

# **Making Good**

**An Assessment of Work  
Undertaken by the Thames  
Valley Partnership 2005-8**

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## **Aim of Report**

This report aims to assess the work undertaken by the Making Good Project, which was funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation as part of its initiative to implement the findings of Rethinking Crime and Punishment.

The structure of the report is as follows. After an introductory section, Part 1 describes the work undertaken by the project, listing the key outcomes achieved and the learning which has emerged from the four pilot areas in the Thames Valley.

Part 2 is a summary of the changing context within which Making Good has been operating, in particular the changes to criminal justice, (e.g. community justice centres) the probation service (e.g. contestability/NOMS) and developments within unpaid work (e.g. Community Payback, the visibility campaign).

Part 3 seeks to make an overall assessment of impact, and compares and contrasts the impact made by the Thames Valley initiative with the effect of other programmes which have sought to increase public involvement and confidence. This is followed by a series of recommendations about how to take forward the positive findings. Guidance for probation services and others who wish to develop consultation mechanisms with the local community is included at Annex A.

## Introduction

Sentencing people to prison for short periods is widely acknowledged to be ineffective or even counterproductive. The review of the sentencing framework conducted by John Halliday in 2001 concluded that sentences of less than 12 months are the weakest part of the system in England and Wales. A year later the Social Exclusion Unit found that there is a considerable risk that a prison sentence might make the factors associated with re-offending worse. The Lord Chief Justice has said that short spells of imprisonment followed by re-offending is an expensive and ineffective way of dealing with the large number of inadequate or damaged members of society for whom minor criminality is the only way of life they know. "Meaningful punishment in the community, coupled with a proper programme of rehabilitation, properly resourced and managed, must be the better option." (Phillips 2006)

The government has accepted the arguments not only that the majority of non-violent offenders can be treated in the community without any risk to the public, but that there are often better options than imprisonment for dealing with such offenders. It has sought to rebuild the use of fines for low level offenders and to increase the use of robust community sentences as an alternative to short custodial sentences.

The Community Order, introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 2003, allows sentencers to attach requirements to the Order to match the seriousness of the offence and the risks posed by and needs of the individual. Twelve requirements are available to be used with the Community Order including unpaid work, a curfew backed by a tag, drug rehabilitation, programmes to tackle the offender's behaviour, and supervision.

Despite this, the evidence so far is that the courts are not using Community Orders as fully as they might as alternatives to short prison sentences. The numbers of offenders starting court ordered supervision did increase by 11% between 2005 and 2006, continuing a trend which has seen courts impose community sentences at a growing rate - from 10% in 1995 to 14% in 2005 (NAO 2008). It is true too that the number of prisoners received into prison serving sentences of six months or less did fall from 51,817 in 2005 to 48,924 in 2006, suggesting some switch to new community sentences from short terms of imprisonment. However, this has not happened on the scale that was hoped for by the government. Indeed the numbers sentenced to between 6 months' and 12 months' imprisonment increased by 3% between 2005 and 2006, and more recent data suggests that the use of short prison sentences may be on the rise again. In most areas of the Thames Valley there was a fall in the number of offenders serving less than 12 months' imprisonment in 2006/07, but numbers have as a whole risen in 2007/08.

The offences committed by these offenders suggest that there should be considerable scope for a more sustained switch to community penalties. In 2006, of the 49,000 offenders received into prison for six months or less, 12,400 were convicted of offences of theft and handling stolen goods and 8,000 of motoring offences. In addition 13,000 were convicted of what are categorised as other offences i.e. not sexual or violent offences, robbery, burglary, fraud and forgery or drugs. It is not possible from available data to know the previous offending history of these offenders and theft and handling, motoring and other offence categories can in themselves cover a range of seriousness. However, it seems likely that some at least of the offending could better be addressed by imaginative alternative sentences which do not require any custodial period. The Ministry of Justice paper "Penal Policy – a background paper", published in May 2007, aims for a "greater use ... of the best community sentences to punish and rehabilitate persistent offenders", but this is not happening as much as it could (Ministry of Justice 2007). One important reason may in part be a perceived lack of confidence in such sentences on the part of sentencers and the wider public. Certainly the Lord Chief Justice took the view at the end of 2007 that "neither all sentencers, nor the media and the public are persuaded that non custodial sentences are effective." (Phillips 2007)

Making Good is a part of a three strand project funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation to address the question of confidence, by building on and implementing the key findings emerging from Rethinking Crime and Punishment, the Foundation's 2001 – 2004 initiative, which aimed to raise the level of debate about the use of prison and alternative forms of punishment in the UK.

One of the initiative's major outcomes was the publication, "*Crime, Courts and Confidence*", the report of an independent enquiry into alternatives to prison chaired by Lord Coulsfield. This set out a number of recommendations to increase public confidence in community penalties, including:

- the importance of local delivery of community penalties
- the importance of the local community being more closely involved in the delivery of community penalties.

The detailed recommendations of the Rethinking Crime and Punishment initiative included:

"Panels of local people should help to decide what form unpaid community work by offenders should take in their areas and community penalties should include some element of reparation". (Rethinking Crime and Punishment: The Report. December 2004, p63)

and

“Stronger links should be made between organisations running alternatives [to prison] and the communities they serve, by extending the role of youth offender panels and creating mechanisms through which communities decide on the nature of community work done by offenders”. (As above, p 65)

In December 2005 the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation launched a three-strand programme to build on the key lessons from the 2001–2004 initiative, with the specific aim of increasing public and judicial engagement with community-based sentences in order to promote confidence in their use as an alternative to prison.

Making Good constitutes the first strand, to increase confidence within the community about community sentencing. The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation has funded the Thames Valley Partnership to conduct a three-year pilot project from December 2005 to December 2008 to develop and test out different methods of engaging communities and community organisations in finding and allocating unpaid work to offenders. It seeks to test whether the wishes of the community can be met within the framework of an Unpaid Work Requirement, as well as integrating a reparative element into the nature of the work completed by offenders in their own community.

The project has been piloting new approaches to community engagement in four areas of the Thames Valley chosen for their diversity and for their capacity to build on existing community relationships to test out some new and challenging ways of working.

Objectives for the project included:

- the development of sustainable models,
- building on existing community engagement structures to create community panels that would work closely with the Probation Area to identify suitable work of benefit to the community and create links with voluntary organisations who could offer placements,
- extending the range of placements which are reparative in nature and meaningful for the offender, and exploring a wider range of placements,
- building on the experience of referral panels in Youth Offending Services to extend their remit to include selective cases in the young adult age group,
- developing more individual placements to provide a more meaningful form of reparation,

- strengthening the links between unpaid work and organisations run by and on behalf of ethnic minority communities,
- increasing the confidence of the public by developing good links with the local media in order to ensure the reporting of stories about unpaid work and to encourage participation by the public.

Prior to the start of the project it was envisaged that:

- due to the fact that individual community initiatives are responsive to local need, different models would develop in the different area,
- the concerns and wishes of the local community may be difficult to fit with the statutory requirements or the underlying philosophy of unpaid work,
- constant change and developments within the Criminal Justice System could produce rapidly increasing workloads for the Probation Area in terms of managing their mainstream work, and as a result developing new ideas and pilots in the context of already stretched resources could prove difficult.

The Thames Valley Partnership and Thames Valley Probation Area chose four pilot sites, Bicester, Wycombe, Milton Keynes and Slough, with:

- sufficient numbers of offenders on community service,
- the existence of links with other local agencies,
- the potential to engage a wider voluntary and community sector.

## **Part One - The Work of the Project**

### **The Structure of Making Good**

The Making Good project has been managed by John Hedge, who, until October 2007, was Director of Community Safety, Thames Valley Partnership. John was seconded from the Thames Valley Probation Area, and was first involved in the management of Community Service in 1974. The Making Good Project Coordinator, Deborah Clarke, was seconded from the Thames Valley Probation Area during the first year of the project. This enabled a strong focus from the outset of the project on changing the culture of the Probation Unpaid Work units and on mainstreaming the project.

During the first year of the project Deborah Clarke devoted her time to accessing appropriate channels through which to promote and develop key relationships with community organisations under the Making Good ethos in the four pilot areas, as well as to developing new ways of working with Probation colleagues.

By the end of the first year suitable and varied links had been developed in each of the four areas, and Probation staff had been introduced to the Project. Initial work projects had taken place or were being planned in the majority of the identified areas.

As had been envisaged prior to the start of the project, each of the four areas was developing differently according to its different community structures, and the Making Good team decided to strengthen the links made in each area by using local Probation Unpaid Work Managers to build up the links created and to begin mainstreaming the project.

Additionally, Rose Hallam, Thames Valley Partnership Associate, joined the team in May 2007 to contribute her considerable community development experience to the project and to work alongside the Probation Managers in Slough and Wycombe. She was tasked to review the strength and sustainability of the links which had been made, consider the gaps and, in particular, develop ways to link more effectively with ethnic minority communities in High Wycombe.

