BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR THE OPERATION OF COMMUNITY SERVICE SCHEMES

A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE SCHEMES:
A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

PART 1: OUTLINE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

REVIEW AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTION

This literature review was commissioned by Corrections Victoria (CV), Department of Justice (DoJ) in 2013 to examine national and international research outcomes regarding the operation of community service schemes in community corrections, to identify effective models and a set of best practice principles. As the aim of the research is exploratory, that is, to shed new light on the operation of community service schemes and also identify knowledge gaps, a literature review was considered the most appropriate methodology.

Through discussion with research and community service experts from Corrections Victoria (CV) and following the findings of a brief, initial scoping review undertaken by the researchers, it was apparent that the way in which community service has been used over time, both nationally and internationally, appears to have evolved from purely a punishment or sanction to a recognition that it may provide a potential for opportunity for meaningful rehabilitation. Keen to exploit such an opportunity, CV identified the following knowledge gaps:

1. What constitutes successful outcomes in community service schemes?
2. How can community service participants’ compliance and completion rates be improved?
3. What is evidence-based practice in the operation of community service schemes?

Thus, the following general research question was formed to guide this review:

‘What are the identifiable best practice principles and models for the operation of community service schemes in community corrections?’

The review systematically poses this general research question when examining the available literature and identifies any knowledge gaps pertinent to the research area. A systematic literature review was chosen as an appropriate methodology that suits the exploratory nature of the research question and can assist to identify research knowledge and gaps in the knowledge, important for practice.

STRUCTURE OF THIS REVIEW

This review is structured in the following five parts:

Part 1: An outline of the literature review, including the methodology.
Part 2: A context for community service in Australia and an overview of the key research concepts used in the review.
Part 3: The findings from the literature examined in this review with a focus on measuring effectiveness and identifying effective practice in community service schemes.
Part 4: The findings from the literature examined in this review that describe models of community service schemes and principles of best practice.

Part 5: A summary of the key findings of the review and a conclusion.

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

This review is specifically concerned with examining available research evidence about the operational components of community service schemes and their effectiveness. As such, the review also examines contemporary research about the determinants of effective practice in community corrections, of which community service is a component. Although some of the available and relevant literature is discussed in this review, it was not the aim of this review to examine or evaluate the overall effectiveness of community service as a sanction in its own right. That is, the review did not examine in detail legislative or judiciary issues related to community service such as legal provisos about the use of community service as an alternative to imprisonment and how these are actually applied by sentencers and whether or not community service should exist as a sanction in its own right. Similarly, the review makes no findings on the merits of using community service as an alternative to prison for fine defaulters, though the operation of such schemes and relevant research is discussed. However, the significant bearing that these issues can have on the operation and overall effectiveness of schemes is acknowledged throughout the review. Notwithstanding some level of formal influence, legislative reviews and sentencing practices are essentially outside the role of community corrections agencies and therefore, in keeping with the focus of the research question, beyond the scope of this review. Similarly, this review does not attempt to clarify the penal philosophy underlying community service, but acknowledges the ambiguity of its aims and how this appears to translate to practice, as well as the implications for evaluation.

The focus of this review on community corrections also precluded examination of the operation and effectiveness of prison work release schemes, albeit that they may operate according to similar principles of community service schemes. This review also did not examine schemes that solely focus on graffiti removal or reduction, but did consider a review of an Australian graffiti scheme that utilised people serving community service to remove graffiti as unpaid work hours. Given the degree of commonality of aims between prison work release schemes and graffiti-removal programs with community service schemes, a systematic review of these approaches could be a worthwhile future endeavour for the development and maintenance of holistic effective practice across the spectrum of corrections.

METHODOLOGY

Systematic approach

The style of this literature review is systematic. The review aims to answer the pre-determined research question and employs a standardised, pre-defined methodology in order to reduce researcher selection bias and enhance the reliability of the review’s findings. Systematic reviews have several advantages over traditional reviews and systematic reviews (along with meta-analysis) and are increasingly becoming the preferred method of reviewing criminal justice literature. Systematic literature reviews provide a more rigorous approach to synthesizing the literature on a particular topic compared to the more open style of conventional reviews (Jessel et al. 2011). Systematic reviews share certain characteristics (Jessel et al. 2011); they are clear about their aims, what databases have been searched, and what studies have been included and excluded and why; in addition, systematic reviews have a narrow focus and report on the quality of studies that have been examined.
Such an approach requires some working knowledge and preliminary understanding of the field (Jesson et al. 2011, p. 103). In this regard, the researchers are both experienced practitioners in community corrections and also conducted an initial scoping review in order to gain contemporary insight into relevant community service issues and gauge the extent, type and quality of the available literature. In addition, the researchers are members of the Collaboration of Researchers for the Effective Development of Offender Supervision (CREDOS), an established international network of researchers, practitioners and policy partners who share a common interest in the effective development of offender supervision. Notably, the researchers involved in key primary studies of community service, Gill McIvor, Sue Rex and Trish McCulloch, are also members of this group.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

This review includes only English-language literature, including documents translated into English from other languages, published between 1970 and 2013. This publication timeframe was selected, as an initial examination of the literature revealed that generally, community service orders were introduced in the 1970s. Literature included in this review was selected according to its relevance to the research question. As such, it must have a significant focus on issues related to the operation and outcomes of CSOs in community corrections. Thus, literature that deals purely with court or judicial administration or criminological philosophies underpinning CSOs was excluded.

As is typical of systematic reviews (Jesson et al. 2011), articles included in this review were mainly sourced from published, peer-reviewed journals. This is because studies published in peer-reviewed journals generally have stronger methodologies because of the peer review process in comparison to those published in less formal journals or magazines and the vast majority of peer-reviewed journals are available online through Monash University databases (Aveyard 2010; Jesson et al. 2011). Papers were considered to be peer-reviewed or refereed as defined by Ulrich’s Web. Relevant studies with a sound methodology, published in books and reports were also included to avoid unnecessarily limiting the scope of the review. Although the systematic approach is considered a strength of this review in terms of its overall trustworthiness and repeatability, it is acknowledged that this may limit the comprehensiveness of the review. Also, like any review, it cannot completely guard against publication bias.

Where possible, only studies with explicit methodologies and outcome measurements were included in this review. As such, this review includes and gives preference to the following types of studies, in order:

1. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses.
2. Randomised control trial (RCT) studies.
3. Efficacy studies undertaken under controlled clinical conditions and effectiveness studies elicited from everyday practice.
4. Process research that determines effectiveness (e.g. high levels of compliance and program completion, reduced recidivism).
5. Explorative studies, including those with sample sizes, provided they are good quality qualitative studies which provide particular insights onto the operation of community service programs (e.g. views of key stakeholders).

This review excludes the following types of studies:

1. Purely descriptive studies.
2. Studies with poor methodology (e.g. ill-defined terms, no outcome measures, etc.).
3. Anecdotal commentaries.
To assist with the methods used in this review and to understand and describe the context of CSO schemes, relevant text books and grey literature, such as official websites, newspaper and other reports and non-academic research were also consulted. These have been included in the review, where appropriate. Both the peer-reviewed journal articles and grey literature were identified through searches using the Google search engine, the Monash University library catalogue (digital and print), individual full text databases (Criminal Justice Abstracts with full text), bibliographic databases (Social Services Abstracts and CINCH: Australian criminology database), reference lists and also information supplied by CREDOS members and Corrections Victoria. The literature search and assessment was undertaken by one researcher and reviewed by a second for quality assurance.

**Search strategy**

**Step 1: Consultation and development of research question**

As noted, the first step in identifying relevant literature for this review was a meeting and discussion with staff from Corrections Victoria. Subsequent to this meeting, CV provided information and links to relevant websites, grey literature (reports, etc.), which have been used as background material to the review and to set the context for the origin and development of CSO schemes in Victoria, across Australia and to some extent, internationally. The relevant resources have been included in the reference list for this review. From this discussion, the research question was developed and agreed upon.

**Step 2: Scoping review**

The second step was to conduct a brief scoping review to determine the extent and availability of literature that appears prima facie relevant to answer the research question. This was conducted by reviewing relevant material already known to the researchers through their own work or involvement with CREDOS, (i.e. McCulloch 2010b; McIvor 1992; Rex & Gelsthorpe 2002, 2004; Trotter 1995), including the reference lists of these books and articles, and also by searching the Monash University Library database. Initially, the search term ‘community service order’ was entered and this returned 738,738 results, many of which immediately appeared irrelevant as they dealt with community service, unrelated to the criminal justice system. Therefore, the search was refined by entering the terms ‘community service’ and ‘corrections’ in the subject lines. This returned 106 results that included; articles (65), books (23), conference proceedings (1), dissertations (2), journals (1), newspaper articles (14), reference entries (1), reviews (3) and text resources (1). Of the articles, thirty-eight appeared in peer-reviewed journals.

