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Date: Tuesday 21st October 2008

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# CHIEF CROWN PROSECUTOR ON COMMUNITY SENTENCE

**West Mercia Chief Crown Prosecutor, Colin Chapman joined an unpaid work party on a community sentence at Worcester Countryside Centre, as another one of many planned events for Inside Justice Week 2008 to inform people all about the Criminal Justice System.**

Mr Chapman, head of the Crown Prosecution Service who prosecutes offenders before the Courts set off early morning to join the party at the Countryside Centre in Worcester. Mr Chapman was dressed accordingly in casuals, wearing jeans, a heavy duty pair of walking boots and a navy fleece, ready to lay flower beds at the Centres gardens.

The Unpaid work party at the Countryside Centre was working in conjunction with Worcestershire County Council. The community sentence provided the offenders an opportunity to put something back into their community after committing their offence. The offenders have to attend as part of their order.

Mr Chapman showed real enthusiasm throughout, and got stuck in to the task in hand alongside the offenders. Mr Chapman left the Countryside Centre suitably wet from the rain, with his boots caked in mud.

Mr Chapman said 'I wanted to take the opportunity to do unpaid community work, alongside some real offenders, to see if this was the 'easy ride' that the public seem to think about community punishments.

If the public's idea of getting up early, going out on a cold, wet, miserable morning, and doing physical work that you don't want to do is an easy ride, then the public have a point. That wasn't the reality. This wasn't fun by any stretch of the imagination and I ended my few hours of community punishment reinforcing my view that prison isn't always the best option and that community penalties do work.

I worked with a tremendous group of guys. Yes, they were all criminals who wronged their victims, and society, and were rightly working to make amends. However, they all knew this, accepted it, and knew that they were putting something back into the community at the same time. Moreover, they were all taking the opportunity to reflect on what they had done, how they would work to make sure it did not happen again and build their lives in a crime free way. I am sure that had they been given short prison sentences, which was the alternative option for all of them, their attitude would have been entirely different and less positive.



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I would like to thank the guys I worked with for their spirit and their openness with me, and I would also like to pay tribute to their Probation Service Supervisor, Will Hall, who not only kept us motivated and working on the day but who was undoubtedly a source of advice and wisdom to the guys to give them the best opportunity of turning their lives around.

It's important that people are aware that community sentences certainly aren't an easy option, and I've seen that for myself firsthand.'

Will Hall the Probation Service Supervisor who worked with Colin Chapman and the offenders on the day said, 'It was great to see a Chief Officer from the Crown Prosecution Service showing an interest in the work offenders do which was appreciated by both me and the offenders who took part. An awful lot of good work is put back into communities by offenders carrying out their punishment and it is nice to see this recognised.'

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## Notes to editors:

1. Community sentences allow offenders to undertake rehabilitative programmes and work in the community whilst under the supervision of the probation service. The Criminal Justice Act 2003 brought into force from April 2005 the 'generic community sentence', also known as the community order. This allows judges and magistrates to combine what previously would have been different orders and tailor the sentence to fit the needs of the offender. In the West Mercia counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford/Wrekin during 2007 approximately 120,000 hours of unpaid work also known as community payback was carried out for the benefit of local communities. At least five million hours are carried out nationally.

For more information on Community Sentences/ for an interview with Colin Chapman please contact: Sarah Hickerton [Sarah.hickerton@cps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.hickerton@cps.gsi.gov.uk)

2. For all the events taking place this year during Inside Justice Week (18-25<sup>th</sup> October) in West Mercia please visit <http://lcjb.cjsonline.gov.uk/WestMercia/home.html>:
3. The winners of the Justice Awards will be announced on 21 October. For more information, please visit [www.cjsonline.gov.uk/justiceawards](http://www.cjsonline.gov.uk/justiceawards)
4. West Mercia Criminal Justice Board is responsible for the running of the Criminal Justice System in West Mercia. For further information please visit: [sarah.hickerton@cps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.hickerton@cps.gsi.gov.uk)

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