The second year was devoted to mainstreaming Making Good into Probation, to strengthening community partnerships that have the potential to be sustainable, and to seeking new partnerships.

The focus of the final year has been to maintain existing partnerships, promote individual placements, recruit and train volunteer supervisors from the community,

make more use of opportunities for publicity and extend the Making Good approach to other areas of the Thames Valley.

### **Making Good and the Thames Valley Probation Area**

Making Good has relied heavily on the motivation and commitment of the Thames Valley Probation Area. The project has been fortunate to work with two Senior Managers who have championed the project, as well as to have worked with the same Scheme and Quality Assurance Managers throughout the life of the project. Without their continued dedication to the Making Good project, it would have been impossible to achieve the progress made towards genuine community engagement in Unpaid Work and the mainstreaming of the Making Good ethos.

The Thames Valley Probation Area has, however, been faced with significant challenges in the Unpaid Work arena during the period of the project, including a physical reorganisation of the way Unpaid Work is managed and organised, contestability and best value, recruitment and retention of staff, and pressure to achieve increased targets.

#### Reorganisation, recruitment and retention

The restructuring of the Unpaid Work teams in the Thames Valley took place within a six-month period in 2007, and involved moving the teams from a locality-based model to three central units, one in each of the three counties in the Thames Valley. This involved displacement of staff and significant staffing issues in Berkshire, including high turnover as well as recruitment difficulties, resulting in a shortage of key staff members. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire were less affected in terms of staffing issues.

#### Contestability

An independent report commissioned by the Probation Area highlighted the need to resolve the issue of capacity, seek to change the nature of some of the projects by locating projects in areas that offenders can reach without transport to reduce current high transport costs, and develop the provision of more supervision of offenders by beneficiaries.

#### Targets

Service targets have required significant increases in both start-ups and terminations of Unpaid Work Requirements. Across the Thames Valley commencements for Unpaid Work have risen from 2762 in 2005/06 to 3225 to date in 2007/08. Thus, for Unpaid Work, large projects, which include the involvement of community members in supervision, are the most attractive.

Best value

Unpaid Work needs to ensure that unit costs represent best value and therefore has to balance the competing issue of the resources taken to develop community partnerships with the returns in terms of hours worked by offenders.

## **Making Good in Bicester**

Bicester is a rapidly growing market town in Oxfordshire with a population of approximately 30,000 residents. At any one time there are approximately 20 offenders on Unpaid Work from Bicester.

The Making Good pilot in Bicester has three strands:

- Developing a partnership with the Town Council,
- Developing links with the Youth Offending Service,
- Developing adult referral panels.

### **a) Developing a partnership with the Town Council**

- In the first year of the project the Project Co-ordinator set up initial meetings with various possible partners, including the District, Parish, Town and County Councils.
- Town Councillors were enthusiastic and further meetings were held with the Town Clerk and Councillors, at which potential projects were identified.
- The Town Clerk was central to the development of the project, championing the Making Good principles and their practical application.
- Initial visible regeneration projects were completed by offenders on Unpaid Work.
- The quality of the work and supervision led to further projects being worked and a sustainable working relationship established.
- Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) have been actively involved in the promotion of suitable projects, and useful links have been established with the PCSO team.
- Five Town Council staff have been trained by the Unpaid Work team to supervise offenders during their working day in the Town Council office, the cemetery, parks and gardens.
- The Probation Area and the Town Council are working towards a Service Level Agreement.
- A similar partnership is now being established with Banbury Town Council in the north of the county.

### **The Tollgate Seats Project**

The first project to be worked under the Making Good banner was Tollgate Seats, a concrete area of land in the town centre that attracted daytime and evening drinkers. The Town Council approached a local school, which planned a new design for the area. The Town Clerk and the lead Councillor met with the Unpaid Work Supervisor and the offenders to discuss the design and ask for offender input. Offenders then completed the project, and feedback indicated that they felt a sense of ownership. The Unpaid Work supervisor was motivational, enthusiastic and in tune with the aims of the project. Attendance throughout the project was excellent. As it was in the centre of the town, the project also achieved high visibility.

### **Learning points**

- Negotiating your way through the politics of different organisations can be both challenging and time-consuming.
- It is important to find a 'champion'.
- It is possible to integrate both the needs of the Probation Area in terms of achieving targets, and the principles of Making Good.
- Training staff in community organisations to supervise offenders strengthens the links with the organisation and ensures sustainability.
- The attitude of the Unpaid Work Supervisor is crucial to the success of the project.
- Engaging offenders in pre-placement consultation with the partnership agency can give offenders a sense of ownership and value, and increase the likelihood of successful completion of their hours.
- High visibility projects can lead not only to greater awareness of the public, but to greater motivation of the offenders.

## **b) Developing a partnership with the Youth Offending Service**

One of the objectives of the Making Good pilot in Bicester was to explore ways in which the Youth Offending Service (YOS) and Probation could collaborate on projects being worked to fulfil the requirements of the YOS' Community Punishment Order and Reparation Order, and Probation Unpaid Work Requirements. It was also hoped that collaboration on publicity could test the potential for a shared approach to awareness and confidence-building within the community. A further strand was to explore ways in which Youth Referral Panels could be extended into the management of some adult Unpaid Work Requirements.

- To start the process of collaboration, the Making Good Project Coordinator made contact with Senior Managers from the Oxfordshire Youth Offending Service (YOS), who were enthusiastic, particularly with respect to projects when the YOS have insufficient capacity to meet the outstanding commitment to work.
- It was clear that working practices in the two agencies differed greatly, and it was essential before any joint work was done to clarify the roles, expectations and practice standards of each agency.
- A project plan was subsequently drawn up between the two agencies.
- A joint project was identified at the North Bicester Doctors' Surgery, where a project was being undertaken by the YOS as direct reparation for an offender assaulting one of the doctors. The work was taking longer than anticipated, as the work commitment for young offenders is substantially less than for adult offenders. As a result, adult offenders sentenced to an Unpaid Work Requirement helped to complete the project, and the collaboration was deemed positive and purposeful.
- The young and adult offenders worked separately on the project.
- A large group placement at Iffley Lock, Oxford, was subsequently planned and has been completed, although the process has taken longer and been more challenging than originally anticipated.

## **Iffley Lock**

The project at Iffley Lock was a joint initiative involving Probation Unpaid Work, Oxford Youth Offending Service and the Environment Agency.

A small area of land adjacent to the lock at Iffley had become very overgrown and dark and local users did not feel safe walking through it. It had also become an area frequented by cross-country motorbike users.

Several joint meetings and risk assessments took place between representatives from Thames Valley Probation, Youth Offending Service and the Environment Agency before work could begin. Obstacles to be overcome included satisfying all parties' stringent health and safety requirements, securing an area for the offenders to shelter and have refreshments, finding somewhere to store tools and ensuring the smooth joint working of appropriate adult and young offenders. Due to the limited number of hours young offenders can undertake in a day, it was agreed that Probation would undertake the majority of the heavy work, and the young offenders would attend weekly to assist with the lighter tasks.

The project lasted 11 weeks and a total of 336 offender hours were completed on this project by Thames Valley Probation. The offenders found the project worthwhile and we had a high turnout for the project every week. The Environment Agency were very pleased with the results and have asked us to return when they have further work for us, such as laying wood chip on the area cleared.

Obstacles faced during the project were the differences in support received by Probation staff and offenders from different lock-keepers from one week to the next, and the discovery that Probation and YOS work so very differently that a great amount of thought would need to be given to any future joint projects.

Nevertheless, to the delight of local residents and lock users, the area is now cleared, brighter and safer to use, and no longer frequented by mini motorbikes, due to a large log pile having been erected by offenders at the far end of the wooded area.

Placement Manager, Thames Valley Probation.

### **Learning points**

- The need to understand the two agencies' different approaches to and understanding of reparation, enforcement, supervision styles, roles and responsibilities.
- For a sustainable working relationship to develop between the two agencies, initial liaison and discussion should be at a very senior management level in order to ensure adequate resourcing of and commitment to such joint working of reparative projects.
- There is huge potential for joint working on projects between the Youth Offending Service and Probation Unpaid Work if the differences in working practices and principles can be understood and overcome.
- Working on these projects has led to a greater understanding of the difficulty of the transition for young offenders from the Youth Offending Service to the adult Probation Service and of the potential for a volunteer scheme to assist young offenders during the transition phase.

### **c) Developing adult referral panels**

A further objective of the Making Good project was to build on the experience of referral panels in the Youth Offending Service to extend their remit to include selective cases in the young adult age group in order to widen the potential for directly reparative Unpaid Work individual placements.