**Step 3: Detailed online database searches and initial inclusion/exclusion of literature**

The next step was to expand the search, using three key criminology online databases, Criminal Justice Abstracts with full text database, Social Services Abstracts and CINCH: Australian criminology database. For every search, the parameters were set to only include literature between and including the years 1970-2013, written in English. The same three search terms were used in each database:

1. the complete phrase “community service order”
2. the terms ‘community service order’
3. the terms ‘community service’ and ‘corrections’.

For expediency, literature was selected for initial inclusion when it appeared prima facie relevant to the research question, based on any or all of the following criteria:

1. An exact match with the key search terms, (as determined by the database).
2. A relevant title.
3. Information provided in the abstract to indicate relevance.

Where these appeared ambivalent, the associated full text was manually searched to determine its relevance. Once selected for initial inclusion, the literature was thoroughly re-examined and either retained for final inclusion or excluded, based on the predefined criteria. In each instance, the rationale for the decision was recorded by the researchers.

*Criminal Justice Abstracts with full text*

The searches conducted in the Criminal Justice Abstracts with full text database were done using the Boolean/Phrase search term mode in any field. The first search, using the phrase ‘“community service order”’, returned 6 results, consisting of peer-reviewed (4) and other journal articles (2), all of which were selected for initial inclusion. The second search, using the terms ‘community service order’ returned 38 results that included; articles in academic journals (26), conference papers (5), magazine articles (6) and a review (1). All papers, (except for the review and already included literature), that were grouped by the database according to the subject ‘community service (punishment)’ and ‘alternatives to imprisonment’ were selected for initial inclusion (10 in total). Next, material grouped according to the subjects ‘probation’, ‘community-based corrections’, ‘community supervision’ and ‘corrections (criminal justice administration)’ was considered and an additional 5 articles were selected for inclusion. The titles and abstracts of the remaining articles and conference papers were then examined to determine their relevance to the research question. Where these appeared ambivalent, the associated full text was manually searched to determine its relevance. Articles that appeared irrelevant based on their title and abstract or following a manual search of the full text were then also excluded. No additional articles were considered relevant. In total, 16 papers, consisting of 11 peer-reviewed and 4 other journal or magazine articles and 1 conference paper were selected for initial inclusion.

The search was then repeated in Criminal Justice Abstracts with full text database, using the Boolean/Phrase search term mode and the combined search terms ‘community service’ and ‘corrections’. This search yielded 248 results that included magazine articles (138), academic journal articles (85), conference papers (17) and a review (1). Using the same search and filtering process described previously, 53 papers were selected for initial inclusion, consisting of 16 peer-reviewed and 32 other journal articles, 4 conference papers and 1 report. Finally, the search was repeated using the combined search terms ‘community service’ and ‘alternative sanction’, which produced 8 results, from which 3 peer-reviewed journal articles and one conference paper were selected for initial inclusion, while the remaining 4 papers were excluded, either due to lack of relevance (1) or because of duplication (3). These same searches were then repeated in Social Services Abstracts and CINCH: Australian criminology database.

*Social Services Abstracts*

The first search in Social Services Abstracts, using the phrase ‘“community service order”’, yielded a total of 6 results, of which, all were peer-reviewed journal articles, two had already been included from the previous database search and the remaining four articles were selected for initial inclusion.

The second search, using the terms ‘community service order’, yielded 2128 results, consisting of journal articles (1245), dissertations (884) and one conference paper. When limited to peer-review, the results were narrowed to 1076 journal articles. These were then filtered by five key subject areas, ‘offenders’ (12), ‘criminal justice’ (42), ‘criminal justice policy’ (12), ‘punishment’ (8), and ‘corrections’ (41), considered most relevant to the research question. A total of 115 papers were reviewed, of which 6 peer-reviewed journal articles were selected for inclusion and 109 papers were excluded, due to either lack of relevance (60) or duplication (49). The conference paper (1) and dissertations (884) located in the initial ‘community service order’ search were then also systematically examined using the same five key subject areas, but as none were considered relevant to the research question, all were excluded.
The third search in Social Services Abstract employed the terms “community service” and ‘corrections’ and yielded 27 results, consisting of 26 journal articles and a dissertation that had already been reviewed and excluded, due to lack of relevance. Of the journal articles, 10 peer-reviewed articles were selected for inclusion and 16 were excluded, due to either lack of relevance (10) or duplication (6). Finally, the combined search terms ‘community service’ and ‘alternative sanction’ produced 8 results, from which one peer-reviewed journal article was included and the remaining 7 papers were excluded, due to lack of relevance (2) or duplication (5).

**CINCH: Australian criminology database**

The first search in the CINCH: Australian criminology database, using the exact phrase ‘community service order’, yielded a total of 26 results. Of these, 12 were selected for inclusion and included a book chapter, magazine article, conference papers (2) and reports (8). The remaining 14 papers were excluded due to lack of relevance (11) or duplication (3). The second search, using the exact phrase ‘community service’ and the term ‘corrections’ yielded a total of 202 results. Of these, 47 papers were selected for inclusion, comprising 7 book chapters, 8 conference papers or proceedings, 19 reports, one thesis, 8 peer-reviewed and 4 other articles. The remaining 148 papers were excluded due to lack of relevance (136) or duplication (19). The duplicated material included two references already located during the scoping review. The final search, using the exact phrase ‘community service’ and any term ‘alternative sanction’ did not produce any new results.

**Step 4: Final selection of literature for inclusion in review**

Next, the reference lists of the literature selected for inclusion were scanned for additional, relevant material. The full text of the initially included literature was then all downloaded and saved to a computer file and linked with the relevant bibliographic details, using Endnote. The initially included material was then all examined in detail by the researchers. Papers were excluded according to any of the following criteria:

1. **Prima facie exclusion (PFE)** – literature that appeared immediately and/or obviously irrelevant to the research question.
2. **No full text (NFT)** – during the process of recording the details of the literature, it became clear that in some cases, the full text was not available online and therefore, this material was excluded. This only applied to conference papers and hence, was not considered to be a serious impediment to the comprehensiveness of the review.
3. **Trustworthiness (T)** – studies that were purely descriptive or not considered to have a robust enough methodology to contribute to an evidence base concerning the research question were excluded. As noted previously, this included:
   - Purely descriptive studies (PDS).
   - Studies with poor methodology (e.g. ill-defined terms, no outcome measures, etc.).
   - Anecdotal commentaries.

Literature was then grouped thematically in Endnote and reviewed thoroughly against the requirements of the research question. From this process twelve key studies emerged, which are described in the next section of this review, as well as Table 1 (see Appendix 1). The remaining literature was referred to in the review as required.

**KEY STUDIES**

As noted, twelve studies (CJNI 2010, 2013; MacKay & Rook 1976; Mair & May 1997; McCulloch 2010b; McLvor 1992; Oxley 1984; Pease et al. 1977; Pease et al. 1975; Rex et al. 2004; Trotter 1993; Wood 2012) emerged from the literature as being central to this review. These are referred to in this review as the ‘key studies’ and are outlined in detail in Table 1 (see Appendix 1). The key studies were conducted on community service...
schemes in Australia, Scotland, England and Wales, Northern Ireland and the United States of America (USA) and were published between 1975 and 2013. Their findings comprise the core of the research material presented in this review, though other material is also referred to, where relevant and appropriate. A brief description of the studies and their context is provided as follows:

Community service in Scotland

McIvor’s (1992) influential study of community service in Scotland between 1986 and 1991 has emerged from this review as the most significant in terms of its identification of effective practice principles against which to evaluate other community service schemes. The program of research, involved five separate, but related studies that examined the extent to which the community service order scheme in Scotland met a stated range of policy objectives. The five studies are outlined as follows:

1. This first study aimed to identify and optimise effective practice in community service, rather than evaluate the viability or effectiveness of community service in comparison to other measures. Notably, identification of good practice was contingent on an appraisal of the comparative effectiveness of the existing diverse operational arrangements across schemes.
2. The second study, conducted by Martin Knapp and Eileen Robertson, examined the comparative costs of community service orders and the most likely alternative custodial sentence that offenders might have received.
3. The third study, conducted by Jim Carnie, examined sentencers’ perceptions of community service. A partial aim of this study was to assess the degree to which courts were using community service orders as alternatives to custodial sentences, as intended by the introduction of the national operating standards for Scottish Community Service schemes in April 1989, rather than in lieu of other non-custodial sentences.
4. The fourth study aimed to assess the degree to which community service work was valued by both individual beneficiaries and voluntary and statutory agencies that offered work placements and agency placements facilitated offenders to become integrated with other volunteers and staff. It also sought to identify any problems experienced by these beneficiary groups.
5. The fifth study, conducted in late 1991, around 3.5 years after the original research, aimed to analyse reconviction among the offenders who were questionnaire respondents in the first study.

