



A Report on Jersey Probation & After-Care Service (JPACS) Community Service Scheme

Introduction

Patricia Ingram, Director of Community Operations, Isle of Man and Kate Clark, Senior Practitioner, Guernsey Probation Service were invited to undertake an independent inspection of the Community Service of Jersey Probation and After-Care Service. The Inspection took place on 16th, 18th and 19th November 2012.

The stated objectives were to determine the extent to which the scheme operates in accordance with agreed service standards, to ascertain views from beneficiaries, sentencers, staff and clients and to make recommendations.

A total of 48 case files were inspected for adherence to the Standards set by JPACS. Interviews were conducted with 8 Beneficiaries, 10 Sentencers, 8 members of staff and six clients. We observed the Community Service team operation over the course of one day including visits to three work group sites.

JPACS identified the criteria for the inspection of the files and formulated the interview questions. The authors were provided with supporting documentation including the "Standards Relating to the Supervision of Community Service Orders by the Jersey Probation and After-Care Service, January 2012"; the JPACS "Community Service Inspection 2012 Client End Of Order Questionnaire", an internal inspection of 100 questionnaires drawn from January to October 2012 inclusive; and the Social Enquiry Report (SER) for each client file read.

This report is set out in the following sections and we present the data results and commentary, including strengths and areas for improvement, for each in turn.

1. **File Inspection:** Assessments, Work Sessions, Enforcement, Recording, and Offenders under 18 (Questions 1-35)
2. **Observation of work parties:** Work Undertaken (Questions 36-44)
3. **Interviews:** Beneficiaries, Sentencers, and Staff (Questions 45-59)
4. **Client feedback:** interviews and study of “Client End of Order Questionnaire” results
5. **Conclusions and recommendations**

We would like to express our appreciation for the warm welcome extended to us by everyone in the JPACS team. In particular we thank Brian Heath, Mike Cutland and Andy Le Marrec for all their organising and preparation ahead of the Inspection, and for generously sharing their knowledge and time when consulted by us. Thanks also to Karen Pallot for her help in organising our visits, and to Barbara Machon for her administrative support, guidance in accessing the databases, and the collation of reams of data and handwritten comments. Special thanks go to Jurat Nicolle for his invaluable help in interviewing respondents. Lastly, of course, we thank those we interviewed; their willingness to volunteer their time for the task is a testament to the good relationships engendered by JPACS and the high regard in which the scheme is clearly held.

1. **File Inspection: Assessments, Work Sessions, Enforcement, Recording, and Offenders under 18 (Questions 1-35)**

Assessments

Question 1: Had the offender signed a Community Service consent form?

		%
Y	44	92
N	3	6
NA	1	2
Total	48	100

Commentary

Strengths:

- Good evidence that 92% of offenders had signed the consent form at SER stage

Areas of Improvement: Of those cases where no consent form was on file:

- In one case Community Service (CS) had been imposed where there was no assessment for suitability of Community Service within the SER; CS had not been proposed or explained to the offender.
- In one case the offender had failed to attend the second Social Enquiry Report interview so there was no consent form on file.
- In one case the Social Enquiry Report indicated the offender's agreement with Community Service but no form was on file.

Question 2: Had a post sentence assessment interview taken place within 10 working days from the date of sentence?

		%
Y	41	86
N	4	8
NA	3	6
Total	48	100

The files were marked NA if the Order was imposed consecutively or concurrently with an existing Order.

Commentary

Strengths:

- Again clear, easy to find record of this standard being met in the majority of cases. Evidence of consideration as to suitable placement depending on nature of offence and diversity issues was apparent.
- In one case there was evidence in the assessment interview of careful consideration of a suitable placement for a sex offender.
- In one case an offender identified as in very poor health was appropriately placed in an Individual Placement.
- In one case there was evidence that careful consideration had been given to the most suitable placement for a vulnerable 17 yr old offender.
- In one case the parents of a young person were involved in the interview and permission to travel was discussed.
- In one case the case records evidenced that the interview notes gave insight into family dynamics. There was evidence of possible conflict with another offender and the risks this posed were taken into account in placement.

- There was evidence of timely practice. In the case of an offender missing the appointment scheduled for 2.12.11 and this being quickly followed up by a meeting on 5.12.11. In another the interview took place within 10 working days despite the offender failing to attend first appointment offered.
- There was evidence of consideration for offender individual needs as the offender was assisted in the Community Service interview by a translator.

Areas of Improvement:

- While it is clear that post sentence interviews took place in a timely fashion, the assessment process and decision making as to suitability for Individual Placement (IP) or work parties is not always clear to file readers. We have no doubt that assessment is made but wonder if greater consideration could be given to the use of IPs

Question 3: If the post sentence assessment interview did not take place within 10 working days from the date of sentencing was the reasons recorded?

		%
Y	3	75
N	1	25
Total	4	100

Commentary

Strengths:

As can be seen from the 75% result to this question, we found the reasons for exceptions to the agreed standards were clearly recorded.

Areas of Improvement:

- The letter on the file states the interview was scheduled for 20.12.10 but the interview took place on 7.1.11. There was no explanation recorded.

Question 4: If it was recorded that the assessment interview did not take place within 10 working days from the date of sentencing was the reason given acceptable?

		%
Y	3	100
N	0	0
Total	3	100

Question 5: Is there evidence that the rules of the scheme were explained to the offender?

		%
Y	42	88
N	5	10
NA	1	2
Total	48	100

Commentary

Strengths:

- There was written evidence in the majority of cases within the Community Service interview notes that showed the rules had been explained and work instructions provided.
- There was written evidence in the majority of cases that instructions were given to offender by letter and information leaflet provided.
- There was written evidence in the majority of case notes that the terms of the Order had been explained to the offender.
- In two cases the case notes evidenced that despite the Order closely following a previous Order the offender was still reminded of terms & rules. There was also acknowledgment within the case notes that an offender sentenced to a second Order does not always complete this without difficulty.