- To this end, the Making Good Project Coordinator raised the possibility with the YOS manager of using Youth Panel Referral members to help place adult offenders suitable for individual placement. The youth referral panel scheme would be adapted to suit adult offenders, with local panel volunteers deciding what work a particular offender would do to make reparation to the community.
- The YOS manager was very supportive of this initiative.
- Several panel members expressed interest.
- The Making Good Project Coordinator rewrote the guidance to make it relevant to adult offenders, as she realised that the panel would need to be structured differently for adults.

- Specialist training for a small group of volunteers in Oxford rather than Bicester was carried out.

The decision to move the project to Oxford was based on the following reasons:

- As Bicester has a maximum of 20 offenders on Unpaid Work at any one time, identifying a suitable offender for an individual reparative placement, taking into account risk factors, is unlikely.
- There is no guarantee that the availability of panel members can be coordinated with the identification of a suitable offender.
- This could result in panel members losing motivation.

It has not been possible, however, to develop this initiative further during the course of the Making Good pilot due to staffing constraints, but it is hoped that the volunteers who have expressed interest and received training might be able to use their skills and time to facilitate and support the transition for young offenders from a YOS Reparation Order to a Probation Unpaid Work Requirement.

#### **Learning points**

- This very positive initiative is likely to be best suited to a large town or city rather than a small market town, as there would be a bigger pool of offenders.
- Panel guidance needs to be adapted to suit adult offenders.
- There needs to be a guarantee of a number of suitable offenders in order to maintain the motivation of volunteer panel members.
- It would be worthwhile dedicating further resources to implement an adult referral scheme, involving trained volunteers, to place adult offenders in direct reparative placements. An assessment of impact could be conducted with follow-up work and use of a control group.

## **Making Good in Wycombe District**

Wycombe District is a local government district administered by Wycombe District Council, serving a population of 162,000. It includes the towns of High Wycombe, Marlow and Princes Risborough. All three towns are surrounded by villages in the countryside of the Chilterns and the Thames Valley. The area has a diverse community, including a high concentration of Asian residents in some wards.

The Making Good pilot in Wycombe District formed into three strands:

- developing links with the Local Authority
- creating links with Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs)
- working with 'the Asian community'.

### **a) Developing links with the Local Authority**

- Initial consultation work was at the Local Authority level. Wycombe District Council has a dedicated Community Development Team, but despite a significant degree of contact, limited progress was made in establishing links which could lead to the possibility of community involvement in Unpaid Work. Attendance at meetings with varying and complex agendas proved to be less productive than envisaged and, as a result, development of key relationships was slower than hoped for in the first year.
- As engagement at the Local Authority level was not proving at that point to be an effective conduit for Making Good, a decision was made to try and form more direct links with the community through other channels of communication.
- As a result, with the support of the Making Good Advisory Group Police representative, the Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) forum was identified.

## **Discussion**

Attempting to negotiate a way through the complexity of local government issues proved time-consuming and was perhaps not the most appropriate channel to go through in order to develop working relationships with a cross section of the community at 'grass roots' level. However, the Probation Service has traditionally sourced productive high volume placements through Local Authorities and continues to do so to the benefit of both agencies and their community.

Although, therefore, the Making Good project did not succeed in creating and developing local working relationships through the Local Authority structures, there continues to be huge potential for Local Authorities and the Probation Service to

work together to deliver Unpaid Work placements for the benefit of the community. In the Thames Valley Probation Area in Reading, for example, there is a Service Level Agreement with Reading Borough Council whereby Reading Borough Council staff are trained to be Unpaid Work supervisors for 4 days a week. This provides the opportunity for regular high-volume placements for offenders.

## **Rural areas**

Initial forays into Wycombe rural neighbourhoods resulted in difficulties. It appeared that perceptions and fear of crime and of those committing crime inhibited community involvement, and that the baseline for brokering meaningful partnerships was very low. Consequently, getting on to the parish meeting agendas proved a challenge, and, without an entry into the community forum, it was difficult to make any headway. It is possible, though, that, with the setting up of Neighbourhood Action Groups in rural areas, the Probation Unpaid Work teams could start to have a visible presence at those meetings.

### **Learning points**

The Making Good experience in Wycombe suggests that Local Authority links are perhaps better suited to 'traditional' high volume Unpaid Work placements.

## **b) Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs)**

A Neighbourhood Action Group, or NAG, is a volunteer working group made up of representatives from the community, including residents, the police, local authority and other organisations, such as local businesses and schools. A NAG should be representative of the different communities living in the neighbourhood.

A NAG aims to deal with key issues in the neighbourhood which have been identified following consultation with the community. The main task of a NAG is to apply a problem-solving process to identify what can be done to achieve noticeable and sustainable improvements.

Police Community Support Officers support the work of the police force, providing presence on the streets by spending much of their time on patrol in their community. In this way they not only aim to provide a reassuring presence to the community, but also are in a good position to both listen to residents' concerns and bring these to the local Neighbourhood Action Group.

- It was agreed that Unpaid Work would be systematically considered in the roll-out of NAGs, so creating an infrastructure to support and sustain a flow of work from the community.
- An implementation plan was drawn up to cover NAGs both in Wycombe and Aylesbury Vale, and attention was focused initially on the Downley, Micklefield and Castlefield NAGs in High Wycombe, areas of diversity and relative disadvantage.
- The Scheme Manager subsequently attended NAG meetings, where he explained and promoted the Making Good project.
- Several joint projects have been undertaken as a result.
- Police Community Support Officers have been an important link in the process.

### **Castlefield clear-up**

In Castlefield, an area of High Wycombe, offenders with an Unpaid Work Requirement were involved, through the NAG, in a weekend tidying the community with the community, which involved the Forestry Commission, residents, the Police and the Fire Brigade. This was identified at the NAG as a key concern and was a highly visible activity involving a wide range of community involvement. The Unpaid Work Scheme Manager said that this was an opportunity to be involved in residents feeling better about where they live and participating in lifting the spirit of the community.

### **Learning points**

- Direct involvement with the community is more likely to be achieved through smaller groups, such as NAGs, than through larger bodies, such as the Local Authority.
- Perceptions of crime and offenders can mitigate against developing a constructive working partnership.
- Maintaining awareness levels of Unpaid Work within the NAGs is crucial, but time-consuming. Lack of visibility in this important area of neighbourhood policing and crime and disorder issues can lead to lost opportunities.

- Probation Unpaid Work teams becoming known across NAGs as a key resource can benefit both the community and Unpaid Work.
- Police Community Support Officers are a key link between the community, Probation Unpaid Work and the NAG.

### **c) Developing links with the Asian community**

One of the objectives of the Making Good project was to strengthen the links between Unpaid Work and organisations run by and on behalf of ethnic minority communities.

The choice to work with the Asian community in High Wycombe was based on wanting to build on previous work undertaken by the Probation Area, and on recognising that, in parts of Wycombe, Asian people were the majority.

- The Asian population in High Wycombe accounts for 16% of the total population and 14% of the population are Muslim (High Wycombe Local Community Area Profile, February 2007, Buckinghamshire County Council).
- The first step of the project in Wycombe was to make contact with key individuals and organisations/groups who had knowledge of and contact with the Asian community and who were involved in local initiatives. This took time and contacts were not always easy to find, but it meant the approach was broad ranging, and included speaking to voluntary groups, community development workers, the Police, the Racial Equality Council, faith leaders, councillors and local community activists.
- What became clear from these discussions was that, apart from the Mosques, there were few central points of contact and few community groups where it was possible to develop participation in the Making Good project. There was also a sense of consultation fatigue. Considerable attempts by the Police to engage with the Asian community in Wycombe had highlighted the complexities of engagement and sustainment of networks. Representatives from the Asian community had got involved in community initiatives, but people reported that little positive action had resulted from these, and this had dampened enthusiasm for future involvement.
- Therefore, whilst there was a clear interest and enthusiasm to become involved in the Making Good initiative from some of the people contacted, the practical difficulties, in particular the lack of infrastructure groups, meant that progress was slower than originally anticipated.

- The emphasis has therefore been on building relationships, increasing knowledge of community sentencing, and exploring ways in which the Making Good project can be taken forward in a practical and sustainable way.
- To this end work has been focused on involvement with a newly formed residents' association, the Castlefield and Oakridge Residents' Association, in High Wycombe, which is chaired by a dynamic member of the Asian community, and is in an area with a high proportion of Asian residents. To date 250 people have become members of the Association, and the Making Good project features both on their website and in their newsletter.

## **Discussion**

Working with the Asian community brings particular considerations. Cultural differences have meant it has been necessary to talk more about offenders carrying out work in the communities they come from, as this can, for some families, present a real problem. Language has sometimes been a barrier, and Unpaid Work opportunities seem to come less readily to people's minds. This may be as a result of different perceptions of what is important in a community. For example, most of the projects identified in other areas have been in some way environmental; such issues may not be so pressing in different communities. Additionally, it has become clear that 'the Asian community' is not a homogenous community, and therefore does not necessarily share the same priorities or interests.

