and re-integration of ex offenders in the community.

Since its introduction to Scotland Community Service by Offenders has contributed many thousands millions of hours of unpaid work to a whole range of worthwhile community projects and initiatives.

It has assisted ex-offenders to provide some recompense for their previous behaviour and has supported their successful reintegration into society.

Community Service continues to rely on local communities for their support in providing ideas for work projects and placements.

Let it Snow



One very recent major project happened unexpectedly with the severest winter in 30 years and over a foot of snow in places. Whilst it gave a beautiful winter scene to look at it made transport and travel almost impossible at times.

In the Borders the priority was to clear access to schools so that they could be re-opened safely and the teams cleared pathways to 14 schools.

Further work took in included clearing pavements and paths for the more vulnerable Border residents so they could attend day care centres – a great help after being housebound for over 3 weeks.

So far this winter 751 hours of offender Community Service hours have been spent helping to

get the Borders area back on the move again with the Community Service staff returning to work early after the holiday period, motivating the clients and leading by example.

The Midlothian Community Service Team cleared paths and walkways for 10 Sheltered Housing complexes in the Midlothian District. Feedback received whilst carrying out this work was very positive and encouraging for staff and clients.

This major effort was mirrored across Lothian & Borders with Community Service staff mobilising workers wherever possible whilst ensuring there was no conflict in taking work away from paid employees and also fulfilling their commitments to existing work projects.



Community Service Clients

A Community Service Order is imposed by the Court as a penalty, instead of imprisonment, with reparation to the community at its heart. Whilst the Order is not primarily intended to be rehabilitative or to be seen as a form of “treatment”, many ex-offenders do greatly benefit from the experience.

One indication of the rehabilitative nature of Community Service can be found in the national reconviction rates¹ (Statistical Bulletin Crime and Justice Series: Reconviction Rates in Scotland) which are published by the Scottish Government.

The most recent data (2006-07) states that individuals given a Community Service Order are least likely to re-offend within 2 years than those who receive other types of community orders or prison sentences.

Another very positive indication comes from the individuals who have completed their Community Service Orders, as these examples from West Lothian show:

(* Please note names have been changed for privacy purposes)



John* commented that his ongoing work at a local community farm tests out his mechanical skills in working on vintage farm equipment. This not only gives him an interest in his work, but he also enjoys the time he spends with fellow volunteers.

Susan* stayed on as a volunteer with a local charity shop because she felt the charity needed the work she could contribute; she enjoys the company of the other volunteers and of customers, and feels valued by them.



Sally* told us that she recognised she had broken the law and should be punished, and was pleased that her needs and opinions were taken into account in deciding on a placement for her. Having finished her order a few months ago, she is still involved with the charity shop, and is now helping in organising training nights for new volunteers.

Two other positive examples come from Midlothian through placements with Midlothian Advice and Resource Centre (**please see page 7**) –

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/08/28132734/8>

John completed his 200 hours Community Service and was successful in his application for a part time position with Midlothian Advice and Resource Centre. John has since left the Centre and is now at college. Here are John's thoughts on his placement:

Q. What did you enjoy most about the placement?

A. *Making a difference to people in the Community who can be vulnerable, elderly and isolated.*

Q. What do you feel you gained from the placement?

A. *It gave me a feeling of responsibility and allowed me to make decisions which benefited people in the community.*

Q. How did you find out about the part-time post?

A. *I was informed by staff that the post was being advertised externally, although I felt awkward as other volunteers were applying. I was encouraged by staff to apply.*

Q. What was the post title?

A. *Shop Supervisor, overseeing and managing the day to day running of the shop.*

Q. How did you feel when you were informed you were successful at interview and offered the post?

A. *It demonstrated to me that they had a great deal of trust and confidence in my work, although I felt slightly awkward as the other volunteers who had applied for the post were unsuccessful but they offered a great deal of support and encouragement.*

Q. Do you have any further comments?

A. *I feel proud that the work and physical effort I put into the placement from the beginning was repaying my debt to society.*

Julie received a Community Service Order of 120 hours unpaid work as a result of a first offence and was assessed as a suitable candidate for an individual placement.

Julie successfully completed her Community Service Order and to this day continues to be a volunteer, she is also a member of the board of trustees so has an active involvement in the day to day running of the Organisation. Julie kindly provided this feedback on her placement:

Q. Did you prefer to be placed on an Individual placement, rather than Group work?

A. *Yes, as my skills were used for a good cause.*

Q. What did you gain from the placement?

A. *It got me back into a work routine which provided the motivation to gain employment on a part-time basis, I was suffering from depression and the placement built up my confidence and raised my self esteem.*

Q. What made you decide to stay on at the placement after your Community Service Order was completed?

A. *Because I had got into the routine, my work was appreciated and I was treated with respect, I enjoy volunteering at Midlothian Advice and Resource Centre, I feel the work I carry out helps the Organisation and makes a difference to people in the community that need our help and assistance.*

COMMUNITY SERVICE

THE PLACEMENT PROVIDERS

As highlighted in Page 2 many Community Service clients are placed with companies and voluntary organisations on an individual basis. The help and support of these businesses is very important and valued greatly by the Community Service staff across Lothian & Borders.

So what are the benefits for a Placement Provider? Derek Mitchell who is a Transport Manager for Midlothian Advice and Resource Centre takes some time out to tell us how it can be of benefit for his company:

Q. What benefits does the Organisation gain from Community Service?

A. *Community Service provides volunteers to help carry out uplifts, collections and deliveries in the community, there is always a shortage of volunteers who are able to carry out manual work.*

Q. What types of placement work do you have available for Community Service clients?

A. *We have a variety of voluntary work opportunities including;*

- *Van assistance [uplifts and removals]*
- *Office work [reception and administrative duties]*
- *Shop and warehouse duties*

Q. Do you see Community Service as a valuable resource for your Organisation?

A. *It is a tremendous resource, without Community Service clients we would struggle to meet our commitments. Community Service clients who are placed at Midlothian Advice and Resource Centre are treated the same way as any volunteer, at the same time they are actively involved in providing a service for vulnerable and disadvantaged people in Midlothian.*

Midlothian Advice & Resource Centre is a charitable Organisation helping vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the Midlothian area by means of providing volunteering opportunities and providing low cost furniture. They have recently carried out bicycle and computer recycling projects and the Centre has provided Individual Placement opportunities for clients carrying out Community Service work for a number of years.



Photo: Left to right Derek Mitchell: [Transport Manager] Charlene Smith: [Project Co-ordinator]: Heather Marshall: [Receptionist and Administrative Assistant]

The Centre provides a variety of placement work including van assistant, shop work and reception and administrative duties and they provide support and guidance for clients throughout their placement. Midlothian Advice and Resource Centre are viewed as a valued placement provider by Midlothian Community Service Team.

COMMUNITY SERVICE – PROJECTS

Scottish Borders

In partnership with SB Local and the Countryside Access Rangers Service

Milldown Bridge, Coldingham Bay

Access had been limited for walkers wanting to complete this costal walk due to the flow of the burn. Community Services designed and constructed this bridge to open up both sides of Coldingham Bay to the public.



Lynwood Walkway, Hawick

This project now allows the public to enter this popular walk from either end of the walkway

This project was undertaken over 4 weeks and used over 6 tonnes of timber.



*Please contact your local Community Service team for more information about projects in your area.
If you have any comments on this Newsletter please contact Lothian & Borders CJA.*



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