Areas of Improvement:

- In a minority of cases there was no clear evidence that the rules of the Community Scheme had been provided but in one case there was a record that the Order was served inferring that the conditions were explained.
- In one instance, the case notes did not specifically record that the rules of the scheme were explained. However advice was given in relation to alcohol issues and attendance at the placement.

Question 6: Following the assessment is it apparent that work that instructions were provided to the offender?

		%
Y	43	90
N	0	0
NA	1	2
No return	4	8
Total	48	100

Commentary

Strengths:

- Excellent performance in this area is noted at 90%.
- In addition to giving instructions a staff member had walked with an offender to a meeting point to be sure that the offender knew where to attend.

Work Sessions.

Question 7: Has the offender commenced Community Service within 15 working days from the date of sentence?

		%
Y	40	83
N	7	15
NA	1	2
Total	48	100

Commentary

Strengths:

- The majority of cases commenced their placement very quickly following sentencing, well within 15 working days. Evidence of a timely process in that the offender attended work placement within 3 days of being sentenced.
- There was consideration for the individual needs of an offender who had no childcare and additional stress factors including health problems. An Individual Placement was arranged for term time.
- In one case there were clear reasons recorded within the Social Enquiry Report and case notes that the offender was undergoing rehabilitation that would delay the start to the Order.

Question 8: If no is the reason recorded?

		%
Y	6	86
N	1	14
Total	7	100

Areas of Improvement:

- In one case there were 2 missed appointments at the beginning of the Order which were marked as acceptable but no reason or explanation recorded as to why they were deemed acceptable.

Question 9: If the answer above is yes, is there a satisfactory reason provided?

		%
Y	5	83
N	1	17
Total	6	100

Question 10: Do the Community Service sessions last for a minimum of 3 hours?

		%
Y	41	85
N	7	15
NA	0	0
Total	48	100

Commentary

Strengths:

- In the majority of cases the work sessions lasted a minimum of 3 hours, usually a minimum of five hours was noted. If the standard was not met, an explanation was recorded for e.g. "rained off".

Areas of Improvement:

- In one case the session lasted for 13.5hrs. The Jersey CS agreed standards state sessions should not exceed 8hrs.

Question 11: If no is the reason recorded?

		%
Y	6	86
N	1	14
Total	7	100

Commentary

Strengths:

- The majority of cases recorded an explanation.

Areas of Improvement:

- In one case less than 3 hours was worked in one session but reason was not recorded.
- In one case a medical reason was given for the first session which lasted 2.5 hours but no verification of A&E visit.

Question 12: If above answer is yes, is the reason recorded satisfactory?

		%
Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

Enforcement

Question 13: Overall, are the reasons for absences accepted by the Community Service Department reasonable?

		%
Y	28	59
NA	18	37
No	2	4
Total	48	100

Commentary

- Removal of the NA cases illustrate that 28 out of 30 reasons accepted were reasonable.

Strengths:

- In most cases the reasons recorded as acceptable were reasonable and related to the provision of medical certificates to support absences.
- In one case there was evidence of medical certificates provided and good liaison with the offender's GP.
- There was evidence of Unacceptable absences being amended to Acceptable with the reasons recorded.
- In one case there was evidence that information regarding poor family support for the offender, which had been gathered during the assessment, was taken into consideration in determining whether the absence was acceptable.
- In one case there was evidence that the reasons given by the offender were accepted but it was made clear in the case notes that the record keeper held the view that the offender was 'playing a game' and there were expressions of doubt over validity of explanations.
- In one case lack of child care was judged as an acceptable reason. This indicated a consideration for the needs of the offender but the record also acknowledged that this is a difficult explanation to evidence.
- In one case the notes evidenced liaison with other agencies regarding the capacity of the offender to complete their hours.

Areas of Improvement:

- There were cases where the absence was recorded as Acceptable but the reason not recorded within the case notes. There was a higher likelihood of a reason being recorded if it had been judged Unacceptable.

Question 14: Overall, are the reasons for absences not accepted by the Community Service Department reasonable?

		%
Y	25	52
N	0	0
NA	23	48
Total	48	100

Strengths:

- We found a good level of recording for those absences deemed not acceptable by the CS team.
- In one case it was noted that the explanations given by the offender for non-attendance became increasingly inadequate and appropriate action was taken by referring to the Solicitor General.

Areas of Improvement:

- In two cases no explanation was recorded.
- In one case there was no GP certificate to support the explanation given of a "hurt back".

Question 15: Was a warning issued for the first unacceptable absence?

		%
Y	24	50
N	4	8
NA	20	42
Total	48	100

Removal of the N/A cases results in 24 out of 28 being issued with a warning, equalling 86%.

Strengths:

- There was evidence of offenders being given clear verbal and written warnings and opportunities to complete hours.

Question 16: If no does the inspector feel that this was appropriate?

		%
Y	3	75
N	0	0
NA	1	25
Total	4	100

Commentary

- In one case the letter could not be issued as the offender was temporarily missing following their court appearance.
- In one case the warning letter was not required as the offender was already back in Court.

Strengths:

- We found appropriate use of professional discretion.
- In one case the offender was not issued with a warning letter but was seen by the CS manager and encouraged to complete their Order.
- In another the case notes recorded an explanation that a warning letter would not be in the interests of the well being of the offender.

Question 17: Was the offender's case reviewed for suspension/ compliance in cases where there was a second unacceptable absence?

		%
Y	17	35
N	0	0
NA	31	65
Total	48	100

Removal of the N/A cases results in 100% of relevant cases being reviewed.