The community development experience and expertise of Rose Hallam, Thames Valley Partnership Associate, has been central to forging community links and in following leads that could result in a working partnership.

The Unpaid Work Scheme Manager has promoted the idea of a working partnership to mosque leaders by focusing on:

- giving the community a chance to help its own young men,
- involving other offenders in placements to provide a cross-community link, which would aid better understanding,
- providing the Islamic community with a chance to have its share of hours of Unpaid Work,
- developing the idea of community volunteers helping with individual placement supervision.

The Unpaid Work Scheme Manager, although committed to further developing links with the Islamic community in Wycombe, has come to the conclusion that, in order to build up trust and achieve tangible results, continued and regular liaison is necessary and this is, sadly, too time-consuming when taking into account the pressure to deliver on placements in the here and now. Additional resources in the

form of a dedicated liaison worker would be likely to achieve sustainable results in the longer term.

**Learning points**

- There is not a single 'Asian community' in High Wycombe.
- Patience and persistence are necessary to pursue and develop links, but devoting time to do so may be beneficial in the long term.
- Perceptions of community issues may differ, thus making it more difficult to identify suitable community projects.
- There is likely to be a lower baseline of knowledge about community sentencing.
- Key to possible successful community involvement is working with local organisations, such as Residents' Associations, and key individuals.

## **Making Good in Milton Keynes**

The Borough of Milton Keynes has been a unitary authority independent of Buckinghamshire since 1997 and is one of the fastest-growing areas of the country. Milton Keynes had a population of 227,800 in 2007. It has a highly devolved local government structure and a parish-based approach to community safety, with local neighbourhoods informing community safety priorities.

The Making Good pilot in Milton Keynes has focused on:

- working with Urban Parish Councils,
- the development of links with Neighbourhood Action Groups.

### **a) Working with Urban Parish Councils**

- The Local Authority was the starting point for making links for Making Good, and the Community Safety unit advised the best route would be to work directly with the Urban Parish Councils.
- Four parishes were initially identified.
- Initial findings through attendance at local meetings indicated that Milton Keynes' communities were not generally aware of Unpaid Work.
- The Probation Quality Assurance Manager attended further Parish Council meetings, and gave a talk to all 45 Parish Councils.
- Regular attendance at a fortnightly Joint Agency Tasking and Coordination (JTAC) meeting, involving representatives from Thames Valley Police, Youth Offending Team, street care unit, environmental health, licensing, trading standards, Bucks fire and rescue service and parish councils, has ensured visibility and a pro-active approach to community problem-solving.
- Encouragement to think creatively and put aside other agendas has been needed to develop suitable projects for the benefit of the community.
- The Probation Quality Assurance Manager has developed a working model, which includes the offer of an estate walk with key members of the Parish Councils to identify environmental improvements that could be made.
- Placements have tended to be environmental in nature, reflecting the concerns of the community.

### **Shenley Church End pond clearance**

The clearance of a pond in Shenley Church End involved local residents, offenders and scouts, and was a true community event, both visible and constructive. The Parish Warden stated in the Parish newsletter that he was trying to use the Probation Service as much as he could, and encouraged residents to come to him with ideas.

### **Learning points**

- An estate walk with key partners has been effective in identifying areas for improvement within the local community.
- Maintaining links through regular attendance and visibility at Parish Council meetings and multi-agency partnerships is essential to raise the profile of Probation Unpaid Work and its involvement in community issues.

## **b) Developing work with Neighbourhood Action Groups**

To further extend the Making Good pilot, the Probation Quality Assurance Manager (QAM) has been involved in the rollout process of the Neighbourhood Action Groups in Milton Keynes through attendance at NAG meetings and liaison with key individuals.

- Finding a way through the various priorities of the key agencies represented at NAGs was initially challenging.
- Gaining entry into new Neighbourhood Action Groups has not always been easy.
- Developing links with senior police management has been productive.
- NAG-related work, particularly with Residents' Associations, is proving effective in finding suitable placements that represent community issues.
- Some Police Community Support Officers have expressed willingness to consider supervising offenders in the future, which could prove an invaluable resource for individual placements or for larger group placements.

### **Bradwell Common Estate clearance**

One of the top priorities from the Bradwell NAG was landscaping and environment issues. After the Quality Assurance Manager had conducted an estate walk, clearance of an alleyway filled with debris was identified as an issue. A group of offenders, in conjunction with the police, NAG chair and local council, cleared the alleyway, significantly improving the environment on the estate.

The June 2008 Safer Neighbourhoods newsletter states:

“The NAG has made excellent use of the Probation Service Unpaid Work Scheme (some will recognise this by the more commonly known Community Service title).

Further Environmental Visual Audits have been carried out by Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in conjunction with NAG members, and other areas have been identified in need of attention. These are being put forward to the Probation Service for consideration.”

### **Learning points**

- Building up relationships with key individuals is central.
- Establishing a presence at NAG forums can require persistence.
- Police Community Support Officers are an integral link in developing work with NAGs.

## **Making Good in Slough**

Slough is a borough and unitary authority and has an ethnically diverse population totalling approximately 120,000. It has strong existing community structures and a vibrant voluntary sector.

The Making Good pilot in Slough has concentrated on:

- The development of a working relationship with the Slough Federation of Tenants and Residents (The Fed)
- Developing the use of volunteer supervisors.

### **a) Working with the Slough Federation of Tenants and Residents (The Fed)**

The Slough Federation of Tenants and Residents, **The Fed**, is an independent organisation formed in 1999 that seeks to promote the interests of all Slough tenants and residents. Its aim has always been to try and get the best deal for tenants. Known as The Fed, it is made up of two elected delegates from each of the 10 tenants' and residents' associations in Slough. The Fed holds monthly meetings and members of its executive body are voted in at an annual meeting.

People 1st is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) which means that, while the council remains the landlord of its council houses, People 1st takes care of the day to day management and running of the homes and provides services for the tenants and leaseholders who live in them. People 1st (Slough) was formed in January 2006, and is a not-for-profit housing organisation managing 7,400 homes on behalf of Slough Borough Council.

- In the first year of the Making Good project, attendance at various meetings in Slough kept leading back to The Fed, The Federation of Tenants and Residents.
- The FED chair was from the start enthusiastic about developing links with Making Good.
- Initial meetings were held, but a misunderstanding developed about what could be expected from Making Good, which had to be resolved before further progress could be made.

- The issue was luckily resolved and a successful working partnership has been established in conjunction with People 1st Slough. The involvement of their Community Participation Officer has been central to this process.
- Regular meetings for feedback, review and future planning have been key to the success of the partnership.
- A Fed representative has become the designated link worker and receives referrals from residents for projects, which she then sifts before passing on relevant work to the Probation Area Unpaid Work team.
- Some FED members have undertaken training to help local communities identify suitable work for offenders, and also to train as FED volunteer supervisors to supervise low risk offenders on individual projects.
- The Making Good project was featured at The Fed annual conference in 2007 and 2008 through the delivery of two workshops.

## **Discussion**

Initially, a certain amount of frustration was caused by misconceptions as to what kind of service the Unpaid Work team could provide, and it was necessary to ensure clarity as to the parameters of the work. Expectations were raised that could not be met and this could have led to the potential partnership falling at the first hurdle. However, with the assistance of the Thames Valley Partnership Associate experienced in community development work, initial misconceptions were resolved. This was achieved by participation at regular meetings, an article in the People 1<sup>st</sup> newsletter, and facilitation by the Unpaid Work Scheme Manager and TVP Associate of two workshops at the FED conference in June 2007, which gave the Making Good project both a higher profile and the opportunity to clarify expectations.

### **Moreton Way Sheltered Housing complex**

This involved refurbishment of benches in the shared seating area of the housing complex, a visible project for the beneficiaries, and one which enabled some myths about offenders to be dispelled through contact with the Unpaid Work group. Feedback was very positive.

### **Learning points**

- A residents' and tenants' organisation has proven to be a valuable route into the community.
- The support of the FED chair and the People 1<sup>st</sup> Community Participation Officer has been key to the success of the partnership.
- It is vital to understand and clarify expectations of each agency from the outset in order to develop appropriate plans.
- Devoting time to regular meetings with partners to review progress and plan ahead is central to developing good working relationships.
- Good and regular written communications can sustain interest and maintain involvement.

### **b) Developing the use of volunteer supervisors**

The Probation Unpaid Work team is working with The Fed to train volunteer supervisors from The Fed to work with small groups of offenders on Unpaid Work projects. Street Wardens have also expressed an interest in supervising offenders.

#### **Volunteer supervisors from The Fed**

- The Fed committee advertised for volunteer supervisors to supervise offenders on Unpaid Work through their newsletter.
- A meeting was held with Fed representatives to discuss the nature of the training for volunteers and the issue of confidentiality.
- The Probation Unpaid Work Scheme Manager attended a Fed meeting to discuss a protocol for volunteers.
- A training event was held for potential volunteers, run by Unpaid Work Placement Managers.
- Potential volunteers will shadow paid Unpaid Work supervisors to gain an idea of the nature of the work involved.

