



COMMUNITY SERVICE ORDERS



**THE PBNI COMMUNITY
SERVICE STORY**

INTRODUCTION

Community Based Sentences

ABOUT COMMUNITY SERVICE

Probation supervise community based sentences, where a person is sentenced by the court to an Order that is to be completed in the community.

There are a range of community based sentences, some of which have a Community Service element where the person under supervision must complete a specified number of hours within the community, completing unpaid work for the benefit of local communities across Northern Ireland.

The aim of Community Service is for individuals to give back to their local community and in so doing provide restitution to the community for any harm they may have caused. Probation is responsible for supervising people who are on a Community Service Order.

Probation risk assess each Service User before any Community Service takes place. Community providers of placements and service users are supported by Probation staff through the process.

Probation has many partnerships with community organisations, District Councils, faith groups, sports associations and other groups. Some examples of community service work undertaken include environmental and conservation projects, painting and decorating, contributing to community clean-ups, working in animal shelters or assisting disabled people.

The work is either under the guidance of a Probation supervisor or staff in the community placement organisation. Through Community Service, PBNi service users are given an opportunity to take responsibility for their actions and behaviours, adhere to routine, boundaries and structure and develop new skills. The Community Service sentence enables pay back to the community for the harm that has been caused. The community is also able to see community based sentences being carried out and their results. Each year people subject to a community service order deliver an average of 116,000 hours of unpaid work to the community in Northern Ireland.

- ▶ Community Service is one of the most successful court sentences in terms of preventing reoffending. Three out of four people who complete community service do not re-offend within one year.
- ▶ It is a visible and practical method of ensuring those being supervised pay something back to the community.
- ▶ Community Service helps those being supervised to develop practical and social skills to help them avoid crime in the future.

Community Service is effective in reducing reoffending and benefiting the community.

VIEWPOINTS

PROBATION SERVICE OFFICER

Joanne McMullan is a Probation Service Officer with the North Antrim Community Service team based in the PBNI Ballymena office covering Ballymena, Antrim and Larne.



I have been a Community Service Probation Service Officer for nearly six years, and before that I worked in PBNI Programmes for almost thirteen years. I decided on a career in Probation because of my aunt who was a Probation Officer. She always talked very highly of the work that Probation does, and I thought that was a career path I would like to go down.

I oversee the completion of Community Service Orders from start to finish and I am constantly on my toes. I can start working on a list of service users to place and by the time I am half way down, I get another list of people to place. My work includes finding placements for service users, looking after the daily time sheets, telephone calls, text messages, emails, collating monthly statistics, and setting out rotas for who goes where with which squads. I also assess the service users for suitability for the Community service placements.

The one thing that I can say about my role with PBNI is the fact that no two days are the same and every new Order brings a range of issues and dilemmas that require all my experience and skills along with close working relationships with team colleagues.

We do not just cover the completion of Community Service, but a lot of the time we also are a listening ear and a place where service users feel safe to talk about personal problems and where they can confide in us. A lot of the time our service users are in a place where they find themselves trouble shooting problems daily and just having us there is a de-stressor.

The most satisfying part of the job is seeing a service user change their attitude, as they complete their Order, to a more positive one. It has to be remembered that they may never have felt positive about themselves before, they may never have worked before. This can be a big change for the service user, as this may be the first time they have ever seen something through to the end. I enjoy watching them on their journey as they accomplish this.

I love hearing that a former Service User connects with a placement so much that they stayed on and are volunteering there or even got a job out of it.

I know it can be stressful at times but I just really love what I do.

COMMUNITY SERVICE SUPERVISOR

Eddie Black is a Community Service Supervisor and has been working in PBNI for 3 years in the North West.



In my role I develop new placements in central locations in the North West. This ensures people who have offended are making restitution within their local communities and are actually forging links with many supportive agencies they didn't know existed up until that point.

Within the North West we have a high number of service users who are women. I work in partnership with a colleague to provide placements where work is completed and also an environment created where the women can learn new skills such as painting, gardening and preparing nutritious meals. We have been proactive in encouraging these women to avail of the female service user forum which runs in conjunction with the squad. This involves a lot of organisation and motivational work to achieve the goal of participation.

I am always up for new challenges within my role and the CS team introduced a new graffiti removal van scheme in the North West. I was very keen to be involved in this and excited about the potential and willing to work alongside colleagues to ensure delivery of a quality service.

Overall, I find being a Community Service Supervisor a really interesting job. One of the most satisfying parts of my job is seeing a positive change in the squad and knowing that I am contributing to making communities safer. I am rewarded by seeing people change behaviours and by sharing their experience at work, I see jobs progress beyond my expectations. Meeting new people and listening to their journey really builds resilience which helps me stay motivated.

PROBATION SERVICE OFFICER

Jonathan Carroll is a Probation Service Officer based in Rural West. The team is located in the largest and most rural part of the areas covered by Probation.

The rural setting creates its own challenges to the completion of Community Service. Some of our service users are in employment and require Community Service placements at weekends. Where possible I try to place service users in their own areas giving them the opportunity to restore some of the harm they have done whilst giving back to their own community.