Question 18: If no was this decision appropriate?

N/A as all cases were reviewed.

Question 19: Where the offender was suspended from the scheme was he/she instructed to attend a compliance interview?

		%
Y	14	29
N	0	0
NA	34	71
Total	48	100

Removal of the N/A cases results in 100% of relevant offenders being instructed.

Question 20: If no was the reason for omitting a compliance interview acceptable?

N/A as all were instructed.

Question 21: Was the offender's case reviewed by CPO/ACPO for subsequent unacceptable failures?

		%
Y	8	17
N	7	14
NA	33	69
Total	48	100

Removal of the N/A cases results in 8 out of 16 cases being reviewed which equals 50%.

Commentary

- Review by CPO/ACPO was recorded in half the files viewed. However we found it likely, due to other actions visible on file, that the offender's cases *were* reviewed routinely but that as an accepted part of practice those meetings were not always recorded on the case notes/system.

Question 22: If no, does the inspector feel this was appropriate?

		%
Y	2	29
N	0	0
NA	5	71
Total	7	100

Commentary

Areas of Improvement:

- In two cases there was some evidence of communication both verbal, written and face to face with the offender that indicated that the case had been reviewed but this was not fully or clearly recorded.
- In one case an offender gave a weak explanation for a second non-attendance, the Community Service Officer took the view that the offender would comply with the rest of the Order however the case notes did not explain that professional override.

Question 23: Were all breaches agreed and countersigned by either the CPO/ACPO?

		%
Y	9	19
N	0	0
NA	39	81
Total	48	100

Removal of the N/A cases results in 100% of breaches agreed and countersigned.

Question 24: In cases of breach, was the decision communicated to the offender by standard letter?

		%
Y	7	78
N	0	0
NA	2	22
Total	9	100

Question 25: Where breaches were presented to the court, was a progress report prepared for the court?

		%
Y	8	89
N	0	0
NA	1	11
Total	9	100

Question 26: Overall what is your assessment of the fairness of enforcement in this case?

		%
Very fair	21	44
Mostly fair	1	2
Mostly unfair	0	0
Very unfair	0	0
NA	24	50
No return	2	4
Total	48	100

Removal of the N/A cases results in 21 out of 24 cases rated as 'very fair', equalling 87.5%.

Commentary

- Generally there was a balance of appropriate enforcement with encouragement to attend.

Strengths:

- One case evidenced that the offender had a partner with serious mental health issues and the care of a young child. The records indicate that the case was very well managed to take account of this whilst ensuring the hours were completed timely.
- One case of an offender struggling with alcohol problem provided evidence that the Community Service Officer managed the case very well, setting clear boundaries.
- Evidence that the consequences of further non-compliance clearly outlined to the offender.
- In several examples there was evidence of the individual needs of the offender being taken into account such as one case where the offender's ill health had increased and the Order discharged by the Court. In another a young offender had many difficulties and there was evidence of a good balance between ensuring the hours were completed whilst recognising the complex issues.
- Latitude was offered to an offender who candidly disclosed his failures/lapse of commitment which affected his compliance.
- There was evidence of appropriate warnings for foul language. The case notes clearly recorded that the offender should not be recommended for Community Service in future due to threats made to staff.
- One case evidenced a joint meeting with Probation Officer & Community Service Officer which offered encouragement and advice to the offender during the warning and breach process.
- In one case of a young offender regular contact with offender and mother gave clarity to what was expected of the young offender and the consequences of non-compliance clearly outlined.

Areas of Improvement:

- In one case an Unacceptable Absence was recorded but it is not clear from the case file as to whether the medical certificate actually received.
- In one case of a young offender there was no record of parental contact or involvement at start of Order or during subsequent enforcement issues and action from the team.

Recording

Question 27: To what extent is the recording of contacts clear in this case?

		%
Very clear	27	56
Mostly clear	20	42
Mostly unclear	0	0
Very unclear	0	0
No return	1	2
Total	48	100

Commentary

- Overall a good level of recording with very clear and mostly clear returns to this question. The officer would be assisted if the system did a spell check! Of the 20 cases that were judged as “mostly clear” the reasons are as outlined above in the earlier questions. It is likely that because much of the good practice is consistent, regular and accepted that it is not automatically recorded. The recording generally assisted in the “working” of the case rather than the recording of the case in light of possible scrutiny of practice and decision making.

Question 28: Is a termination summary on file?

		%
Y	43	90
N	1	2
NA	3	6
No return	1	2
Total	48	100

Commentary

- In the one case where no summary was on file this was due to exceptional circumstances in that the offender had died. This was recorded on the case file under the Probation Officer records.

Question 29: Is there evidence of completed cases being marked by a completion certificate?

		%
Y	37	77
N	1	2
NA	9	19
No return	1	2
Total	48	100

A good standard with 37 out of 39 clients issued with completion certificate.

Offenders under 18 at Sentence - 7 files were reviewed.

Question 30: Was a parent or guardian invited to attend the initial assessment?

		%
Y	4	57
N	3	43
NA	0	0
Total	7	100

Commentary

Where a parent or guardian did attend the initial assessment it was not clear how they had been invited. A formal letter, or note on file if seen in person, of invitation would assist in explaining lack of parental involvement for example

Question 31: Are parents or guardians kept informed of significant developments in the young offender's case and sent copies of letters?

		%
Y	4	57
N	3	43
NA	0	0
Total	7	100

No evidence found in three out of four cases

Question 32: In cases of failures to attend, is the young person instructed to report to the Community Service Department to explain reasons for failure?