- Volunteers in pairs will then supervise a small group of low risk offenders on outside work projects.
- The same volunteers will work together whenever possible.
- There will be back-up telephone support from a Placement Manager.

## **Discussion**

If volunteer supervisors become an integral part of the working relationship between the Probation Unpaid Work team and The Fed, the high level of community participation is likely to increase community confidence, lead to a greater chance of offenders reintegrating into their community, and achieve a greater degree of understanding between those who have offended and other members of their community. It will also increase capacity for Unpaid Work at no increase in unit cost.

Community Wardens in Slough have expressed an interest in supervising offenders on Unpaid Work, and some have attended an initial training session. Community Wardens in Slough have in the past (2003 – 2005) been pro-active in identifying placements for Unpaid Work, when they identified Unpaid Work as a practical solution to improving the living conditions of vulnerable tenants and preventing properties from becoming run down.

(See <http://www.respect.gov.uk/members/case-studies/article.aspx?id=8628>)

## **Part Two - The Changing Context**

### **The national Probation arena**

The Probation Service has been responsible for the delivery of Unpaid Work or Community Service, as it was traditionally called, since the 1970s. In recent years Unpaid Work projects have tended to be sourced through links with Local Authorities, referrals from existing placement providers, and 'cold-calling' charities and voluntary organisations to 'sell' the concept of Unpaid Work. The approach has in general been reactive to the needs of the Probation Service in fulfilling the requirements of the volume of Unpaid Work hours going through the Courts.

Since the original proposal for the Making Good project was submitted, the project has operated within a rapidly changing Probation context, both nationally and locally. The Community Payback initiative has been piloted and launched nationally across the National Probation Service Areas, and the single Community Order has led to a significant increase in the number of Unpaid Work hours supervised by the Probation Service. This has consequently led to considerable stretch on Unpaid Work resources, and an ever-increasing demand for Unpaid Work placements that can work large groups of offenders.

Moreover, the creation of the National Offender Management Service and proposals to introduce a range of providers into the field through a process of contestability have introduced a high level of uncertainty about the future role that the service will play both in respect of unpaid work and other tasks.

The specific question of addressing negative public and sentencer perceptions has been the aim of a range of statutory and voluntary sector initiatives over the last five years. Since 1998, the government has established 'key performance indicators' and targets relating to confidence in justice. More recently there have been a variety of government initiatives to promote community engagement in the justice system - most notably through the piloting of "community justice centres" and efforts to make community penalties more visible to the public and responsive to the needs of local people.

The Home Office have for example worked with RED Consultancy on a three year PR campaign to promote a positive public profile of the work of the criminal justice system. Two main elements to the campaign were to promote a positive public profile for community sentences making them more visible, better understood and supported as an effective alternative to custody, and to demystify the role of the criminal justice system and open it up to the public. The campaign involved the production and dissemination of information about sentencing and "WOW" sheets highlighting direct benefits of community sentences to local communities. The work also included "clean up weeks" in which the public were able to vote for particular

environmental projects for offenders to work on.

Complementing this has been the Probation Service's own Visibility Campaign, designed to increase public awareness of unpaid work. Six areas – Hampshire, Durham, Kent, Merseyside, London and Suffolk – piloted the visibility campaign in July 2005, preparing strategies on Visible Unpaid Work and Community Engagement, arranging high profile launches with media coverage and enabling members of the public to contact probation areas, using websites, e-mail, telephone and post to nominate unpaid work projects. The lessons learned from the pilot areas underpinned the national rollout of Visible Unpaid Work, called Community Payback, from November 2005.

Community Payback aims to make Unpaid Work more visible by branding the work completed by offenders on Unpaid Work with plaques, and by publicising the work being done by offenders through displaying the Community Payback logo at work sites. Community Payback also aims to make Unpaid Work more representative of communities' needs through setting up websites and distributing information cards to encourage community organisations to contact Unpaid Work teams with requests for work to be undertaken by offenders. The aim is for local people to be able to have their say as to how offenders should make amends for the harm they have caused. This scheme has therefore been running alongside the Making Good initiative, which had not been anticipated at the inception of Making Good.

Another parallel initiative is the Community Payback Mayoral Project. In 2007 the National Probation Service invited some of the country's mayors to adopt Unpaid Work projects in their locality. It was the first time mayors had been approached as a group and a National Probation Service brochure, "Community Payback Mayoral Projects", states that the ensuing partnership has been one of Probation's most successful. A total of 63 projects were undertaken. Many have brought derelict areas back into use or renovated popular buildings used by communities. Between them they represent many thousands of hours of unpaid work which would not have been done otherwise because of lack of money. More mayors have been invited to take part in the Mayoral Project 2008/9.

### **Community Justice Centres**

The first Community Justice projects, the Community Justice Centre, North Liverpool and the Salford Community Justice Initiative, have been running since autumn 2005, piloting a model based on the principles of:

- community engagement,
- a robust and speedy court process,
- problem-solving,

- repairing harm,
- community involvement.

Community engagement in this context means understanding the views of the community so that the work of the court reflects their priorities, offenders are held to account and people gain a better understanding of criminal justice. Community involvement is defined as encouraging people to become involved in the delivery of justice, for example as magistrates, mentors, or by attending court as witnesses.

The Community Justice Centre model aims to ensure that offenders sentenced to Unpaid Work complete relevant and visible work in their local community and that the community helps identify tasks for offenders on Unpaid Work Requirements. An Evaluation of the North Liverpool Community Justice Centre, published in October 2007, stated that direct reparation activity was operating on a relatively small scale, due to the limited capacity of the Probation Service to organise and supervise such activities.

In North Liverpool the Community Court Judge, Judge Fletcher, currently attends a Community Reference Group every two months at which issues of concern to the community are raised, potential Unpaid Work projects are identified and then referred to the Probation Unpaid Work team, who conduct a risk assessment and inform the Judge of viable projects. The Judge informs offenders sentenced to Unpaid Work Requirements that they will be required to complete their Unpaid Work hours in their community on one of the current projects.

A Process Evaluation of the Salford Community Justice Initiative, published in October 2007, commented that there was a need for an increase in nominations from the community for Unpaid Work projects.

During 2007 eleven Community Justice Courts were set up across England and Wales. In East Middlesbrough there were already established community consultation mechanisms set up as a result of STEM (Stronger Together in East Middlesbrough), a local regeneration initiative. Community members can put forward suggestions for Unpaid Work through STEM, and, if assessed as viable, the Community Justice Court magistrates are made aware of projects in the local area.

In Newham, London, collaboration with stakeholders is good and Safer Neighbourhood Teams play a significant role. A large project, involving complete refurbishment of a youth centre, was nominated by a lead councillor. Initial contact is being made with Area Tenants' Liaison Committees. In the Riverside Community Justice Court, Hull, a payback sub-group, involving community members, refers potential projects to the Probation Unpaid Work unit. The payback group hopes that suitable projects will be identified for supervision by volunteers from community organisations. In Birmingham suggestions made through the Community Justice

Court are referred to the Probation Unpaid Work unit. In Plymouth referrals are made through the Neighbourhood Renewal Team, and projects have been completed in areas of social housing, where improving community aesthetics has been the main focus. In Stonehouse, one of the neighbourhoods served by the Community Justice Court, there is a whiteboard in a community building devoted to suggestions by members of the community for Unpaid Work projects and space for updates as to progress. In Merthyr Tydfil, a small tightly knit area, a number of referrals come by word of mouth, and Probation Unpaid Work make presentations to the magistrates about work that has been completed in the area.

It would appear that, to date, nominations for Unpaid Work projects are being made by various means, but that there has not as yet been the opportunity to create long term sustainable partnerships with community organisations.

### **Crime Concern Initiatives**

In 2007 Crime Concern was tasked to work with four Probation Areas to develop branding of Community Payback in specific designated areas in order to assist Unpaid Work teams to develop new partnerships in the community and to increase the volume of placements. The four brands tested were Community Payback, involving relationships with social landlords and the faith sector, Planet Earth Payback, Victim Payback, involving direct reparation, and Public Purse Payback, which involved work with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and local councils. Offenders as a result were working more closely with the community and it is hoped that community volunteers will supervise or work alongside offenders on designated projects. A report of the project is due to be published in November 2008.

In the Thames Valley Crime Concern are currently working on a project in Reading to develop partner-supervised volume placements which include added value for offenders in terms of, for example, learning of new skills.

### **Community Panels**

One of the original objectives of the Making Good project was:

- to build on existing community engagement structures to create community panels that would work closely with the Probation Area to identify suitable work of benefit to the community and create links with voluntary organisations who could offer placements.

What has developed, as can be seen from each area summary, is that the Making Good project has built up working relationships with key individuals in existing community organisations, who have provided a conduit for the identification of

suitable work. It has not been necessary to create community panels as the structures that already exist, with which Making Good has developed sustainable links, have proved to be accessible and representative of community interests.