I am continually seeking new opportunities which would offer our service users the chance to work in their local community. It's my role to try to find projects/placements where service users can continue to give back to the people and make a difference.

I have built up good relationships with placement providers over the years. The support provided by community partners and charitable organisations to Community Service is invaluable.

During their community service placement, service users learn new skills in a way that benefits the local community, but for all service users it provides an opportunity for them to accept what they have done while doing good in the community. My job is both demanding and rewarding, every day is different and brings with itself different challenges.

VIEWPOINTS



“ In a lot of cases a Community Sentence is the most appropriate disposal. Community sentences can tailor a sentencing package to the individual and in my view, in appropriate cases, they offer the best approach and best outcome for both individuals and wider society in preventing re-offending. Community Service provides the opportunity for direct reparation to the community for the harm caused by the offending. ”

**PRESIDING DISTRICT JUDGE
STEVEN KEOWN**

VIEW FROM SERVICE USERS

“ I’m here basically paying my debt to society. It was an alternative to prison. I would prefer to do this than go to prison. I don’t mind being here because it’s good for your mental health. It’s just good to get out in the air. You learn something new every time you come.

“ When I was growing up, I didn’t really have much of an interest in nature and wildlife. I wasn’t into nature and anything like that until I came here and I’ve learned a lot.

“ When I’m here it makes me feel a lot better within myself, it gives me peace of mind. It is very good for your mental health. I’ve been to counselling and I’m trying to go down a different path, trying to change my life around. I feel like being here gives me a lot of satisfaction and a lot of self-worth. It makes you feel good being out and seeing what you can achieve and just looking at the achievement over the years.

“ Through committing an offence, I have 160 hours of unpaid work to do here, but I’ve been here basically from the start, and I’ve seen the place just transform.

“ Seeing them [plants] growing, seeing what can come of a wee seed, you get so much pleasure out of it. You get so much satisfaction, growing something, and putting it on the plate and eating it, you know.

VIEW FROM SERVICE USERS

“ The people and the interactions are why I like doing my community service here at Knockbreda. They make it easier being here.

“ It's therapeutic to be in the garden and working. You learn and pick up quite a few tips from being around and hearing the volunteer discussions, and just seeing them in action.

“ Look at getting involved in your community - there's a really strong community presence here - I think every community should have this - very positive.

“ On being sentenced to 80 hours community service, I wasn't sure what to expect. To be honest I imagined that it would be a pointless exercise and waste of time. On making contact with my officer, I realised that it was a lot more organised than I thought. She asked me many questions regarding my abilities and interest. I was placed at a church where the grounds needed tending. The jobs were, grass cutting, strimming, gardening and also some inside work when it was raining. The supervisor was extremely friendly, kind and had a good sense of humour. The people at the church were friendly and appreciated the work we were doing.

There was a lot of things that required strength, like heavy lifting and jobs that took a long time like grass cutting. It was obvious that they really needed help. So I found my experience rewarding. It wasn't pointless and we even had a lunch on my last day. I was proud of the work we did and I was pleased with the experience.

“ Before starting community service I was very nervous about being around a lot of people I didn't know and doing things I hadn't really been interested in before. This all changed after a short time as I was made to feel welcomed, I learned new skills about gardening, using equipment and gained knowledge about various plants, weeds and shrubs. It helped me form a new routine and has given me motivation to help landscape my girlfriend's garden. Once my community service has ended I will continue to seek employment work on developing a better routine and habits.

“ Just a wee text to say I've completed the final timesheet and now have completed the 200 hours and to say thanks as well. I've successfully got a full time job and am going to help out more with a local charity who have been amazing. Thank you and all the best.

“ Let's be real, if we have to go to Probation it's for a reason. We not only need to take responsibility for our actions but also feed that back into the community in a positive way.

“ For others looking in from the outside, I would say that Community Service is an effective way of restoring Justice in Society and that we aren't all bad people, we maybe just took a bad turn in life and got it wrong. Everyone gets it wrong in life sometimes.



VIEW FROM VICTIMS

One victim of crime registered with the PBNI Victims Information Scheme paid tribute to the work carried out by the Victim Information Unit by saying:

“The Unit reached out to us initially when the court process started and asked if we wanted to be kept in touch and I said yes. The Victim Liaison Officers were fantastic. They came to the house and just talked me through everything and explained the processes. The personal touch makes such a difference than just talking to someone on the phone. They listen and take the time to ask you if you are OK. They have reached out and let me know what’s available, help, support but also if I need them to pick up the phone. You couldn’t get that anywhere else.”

A Victim Liaison Officer said:

“Victims are surprised when we tell them that they can input to a service users community service in a practical way. Victims can suggest types of work that the service user in their case could carry out on community service, like working with animals, or cleaning graffiti in their area. Victims can also specify if they don’t want to see a service user working in a specific place or area. It gives them a sense of control and can be very helpful.”

Another victim said:

“I am a victim but I am seen as a person. It’s important for the Probation Board, for the people convicted, to understand the crime and not to reoffend.”