		%
Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

Strengths: Excellent return at 100%

Question 33: In line with the Service discretion with under 18 year olds, is failure to attend an appointment responded to by another opportunity at the same enforcement level (e.g. failure to attend a first interview should result in another “first” appointment being offered rather than moving to a formal suspend/compliance interview)?

		%
Y	4	67
N	1	16.5
NA	1	16.5
Total	6	100

Question 34: Are parents and guardians always invited to meetings with their child?

		%
Y	3	43
N	3	43
NA	1	14
Total	7	100

This return indicates a potential weak area – it was not clear from the files whether parents or guardians had been invited, or indeed had attended

Question 35: If a parent or guardian is unable to fulfil the role of responsible adult has another appropriate adult, including a Probation colleague, been asked to attend?

		%
Y	1	14
N	2	29
NA	4	57
Total	7	100

Removal of the N/A cases results in 1 case out of 3 responding 'Yes' which equals 33.3%.

2. Observation of work parties: Work Undertaken (Questions 36-44)

In answering the following questions our comments are based on the observations we made during our day with the Community Service Team, starting with the morning preparation, staff meetings at the start and end of the day, and site visits to three work parties.

Question 36: To what extent is the nature of the job and the risk/needs of the offenders relayed to the supervising staff and individual Beneficiaries?

Commentary

Strengths:

- We found that this information was well communicated between Officers, supervising staff and individual beneficiaries. In addition the case file reading indicates that care is given to placement choice in terms of individual needs of the offender. As will be seen later from the interviews, the individual Beneficiaries were positive about the meeting which takes place before the offender begins the placement. The Beneficiaries felt they were given an explanation as to why the offenders are on Probation and receive a telephone call every week. The Beneficiaries were very positive about the offenders placed with them.

Question 37: To what extent are placements interesting and stimulating for offenders?

		%
Very satisfactory	1	50
Satisfactory	1	50
Unsatisfactory	0	0
Very unsatisfactory	0	0
Total	2	100

Commentary

- Reading of case files, "End of Order client questionnaires", and interviews with three clients illustrated that some offenders liked the work they had undertaken. In one case in particular there was a view that the placement was good for getting the offender involved in the community. In some cases the placements were perceived as developing confidence. An offender was subsequently offered employment at the Hospice where they had an individual placement. The Hospice staff and Durrell Park manager described the offenders as very good at attending and felt this was due to the good working relationship between Probation and beneficiary staff. One offender had been unemployed for two years and subsequently gained employment at the end of the placement.
- In terms of work party placement there was evidence that some clients found the work satisfying and challenging, though this depended on the nature of the work which could also be repetitive e.g. clearing hedgerows. Supervisors made efforts to explain the purpose of the work such as environmental impact.

Question 38: How effectively is discipline maintained on work parties?

Commentary

- Observation of the Sunday Working Parties evidenced that maintaining discipline was a primary focus. Clients were clear as to the expectations of arriving in good time for transport to the work sites. The Supervisors closely monitored the groups and the work undertaken. Offenders were kept within clear sight of supervisors.

Question 39: How effectively is a satisfactory work ethic maintained on work parties?

Commentary

- The offenders were observed to be all working hard and consistently. The nature of the conservation work in particular provided evidence to the offenders that the work made a difference to this community. Supervisors were skilled at being clear with clients as to what was expected of them; motivating through use of praise and encouragement was noted.

Question 40: To what extent are health and safety considerations taken into account on Community Service placements (work parties and individual placements). Inspectors should take into account health and safety assessments, briefings to staff and clients, use of PPE, first aid availability, and management of work undertaken, staff training and review of session?

Commentary

- Overall this was deemed to be very satisfactory. In the individual placements the offenders have a full induction which includes Health & Safety etc. as they would with any member of staff. Instruction to clients on work parties was observed to be clear, supervisors kept close oversight of work and potential hazards. Supervisors and CS Officer's knowledge of offenders was of a high standard, morning briefings and afternoon reviews gave good opportunity to note information about offenders and their progress.
- All supervisors are first aid trained; contact between supervisors and CS manager is maintained via radio. Assistance can be called for example in case of client who injured himself at a work site, however due to geographical distance between sites and parties help could take some time to arrive. Good risk assessments regarding diverse issues such as terrain and proximity to members of the public evident from our discussions with supervisors and CS managers.

Question 41: To what extent is there evidence that the supervision of offenders reflects good pro social modelling?

Commentary

- Observation of the Sunday Working Party evidenced the Supervisors worked alongside the offenders and there was evidence of a good rapport. There was an indication from interviews that some felt that pro social modelling was not always used by staff when challenging offenders, particularly about discipline.
- The comment from two individual placements was that all the staff and volunteers in the placement were aware the offender was on Community Service and the offender fitted in well; all the staff were accepting of the offender. An example was given of a young offender assisting at a Hospice charity event in addition to their Community Service hours.

Question 42: To what extent do the inspectors believe that the vehicles and equipment are sufficient for the scheme to operate?

Commentary

- Observation of the Sunday Working Party evidenced that there were no issues with the vehicles and equipment and in this respect the Service was well resourced. Creative solutions to the issue of storing equipment, and sharing resources such as vehicles had been used to make savings.

Question 43: To what extent do the Inspectors believe that the scheme operates on an effective value for money basis?

Commentary

- Observation of the Sunday Working Party and interview with the Community Service Officer evidenced careful financial budgeting within finite resources.

Question 44: To what extent do placements reflect appropriate equality and diversity considerations for clients?

Commentary

- There are several examples of the individual needs of the offender being taken into account when considering suitable placement. See responses to earlier questions. However we noted that the majority of offenders completed their hours on Workgroups with only a minority placed in Individual Placements. There was good evidence that where assessments for individual placements had been made successful outcomes for beneficiary and client were achieved. An increase in the number of Individual Placements could provide a wider choice of placements to meet individual needs.