The Louise Casey report, *"Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime"*, found that the public wanted to be given more information about Community Payback work and have a say in what offenders are required to do. 82% of people interviewed thought that people should be informed about the type of work offenders were doing. 58% of the public wanted to have a say in the type of work that should be undertaken; and, of those, 71% said that they would attend a meeting to influence this.

On 01 September 2008 David Hanson, Justice Minister, stated in a press release:

"It is important that the public can see and influence the work that is being carried out by offenders in their neighbourhoods. This is crucial to ensure that there is confidence in community sentences.

The public can already suggest projects for offenders to work on to their local probation office and we are intending to set up community panels linked closely to local communities which will further enable members of the public to propose work projects for offenders in their local area."

On 29 September 2008 David Hanson launched the Citizens' Panels:

"Justice Minister David Hanson has launched the Citizens Panels pilot scheme to give communities more say in the type of work offenders carry out in the community.

Citizens Panels will enable members of the public to consult with their local council and probation services to identify work that needs to be carried out in their area to improve public safety and the environment.

The pilots, running in six areas around the country, build on the Community Payback initiative by establishing and encouraging further channels for public consultation, as members of the public will also be able to express their views through neighbourhood forums, which will be operating during the six-month scheme."  
(Ministry of Justice Press Release 29/09/08)

The Making Good project anticipated the setting up of community panels, but instead has built up working relationships with existing community organisations, which has provided not only a conduit for the identification of suitable work, but also partnership working. It is hoped that the learning from Making Good will be a useful tool in the development of Citizens' Panels.

## Part Three - Assessment and Recommendations

### Findings

Making Good has taken place during a period of fast moving change. Although hard data on impact is difficult to find, there is nevertheless evidence to suggest that efforts to increase public confidence can pay off. The LCCS project has shown that providing information to the public can succeed in influencing the attitudes of the public towards the appropriate sentence for particular cases. Evaluation has found that of the members of the audience who initially thought the offender should go to prison, almost half changed their mind and the vast majority of those who took part said that their confidence in community sentences had increased as a result of the presentation. (Grimshaw 2006)

Positive media coverage can be obtained particularly for unpaid work projects which benefit local communities and as a result of award programmes recognising excellence in community supervision of offenders. Individual and community groups can be engaged in practical initiatives such as the Home Office "clean up week" and in discussions about community sentences. Indeed it has been estimated that up to 38% of unpaid work placements are now nominated by the public.

Evaluations of the Community Justice centres in North Liverpool and Salford have produced more mixed results. In North Liverpool, the percentage of respondents to a survey who felt confident that the CJS is effective in bringing offenders to justice fell during the first two and a half years, the evaluators commenting that "the community engagement activity is not yet leading to increased public confidence in the criminal justice system" (Llewellyn-Thomas and Prior 2007). In Salford the evaluation found "little success was achieved in engaging with non-engaged members of the community. Despite the efforts that had been taken to inform the community ... those interviewed remained unaware of the initiative". (Brown and Payne 2007). This suggests the danger, endemic in all engagement and campaigning efforts, of preaching to the converted.

At a national level, evidence is mixed too on whether public attitudes to community sentences have become more positive in recent years. Awareness of these sentences has remained constant at 63% since 2004, but the percentage of people saying they know a great deal or a fair amount about community sentencing has decreased from 33% in 2005 to 29% in 2007. More people now believe that community sentences provide a tough punishment for adult offenders and are an effective means of punishing someone - but more also believe that community sentences are easier than prison (Ministry of Justice 2007).

The public profile of community sentences can of course be affected by national events such as the well-publicised probation failures in 2006 involving serious

offending by ex-prisoners under supervision. While not related directly to community sentences, Home Secretary Charles Clarke among many did not make the distinction between aspects of probation service performance. In commissioning the Chief Probation Inspector to undertake an inquiry into the Monckton case, he considered it "vital to public confidence in community orders and licences that your findings and recommendations lead to lessons being learned by the responsible authorities and that any necessary changes are implemented as the top priority." (HMIP 2006)

More important than the failures in performance themselves are the ways in which the media and politicians respond to them. In this respect, politicians have not done the probation service many favours. Clarke acknowledged in a speech on 21st March 2006 that there was a major problem of public protection, serious mistakes within our probation system and Parole Board system, which let out people who ought not to be free. A newspaper reported him privately describing probation as "the dagger at the heart of the criminal justice system, undermining public confidence in criminal justice as a whole" (Johnson 2006). Eight months later his successor made it clear that "the probation service is letting people down, and needs fundamental reform." (Home Office Press release 7 November 2006). The way in which politicians have made political capital out of crime and criminal justice in such a way is perhaps one of the most disappointing aspects of recent times (Green D 2006).

In this context it is not surprising that local attitudes can be shaped by national media and political rhetoric, rather than the local realities. This was one of the findings of a study of attitudes to youth crime in Swansea (Haines and Case 2007). What is more surprising is that, despite negative political and media rhetoric, polls have repeatedly shown that underlying public attitudes are not nearly as punitive as is often thought (Allen 2007). There is considerable scepticism about prison and a good deal of support for alternative measures. Recent polls undertaken for Smart Justice have found that two in three people, of over 1,000 polled, think that prisons are universities of crime - and 65% think they are not effective in reducing young people's offending. Instead, the vast majority (eight out of ten) back mental health and drug or alcohol treatment. (Smart Justice 2008). In respect of women, almost nine out of ten (86%) support community alternatives to prison, almost three quarters (73%) do not think mothers, particularly those of young children, who commit non violent crime should be locked up, and 77% think it would be more effective for female drug addicts who commit non violent crimes like shoplifting to undergo drug rehabilitation treatment as well as doing compulsory work rather than being sent to jail (Smart Justice 2007).

### **Impact of Making Good**

What then, taking into account the context above, has been the impact of Making Good? For the Thames Valley Probation Area Chief Officer

*"Making Good offers us the springboard to community engagement at a level which complements the ethos of neighbourhood policing."*

But what has this meant in practice? There are three main areas of activity where varying levels of achievement can be identified.

## **Raising Awareness**

It was evident from the start of the Making Good project that baseline knowledge and awareness of Unpaid Work was very low. The Project Coordinator's experience of attending meetings in the first year of the project highlighted the fact that many members of the public do not know what Unpaid Work is, and in some public meetings the only people who had heard of it were existing placement providers and/or magistrates.

Since the start of the project, contact has been made with significant numbers of people in the community through the Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Action Groups, Town Council, Residents' and Tenants' Associations, and District and Borough Councils by attending meetings, brokering partnerships and delivering projects, thus raising awareness of Unpaid Work to a wide sector of the local population.

Awareness has also been raised through publicity for Making Good. This has been achieved through newsletters, such as the People 1st newsletter in Slough, in parish magazines in Milton Keynes, in the Bicester Town Council Annual Report, through resident association websites, such as the Castlefield and Oakridge Residents' Association, through NAG publications, and through articles in local newspapers. There has also been representation at The Fed conference and promotion of Making Good through the National Association of Town Councils.

Newsletters and parish magazines reach large audiences in the local community and are likely to be a more reliable vehicle for publicity than newspapers.

As Community Payback and its resultant publicity was introduced at the same time as Making Good, it is difficult to distinguish between the effect of Making Good and the higher profile for Community Payback in both national and Thames Valley media and in terms of the visibility of projects.

It would seem fair to conclude, however, that Making Good has increased awareness of Unpaid Work considerably among certain sectors of the community and that, if this way of working is sustained, awareness will filter down to other sectors of the community through its visibility, increase in capacity and its 'normalisation', thus increasing the likelihood of perceptions of community safety changing in a positive direction. As the Community Participation Officer at People 1st, Slough put it:

*"The Making Good project is a great way of involving the community and giving them a different viewpoint on offenders, particularly as most of the feedback given from the community is very positive and makes us realise that offenders are often people who have made mistakes."*

Another beneficiary, the Neighbourhood Regeneration Officer from Lance Way estate in High Wycombe, suggested that

*"the work carried out ..... is definitely having an impact on people's perception. ... is greatly appreciated by all and goes a long way in making the residents feel good about themselves and the estate they live on."*

In articles about the Making Good project, there has been some confusion over terminology, articles referring to Making Good, Community Payback, Unpaid Work, Community Service and the Probation Service. Slough is the only area which has consistently used the Making Good brand in its publicity, largely through articles in the People 1<sup>st</sup> newsletter.

As the Making Good pilot project has sought to mainstream its approach through the Probation Unpaid Work teams, it would seem appropriate to drop the term Making Good in favour of a single identifiable name for the work that offenders carry out on an Unpaid Work Requirement. Louise Casey, in her report "Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime A Review" (Home Office June 2008) suggests that the term Community Payback should be used to describe all Unpaid Work carried out by offenders. A single term, whatever that may be, would assist the public to better understand what work in the community is completed by offenders, and could assist in increasing public confidence in the sentence.

