

UPDATE OF COMMUNITY PAYBACK UNPAID WORK ACTIVITY 2014/15

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the work being undertaken by offenders subject to Community Payback Unpaid Work.

Unpaid Work offers reparation to society for an offender's misconduct and opportunities for rehabilitation through skills training and positive social activity.

In 2013/14 the Unpaid Work scheme provided 16,154 hours of labour. During 2014/15 this figure rose to 19,945 - the equivalent of £133,631 worth of labour put back into the community.

The report highlights that activity is expanding due to an increased use of Unpaid Work as a sentencing option by the Courts. All communities in Argyll and Bute have benefitted from unpaid work. The scheme is focusing on larger more visible community projects and this is attracting positive feedback and improving the capacity for offenders to make reparation and start the process of rehabilitation. Smaller charitable groups also benefit from individual placements.

The report makes reference to the difficulties in managing resources to meet spikes in demand across a large geographic area – reliant upon a flexible workforce, but also applying a cautionary approach to managing local demand and expectation.

The Unpaid Work Scheme is part of the functions of Criminal Justice Social Work and is delivered via a ring-fenced grant from Central Government. There are no financial implications.

Recommendations

The report recommends that the Community Service Committee:

- a) Note the content of this report

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Unpaid Work is one of nine requirements that can make up a Community Payback Order imposed upon offenders by means of a community based sentence.
- 2.2 Unpaid Work offers reparation to society for an offender's misconduct and opportunities for rehabilitation through skills training and positive social activity.
- 2.3 The Unpaid Work scheme provided the equivalent of £133,631 worth of labour in the community in 2014/15

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Committee is invited to note the content of this report

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The introduction of Community Payback Orders (which replaced Community Service and Probation) in February 2011 has resulted nationally in a significant increase in offenders required to carry out Unpaid Work as a community based sentence. In Argyll and Bute this increase is subject to local variation dependent upon the sentencing practice of individual Sheriffs and this dictates the need for a flexible workforce that can respond to spikes in demand across a large geographic area.

Unpaid Work Requirements can be imposed by the Court on 2 levels:

- Level 1 – between 20 and 100 hours to be completed in 3 months
- Level 2 – between 101 and 300 hours to be completed within 6 months (although the court may stipulate a different period of time).

- 4.2 The delivery of the Unpaid Work scheme is carried out either by work squad or agency placement – both are overseen by the Scheme Co-ordinator. Work squads are run by a number of permanent and sessional supervisors located across Argyll and Bute (not Helensburgh)

and Lomond, which are serviced through a partnership arrangement with West Dunbartonshire Council).

- 4.3 During 2014 – 2015 the Scheme operated approximately 12 work squads per week across the area. Work undertaken in Argyll and Bute can be found highlighted at appendix 1. This list is not exhaustive - it details mainly larger projects that benefit the majority of people and have greater community visibility.

Promotion of the work undertaken by the scheme is applied with caution to avoid over expectation, as the capacity to commit to any project is dictated by the availability of offenders on suitable orders in that area. Despite having a flexible workforce, financial and practical constraints limit what can be achieved in any given area at any one time and this carries the potential to disappoint local demand.

- 4.4 On occasion and if the offender's risk permits, an individual may be placed within an agency setting and supervised by that agency directly. The scheme has been successful in placing offenders in Charity Shops, Residential Homes for the elderly, local charities such as the Help project and local Community Trusts. The scheme is developing links with the following community gardens at Dalmally, Campbeltown and Colintrave. Such placements offer a better quality of work to some offenders who match certain criteria, giving them more opportunity to complete their hours whilst gaining experience of the work place.
- 4.5 In 2013/14 the Unpaid Work scheme undertook 16,154 hours of work in Argyll and Bute. During 2014/15, this figure rose to 19,945 hours – the equivalent of £133,631 (using minimum wage of £6.70/hr) of labour put back into the community. Whilst this figure provides an interesting view of "payback" by offenders, what is missing from Government statistics and is impossible to gather at a local level, is the impact of specifically undertaking Unpaid Work and developing new skills or experiencing meaningful activity, upon re-offending rates.

There were 135 Community Payback Orders with a requirement to undertake Unpaid Work given in 2014/15 in Argyll and Bute. Just under a half (62) were at Level 1, representing less serious offending dealt with through a more constructive response to rehabilitation than punishment simply through financial penalty. The average Level 1 requirement was 78 hours of unpaid work to be completed within 3 months.

Just over half (73) were dealt with at Level 2. These represent the more serious offending, act as an alternative to custody and, commonly, are imposed along with a requirement for supervision by a social worker to undertake offence related interventions. The average Level 2 requirement was 189 hours to be completed within 6 months – indicating a lengthier and more intense order than at Level 1.