3. Interviews: Beneficiaries, Sentencers, and Staff (Questions 45-59)

Beneficiaries – Eight beneficiaries were interviewed

Question 45: How do you rate the quality of the work performed by Community Service?

		%
Excellent	6	75
Good	2	25
Poor	0	0
Very poor	0	0
Total	8	100

Commentary

- There was an overwhelmingly positive response from the Beneficiaries interviewed. Overall they were very satisfied with the work performed by Community Service offenders. One beneficiary noted that, at times the quality of work varied and it was not always to the requested standard or specification, however it was also noted that as the relationship between the CS team and beneficiary had developed this had improved. Some beneficiaries had high standards or business models regarding the scope of work which could be provided in a particular time frame.

- All Beneficiaries expressed that they were very grateful for the hours of work provided by the offenders. Comments included that the relationship with CS “could not be better”. One beneficiary described himself as a ‘total convert’ to CS, he felt that the support and input from CS was highly professional and that the work completed by clients was a good example of the values of rehabilitation to the community.
- The Conservation Awards are a good sign of the value of the work completed. There was recognition from some of the problem of never knowing how many offenders may be available for work which restricts planning. One Beneficiary described being impressed with the mixed group of ages etc in the work party that meant the job was effectively completed.
- Two beneficiaries (individual placements) commented on the high level of support and liaison from JPACS from start to end of the Order.

Question 46: How do you rate the quality of supervision of offenders by the Service?

		%
Excellent	5	63
Good	1	12
Poor	0	0
Very poor	0	0
n/a / unable to comment	2	25
Total	8	100

Removal of the N/A cases resulted in 5 out of 6 rated as ‘excellent’ equalling 80%.

Commentary

- Two Beneficiaries (Individual Placements) described regular contact each week with the Community Service team to discuss the offender and how many hours they had left to work. It was positive to have contact with the same supervisor each time. One Beneficiary described having the opportunity to explain if they felt the offender was not suitable for the placement and if concerns are raised they are dealt with properly. All IP Beneficiaries felt that the Officers were good at assessing which offenders were suitable for their projects. Some offenders continued to volunteer after they had completed their hours.
- Supervision of the Work Parties was described as “excellent” and “well organised”. The Beneficiaries were impressed with the work completed and thought the level of supervision was excellent. Appropriate tasks were identified for offenders and an explanation of the need for the tasks to be done increased motivation. The skills of the offenders were seen by beneficiaries as a good match for the jobs available.

- One beneficiary noted that the Work Party presence on Sundays is positive for those who play/train at the football grounds maintained by CS clients.
- The one N/A result was due to the beneficiary not being present when clients were completing their hours.

Question 47: How do you rate your communication with Community Service Staff?

		%
Excellent	8	100
Good	0	0
Poor	0	0
Very poor	0	0
Total	8	100

Commentary

- The Beneficiaries described the CS staff as friendly, reliable and very businesslike.
- Communication with Community Service Staff was described as excellent ahead of and during the placement. Any individual issues relating to the particular needs of an offender were resolved quickly and the offender removed from the placement if necessary.
- Individual Placement Beneficiaries felt supported if they had to address any issues such as using mobiles. The offenders were warned if they did not adhere to the requirements of the placement for e.g. arriving late, the Community Service Officer would be informed.
- If Beneficiaries reported to the Community Service staff that work was not completed to a satisfactory standard then remedial action was taken by the Service. Overall respondents felt that communication worked very well. In schemes which were long standing communication could become rather ad hoc. This was not viewed as a problem as it was also noted that there was also a “great” response to short notice requests; this showed good flexibility and desire to assist on the part of CS team and Beneficiaries alike.

Question 48: Do you have any ideas that could improve your partnership with the Community Service Scheme?

Commentary

- Almost all Beneficiaries interviewed felt they were very satisfied with

the partnership and there was little room for improvement. When encouraged to consider further comments were:

“Perhaps a few more meetings to discuss general matters in addition to the offender placement meetings”.

“Mid-week Work Parties could be useful as our staff can introduce/supervise some of the more specialist tasks (as our staff don’t usually work weekends and this restricts tasks we can allocate”.

“Part of our countryside management involves for example clearing ragwort from large areas and it would be useful to find ways of incorporating that work into a Community Service day. Maybe focussing on small sections or mix with other tasks to get around the motivation issues”.

Sentencers 10 Sentencers were interviewed

Question 49 Please rate the extent of relevant information provided to you by the Probation Service in relation to the operation of the Community Service Scheme?

		%
Excellent	9	90
Satisfactory	1	10
Unsatisfactory	0	0
Poor	0	0
Total	10	100

Commentary

- The responses to this question tended to move beyond the specific focus of information provided about the operation of the CS scheme expanding into the wider area of information provided in the SERs before the Courts and in other liaison.
- Responses and comments were overwhelmingly positive. All the Sentencers felt they were given the information they needed.
- Some, but not all, had been out with the CS Work Groups and thought this was an “excellent opportunity” to see how they operated. Of those who had seen the work groups they commented that the offenders appeared to be responding well and one remarked *“It would be a good idea for politicians to observe a Work Group”.*
- Some Sentencers (due to being based in the same building) took the opportunity to speak with the Community Service Staff. The statistics provided at the bi-monthly meetings of the Probation Board on the success or otherwise of the Orders evidenced the quality of the Service to some sentencers. Sentencers felt able to ask for further information if needed.

- One Sentencer commented that the quality of reports had improved over the past 12 years. The Reports were described as “comprehensive and thorough, a helpful tool in sentencing”. Reports offered a good recommendation. An example was given of a Sentencer relying on Probation Officers report over a “specialist report” which was woolly.
- In one case a Sentencer felt they did not have information on whether the offender was willing and able to undertake the work and if there was work available.