### **Developing partnerships**

The second area of impact relates to the development of successful partnerships between probation and various statutory and voluntary organisations documented in part two of this report. Models have been established for partnerships with town and urban parish councils, tenants and residents associations and neighbourhood action groups, and the role of police community support officers has been identified as critical to success.

Evidence of impact is shown through the partnership between Bicester Town Council and the Probation Unpaid Work team, which is established and mutually productive. The Town Council has trained five members of staff to supervise offenders on Unpaid Work, and this is now part of their practice. The Bicester Town Council Annual Report 2007/08 reports on the initiative as follows:

*"... In addition the Town Council has been working with the Oxfordshire Probation Service on projects in the town, which can be carried out by community service workers.*

*Five Town Council staff were trained by the Probation Service as part of the new Community Payback Scheme. The Town Council is one of the pilot projects in the UK. This means that staff can supervise individual offenders in their departments and have them work as part of the staff of the Town Council. Strict rules have to be adhered to and staff have the right to send them home if these are broken. The Town Council has been congratulated on the way it has embraced the challenge."*

Annual Report of Bicester Town Council 2007/2008 p iv

In addition, according to the Town Clerk at Bicester Town Council:

*"The partnership has now become a way of thinking of The Town Council."*

The Fed in Slough has a standard Making Good agenda item at their meetings and the Probation Unpaid Work team attend on a consistent basis. There is a Fed link worker in place, who provides the community link between residents and probation. The Fed link worker has commented on the importance of the partnership in terms of the difference it makes to vulnerable residents in Slough, and the enthusiasm of residents to get involved by volunteering to become volunteer supervisors. The training of Fed volunteers as volunteer supervisors is in progress and regular articles in the People 1<sup>st</sup> newsletter have promoted the partnership.

In Milton Keynes the Probation Unpaid Work team in Milton Keynes has a visible and pro-active presence at JTAC meetings and Urban Parish Council meetings and this, as well as the quality of the work, results in repeat requests. The Manager of the Cross Links Centre on the Lakes Estate in Milton Keynes has commented:

*"When there is any community activity I will get in touch with the Unpaid Work team."*

Working with the Neighbourhood Action Groups in Wycombe and Milton Keynes, with the Urban Parish Councils in Milton Keynes, and with the Bicester Town Council in Oxfordshire has highlighted the importance of cementing partnerships with Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

PCSOs spend the majority of their time on foot patrol in the neighbourhood in which they work, and are aware of and are tasked to aim to try and solve community concerns. PCSOs talk and listen to residents in their community, look out for environmental improvements that need to be made, and are expected to be seen to

be doing something about it. PCSOs have representation on Neighbourhood Action Groups and may participate in other community forums.

Probation Unpaid Work Managers in Bicester, Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire have all commented on the development of constructive working relationships with PCSOs and on the crucial role they are in a position to play in communicating community concerns to the Probation Unpaid Work teams with a view to planning a shared community project.

The Thames Valley Probation Area Assistant Director for Interventions stated that a strong partnership with PCSOs could be mutually beneficial in that PCSOs can demonstrate to the community that their concerns have been heard, and Probation Unpaid Work teams can carry out work projects in the community, which will raise community confidence, promote the work that offenders do, and can enhance motivation and compliance among offenders.

#### **Lance Way estate clearance – the role of PCSOs**

An initial meeting was conducted with the estate manager and a PCSO by means of an estate walk. Plans were made for a next meeting, before which the estate manager discussed the plans with local residents. The next meeting took place with 2 PCSOs, the estate manager and the regional manager, and each agency's tasks were identified. PCSOs and an estate manager completed a leaflet drop to inform residents of when and where the clearance was happening. A final meeting was then held.

The clearance took 3 days and involved offenders painting around the rubbish areas, hanging up signs, and rubbish removal from both the estate and residents' homes if they were unable to move items themselves. The PCSOs worked alongside the group. Volunteer residents came out to help as well. The council waste disposal collected rubbish from various points around the estate.

The project worked well because of the planning and organisation before the event and agencies working together, including the council waste disposal, offenders, PCSOs and volunteers.

A Police Community Support Officer on the Castlefield Estate, High Wycombe, has summarised the joint work as follows:

*"People who have created the problems are solving the problems. I have nothing but praise for the work done."*

Each of the Probation Unpaid Work Managers involved in Making Good has stated that the way placements have been sourced has been the overwhelming impact of the pilot for them. The impact is the involvement of community organisations, the resultant voice that they have in determining what changes offenders can make to their environment and the positive difference this makes to the community. AS one Probation Unpaid Manager said:

*"Working with communities increases community confidence, lifts the community spirit and helps the community to help themselves."*

### **The nature of Unpaid Work Placements**

The third area where impact might have been expected has been in relation to the type of placement. Unpaid Work placements in the group setting have tended in recent times to be environmental in nature, involving painting and decorating, ground clearance and maintenance, and regeneration projects. One of the objectives of Making Good was to explore a wider range of unpaid work placements.

The findings from the project in each of the four pilot areas have shown, however, that community concerns tend to be environmental and that, as a result, the type of placement has remained similar. What people appear to want is physical improvement in the environment in which they live.

The National Probation Service snapshot of Unpaid Work 2008, which includes a total of 3,794 Unpaid Work projects, showed that, of the hours worked by offenders, 45% of those hours were devoted to environmental and painting and decorating placements.

Environmental projects can be beneficial for all concerned - for members of the community, who may feel better about themselves in improved surroundings, for offenders, who can take pride in the practical improvement they have made within the community and which could lead to different future life choices, and for the Probation Service, in terms of gaining recognition and increased community confidence.

What has been different, however, is the way in which those placements have been sourced, the involvement and participation of the community, and the fact that projects have been local and visible.

A further objective of Making Good was to develop individual placements which provide a more meaningful form of reparation and a greater variety of work opportunities.

Individual placements have always been an integral part of Unpaid Work schemes, and have tended to be sourced through charity shops, day centres and luncheon clubs, to which low risk offenders have made significant contributions. These placements are supervised by the beneficiary organisation.

It was hoped that individual placements through Making Good would be more directly reparative and sourced through direct local community involvement. Experience in each of the four areas is, however, that this has been more difficult to achieve than anticipated. It takes time to develop trust, confidence and understanding between the Probation Service and community organisations, and the supervision of offenders for volunteers who have had no experience of working with this particular group of people can seem a complex and daunting task. Volunteers need to be trained and supported to undertake such work, and this requires time, organisation and careful consideration of a suitable training and support package.

The positive impacts of the project in this respect, though, have been significant and include:

- the training of five Town Council offender supervisors in Oxfordshire,
- current training of volunteer supervisors from The Fed,
- some Police Community Support Officers in Bucks and Milton Keynes expressing an interest in supervising offenders,
- Community Wardens in Slough attending an initial training session,
- two experienced volunteers from the Youth Referral Panel in Oxford expressing interest and attending training in developing an Adult Referral Panel to replicate the Youth Referral Panel.

Learning from the project suggests that individual placements are likely to evolve from the emergence of trust between organisations, and this takes time to build. Individual placements could thus more appropriately be seen as 'second phase' development priorities - following the creation of successful partnerships. Volunteer supervisors are the key to the provision of individual placements.

Feedback from probation unpaid work managers suggested that community engagement projects can increase the level of compliance of offenders, particularly if offenders were involved in the planning of the work carried out, but this was not something we were able to test rigorously in this research. Although Thames Valley Probation Area Unpaid Work completion rates are substantially higher in 2007/08 than 2006/07, attribution is difficult to pinpoint as the statistics do not take into account individual projects.

## Summary and Recommendations

### Summary

The Making Good project has sought to increase confidence within the community about community sentencing and safety by testing whether the wishes of the community can be met within the framework of an Unpaid Work Requirement and whether a reparative element can be integrated into the nature of the work completed by offenders in their own community.

The findings of the project show that it is possible to develop relationships with different sectors of the community which lead to being able to carry out some of the wishes of the community through an Unpaid Work Requirement. Small local organisations are likely to best represent the interests of 'the community', and the local neighbourhood policing structures, though PCSOs, are well placed to gain an insight into local priorities. Mutual understanding needs to be carefully developed between representatives of the community and the Probation Unpaid Work teams. Local projects give offenders the opportunity to make reparation in their own communities. Whether more directly reparative projects are feasible within an adult Unpaid Work Requirement requires further testing. Sustainable models can be developed, but require adequate resourcing to maintain.

An increase in successful local projects worked in collaboration with local community organisations should result in an incremental increase in community confidence about community sentencing and safety, but this is difficult to measure and is likely to be a longer term outcome of continued community involvement.