CS Pathfinder Projects in England and Wales

This is a large-scale study, conducted in England and Wales, known as the Community Service (CS) Pathfinder projects and sponsored by the UK Home Office under the Crime Reduction Programme (Rex et al. 2004). The projects were part of an overarching ‘What Works’ strategy under which the Joint Prisons/Probation Accreditation Panel was to ratify a core syllabus of demonstrably effective offender programs. Their goal was for these programs, as well as community service to be delivered to sixty thousand offenders by 2003/04. The aim of the projects was to develop the existing community service research base to examine what in community service could be effective in reducing recidivism, concentrating on the following promising approaches or change models: (1) Pro-social Modelling (PSM); (2) Skills Accreditation (SA); (3) Skills Accreditation combined with Pro-social Modelling (SA + PSM); and (4) Tackling offending-related needs (TON). The key aims of the evaluation were to address the following specific questions:

1. Were the intended elements implemented in practice?
2. Have the projects had impacts on outputs (functioning and attendance), intermediate outcomes (skill, employment and training gains; attitudinal, behavioural and offending changes)?
3. Are such changes connected to subsequent decreases in rates of reconviction?
4. How do the costs of the project inputs correlate to the outputs and outcomes?

Note: In April 2001, the community service (CS) order in England and Wales was renamed community punishment (CP) order and the combination order became known as the community punishment and rehabilitation (the combined) order. The new names of the orders are used in the report of the CS Pathfinder projects and the term ‘community service’ is used to refer to work undertaken by offenders subject to a community punishment or combined order. For the purposes of this review however, the research projects are still referred to as the Community Service (CS) Pathfinder projects.

What works in the supervision of offenders in Victoria

This study by Trotter (1993) was funded by the Australian Criminology Research Council and the Victorian Office of Corrections, (now known as the Victorian Department of Justice), and involved the teaching the 'integrated supervision model', to a group of Community Corrections (CC) Officers in Community Based Corrections in Victoria. The principles of the 'integrated supervision model' include: using pro-social modelling and reinforcement; using problem solving; employing empathy; and focussing on high risk offenders. The study sought to consider whether Community Corrections Officers (CCOs) who received this training carried out the principles, and whether their clients offended less compared to a control group. The study also considered the impact on offenders, of association with other offenders, whilst undertaking unpaid community work. Specifically, it considered whether some worksites are more likely to have a positive effect on offenders in comparison to other worksites, or alternatively, whether some worksites are more likely to have a negative effect on offenders, in comparison to others. It considered whether offenders placed on worksites with other offenders are more likely to breach their orders, or to commit further offences, than offenders placed on sites where they work alone or where they work alongside members of the community. This study had three key aims: (1) to determine if it were possible to teach community Corrections Officers the principles which appear related to effective supervision; (2) to determine whether the principles related to reduced client reoffending; and (3) to examine whether the nature of community work placements, in community based corrections in Victoria, Australia, was related to offending rates of participants in the programs. Specific to the last aim, the study sought to examine whether offenders placed on worksites with other offenders had higher recidivism rates in comparison to offenders who were placed on individual worksites, where they either worked alone or with noncriminal members of the community.

Note: The results of the ‘integrated supervision model’ component of the study are not as comprehensively reported in this table or in the literature review due to the greater relevance of the results of the community service component of this study.

Pro-social modelling and community service supervision

Two articles by McCulloch (2010a, 2010b) report on the findings of a small scale Scottish study that aimed to evaluate the impact of pro-social modelling training on the practice of community service supervision within a criminal justice social work team, drawing primarily on staff and offender perspectives. The specific aims of this study are to demonstrate if and to what degree the training of community service staff in PSM demonstrably effects staff practice and, where possible, service outcomes; and contribute to understanding of the wider processes affecting training impact and service development in community service in general.

Home Office research reports on community service in Britain

These are two reports on studies of experimental community service programs conducted in six areas of England. The first report (Pease et al. 1975) described the scheme and the second report (Pease et al. 1977)
evaluates its effectiveness. The second report is the first attempt to assess the use of community service as an alternative to imprisonment on the basis of data from the original experimental schemes (see Pease et al. 1975) and aims to answer the following two general questions:

1. What happened in terms of subsequent reconviction to the sample of offenders who were the subject of the earlier study (see Pease et al 1975)?
2. If community service had not been available to the courts which dealt with those offenders, what other sentences would they have received?

The report describes the following three studies:

1. **Displacement from custody**: This study is based on the concept that for the use of every new penal sentence, an ‘old’ sentence is displaced and uses circumstantial evidence to estimate sentence substitution for community service and custodial sentences. Specifically, the study aims to estimate the number of offenders sentenced to community service orders instead of custody.

2. **Reconviction study**: This study calculated the one year reconviction for offenders who were made subject to a CSO within the first 12 months of the scheme’s operation in each of the experimental areas. The aim this study was to evaluate what happened terms of subsequent reconviction to the sample of offenders who were the subject of the earlier study (see Pease et al 1975).

3. **The offence seriousness experiment**: This study estimated the relative seriousness of new offences committed by offenders who were made subject to a community service order within the first 12 months of the scheme’s operation in each of the experimental areas, in comparison to the offences for which they had initially been sentenced to the community service order. The aim this study was to determine whether offenders who were reconvicted following community service committed generally more or less serious offences than those for which they had first been sentenced to community service.

**Offenders on probation in Britain**

This study (Mair & May 1997) involved a survey, conducted in the first half of 1994, of offenders on probation. The study excluded offenders subject solely to community service orders, but examined offenders’ experiences of dual orders (including community service orders) and orders that included community service. The study aimed to learn more about the impact of probation from the point of view of those supervised by eliciting the following offender information: their backgrounds; their experiences of probation; and their views about the helpfulness of probation in addressing problems and stopping recidivism.

**The Tasmanian Work Order Scheme**

This study (MacKay & Rook 1976), funded by the Research Council, Australian Institute of Criminology, aimed to evaluate the operation of Tasmania’s Work Order Scheme, an optional alternative to short terms of imprisonment, introduced into the Tasmanian criminal justice system in 1972. The study was conducted over twenty-six weeks in 1974 and considered the following operational aspects to the scheme: attendance and conduct; differences between regions; differences between projects; the effects of weather on attendance; and the effect of court breaches on attendance, termed the ‘contagion element’. The study also compared data on the outcomes of Work Orders to short-term imprisonment in terms of recidivism rates.
Evaluating rehabilitation: South Australian community service scheme

This study (Oxley 1984) conducted over five months by a senior research officer from the New Zealand Department of Justice, examines community service orders in South Australia. The study proposes a model for evaluating the usefulness of community service in rehabilitating offenders and addresses whether community service reduces offending. Community service objectives in South Australia are to: be an alternative to prison; be a substantial punishment; provide reparation for offending; and rehabilitate offenders. This focus of this evaluation is on the fourth objective and aims to learn how community service rehabilitates.

Restorative community service in Washington State

This study (Wood 2012) is a component of a broader three year case study on the use and effects of restorative justice interventions at the Clark County Juvenile Court (CCJC) in Washington State, USA. The aims of the study were to explore CCJC’s implementation and use of ‘restorative community service’ (RCS) as part of its larger implementation of a restorative justice framework, between 1999 and 2005. The study examined: the sorts of institutional changes created by the court, including rejection of work crews in favour of ‘real work’ within community locations; the variety and characteristics of social interactions, notably how youth and volunteers ‘made sense’ of their work; the practical implications of findings for restorative justice advocates for using community service in a youth context; and the theoretical implications of findings for research on community service in sociology and criminology.