Question 50: Please suggest any improvements that the Probation Service could make to improve your knowledge and understanding of the scheme?

Commentary

- Again overall the Sentencers interviewed expressed positive responses observing that they felt their knowledge and understanding of the scheme was fairly comprehensive. One commented, “*I don’t think it could be improved*”.
- Where suggestions were made these related to Sentencers taking up the opportunity to observe the operation of CS directly with one expressing the view that sentencing colleagues “*should go out on the Work Group in the van with the offenders to experience the whole thing*” and “*Visit to the work party should NOT be optional for Jurats and should take place every 2 years at least*”.
- Some Sentencers felt that data on the number of Community Service Orders completed on time and satisfactorily would be useful. Information on the “*scope of the work done, identifying the projects and full range of work suitable/available for Community Service*” was also felt to be useful by one respondent.

Question 51: Please rate the quality of information contained in review/breach reports prepared by the Community Service team.

		%
Excellent	7	70
“Very good”	1	10
Satisfactory	1	10
Unsatisfactory	0	0
Poor	0	0
No experience	1	10
Total	10	100

Commentary

- The above results illustrates that Sentencers were very positive about the quality of information in review and breach reports.
- It was thought to be positive that offenders in breach could be referred to the Solicitor General for a discussion to focus on compliance issues and motivating the offender by encouragement and building confidence in the offender's ability to complete the Order satisfactorily.
- Comments about breach and review reports included:-

"Well presented and thorough"

"The information is detailed and well laid out".

Question 52: Overall how do you rate the fairness of breach decisions?

		%
Very fair	8	80
Fair	1	10
Unfair	0	0
Very unfair	0	0
No experience	1	10
Total	10	100

Commentary

- If the ‘no experience’ element is removed we see that 100% of sentencers considered the breach decisions to be fair / very fair. Comments included:-

“Spot on”

“The breach process is timely and this is positive. The close working relationship allows there to be discussion on cases before sentence”.

“There is evidence that the team try hard to get the offenders through their Orders and the Offenders are given ample opportunity to complete order”

“Very comfortable with the level of enforcement”

“Officers are clear about the recommendation and not dramatic”.

3. Interviews: Beneficiaries, Sentencers and Staff

Staff Questions – 8 staff were interviewed

Question 53: To what extent do you feel supported in your work by managers?

		%
Very supported	5	63
Mostly supported	2	25
Mostly unsupported	0	0
Very unsupported	0	0
No return	1	12
Total	8	100

Commentary

- Overall the feedback was positive with staff commenting that they felt they could approach their line manager for support when required. Of those that received regular supervision and appraisal this was seen as positive. There was felt to be a common approach to the work from within the team with opportunity for challenge, discussion, and advice.
- There was positive feedback from Supervisors on the organisation of the Community Service work parties which was seen as excellent with regards to communication/briefings/risk assess etc.
- Of those who felt mostly supported there was a view that as the manager was responsible for the decision making regarding compliance or hours worked etc there was little autonomy for staff.

Comment [p1]: Would this be better elsewhere

- It was noted that Supervisors could be working in an isolated area and if there were problems it could take time for assistance to arrive.

Question 54: To what extent do you feel part of the work of the Jersey Probation and After-Care Service?

		%
Very much a part	0	0
Mostly a part	6	75
Not really much of a part	2	25
Definitely not a part	0	0
Total	8	100

Commentary

- Overall the feedback was positive though we noted that no interviewees responded that they felt “very much a part”.
- In terms of factors which assisted staff to feel part of the JPACS Respondents appreciated it when people come out to see the work groups working on projects. The acknowledgement from Sentencers and other staff was appreciated “*It’s nice to get positive feedback*”, but some felt it to be “*too few and far between*”.
- Requests for feedback from Supervisors about clients and the work completed were appreciated and contributed to CS staff feeling part of the work of the Service.
- However there was a sense that some Probation Officers lacked awareness of the work of Community Service. In some cases there was a doubt that Probation Officers acknowledged the feedback from the Community Service team, for example in cases of previous poor compliance as recommendations for further CS hours were made in Social Enquiry Reports. We noted that there was a sense of separation between the Community Service Team and the rest of the Service. Some felt that the operation and efficiency of the scheme was not always appreciated by other Probation staff. Combination Orders in particular were highlighted as sometimes difficult to manage with Community Service Officers and Probation Officers taking different approaches to compliance issues.
- Some respondents observed that being part-time and working odd hours was a barrier to feeling involved and part of the Service; for example being on site at weekends meant little contact ‘naturally’ occurred with most Probation colleagues.

Question 55: How would you describe your level of job satisfaction in your work?

		%
Very satisfied	4	50
Mostly satisfied	4	50
Mostly dissatisfied	0	0
Very dissatisfied	0	0
Total	8	100

Commentary

- Overall the feedback was positive with staff really enjoying the work and finding it both interesting and worthwhile. The achievements of the Scheme could be seen around the island and there was recognition of the work completed and its contribution to the community.
- The supervisory role was seen as enjoyable and training new members of the team was felt to be rewarding.
- However some interviewees felt they were not given enough responsibility. Some identified that they were less involved with identifying work placements than had been the case historically.

Question 56: To what extent is your work positively acknowledged by managers?

		%
Very much	3	38
Mostly acknowledged	5	62
Mostly not acknowledged	0	0
Never acknowledge	0	0
Total	8	100

Commentary

- Overall staff felt that the work undertaken by them was appreciated by the managers but some feedback indicated that it was felt there was no encouragement for Supervisors to be autonomous or use their discretion and make decisions. It was felt by some to be a “*top down structure*”.
- There was a comment that a visit to a work site by the Chief Probation Officer would be appreciated.
- The Personal Review Appraisal was seen as a useful way to express good work and performance.