Extending the Making Good approach to other Probation areas with adequate resources to develop and sustain working relationships with community organisations would increase the likelihood of communities gaining confidence in community sentencing and feeling safer in the environment in which they live. Community Justice Courts may be well placed to complement and develop their ethos by using the Making Good approach to source Unpaid Work placements.

The Making Good project has demonstrated the effectiveness of being pro-active in developing relationships with local organisations that represent community interests and thus enabling members of the community to suggest projects that would improve their environment and increase their confidence in community safety. In contrast to Community Payback which puts the onus on individuals to find the website and/or contact details and make requests for work to be done, the Making Good approach leads to a two-way sustainable partnership. Tenants' and Residents' Organisations, Town and Urban Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Action Groups have proved to be effective channels through which to achieve genuine community involvement.

More detailed and longitudinal research would be needed to assess the extent to which perceptions about offenders and thus of community safety can change as a result of community involvement, high visibility projects and the 'normalisation' of the work of offenders in their community.

## **Recommendations**

- Probation Senior Managers need to allocate sufficient resources for Unpaid Work managers to devote the time necessary to begin to build partnerships with relevant community organisations.
- Probation Unpaid Work resources should be allocated to maintain relationships with community organisations through, for example, attending regular meetings and supporting link workers in the community organisation.
- Probation Unpaid Work Managers should be trained in or have previous experience of community development.
- Probation Unpaid Work teams must ensure they have the capacity to deliver, taking into account staffing and resource issues.
- Wherever possible, Service Level Agreements should be drawn up with partnership organisations to ensure both sustainability and clarity.
- Unpaid Work supervisors need to understand the nature of the partnership between Probation Unpaid Work and the community organisation it is working with in order to be able to promote the ethos and rationale to offenders.
- The Probation service should formalise and strengthen links already established with PCSOs to continue to facilitate community regeneration projects e.g. by contributing to the initial training of Police Community Support Officers.
- Probation Unpaid Work teams need to be provided with enough cameras to record photographic histories of all placements for positive publicity and marketing purposes. Local newsletters are effective channels of communication, which reach a wide local audience, and should continue to be used whenever possible.
- A national training and support package for volunteer supervisors should be developed.

- A further pilot project should be established to test the viability and effectiveness of Adult Referral Panels for directly reparative individual placements.
- A more detailed Probation/YOS synergy project should be set up to develop a more shared approach to reparation across the Criminal Justice system. This could involve other partners, such as the Courts, Crown Prosecution Service and the Police as well as the Local Authority. Such a project would sit well with the development of the Community Justice Courts.
- Areas setting up Citizens' Panels should draw on the learning of Making Good.
- The learning from Making Good should be integrated into Community Justice Court settings.
- A single name should be consistently used to describe Unpaid Work in the community.

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## **Annex A**

### **Guidance for implementing Making Good findings: 12 tips**

#### **1. Finding the most suitable local representative organisation or grouping and planning how things will work**

The research has shown effective results from working with Town or Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Policing groups, and tenants' and residents' organisations. These can be used effectively in combination to everyone's advantage. Advance discussion and explanation is needed to find and prepare partners. This needs to include discussion of the 'values' everyone concerned subscribes to, and a realistic discussion about mutual expectations. Promising and then not being able to deliver or sustain is a real danger. Processes need to be as simple as possible with very clear lines of communication. Make sure that there is a clear route for members of the public to make suggestions and that there are agreed ways of giving feedback.

#### **2. Working with representative organisations will take time and patience**

Usually such organisations have very little prior knowledge or understanding about Criminal Justice issues - this is one of the problems these approaches are trying to address. It takes time to brief partners fully and develop trust. An important starting point is usually for members to understand sufficiently clearly the sort of work which can and can't be done, and how the funding partnership and responsibilities work. Once agreements are made it is important to follow up promptly - an effective response to early tasks is crucial, and it pays to keep checking on satisfaction and participation levels. The pay off for careful work and investment of time in the early stages is that good partnerships will endure and with reasonable maintenance will save time in the longer run, as well as having the potential to increasingly involve local people and build public confidence.

#### **3. Don't be surprised if lots of gardening and environmental work come over as the main priorities**

Most community safety audits show that environmental issues and putting damage right are key issues for most people. With thought they can become creative tasks, and they are usually already types of work that Unpaid Work does well and has expertise in. In planning the projects, though, always look for opportunities for involving the local people, and for highlighting the way Probation is working with other community safety partners and agencies.

#### **4. Probation staff will need careful briefing about this approach at all levels, including supervisors.**

Working with members of the community, their organisations and other representative bodies will mean attending a different type of meeting and fielding different questions and concerns. These approaches also imply a different kind of accountability and the development of ongoing relationships. This can seem quite threatening to very busy staff who have developed their own 'client list' of projects and they may not at the beginning feel well equipped to present material at meetings or work alongside community groups. Experience suggests that with support and some preparation they can quickly acquire this experience and develop confidence.

### **5. It is important to brief and train partners and other key professionals**

From the outset of the project it was clear that Probation and its role is not well understood even within community safety partnerships. One of the real issues is that as a relatively smaller service Probation cannot easily 'reach in' to local structures in Neighbourhood Policing, locality management and similar structures. Time spent on working with key groups like Police Community Support Officers and Parish Clerks will substantially help in spreading knowledge and awareness of Probation through briefing on Unpaid Work. Interestingly, it may be that the first step is to brief other in-house Probation managers about the initiative and increase their knowledge of Unpaid Work and these ideas.

### **6. Spreading the word needs to use a range of options and methods**

Quite rightly Community Payback has stressed the need for good press and radio work, and that of course remains a significant method of reporting good work and raising general awareness. The experience of Making Good shows, though, that to reach into communities effectively you also have to use local newsletters, partner newsletters, web sites and word of mouth. It is also important to ensure that Probation makes full use of other promotional initiatives and public consultations - whether they are estate walks for Community Safety or Local Authority mailings. A broadly-based approach will be more effective than concentrating only on the mainstream local media. To make full use of these opportunities, though, staff will need help to develop their confidence and skills, as well as the basic tools to do the job. This means easy Internet access, some basic desktop publishing capacity and lots of encouragement. Clearly, this has to fit acceptably with the Probation Area's communications strategy, and there need to be ground rules, but empowerment of staff in this area of work should give real dividends in public confidence and awareness.

### **7. Think about how to use the Unpaid Work relationships and increased profile to improve confidence and awareness in other aspects of Probation work**

At present in many Probation Areas, Unpaid Work seems to operate in relative isolation from other interventions and activities. If Unpaid Work, through these approaches, has valuable 'eyes and ears' information about communities and confidence issues, how is that being fed back to other parts of the service, and can the links made to bring more community involvement to Unpaid Work be used to improve awareness of such areas of work as MAPPA and PPO initiatives?

### **8. These approaches can fit alongside existing methods**

Within the Thames Valley pilots there was initial fear of a tension between the community involvement approach and schemes for enlarging throughput in partnership with major work providers, such as local authorities. In reality a two-tier approach seemed entirely manageable - you can both identify some priority communities for the Making Good methods and have that co-exist with other approaches. It may be that Making Good is particularly appropriate in areas of high need or high levels of crime concern.

### **9. Working with Youth Offending Services is valuable but needs careful planning and an awareness of the potential tension between Unpaid Work and Reparation approaches**

Our experience was that there had to be commitment at senior level in both organisations for this to work, and that a contractual approach would probably be best, so that values, mutual responsibilities and how to resolve difficulties were spelt out clearly. There is huge potential for synergy between the two systems, but the differences of focus need to be understood and respected. There are real problems nationally about transition of young offenders between the two systems, and the presence of two types of offender unpaid work is also confusing for the public. While this may need to be more of a national concern than it has been to date, there should be room for some increase in collaborative approaches in most areas, if care is taken.

### **10. Involve the sentencers**

As well as operating Making Good, Thames Valley Partnership and Thames Valley Probation Area also worked together within Rethinking Crime and Punishment on improving the knowledge and awareness of Crown Court Judges and Magistrates in Community Sentencing, including Unpaid Work. We were frequently reminded by magistrates that they lived in the communities we were working with and had many links of their own. Responding to their ideas and suggestions both helps integrate the work on the ground and also sets up a valuable information loop back into benches. Another engagement initiative LCCS (Local Crime, Community Sentence) offers similar possibilities for collaborative work with communities.

## **11. Reaching minority groups will not necessarily be through religious groupings or even representative organisations.**

A good deal of experience has been acquired over the years about how best to engage with BME groups, but there remain real concerns about how to involve them more fully. Work was undertaken on these issues within one of the pilot areas. It was helpful to work through other organisations to identify good links and some of these were through religious organisations such as mosques. The most successful efforts, though, were made by looking for local organisations such as Tenants' Associations, which already had good engagement with and representation of BME groups.

## **12. Keep Going**

There are no quick fixes to improving engagement and confidence, but if these really are priority issues then it will need persistence and perseverance. These approaches take time and produce real dividends, but they need to be sustained and adapted in the light of experience.