Community Justice Inspections: Probation Board of Northern Ireland

These are two reports of the inspections by the Community Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland’s (PBNI) supervision of offenders in the community and on community service. The first report (2010) is of a thematic inspection of the PBNI’s arrangements for persons to perform unpaid work as part of Community Service Orders (CSOs) and combined orders (COs). At the time of the inspection seven hundred and eighty-six people were subject to CSOs and one hundred and twenty-seven were subject to COs in Northern Ireland, representing 24% of PBNI’s statutory orders, supervised at any one time. Relevant to this report is the Northern Ireland Standards (Northern Ireland Office 2006) and the subsequent inspectorate report by the CJI (2013) that comprehensively examined how the PBNI supervised offenders in the community, including those on community service. The evaluation was reportedly undertaken while the PBNI experienced continuing mounting demand for their services. Also relevant to this report is the Best Practice Framework Incorporating Northern Ireland Standards (PBNI 2012).
COMMUNITY SERVICE IN AUSTRALIA

‘There is something very attractive about the concept of an honest day’s work.’ (Minister for Community Welfare Services in Victoria, The Age, 25 July, 1984, In Leivesley 1986, p. 261)

The idea of community service as a punishment was introduced to Australia, in 1971, in Tasmania, where it was enacted into legislation and implemented as a legal order in 1973 (DoCWS Victoria 1982; Freiberg & Ross 1999). Western Australia was the next state to do this (1976 – 1977), followed by the Northern Territory (1979 – 1980), New South Wales (1980 – 1981), Queensland (1980 – 1981), South Australia (1982) and Victoria (1981 – 1982) (DoCWS Victoria 1982; Freiberg & Ross 1999). Adoption of community service as a sanction in Australia mirrored the implementation of such schemes in parts of the United States of America (USA) and nation-wide in the United Kingdom (UK) during the mid-1960s and 1970s. Since this time, the development and implementation of community service schemes has continued to spread world-wide, albeit in an uneven fashion, mostly throughout Western Europe and old commonwealth nations, (particularly, New Zealand and Canada), but with limited use in Asia, South America and Africa, and none known in the Middle East (Harris & Lo 2002). For detailed overview of the history and evolution of community service in Australia, see Bevan (1983), Harris and Lo (2002) and Kilcommins (2002).

Community service in the sentencing hierarchy

There is variation between and within countries as to the place given to community service within the sentencing hierarchy (Harris & Lo 2002). In Australia, community service is part of an array of ‘alternative’ sanctions available for courts to use when a prison sentence is not obligatory or required, or when courts can suspend the execution of a term of imprisonment or otherwise alter its structure. According to Freiberg and Ross, ‘Such sanctions are “intermediate” in the sense that, in the sentencing hierarchy, they lie between imprisonment at the one extreme, and bonds and fines at the other.’ (Freiberg & Ross 1999, p. 133) An intermediate sanction is one which is an independent measure, rather than an alternative method of serving a custodial sentence, the latter of which can be termed a ‘substitutional’ sanction (Freiberg & Ross 1999; Howells & Heseltine 2006). By this definition, community service as it operates in Australia is an intermediate sanction, which can be imposed either as a legal order in its own right, or as a condition of a broader community-based order (Freiberg & Ross 1999; Howells & Heseltine 2006). This can include community service orders (CSO) or other community-based orders, such as probation, with a condition to undertake unpaid work. Such orders are referred to in the literature as ‘combined orders’ or ‘combination orders’ (Mair & May 1997; Rex et al. 2004).

Aims of community service

The Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia (AIC 2004) describe some of the aims of Australian community correctional services as: ensure ‘public safety’ through crime prevention and reductions in recidivism; promote offender ‘rehabilitation’, ‘compliance’ and opportunities for ‘reparation’; and provide relevant authorities with ‘assessment and advice’. Community service, situated within community corrections, is similarly defined by multiple executive aims. Proponents of community service have touted it as a virtual panacea, one that seemingly addresses the needs of all key criminal justice stakeholders through its retributive, restorative, diversionary and rehabilitative aims (McIvor 1992; Pease & McWilliams 1980). Around
the time of its introduction to Victoria in 1982, a government report described aims and benefits of the community service scheme, as follows:

A Community Service Order is seen as a substantive penalty aimed at enabling offenders to make reparation to Society for harm done through their offences. Projects on which offenders are required to perform unpaid community service are selected so as to provide tangible benefit to the community while at the same time offering worthwhile experience for offenders...[The] scheme provides an alternative to imprisonment for selected offenders...[and] opportunities for achievement of some positive effect on the life of the offender. (DoCWS Victoria 1982, pp. 2-3)

However, critics have pointed out concerns about the multi-faceted aims of community service and their consequences, stating that this has not only confused their purpose, but has resulted in diverse, inconsistent implementation and practice, as well as net widening (Bray 2002; Cromer 1978; Immarigeon 1995; Pease et al. 1977; Pease et al. 1975)

### Characteristics of community service schemes

While there is variation between community service schemes across international, national and local jurisdiction they all share the common feature of supervising offenders in the community to undertake a predetermined, court-mandated number of hours of unpaid work as a consequence for their offending. It is this element of undertaking unpaid hours of work that sets the concept, operation and experience of community service apart from most other criminal justice sanctions. In Australia, community service schemes have been historically characterised by the following elements: offenders must voluntarily accept to undertake community service; hours of unpaid work are between forty to two-hundred and forty hours; the orders do not exceed twelve months; probation services assess offenders suitability for the scheme prior to sentencing and provide this advice to the court; and offenders are supervised by community service staff while serving their orders (Leivesley 1986). For the most part, these characteristics remain relevant today and are common to community service schemes elsewhere.

The profile of offenders on community service in Australia, like Scotland, England and Wales, is young, single and unemployed males, who generally come from stable family and accommodation backgrounds and have minor or no issues with alcohol and other drugs (Bevan 1983; May 1999; McIvor 1992; Oxley 1984). These offenders usually have at least one prior conviction, but few have a history of imprisonment and have been sentenced to community service for relatively minor or less serious offences, such as property offences, those involving dishonesty (e.g. stealing), minor assaults, motor offences, and those breaching the public order (Bevan 1983; May 1999; McIvor 1992, 1993a; Oxley 1984). In contrast, in the United States, people on community service tend to be ‘white-collar offenders’ or those who have committed minor crimes, which are less likely to include property offences or those involving violence (McIvor 1993a). In some Australian jurisdictions, community service can be applied in addition to a disqualification (e.g. driver’s licence) and in lieu of a fine default. Although the last Australian state to introduce a community service order scheme was Victoria, it appears to have been the first to introduce the scheme as an alternative method of dealing with fine defaulters (Bevan 1983).

A key component of community service is offenders performing a range of different types of unpaid work at different placement sites in the community. Placements could be at ‘ongoing sites’, where community service is performed repeatedly (e.g. community garden, local library, etc.), and ‘one-time sites’ where work is performed just once (e.g. neighbourhood clean-up or community event, etc.) (Wood 2012). In addition, the work can be performed with other offenders subject to community service in groups (e.g. group placements or workshops), created specifically for the purpose of carrying out community service hours, or the work can be performed on a more or less individual basis through agency placements. These placements are generally
located at community-based, non-government agencies that have partnered with community corrections to provide offenders with opportunities to undertake their community service hours. The type of work ranges from manual tasks, such as painting, gardening and graffiti removal to personal tasks, such as, helping people with disabilities or the elderly. Work can be performed in the company of other offenders or individually and is supervised by a community service officer or volunteer.

**EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IN COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS: KEY RESEARCH CONCEPTS**

This review makes reference to a number of key concepts and findings from the existing pool of research on effective practice in community corrections. A brief overview of these concepts and associated studies is provided to assist in interpreting the findings from the key and other studies examined in this review and recognising their relevance to effective practice in community service.

### The ‘what works’ paradigm

There is an expansive and growing body of literature that has examined ‘what works’ in correctional programs and approaches in general to reduce recidivism. As this material is extensively documented and readily available elsewhere (Andrews & Bonta 2003, 2010; Andrews & Dowden 2006; Andrews et al. 1990; Burnett & Roberts 2004; Chui 2003; Lipsey 1995; Lowenkamp et al. 2006; McGuire 1995; McGuire et al. 2002; Trotter 2006; Turner 2010a, 2010b), this review will provide only a brief outline. A useful synopsis of evidence-based practice in corrections is provided by McGuire’s (2000) review of what works to reduce criminality. McGuire’s review found that a wide range of interventions with offenders can be effective in reducing recidivism, but that certain interventions work better than others and that punitive, deterrence-based interventions are linked to increases, rather than reductions in recidivism. McGuire identified that the services and programs that work best to reduce recidivism are characterised by the following features:

- **Theoretical soundness** – services and programs that are built around overt and clearly articulated theoretical underpinnings that provide a cause-and-effect rationale for crime and offending behaviour, based on experimentally sound data from disciplines such as, psychology, criminology and related social sciences.
- **Risk assessment** – services and programs that acknowledge the crucial role of risk-assessments of recidivism, drawn from information about participants’ criminal history and other variables, and that allocate various grades and types of supervision or service delivery to participants, appropriate to this knowledge.
- **Criminogenic needs** – services and programs that involve ‘...assessments of criminogenic needs or dynamic risk factors, such as attitudes, criminal associates, skills deficits, substance abuse, family issues, or self-control problems which are known to be linked to offending behaviour and which change over time.’ (McGuire 2000)
- **Responsivity** – services and programs that engage participants by recognising the necessity to tailor services to individual needs and by responding appropriately to ‘...the active, focused and participatory learning and change styles encountered in many offenders’ (McGuire 2000)
- **Structure** – services and programs that provide staff and participants with lucid aims and outcome goals, and encourage expert and ordered staff participation in activities that are clearly related to individual offenders’ needs.
- **Methods** – services and programs that employ a cognitive-behavioural approach, which can involve a compilation of ‘theoretically inter-related methods’ that centre on the interactions between a person’s feelings, thoughts and behaviour during the course of an offence (McGuire 2000).
• Program integrity – services and programs that ensure that only suitably trained staff deliver interventions and that the integrity of the program is continuously scrutinised and evaluated to ensure adherence to their prearranged aims and outcome goals and their chosen methods of intervention.

