



SW Region News on Unpaid Work

SW Region Unpaid
Work Pathfinder
Project

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Project Board meets for first time

June 12th saw the inaugural meeting of the new-look board heading up the SW Region's Unpaid Work Pathfinder Project. Chaired by Mary Anne McFarlane on behalf of the Region's Chiefs, Peter Blomley represents the Regional Offender Manager (ROM) and Liz Watkins of Dorset leads for the Senior Operational Managers across the 5 Areas.

The project has been set up with the aid of funding from the ROM and follows on from SW's success in the national mock contestability bid last year. The aim is to realize some of the potential efficiencies spotted during the mock bid and to work towards a best value regional exercise later this year.

4 work streams have been established, each in essence a project in its own right and designed to deliver the overall goal. These are:

- Activity costing
- Business Development
- Common Practice
- New Technology

The Activity Costing Work Stream is described in more detail on page 2.

The Business Development stream is being led by Garry Holden (GPA), Martyn Strike (WPA) and Mike Thomas (DPA). We'll report more on their work in Issue 2.

The Common Practice Work Stream deals with quality and is designed to take forward a more co-ordinated regional approach to UPW delivery—so we're looking to develop common approaches to delivery of the UPW Manual, the forthcoming Quality Standards Audit (being led by Meg Blumsom), and the collection of management information.

New Technology promises a great deal—not just new toys, but the real prospect of reducing form filling, improving accuracy and saving wasted effort. Much of the technology won't be new to many of you, but we've struggled so far to get a grip on the reality behind all the promise. A key task for this Pathfinder Project, and the New Technology Work-Stream, is to clear some of the organizational obstacles and establish low cost, well-considered trials.

The Project Board meets regularly—next on July 26th.



Voice Verification could save all that effort getting placement info from IP's. No more chasing beneficiaries to return placement reports, no more worrying about the accuracy of hours worked or collusion with manipulative workers? We certainly aim to find out—we plan to negotiate trials of at least one application in the next few months. And have already opened discussions with two of a number of suppliers.

Some key principles for delivery of Unpaid Work in the South West

Reducing re-offending

UPW has historically had a lower rate than other disposals, but we can do more, especially through employment

Visible punishment

Work can be clearly identified through logos and other features so that local people are familiar with unpaid work teams, as part of their commu-

Reparation

Research shows that re-offending rates can be reduced if the unpaid work that offenders undertake is seen to be, and is experienced by the offender as, worthwhile.

Value for money through partnership

UPW should contribute to safer and stronger communities within Local Area Agreements (LAAs), where possible generate funding for equipment and materials from beneficiaries and involve VCS staff, with us in the supervision of work.

So what's your job called?

The mock contestability bid revealed to us that there's all kind of jobs in unpaid work and all kinds of job titles.

A recent meeting of lead ACOs confirmed the picture. In the time we had available, we found it impossible to list all the different kinds of jobs, never mind the range of working hours, which make up the picture across the region.

So, one of the tasks for the project is to review and compare the different models of staffing structures and roles across the region. We aim to work with HR managers in the region to establish just what are the differences and how many types of job there really are

Quality Standards & The Unpaid Work Manual

Unit Managers met on 19th June and agreed to a co-ordinated approach to NOMS demand for a quality audit nationwide. Each area has nominated two people to act as auditors of another area's work and an internal team who prepare the evidence for their own audit.

The Unit Managers have agreed

a schedule to ensure completion of audits across the whole region by the end of September. Rather than being paired, areas are on a rota, so ASPA will be audited by WPA, and will be auditing DCPA, GPA will audit DPA and will be audited by DCPA and so on.

The Audit is being conducted following the publication of the

new Quality Standards for Unpaid Work, issued under PC 16/2007. The whole point of this regional collaboration is to provide NOMS with a robust, validated picture of the standards we are meeting in the south west, and to give us a good understanding of where we need to concentrate our efforts for improvement.



Activity Costs



Fresh from success in mapping accredited programmes (Regional Business Development Manager Nick Heape's Benefits Realisation exercise) the Regional Change Control Group (CCG) has taken on the task of working with Unpaid Work staff to map in detail how we do the job and on the basis of that, help Treasurers build costings we can use to prove just how good we are at delivering efficiently.

The team have already met once and are scheduled to meet again at the end of this month and finally at the end of August. As they did with Accredited Programmes, CCG members

will work with Unpaid Work colleagues in their home areas. They are using the regional template prepared previously and will help local colleagues to fill out the detail of what they do to deliver unpaid work—in urban and rural groups, at singleton placements and, where they exist, in workshops.

Once the group have signed off these "process maps", their suggestions on costings—staff time and equipment used—can be used by finance staff to fill out a picture of the costs involved in delivering unpaid work activities such as placement planning, preparation, offender transportation etc.

It's a costly and time-consuming exercise, but the effort involved is clearly understood by the chiefs and our commissioners to offer significant long-term benefits. It will provide us with a more comprehensive grasp of what it costs us to deliver Unpaid Work. We will be in a better position to make strategically sound choices about what would be better value ways of delivering Unpaid Work. We can also put ourselves in a much better position to compete, if we have to, with other providers, none of whom have our background of quality, nor our history of successful local working relationships.

Contact

For further information on the issues covered in this newsletter or on anything related to the Regional Unpaid Work Pathfinder Project in the first instance please contact the Project Manager, Simon Noble:

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There's plenty to suggest that technology can help enormously in Unpaid Work—software for solving those **logistics** and scheduling headaches, **Handheld computers** (PDAs) for supervisors out on the road allowing remote transmission of work instructions and hours worked returns at the end of the day—and **voice verification** for automating attendance records at individual placements.

We have identified these three

Can Technology Help Us?

applications which appear to have clear potential to provide efficiencies and improvements in the way we manage Unpaid Work.

It's never so straight forward though that we can simply take something off the shelf at our local IT store and make it work effortlessly in Wareham or Taunton or Salisbury (nor even Tewkesbury or Truro). So we aim to negotiate with suppliers to provide us with low cost (or free) trials of their ready-made

solutions so that we can assure ourselves that they work for us, establish what the technical complications may be to get them to work effectively with our existing systems and assess whether they will give us the value for money we need.

Meetings are under way with suppliers and NOMS IT. We want to start trials as soon as we can.

Support Group for Placement Co-ordinators



The Project's Business Development Work Stream will feature at greater length in the next edition of the newsletter. In broad terms, its purpose is to assist Areas to identify, acquire and develop a balance of work-site placements which is weighted towards those which are reliable, long-term, fixed in location, provide shelter and are located close to or are readily accessible to offenders. There are four key features of

the strategy. These also include plans to develop a regional policy on charging and materials for work. We'll say more next time.

A key step in the plan is to set up a support group for all those placement co-ordinators out there negotiating with partners and beneficiaries and selling the benefits of having unpaid workers. Some have been focusing on the task for some time, some will have been placement

finding for years just as part of the day-job; and some are only just coming into newly-created posts.

A date is soon to be put into their diaries to meet together with the Project Manager in an inaugural meeting which will add flesh to the group's terms of reference and start the process of underpinning and supporting their work with partners and beneficiaries.