

Probation in Essex Working to make people safer



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Community Payback



Community Payback

Community Payback is a scheme run by the National Probation Service, which enables offenders to do **Work** done by offenders in Essex to receive public recognition, and allows the public to have their say on ideas as to which work projects are undertaken.

Offenders in Essex were sentenced by the courts to well over 200,000 hours of Unpaid Work in the last year. This equates to a million pounds worth of available labour, if you consider these hours at minimum wage rates.

It is critical that these hours are used effectively both as a punishment, and to help rehabilitate offenders. It is also critical that the public recognises the value of the work undertaken by offenders in their communities.

Unpaid Work is the new name given to the community sentence many people recognise as *Community Service*.

Community Service was first introduced in the 1970s but has come a long way since then. The key components are still the same. Offenders are required to give up their free time to do Unpaid Work within their local communities to pay back for the crimes they have committed. This equates to a day's work once a week.



What work do they do ?

Over the years staff working in the Unpaid Work Team have developed a wide range of projects and placements to meet the needs of offenders. These include projects undertaken by groups [usually 6-8 offenders] or individual placements. [Examples of Community Payback](#)

Hard work is key feature in this particular court sentence. However, all projects aim to use the opportunities the work provides to improve offenders' attitudes, set good examples of the right behaviour, and where appropriate, teach new skills.

A recent study shows that 55% of the offenders under the supervision of the Probation Service have employment, training or education. This increases to over 80% for repeat offenders who commit the most crime. Unpaid Work presents an ideal opportunity for offenders to complete a task being completed as the framework to teach new skills and is an effective way to enhance the employability prospects of offenders.

An example of this is the work done in the Witham Workshop, where garden furniture and other items are produced to an extremely high standard. A young man had been sentenced to a good number of hours' Unpaid Work as a result of various offences. Although he had had a job in a kitchen, he was not going to return to it. In the workshop he took the first steps towards a new career. He learned the necessity for patient, accurate working, and accumulated some of the woodworking skills which led him on to taking National Vocational Qualifications. He has every prospect of obtaining a good job with his newfound skills.



Learning Basic Skills on-site

As a component of the hours ordered by the court, offenders can be removed from their work task to spend time with a tutor learning the basics of numeracy and literacy. Provision is made on-site for individual sessions to take offenders through the vital step on the employment ladder.

Who decides what work is done ?

Essex Probation Area's Unpaid Work Team has the ultimate decision on what projects or placements are suitable. We are currently looking for projects to consider for the future. Faith groups, voluntary organisations, local authorities and Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships are encouraged to put forward suggestions for potential work.

Group Projects – A good project is one that meets the following criteria:

- Provides work for up to 6 – 8 offenders for at least a day
- Provides a range of tasks
- Provides opportunities to learn new skills



- Provides constructive and worthwhile work, which can give offenders new skills
- Provides benefit to the local community
- May reduce the fear of crime by making the community feel safer

Long term projects that take a number of weeks to complete are always useful as these can help teach planning skills and work, which may include clearing a site at the start to painting and decorating at the end. Group projects are always supervised by a Work Supervisor or on-site project manager.

Individual Placements

Individual placements can provide a wide range of opportunities to offenders, who may have particular needs including care. The hours of delivery can be more flexible, including evening work and work in smaller blocks over two or three days with Individual Placements occasionally give us the opportunity to match specific skills the offender has to help in agencies with those skills. However, mostly it will be work the offender is unused to doing.

Paying back to Local Communities

Whatever the project or placement the aim of the Unpaid Work Team is to ensure that work undertaken reflects the priorities and make-up of local communities is aimed at improving them, protecting them and, where appropriate, reducing crime. As a result Essex Probation Area offered each of the 14 Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships [CDRPs] in Essex a specified number of hours of Unpaid Work group activity in 2004/05, to be used in meeting their targets to reduce crime and protect communities.



We have also targeted minority ethnic community groups this year to ensure that all aspects of our local communities benefit from Unpaid Work activity.

The Community Payback campaign aims to ensure that the work undertaken is highlighted. This is achieved by displaying a certificate on the project in recognition of the work done by offenders.

Can I have say in what is done in my Community ?

YES, this is what Community Payback is all about. Whether you are a community group or an individual you can have the suggest projects or placements in your local community that might benefit from Unpaid Work hours.

What do I need to do ?

Firstly, it is helpful to consider the issues outlined above, for example, the kind of projects we are looking for and secondly remember that Unpaid Work should not be used as a way of replacing people's paid jobs with free labour. The examples, newsletter/on this web-site can also be a helpful guide.

If you have an idea then please Email us:

Colchester.SEM@essex.probation.gsx.gov.uk

Or you can write to us at:

Community Payback
Essex Probation
Cullen Mill
49 Braintree Road
Witham,
Essex CM8 2DD

Make sure your suggestion provides the following details:

- An outline of the project/placement or task to be undertaken including its location
- A contact person and their contact details (See form)

We will reply to all suggestions and then assess each project for its suitability. Whatever, the outcome we will let you know a project we can do then we will let you know when we aim to begin. If we can not do it then we will let you know our reasons.