COMMUNITY SERVICE CASE STUDY

A service user gave an interview on his time on Community Service working in a charity shop and on the Graffiti Removal Scheme

“ I was given 75 hours on Community Service which I felt alright about, as it could've been worse. When I was given the Community Service I thought about what type of work I'd be doing and I suppose I was thinking that this is a court order hanging over me now.

During my time I ended up doing various duties including working in a charity shop and working on the Graffiti Removal Scheme, and being given a chance to put back into the community did have a positive impact on me. I enjoyed working with the team that was in charge of my case plan, they were easy to engage with and I found if I needed help with anything they would help me their best.

Being on Community Service, I acknowledge the great importance of why it's essential to give back into the community and also that I have to be more responsible for my actions. To anyone given Community Service, I would say get in, get a plan, get stuck in and do the hours. I would also encourage them to have a good working relationship with the staff as this breaks down the barriers and makes the work a lot easier and more fun to enjoy whilst doing it. Let's be real if we have to go to Probation it's for a reason. We not only need to take responsibility for our actions but also feed that back into the community in a positive way. For others looking in from the outside, I would say that Community Service is an effective way of restoring justice in society and that we aren't all bad people we maybe just took a bad turn in life and got it wrong everyone gets it wrong in life sometimes.



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Community Service Projects and Placements

ACTION CANCER CHARITY SHOP AND FURNITURE STORE BANGOR

Action Cancer Charity Shop has been a long-time partner of probation.

The shop and furniture store provide placement work for service users both on the shop floor and in preparing and sorting items for sale.

ASSISI ANIMAL SANCTUARY, CONLIG

Assisi Animal Sanctuary as a placement offers more skilled service users the opportunity to complete their Community Service hours under the supervision of Assisi's staff. Work opportunities include general maintenance and grounds work.

GLENMACHAN CHURCH OF GOD BELFAST



Glenmachan Church of God is situated in large grounds with a residential home.

The site operates under the supervision of the Community Service Supervisor for medium to high-risk offenders. Work for Community Service is grounds work, cleaning and tidying of the church halls.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RESTORE NEWTOWNARDS

Habitat Restore is a large indoor warehouse selling furniture and other household items.

The placement is managed by Habitat staff. The manager is supportive of Community Service and there is good communication with Probation. The placement requires a degree of manual handling – moving furniture and other household items. The placement requires a Habitat for Humanity induction on the first day of Community Service, which gives an overview of the charity and ethos of the organisation.



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

THE VICTORIAN GARDEN, ARDGLASS ROAD, DOWNPATRICK



The Victorian Garden is on the Downshire Civic Centre site and it is managed by the South Eastern Health Trust.

Community Service work includes gardening duties and there are opportunities during the year to create seasonal crafts which support the Trusts mental health and childrens health programmes. There are 2 supervisors on site, one from Probation and one from the Trust. The partnership in Downpatrick has been operating for over 20 years.

SHARE DISCOVERY VILLAGE LISNASKEA



Share Discovery Village is a residential activity centre providing activities for people of all abilities and needs. They work with many charities, community groups and schools to ensure that everyone can access activities.

Our Community Service squads have provided long term support to the project. Our tasks are many and varied. For example, we have installed disabled access paths, canoe storage, and recently completed rebuilding a Geodome which has been used by many organisations.

ST COLUMBS PARK HOUSE, DERRY



For a number of years a squad of Service users supervised by a Community Service supervisor have worked improving and maintaining the grounds and garden of St Columbs Park House in Londonderry.

RIDING FOR THE DISABLED OMAGH



Service users, working with a Community Service Supervisor help maintain and develop the building and grounds at Riding for the Disabled Omagh.

Here they can develop existing skills and they can clearly see how the work gives back to their community.

BALLYMACASH FOOTBALL CLUB LISBURN

The Football Club provide an allotment to PBNI where we help service users grow vegetables which the Club then uses to supply the local community. Our PBNI squad also cut their grass and tidy the grounds.



COALISLAND CHURCH OF IRELAND



One of our Community Service projects was the restoration of one of the older graves in Coalisland Church of Ireland. As time passes by families are no longer around to maintain the graves so Community Service stepped in to tidy, clean, paint, and restore these where necessary. At least a dozen family burial plots are being maintained in this way.

CONTACT US:

We can't do this without your help!

We need to know about projects you think we could work on.

A project must meet the following criteria:

- ▶ It must benefit the local community
- ▶ It must not take paid work away from others
- ▶ No one must make a profit from the work
- ▶ It must be constructive and worthwhile
- ▶ It must be challenging and demanding
- ▶ Service users must be able to put something back into the local community
- ▶ Public liability insurance must be in place
- ▶ It must be within our capabilities and comply with health and safety standards. The Community Service team will assess the project for suitability and for health and safety implications.

You can complete the project nomination form at

www.pbni.org.uk/community-service-project-nomination-form

Email us at this address: communityservice@probation-ni.gov.uk
or telephone (028) 90522 522 and ask to speak to a local Area Manager
about Community Service.



PBNI

Probation Board
for Northern Ireland