The findings of McGuire’s review also lend support to a wider view that interventions delivered in a community setting are more effective than those delivered in prisons or detention centres (McGuire 2000; Trotter 2007). However, it is important to note McGuire’s (2000) finding that, ‘badly-designed, poorly implemented services emerge as ineffective regardless of criminal justice setting.’ In summary, programs or services that work best to reduce recidivism comprise structure and theoretical soundness, risk assessment of re-offending and corresponding levels of service or supervision, responsivity of services to individual differences in learning and change styles and assessments of criminogenic needs.

What works with young offenders

Given the large number of younger people made subject to community service, it is also worth briefly examining the existing research findings that relate to working effectively with this group in a criminal justice context. While McGuire’s (2000) review provides significant and useful insights into ‘what works’ for offenders in general, but given the significant developmental differences between adult and young offenders, there are liable to be associated differences in risk, need and responsivity. A literature review prepared by McGuire, Kinderman and Hughes (2002) for the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales compiles twenty-three systematic reviews or meta-analyses that examine effective practice with juvenile and young offenders (ranging in ages 12 – 21 years) to reduce recidivism rates. The compilation excludes meta-analytic reviews focused on sex offenders or exclusively on adults. According to the reviewers, the findings are statistically significant and indicate that, on average, the effects of ‘treatment’ are positive in terms of reducing recidivism compared to ‘no treatment’ (McGuire et al. 2002). Specifically, the review found no or insufficient evidence to support the following approaches as effective in reducing re-offending rates for young offenders:

• Deterrence-based approaches and punitive sanctions such as, shock incarceration programs – (e.g. boot camps, ‘Scared Straight’ program) these in some cases actually yield significant increases in recidivism, which supports McGuire’s (2000) earlier finding for adult offenders, that punitive, deterrence-based interventions are linked to increases, rather than reductions in recidivism.
• Institutional milieu therapy
• Vocational training without connection to genuine employment prospects – these appear related to increased recidivism rates.
• Wilderness or outdoor challenge programs that are without high standards of training or therapeutic aspects – these appear related to increased recidivism rates.
• Programs that target only ‘non-criminogenic needs’ – these are associated with increases in recidivism (McGuire et al. 2002).

In addition, an Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) review (Sallybanks 2002) of ‘what works’ for preventing and reducing offending in young people (aged 12 to 25 years), concluded that more effective programs are targeted at individual’s needs. The report noted that:

One program does not necessarily “fit all” and a case management approach to dealing with young people may be more appropriate. Finding the right program for the young person is important so that the risk factors and problem behaviours specific to that individual are addressed (Sallybanks 2002).
Following on from this premise, it has also been argued that correctional programs for young people should be culturally specific in order to meet the needs of individuals (Sallybanks 2002). This is particularly pertinent to correctional responses to the overrepresentation of young (and adult) Indigenous Australians in the criminal justice system, especially Aboriginal girls and young women whose numbers have seen a dramatic recent increase in prison (Turner 2010a), as well as high numbers of young offenders from other specific ethnic backgrounds (Cunneen & White 2007).

The ‘desistance’ paradigm

McNeill (2006, 2008) argues that missing from the ‘what works’ paradigm is a conceptualisation of how change processes occur, and that this must first be understood in order to consider how practice should be shaped. Specifically, McNeill advocates for an understanding of ‘desistance’, the methods by which offenders cease and refrain from offending (McNeill 2008). He writes:

Building an understanding of the human processes and social contexts in and through which change occurs is a necessary precursor to developing practice paradigms; put another way, constructions of practice should be embedded in understandings of desistance. (McNeill 2008, p. 13)

The ‘desistance paradigm’ concentrates more on criminological research about how change works than on the evaluative evidence of what works in its developmental approach to evidence-based practice (Maruna & LeBel 2010). It may also be described as a strengths-based approach, as it seeks to promote elements that are empirically known or considered to be related to desistance (e.g. pro-social participations, social connections and capital), rather than a deficits-based approach that is offence-focused and targets or rectifies offender deficits (Maruna & LeBel 2010).

Effective practice with involuntary clients

Clients of correctional services and programs are essentially involuntary. This is not to say that all involuntary clients are necessarily ‘resistant’, but rather that it is important to acknowledge the coercive, or at least constraining, influence of the criminal justice system in offering clients the possibility of increased or reduced punitive sanctions, depending on their level of compliance with the conditions of a legal mandate (Chui 2006). Effective practice with involuntary clients requires particular approaches and worker skills to enhance client motivation for positive change, which has implications for the way in which correctional staff work with their clients (Rooney 1992; Trotter 2006). Trotter (2011) identifies a number of approaches as effective in producing improved outcomes for involuntary clients including, role clarification, reinforcing and modelling pro-social values, collaborative problem-solving (based on the client’s definition of problems and goals), and an integrated approach that uses all of these. He argues that, ‘Effective work with involuntary clients involves understanding what the client expects from the intervention and clarifying misconceptions.’ (Trotter 2006) Trotter further notes that building positive worker-client relationships through empathy, humour, optimism and some self-disclosure can provide the foundation for effective outcomes when accompanied by pro-social modelling and problem solving (Trotter 2006). Trotter (2006) also points to the value of dealing with a wide range of client needs, consistent with findings from a meta-analysis by Andrews and Bonta (2003).

Important to this review are the findings of Trotter’s (1993) study, (mentioned as a key study for this review and outlined in Table 1 (see Appendix 1)), that examined the outcomes of an ‘integrated supervision model’ training delivered to Victorian community corrections staff. The model comprised: the use of pro-social modelling and reinforcement; problem solving; employing empathy; and focussing on high risk offenders. Trotter (1993) found that offenders, supervised by the officers involved in the project, indicated that they received more help with their problems and felt more supported in comparison to two client control groups;
and clients receiving supervision by the officers in the project had more than thirty per cent lower breach and imprisonment rates in comparison to the control group clients. In their bid to reduce recidivism then, correctional agencies must understand and apply ‘what works’ at the system and service levels, as well as at the level of individual, day-to-day practice.

In an article that seeks to draw links between the ‘what works’ and desistance literature, Rex (1999) reports on the findings of a study about the degree to which probationers connected their supervision experiences to changes in their behaviour, including reducing their offending. Notably, the findings of the study suggested that where both the offender and probation officer viewed their supervisory relationship to be positive, it appeared to contain many of the components of pro-social modelling (Rex 1999). Rex (1999) also highlights the importance of understanding the closely related concepts of ‘moral authority’ and ‘legitimacy’. She describes this in part as the requirement for correctional officers to behave in a way that is ‘authoritative’ rather than ‘authoritarian’ (Rex 1999). She writes that:

> According to Beetham, those in (political or other) positions of authority derive legitimacy from the justifiability of their words and actions in terms of people’s beliefs; because co-operation with authority is not automatic, it needs to be exercised in a manner which preserves its legitimacy. (Rex 1999, p. 380)

These concepts are also related to research on compliance, which aims to better understand how and why some offenders comply with the conditions of their legal order (McCulloch 2010a; Robinson & McNeill 2010). These are important considerations to the design of correctional programs and to the provision of offender supervision and interventions. This research is examined in further detail in the following part (3) of this review.
The first issue in addressing the research question was to determine what constitutes effective practice in community service? In other words, how is success measured in community service schemes? This issue was prevalent among the key studies and other related literature (McIvor 1992; Pease & McWilliams 1977; Rex et al. 2004; Trotter 1993). For example, Pease and McWilliams (1977) suggest that community service schemes require different methods of thinking about the work of correctional services. They note that community service is different to other correctional programs in some general, but important ways. Specifically, they point out that: the offender subject to community service is also a giver, rather than just a receiver of assistance; the contract between the court and offender is very specific and this has particular implications for breaches of such contract; and the extent and nature of contact with the offender required by the scheme is unique (Pease & McWilliams 1977). Others suggest that, notwithstanding these differences, the effectiveness of community service can be better understood and developed by applying effective practice principles relevant to providing services, programs and supervision to offenders on community-based orders in general (McIvor 2002).