Question 57: To what extent do you feel that the work is interesting and stimulating for offenders?

		%
Very interesting	1	12.5
Mostly interesting	5	62.5
“Average”	1	12.5
Mostly uninteresting	0	0
Very uninteresting	0	0
No return	1	12.5
Total	8	100

Commentary

- The majority held the view that the work was ‘mostly interesting’ for offenders. It was felt that as all offenders are different it was inevitable that some would find the tasks interesting when others did not. Most supervisors observed that explaining the purpose of the task and how it might help the environment assisted in motivating the offender. Some offenders enjoyed the physically harder work in preference to lighter work. Some work, by its nature, was recognised to be repetitive and routine.
- Educational placements were identified as being appreciated by offenders and although the workshop is more mundane it was seen as preferable to imprisonment.

Question 58: To what extent do you feel the training provided by the Jersey Probation and After-Care Service is adequate for your work?

		%
Very adequate	4	50
Adequate	2	25
Inadequate	2	25
Very inadequate	0	0
Total	8	100

Commentary

- A minority of those interviewed (25%) felt the training provided was inadequate for the work. Suggestions for further training included dealing with awkward people; interpersonal skills; and drug awareness.
- It was highlighted that the training occurred “on-the-job” and a Certificate to formally recognise the training undertaken was suggested.
- The majority (75%) felt that adequate or very adequate training was provided.
- Answers to this question were mixed possibly due to the different posts held by the interviewees. One respondent felt that further training could be requested and in their experience any suggestions made during PRA were taken up. Another noted that they had no formalised Training Needs Analysis.

Question 59: Do you have any suggestions about how the service might be improved?

Commentary

- Overall the Community Service scheme was seen by the staff interviewed to be working efficiently for the Court and offenders. However, more involvement of Community Service staff at the Social Enquiry Report stage could be beneficial in ensuring appropriate recommendations were made to the Court, and suitable placements identified.
- Two interviewees felt that greater use of pro-social modelling could be employed when challenging offenders.
- Some felt that the Hay evaluation had devalued the role of the supervisors and did not recognise the inter-personal skills supervisors needed for the role. This tied in with a view that Pay scales could be problematic in future recruitment for example Civil Service First Aiders get £6 bonus each week and Community Service staff do not.

- Staff made the following suggestions; further training, Team “bonding” – away days, see what can be learnt from how other services operate and for Supervisors to spend time observing how other supervisors manage situations with the aim of building consistency across the scheme for offenders.

4. Client Feedback: interviews and study of Client End of Order Questionnaire Results

Client Interviews re: End of Order Questionnaire Results

6 clients were interviewed, 5 Males (83%), and 1 Female (17%)

Demographics and Order information

Of those six, three were also subject to Probation supervision

Also on Probation		%
Y	3	50
N	3	50
Total	6	100

Age group		%
Under 18	0	0
18-25	2	33
26-45	3	50
45+	1	17
Total	6	100

Type of placement		%
Work party	2	33
Individual	3	50
Workroom	1	17
More than one	0	0
Total	6	100

Length of order		%
40-90	2	33
91-180	4	67
181-240	0	0
241-480	0	0
Total	6	100

Employment Status		%
Employed	4	67
Training	0	0
Student	0	0
Long Term Sickness Benefit	1	16.5
Unemployed	1	16.5
Total	6	100

Comments

- One interview stated that they had lost employment due to the imposition of CS but this was not expanded on.

Questions and results

Preparing for Community Service

- a) Did the Probation Officer who prepared your Background Report explain the Community Service Scheme accurately to you?

		%
Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

- b) My Community Service Officer explained the Rules and Conditions:

		%
Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

c) I understood and found the Community Service Leaflet useful:

		%
Y	5	83
N	0	0
No return	1	17
Total	6	100

d) I would know how to make a complaint if I was unhappy with the way I had been treated:

		%
Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

Commentary

- It was clear from the returns that all clients interviewed felt that they were well prepared for CS, by the Probation Officer at SER stage, during their first assessment meeting with CS staff, from the leaflets provided to them and in one case from being accompanied to the individual placement.

The work you did

e) Was the reason for the work and who would benefit from it explained to you?

		%
Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

f) Did you look forward to getting on with the work?

		%
Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

g) Did you feel pleased with a job well done?

		%
Y	5	83
N	0	0
Mostly	1	17
Total	6	100

h) Did you feel pleased to have done something for the community?

		%
Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

i) Do you think that the community benefited from your work?

		%
Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

Commentary

- All clients answered yes to the questions about the work they did. Overwhelmingly those interviewed understood the reasons for the work they were asked to do, they reported feeling pleased to have done something for the community and all felt that the community had benefitted from their work.

j) Were you given sufficient information about Health and Safety?

		%
Y	5	83
N	1	17
Total	6	100

Commentary

- Five out of six clients answered yes. One client's response to this question was "Maybe explain more about what to do if an offender was cut or injured e.g. wait for supervisor or help. Plus Health & Safety about disease spread in blood".

THE COMMUNITY SERVICE TEAM (or supervisor in an individual placement)

k) Did the Supervisor treat you with fairness and respect?

		%

Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

Commentary

- One client noted that the supervisors had different personalities but were consistent in their approach to supervising. The ethos of the group (on work parties) tended to be that the rules should be followed.
- Another client on an individual placement felt that *“the supervisor understood my position, I was very well supervised. My supervisor had a very good attitude in dealing with me”*.

l) Did they show you how to do the work?

		%
Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

Commentary

- One client said that each morning CS staff had explained the job and what it entailed including why they were clearing grasslands etc.

m) Did you learn any skills from them?