There were 20 applications for breach for non-compliance, usually as a

result of failure to attend as instructed. Three are still outstanding matters in the Court, the remaining 17 were all prosecuted successfully indicating a robust, effective but fair response to managing discipline.

- 4.6 For the future the Scheme is looking to build upon the success of the Glenfinnart Walled Garden project and link with other community projects to acquire small pieces of land across Argyll and Bute to use for planting and horticulture. The aim of this is to grow fruit and vegetables with a view to supplying local foodbanks.

In Bute and Cowal the scheme is working with Community owned forestry groups to make land more accessible to local tourists. Such work has potential to give service users a real chance of developing skills in this area, making them more employable.

Another future project awaiting confirmation is the installation of child size road safety signs to be situated outside selected primary schools in the area with the purpose of encouraging drivers to take better care on the roads. This is in conjunction with Roads Scotland and Police Scotland.

- 4.7 The scheme is very proud of the feedback received in the last year from beneficiaries of service, often citing that work has been carried out efficient and tidily and noting the benefit to the community. In addition, some past service users have returned as volunteers to the projects they had assisted on the Unpaid Work scheme. The scheme has also welcomed media interest by way of positive newspaper articles from across the Authority.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 All communities in Argyll and Bute have benefitted from unpaid work by offenders. The scheme is focusing on larger more visible community projects and this is attracting positive feedback and improving the capacity for offenders to make reparation and start the process of rehabilitation in the community. Smaller charitable groups also benefit from individual placements.
- 5.2 Capacity of the Unpaid Work scheme is dependent upon local Court sentencing which subsequently limits the number, length and breadth of the projects it can commit to.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy
There are no policy implications to this report
- 6.2 Financial

There are no financial implications to this report. Unpaid Work is delivered within the ring-fenced Social Work (Scotland) 1968 S27 grant from the Scottish Government provided for the management of offenders.

6.3 Legal

There are no legal implications to this report

6.4 HR

There are no HR implications to this report

6.5 Equalities

There are no equalities implications to this report

6.6 Risk

There are no risk implications to this report

6.7 Customer Service

There are no customer service implications to this report

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Work currently Undertaken by Unpaid Work squads

Work currently Undertaken by Unpaid Work squads in Argyll and Bute:

- Beach Cleaning – Throughout the area including Toward, Dunoon, Loch Eck, Tighnabruaich, Strachur, Kilmun, Blairmore, Ardentinn, various locations on the Isle of Bute and Campbeltown.
- Gardening – Working with Argyll and Bute Operational services, ACHA and Fyne Homes we identify vulnerable residents and, on a rota basis, undertake domestic gardening. We have cleared weeds from foot paths and road edges at Blairmore, Kames and Tighnabruaich. We annually assist Ferfadd Court to plant beds and assist at events such as the Highland Games and local shows.
- Furniture removal – for vulnerable persons only. Each case is assessed on its own merits. A recent example of this type of work was in Oban where we assisted a family in need with a full house move. The family in question had care of an extremely ill child and this work was invaluable to them as they were on very limited means.
- Path/land Clearance – Bishops Fairy Glen, Taynuilt, Oban, and other woodland areas. Squads recently completed a fairly large piece of work at the Oban sensory Garden where we cleared land and painted benches.
- Decorating – Examples of work undertaken include the painting of Dunoon pipe band hall, and other various village halls such as Strachur, Ardentinn, Port Bannatyne, and Lochgoilhead.
- Woodwork and Joinery – The creation of raised beds, school play equipment and historically even the design and building of doll's houses for the local hospice. We have also made bird boxes and benches for donation to local not for profit community groups.
- Play parks/playgrounds – Tasks involve painting, cleaning areas and power washing play equipment. At Lochgoilhead Play Park we delivered and laid 10 tonnes of sand and 6 tonnes of bark.
- Litter picking throughout the region. At North Bute Primary school we also put down wood chippings donated by other community projects.
- Tarbert Harbour – painting and planting.
- Other larger scale projects such as
 Machrihanish community airbase - this involves litter picking, rubbish clearance, painting fences and walls and fence erection and painting inside buildings.
 Kilfinan forest – Path clearance, forestry work general land maintenance as and when required.
 Glenfinnart walled garden – planting, growing and maintaining edible crops and other plants in the gardens. Maintaining the play areas and orchards. We are also fortunate to have been given a small part of this garden which enables our offenders to grow their own vegetables promoting a healthier lifestyle within our client base.

Barbluie Woodland Enterprise, Lochgilphead -Path clearance, forestry work, general land maintenance as and when required.

Campbeltown community garden – with a real focus on education this multi-activity site enables our clients and others to benefit from tips of how to cultivate and develop land.

- Winter weather work. In conjunction with Argyll and Bute council we were heavily involved during winter 2014/2015 with path clearance and gritting to provide access to vulnerable persons to essential services such as hospitals and doctors surgeries.