The literature on effective practice in community service, located for this review, can be grouped into the following two broad categories:

1. Empirical studies on community service using all or any of the following measures of effectiveness:
   a. comparison of scheme outcomes against all or any of the stated aims of community service;
   b. examination of offender recidivism and reconviction;
   c. analysis of order completion rates;
   d. the degree to which community service has been used as an alternative to prison (diversion, reduced prison population and net widening);
   e. the cost effectiveness of community service in comparison to other sanctions;
   f. the ‘McIvor Criteria’ (offenders’ perception of the work as worthwhile, contact with beneficiaries and opportunity to acquire skills); and
   g. views of offenders, beneficiaries and administrators of CS schemes.

2. Theoretical and actual comparisons of the operation of community service schemes with general research knowledge about effective practice in community corrections (e.g. ‘what works’, desistance, pro-social modelling). In other words, in the studies, effectiveness in community service is measured against the existing evidence base for effective practice in community corrections. Some studies employed a set of ‘best practice’ principles or standards, based on such research knowledge as a benchmark for effective practice in community service.

Relevant findings of the key and other studies are discussed in the following sections of the review, arranged according to these categories.

EVALUATING COMMUNITY SERVICE AGAINST ITS AIMS

The simplest approach to evaluating the apparent success of community service appears to be to measure its achievements against the stated aims of the scheme. However, as discussed, community service schemes have many aims, such as:
• **punishment** – a retributive or punitive approach, enacted through the deprivation of the offender’s leisure time (Kilcommins 2002; McIvor 2010);

• **rehabilitation** – closely associated with reintegrative goals, achieved through the positive effects on offenders of helping others (McIvor 2010);

• **reintegration** – through the offender being enabled to remain in the community, preserving existing employment and family connections, as well as by interacting with others during the undertaking of unpaid work (McIvor 2010);

• **reparation** – a restorative approach, by undertaking unpaid work of benefit to usually disadvantaged sections of the community (Rook 1978); and

• **cost-savings** – to the community, by reducing the prison population through diversion to community service as an alternative sanction, as well as through offenders’ provision of unpaid work (McIvor 2010).

As noted, these multiple aims of community service appear ambiguous and to some degree, conflicting, creating substantial challenges for evaluation (Armstrong 1983; McIvor 1992; Rex et al. 2004). Pease (1985) suggests that the uncertainty in the penal philosophy underpinning community service also has implications for practice. He states, ‘The consequences of confused thinking become evident when community service ceases to be words on paper and starts being work in a community.’ (Pease 1985, p. 59)

Notably, a review of the New South Wales community service order scheme that examined whether offenders participating in the scheme thought it was meeting its aims found that different offenders perceived the scheme to have different aims (Miner & Seth 1983). Specifically, the reviewers found that of the fifty-one offenders interviewed, the majority of offenders (41%) thought the most important aim of the scheme was to be an alternative to imprisonment; while others thought that offender rehabilitation (27%) or reparation to the community (21%) was of greatest importance (Miner & Seth 1983). Similar findings were made by the Judicial Commission of New South Wales (NSW) in their study (Houghton 1991) of the views about community service held by nineteen correctional community service organisers in NSW. The research was conducted over a six-week period in November-December 1989 and drew the following conclusions about the community service organisers’ understanding of the aims of the scheme: all considered community service to be an alternative to prison (100%); some mentioned the scheme was to benefit the community (63%); other considered it to be for the rehabilitation of offenders (42%); followed by reparation (26%); and less expensive punishment (16%) (Houghton 1991). Notably, most organisers mentioned more than one aim of the scheme (Houghton 1991), reflecting an understanding of the multiple objective of community service. According to McIvor (1992), in spite of this confused underlying penal philosophy, her comprehensive study was able to conclude that in many respects and to certain degrees the community service scheme in Scotland had achieved its aims (McIvor 1992). This suggests that, while challenging, robust evaluation of community service is possible, provided the limitations of these mixed aims are acknowledged and taken into account when considering the outcomes of such research.

### Evaluating rehabilitation

Most evaluations of community service have concentrated on measuring its effectiveness as an alternative sanction, in terms of reducing both prison numbers and associated costs, as well as reducing recidivism rates (Henning 1997), while very few studies have primarily focused their attention on the possible rehabilitative and reparative effects of community service. However, one South Australian study has focused expressly on examining community service’s role in rehabilitation. It noted that among the scheme’s other stated objectives of being an alternative to prison, a substantial punishment, and providing reparation for offending, was the objective to rehabilitate offenders (Oxley 1984). The study aimed to learn how community service rehaibilitates by developing a theoretical model to explain how this might be achieved. The model
incorporated ways that community service components (immediate outcomes) can be converted into changes in the individual offender’s attitudes and skills (intermediate outcomes), which could eventually reduce the risk of recidivism (ultimate outcome). The study found that despite providing some incentives, community service generally acted as a deterrent, (a hassle offenders would not want to go through again), instead of a constructive opportunity for offenders to enter into a crime-free lifestyle (Oxley 1984). It identified two strains of community service that existed in practice: one providing for rehabilitation and the other for punishment (Oxley 1984). According to Oxley:

> The study concludes that rehabilitation has little impact in that it was not a major reference point during implementation stages, nor was it consciously pursued in day-to-day operations. However, rehabilitation ideals are part of the training and experience of the community service staff and despite the diluted authority of the rehabilitative objective, the scheme is by no means devoid of rehabilitative components.’ (Oxley 1984, pp. vi-vii)

This suggests the possibility that the lack of primacy given to the objective of rehabilitation in the South Australian community service scheme, translated to practice in a similar way. Interestingly, reducing the risk of recidivism was defined as the desired ultimate outcome or, in other words, rehabilitation of offenders was defined in terms of minimising the risk of re-offending. It is outside the scope of this review to examine debates about the best way to define and understand what constitutes offender ‘rehabilitation’ in a correctional context, but it is important to point out the significance of this issue to evaluating and determining success in community service and other correctional approaches. Due to its experimental nature and the short period of the study, a definitive conclusion could not be reached about the ultimate outcome of reducing recidivism (Oxley 1984).

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**Community service as restorative justice**

Although widely acknowledged as restorative in nature, the inclusion of community service within restorative justice has secured considerable, but certainly not unanimous support (Latimer et al. 2005; Umbreit 1997; Wood 2012). While definitions vary, restorative justice is essentially an approach to offending that proactively attempts to directly involve victims, offenders and communities in problem-solving processes intended to repair harm caused by the offending (Latimer et al. 2005; Umbreit 1997; Van Ness 2004). Notions of what does and does not constitute restorative justice are problematic, as a range of responses to criminal behaviour may be covered by the ‘so-called restorative umbrella’ (Latimer et al. 2005, p. 128). Reparation is a shared goal of restorative justice approaches and community service. In broad terms, restorative justice approaches aim to provide reparation for harms caused to the specific victim of an offender’s criminal act, while community service offers more generalised reparation to the community (Umbreit 1997; Van Ness 2004). This approach to victims by community service schemes has also been conceptualised as ‘community as victim’ and ‘symbolic restitution’ (Bazemore & Maloney 1994). According to Wood (2012, p. 689), community service is seen by some, in favour of restorative justice, ‘as potentially beneficial to and generally consistent with the goals of restorative justice to the degree that it may complement larger strategies of repairing harms to victims and holding offenders accountable.’ However, critics of this view maintain that because of its lack of opportunity for the offenders and their victims to take a direct part in the decision-making, community service sits squarely outside the scope of restorative justice work, regardless of benefits to offenders or communities as a result of such work (Wood 2012). Others are concerned about the problem of justice agencies co-opting or appropriating community service and other restorative justice programs and interventions, to the extent of simply re-branding their programs as ‘restorative’ (Wood 2012). Umbreit (1997, p. 22) also notes that, besides work supervisors, community service programs generally do not involve citizen volunteers as actively as restorative justice approaches and can be administered in a retributive fashion, since most ‘were not intentionally developed or evaluated within a conceptual framework of restorative justice.’ In
South Australia, Oxley (1984) observed that only half the offenders in her sample worked alongside volunteers on community service projects and again, only around half the projects provided opportunities for offenders to help people more disadvantaged than themselves. She concluded that the reparative ideal of using community service as a way for offenders to amend for harm caused by their offending was not generally acknowledged, although community service was considered a way for offenders to ‘give something back’ to the community (Oxley 1984).