		%
Y	3	50
N	3	50
Total	6	100

Commentary

- Some felt that the work was straightforward and that they already had the skills needed for performing the task. Others felt they learnt about social interactions from being in a different social group, as well as organisational skills.

n) **Did they praise you when you did something well?**

		%
Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

Commentary

- Again a good 100% response here.

o) **Could you talk to staff about any problems you had with your order?**

		%
Y	6	100
N	0	0
Total	6	100

p) **Did you understand why you were returned to court?**

q) **Did you find the breach leaflet helpful?**

r) **Were you treated fairly throughout the breach process?**

As none of the clients interviewed were returned to Court for breaching their Order the above questions were N/A

At the end of my Community Service Order my employment status was:

		%
Employed	3	50
Training	0	0
Student	0	0
Long Term Sickness Benefit	1	16.5
Unemployed	1	16.5
N/A - still on order.	1	17
Total	6	100

- General Comments offered by the clients interviewed

“CS really helped me with my drinking – it kept me on track; I didn't want to breach so helped me not to drink; but I missed 2 sessions due to withdrawals”.

“I think they have CS pretty much spot on. It helped with my anxiety and routine and now I am volunteering for a charity”.

"I felt the placement was worthwhile and Tony and the other staff were very good to work with. I was grateful for Nicky putting me somewhere I could walk to as I don't have a car".

"I preferred the 7.5hrs as this would use up most hours and the full day was more like a normal working day".

- One client found he has 'moved on' since the end of his CS and talked of his plans to travel and possibly live in Australia.
- One client commented that the CS Scheme had been "*very flexible in how I could carry out the work*". He felt that his position had been fully taken into account by staff and that the team had tried to find a placement that suited him from the point of view of family and public transport etc.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

In our view this invited inspection found a scheme which was operating to a very high level against the set standards, and was evidently held in high regard according to the views of sentencers, beneficiaries, staff, and clients.

Our conclusions are overwhelmingly positive and the recommendations are limited to suggestions for improvement in detail in three areas.

Areas for improvement

In relation to practice in cases of offenders under the age of eighteen (Section 1); this group formed a small percentage of the total case files viewed and this can skew the percentage results.

As outlined above in 3 out of 7 cases there was no evidence that a parent or guardian attended the initial assessment. Of the three that did attend it was not clear how they had been invited. We would suggest that a formal letter, or note on file if seen in person, of invitation would assist in explaining parental involvement or lack thereof.

The return to Q 34: Are parents and guardians always invited to meetings with their child (yes in 3 out of 7 cases) indicates a potential weak area – it was not clear from the files whether parents or guardians had been invited, or indeed had attended. This may again be a recording rather than practice issue.

In terms of assessment for work placements we found good evidence that the individual needs of offenders were taken into account when considering suitable placements, we noted that the majority of offenders completed their hours on work parties with only a minority placed in Individual Placements. It was notable however that where Individual Placements were utilised these had resulted in successful outcomes as perceived by beneficiary and client. We are of the view that perhaps an increase in the number of Individual Placements provided would provide a wider choice of placements to meet individual needs and build on the evident satisfaction of those beneficiaries.

With regards to responses from staff interviews it was noted that feedback from beneficiaries and Probation Officers was appreciated, we would suggest that this could be better emphasised or communicated. One improvement could be formal three way meetings (with client, Community Service Officer and Probation Officers) for those on Combination Orders to increase the sense that the scheme is part of the JPACS.

Notable strengths

As can be seen from the responses in section 1 (file Inspection) above the scheme rates very highly in terms of operating in accordance with the agreed service level standards. From SER stage to the completion of Orders we found good evidence that standards were well met.

Where decisions were made regarding enforcement or deviations from the standards were noted, the reasoning was well documented and viewed as acceptable by us. Where we have noted that there is no clear evidence available we would suggest this is likely to be that the recording does not specify some detail rather than a failure in process for e.g. in Q5 it is likely that rules were explained and a leaflet provided but this was not recorded specifically.

We noted that Breach actions consistently performed well against the standards Q23-25 for example scored 100%. Good practice was evident from the records in relation to enforcement, in particular good decisions were made that balanced offenders' needs and compliance. In a small minority (8%) of absences that were recorded as 'Acceptable' we could not discern how or why the reason was judged to be acceptable. We would observe that Acceptable absences were less likely to be fully explained than Unacceptable absences in the file record. No doubt this is due to the officer understanding the need to evidence absences. We would repeat the comment we made under Q27.

It was very positive to see that informed professional discretion was used in the case management of CSOs.

Conclusions drawn from our observation of work parties (Section 2) were overwhelmingly positive as can be seen from our comments in Q37 which speak for themselves. The strengths noted were reinforced by information from other sources for example in the feedback taken separately from beneficiaries, staff, and clients.

As the comments in the feedback from Beneficiaries and Sentencers (section 3) illustrate, this is a strong performance area. No doubt this is a result of excellent communication skills and the investment in building strong relationships. The scheme has the confidence of the sentencers who are united in their praise of what they see as the robustness and fairness of enforcement.

The staff feedback provided by the experienced and knowledgeable team was again generally positive. We discerned that there was a sense of 'separateness' from the rest of JPACS, those we interviewed acknowledged why that may be for example the working of different hours etc.

Client feedback both from interviews and perusal of the end of order questionnaire results (2012) indicated that the majority of clients understood the CS scheme, what was expected of them, and how to complain. The positive responses to the client interviews are acknowledged to be confined to a small number of offenders. However they were repeated across the collation of questionnaire results and are again viewed by us as an area of strength and good practice.

Pat Ingram
Director of Community Operations
Isle of Man Prison and Probation Service

Kate Clark
Senior Probation Officer
Guernsey Probation