COMMUNITY SERVICE AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO IMPRISONMENT

Alternative to custody

There is a considerable body of research on community service order outcomes that has focused on its effectiveness as an alternative sanction, that is, an alternative to custody, as well as the potential net-widening effect of this sanction when applied in other ways (Henning 1997). It is evident from the literature that ample evidence exists to demonstrate that, on the whole, community service has not achieved its aim of providing an alternative sanction to custody, but has indeed widened the criminal justice net (Austin & Krisberg 1982; Biles 2001; Bray 2002; MacKay & Rook 1976; McIvor 1990, 1992, 1993c; Muncie 1996; Petersilia 1999; Spaans 1998; Tonry 1999; Walters 1996; Wood 2012). For example, the Home Office studies of the early experimental British community service schemes found that between forty and fifty per cent of community service orders issued to offenders had not replaced imprisonment, but were instead substitutes for less serious non-custodial sentences (Pease 1985; Pease et al. 1977). The same holds true for the early Tasmanian study (MacKay & Rook 1976; Rook 1978), which found that such net-widening had occurred in around half of all cases in which community service was imposed. Likewise, McIvor (1992) estimated that less than half of the offenders in her study sentenced to community service in Scotland had been diverted from a custodial sentence. However, she found that most of the offenders were under the impression, from comments made by the sentencer in court, that the community service order was in lieu of a custodial sentence (McIvor 1992).

It is also evident from the literature that the status of community service in legislation and its, overall inconsistent, application by the courts is a point of great contention among key stakeholders of community service schemes (Biles 2001; Harris & Lo 2002; Henderson 1988; Houghton 1991; Immarigeon 1993; McIvor 1991, 1992; Pease 1985). McIvor summarises this argument, as follows:

> Perhaps the greatest debate surrounding community service concerns whether this option should serve solely as an alternative to a custodial sentence or whether the community service order should be regarded as a sentence in its own right which might justifiably be imposed in place of other non-custodial penalties such as fines.’ (McIvor 1992, p. 23)

In general, arguments in favour of community service as a sentence in its own right are driven by the judiciary, who see community service as a solution to the complex issue of dealing appropriately with fine defaulters, in particular those who cannot afford to pay their fines (Meyer & Jeslow 1993). The arguments against this use of community service, driven largely by correctional administrators and academic commentators, centre on concerns about net-widening through ‘up-tariffing’ (Austin & Krisberg 1982; Houghton 1991; McIvor 1992). Up-tariffing, as described by Muncie, is ‘the tendency for community corrections to be used instead of lower tariff disposals, such as fines, supervision and probation.’ (1996, p. 182) McIvor (1992), in her study, found inconsistent use of community service orders in the Scottish courts with some sentencers only imposing community service as a direct alternative to custody and others using it as a penalty in place of other non-custodial option. She noted conflicting views between community service staff and the judiciary about the appropriate use of community service orders (McIvor 1992). Notably, McIvor (1992) observed that community service staff were reluctant to assess an offender as unsuitable for community service on the
grounds that a custodial sentence was not warranted, as this was seen as outside their role and to be pre-empting decisions of the court.

Sentencers, who took part in the study, expressed a view that community service should mainly, but not solely be an alternative to custody, whereas community service staff were more resolute in their view that community service should only be imposed as an alternative to custody (McIvor 1992). McIvor (1992) observed that community service staff were reluctant to assess an offender as unsuitable for community service on the grounds that a custodial sentence was not warranted, as this was seen as outside their role and to be pre-empting decisions of the court. Moreover, the study found that they tended to impose custodial sentences, unless convincing mitigating factors were shown, should offenders be returned to court for failing to comply with community service order conditions (McIvor 1992). A key mitigating factor was an offender’s apparent level of commitment to community service, while other factors included the nature of the original offence and recommended revocation reasons (McIvor 1992). It appeared evident that offenders were sentenced to imprisonment as the result of a breach of community service, despite the order having been initially imposed in place of a non-custodial sentence. Notably, the rate of imprisonment following breach (65%) was greater than the estimated rate of diversion from custody, but the breach rate was higher for offenders assessed as having an intermediate or high risk of custody than for those at low risk. McIvor found then that up-tariffing was indeed apparent in a few cases, owing to inconsistent court application of community service orders, in spite of the view of sentencers that this phenomenon was unlikely (McIvor 1992). She noted that these findings preclude using the resentencing of offenders following revocation of a community service order as a trustworthy benchmark for evaluating the diversionary impact of community service (McIvor 1992). Furthermore, according to McIvor (1992), despite imposition of National Guidelines to clarify the intention of community service orders as an alternative to custody, courts continued to impose community service orders in lieu of non-custodial options. Legislative changes were made, but these were after the study period and their impact could therefore, not be evaluated. The full study and its outcomes are reported in Carnie (1990).

### Community service fine default schemes

Interestingly, McIvor reported that Scottish sentencers indicated they would be tempted to use community service in some instances as a fine replacement due to the large numbers of people unable to pay their fines. The use of community service as an alternative sanction to prison for fine defaulters is current across Australian jurisdictions (Harris & Lo 2002). The main argument in support of this approach is that community service is supposed to be an alternative to imprisonment (Bevan 1983). The Western Australian Work and Development Program is an example of a fine default scheme that was introduced as a legislative reform to provide courts with an alternative to imprisonment for offenders who default on fine payments (Western Australia Department of Corrective Services 1991; Yeats 1991). A review of the first two years of the scheme found that it was operating effectively and had diverted an estimated six thousand, seven hundred and sixty-six fine defaulters from prison, but that nonetheless, ‘some net-widening may have occurred’ (Western Australia Department of Corrective Services 1991, p. 3).

There are several key arguments against the use of community service as a fine default sentencing option in Australia. Firstly, the schemes have different rationales in that the philosophical underpinnings of fine option schemes are essentially financial, while those of community service schemes include reparation and offender rehabilitation, as well as cost-effectiveness (Bevan 1983). Secondly, unlike most community service schemes, fine defaulters are not assessed for suitability prior to being sentenced to community service (Bevan 1983). Thirdly, as fine defaulters are typically involved for shorter periods of time in the criminal justice system than people subject to community service, this creates difficulties finding suitable work (Bevan 1983). Finally, it has been argued that a fine option scheme is likely to inundate community service agencies with ‘revolving door’
and minor offenders, reducing the effectiveness of community service schemes to target more serious offenders who might otherwise be imprisoned (Bevan 1983; Freiberg & Ross 1999). A review of five studies of the use of community service for fine defaulters in New South Wales (NSW), conducted between 1988 and 1989, made a number of findings that support some of these concerns, particularly in regard to the suitability of offenders participating in the scheme (Gorta & Miller 1990). The study concluded that, ‘the fine default scheme is a useful non-custodial alternative for some (sic.) offenders who either cannot afford to pay or do not wish to pay their fines. It is not the answer for all fine defaulters.’ (Gorta & Miller 1990, p. 47) The introduction in 1988 into NSW of a community service fine default scheme appeared to initially reduce the number of people imprisoned for defaulting on fines, but the effects did not last (Jochelson 1995). According to Weatherburn, ‘By mid-1993 the rate of imprisonment for fine default had risen above the level which prevailed before the introduction of more flexible fine paying arrangements and alternatives to fine payment.’ (Jochelson 1995, p. iii)

**Referral and selection bias in community service**

Substantial concerns have been raised about equity in access to community service schemes related to inconsistencies in their suitability assessment and selection processes (Pease & Earnshaw 1976; Tasmanian Audit Office 2002) and more particularly, about which groups of people are consequently excluded from community service schemes (Henning 1997; Hoggarth 1991; McIvor 1998). Henning summarises this issue, as follows:

Specifically, the variables gender, dependants and health status influence the assessment outcome because of their negative impact upon the variable work availability. The result is that because community service order work is less likely to be available for women offenders, offenders with health problems and offenders with dependants, the community service order sanction itself is likely to have more limited availability for these groups of offenders. (Henning 1997, p. 313)

A study of selection methods, based on analysis of court records and hypothetical decision-making tests conducted with probation personnel from three areas of the West Midlands Probation Service in England, revealed inconsistencies in recommendations and sentencing to the extent that young, black, male or unemployed offenders more likely to be imprisoned, than diverted through the use of alternative sanctions (Hoggarth 1991). The researchers asserted that, ‘[t]he concentration on suitability needs to give way to a concentration on the justice of the sentence.’ (Hoggarth 1991, p. 201) As noted, McIvor (1992) reported that community service staff in her study were reluctant to assess an offender as unsuitable for community service on the grounds that a custodial sentence was not warranted, as this was seen as outside their role and to be pre-empting decisions of the court.

Following an analysis of data from three Scottish courts, McIvor (1998) found that only five per cent of referrals to the three schemes were for female offenders. She concluded that, ‘the potential for community service to divert women from short sentences of imprisonment [was] not being fully exploited’ (McIvor 1998, p. 280) and that this under-representation of females on community service was significantly affected by the choice to refer an offender for a community service assessment, or not. Interestingly, when comparing referrals initiated by the courts and those initiated by probation social workers the study also found differences in the characteristics of female offenders who were referred for community service. Specifically, in contrast to the women in the probation referrals, women offenders who were referred by the courts for community service assessment were less likely than their male counterparts to be at risk of a custodial sentence (McIvor 1998), suggesting that up-tariffing posed a greater risk to female offenders referred for community service in these schemes. Moreover, according to McIvor (1998, 2004), even if selected for community service, women can have limited choices in terms of placement allocation, which in turn, can limit the potential benefits of their undertaking of unpaid work, and women with children frequently confront the
additional complexity of having to manage their community service commitments, alongside their carer responsibilities.

In Australia, a low rate of participation of women offenders in community service is also evident and these small numbers have implications for the availability and suitability of work placements (Alder & Edwards 1992; Edwards 1992). Notably, a statistical analysis of community sentences levied by Victorian courts, (commenced in the 2006-07 financial year), found that in terms of conditions imposed, ‘[t]he largest discrepancy was for community work, a condition imposed on 80.0% of males and 72.9% of females. Otherwise, there was little difference by gender.’ (Fisher 2007, p. 10) A handful of small-scale Australian and other studies have examined women’s experiences of community-based sentences, including community service, and raised two main concerns in relation to the experiences of female offenders on community service (Alder & Edwards 1992; Edwards 1992; McIvor 1998). Firstly, female offenders, in disproportionate numbers to male offenders, were primary carers of dependent children who experienced difficulty obtaining and paying for appropriate child care in order to have time to fulfil their community service obligations – the impact of this separation also adversely affected their children (Alder & Edwards 1992; Edwards 1992; McIvor 1998, 2004). Secondly, the prevalence and dominance of male offenders at community service work sites exposed some female offenders to intimating and offensive behaviour, including sexual harassment (Alder & Edwards 1992; Edwards 1992; McIvor 1998). Besides these studies, this review found no additional research that focused specifically on the use of community service with female offenders. According to McIvor:

The small numbers of women on community service usually prevent meaningful analyses of gender differences with respect to the use of this sentencing option...[but] [t]he under-representation of women on community service is in itself a legitimate cause for concern, especially if this particular option is being considered by the courts for women who appear unlikely in any case to receive a custodial sentence – with the risk of tariff escalation that this presents...’ (McIvor 1998, p. 289)

Although the relatively small number of girls and women involved in the criminal justice system generally and the corresponding lack of research, has historically rendered the issues facing this group ‘invisible’, the recent dramatic increase in their numbers (Turner 2010a) – if not just the issues raised in this review –should prompt greater interest in and research about the use of community service with female offenders.

Particular to the Australian context, wide-spread concerns have been raised about Aboriginal offenders’ low rates of participation in diversionary programs and alternative sanctions to imprisonment, including community service schemes (Biles 2001; New South Wales Parliament 2000; NSWLRC 2000; RCIADIC 1992; Roeger 1994; Yeats 1991). A report of the New South Wales Law Reform Commission (NSWLRC 2000) on the sentencing of Aboriginal offenders cautioned that, ‘Care needs to be taken in giving Aboriginal offenders CSOs which will be difficult for them to perform due to ill health, substance abuse or other reasons, thus making them vulnerable to breaching the order.’ (NSWLRC 2000, p. 160) The report recommended the use of other alternative sanctions that could better address these concerns, for example, by providing access to rehabilitative courses (NSWLRC 2000). In examining practices across Australia, the report also found that the breach rates for Aboriginal offenders subject to community service in Western Australia were higher than those for non-Aboriginal offenders and noted the proposition that: ‘[t]his could, at least in part, be because the nature of the order is inappropriate, the mode of supervision is ill-adapted to Aboriginal needs, or the response of the supervisors is unduly formalistic.’ (Harding et al. 1995; In NSWLRC 2000, p. 160) The NSW Law Reform Commission also reported on findings by the South Australian Department of State Aboriginal Affairs (1995) that while fines and community service orders were increasingly popular sanctions in that state, these did not serve to reduce the recidivism of Aboriginal offenders, but instead recycled them through the criminal justice system (NSWLRC 2000). The Commission noted the suggestion that support could be provided to Aboriginal offenders on community service by a relevant community leader, as well as the recommendation from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) that: ‘persons responsible for devising
work programs on CSOs in Aboriginal communities should consult closely with the community to ensure that work is directed which is seen to have value to the community.’ (NSWLRC 2000, p. 157) In particular, pertinent to the issues raised about lack of research focusing on women offenders subject to community service, the NSWLRC report noted that:

‘Aboriginal women are over-represented in prisons to an even greater extent than Aboriginal men and this over-representation is increasing. In spite of this, Aboriginal women remain largely invisible in the picture of criminal justice. Research, policies, programs and correctional institutions focus almost entirely on the needs of the male offender.’ (NSWLRC 2000, p. 252)

In addition to supporting female Aboriginal offenders to manage issues related to child care, the NSWLRC recommends the use of women’s committees, prevalent within Aboriginal communities, to organise community service projects, supervise their execution and either deliver, or assist in locating, suitable work to ensure community service is a more feasible option for Aboriginal women (NSWLRC 2000).

COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community service schemes are frequently viewed and promoted as cost-effective alternatives to imprisonment (Walker, 1988 #77; McIvor, 2010 #334; Bevan, 1983 #271; Tait, 2001 #220; Leivesley, 1983 #198 (DoCWS Victoria 1982)). Indeed, the operating cost of the Tasmanian Work Order Scheme was found to be considerably cheaper, at $4.50 per man per week, than that of imprisonment, at $117.11 per man per week. This approximated to $1,175,000 in state saving for the year (1975). A review of the Queensland community service order scheme during its implementation reported that, for the financial year 1981-82, the daily cost was $1.52 for an offender on community service, compared with $49.13 for an offender in prison (Leivesley 1983). A comparable scheme in Western Australia reportedly only cost $1 per person per day (Bevan 1983). McIvor, in Scotland, also reported that community service orders were less expensive (£1,044) than alternative custodial sentences (£2,268), but with the caveat that the overall cost savings are only relevant if community service is used consistently as a replacement for imprisonment and not as a frequent replacement for cheaper non-custodial sentencing options, such as fines (McIvor 1992). This observation has been made more generally also (Chan & Zdenkowski 1986; Knapp et al. 1992). For example, in an article reviewing the effectiveness of alternative sanctions, including community service, Chan and Zdenkowski assert that:

The economy of these programmes... can only be realized if they are used as real alternatives to imprisonment. If, as we have seen, many of these programmes are being used in addition to imprisonment, and if the criminal justice net is indeed widening, then we cannot expect much saving at all. (Chan & Zdenkowski 1986, p. 137)

As previously discussed in this review, the available evidence to date demonstrates that community service is not used consistently by sentencers as an alternative to prison. Therefore, claims about the cost-effectiveness of community service, in terms of reducing prison costs, must be weighed against the reality that community service is frequently and commonly used to replace, cheaper, non-custodial sanctions, such as probation and fines (Austin & Krisberg 1982; Chan & Zdenkowski 1986; Kerezsi 1998; Knapp et al. 1992).

In ascertaining the cost-effectiveness of community service, it has been argued that other, potentially hidden, costs of schemes must also be taken into account. Leivesley describes this, as follows:

The policy of placing the responsibility for rehabilitation back onto the community is, at first glance, quite laudable. However, schemes such as community service orders are in reality placing large numbers of offenders into the community at community cost (Leivesley 1986, p. 262).
In particular, in spite of the widely purported financial and other benefits for community organisations of being on the receiving end of unpaid community service work (MacKay & Rook 1976; McIvor 1992, 1993b), there are costs associated with providing supervision to offenders on community service work placements, for which community organisations are not reimbursed (Leivesley 1986). In Scotland, McIvor (1992) reported cost-implications for schemes that undertook pre-sentence community service order assessments, though these assessments significantly influenced neither the type of offenders found suitable for community service, nor subsequent rates of non-compliance and breach. She found that more expensive schemes conducted pre-sentence assessment interviews in offenders’ homes, while less expensive schemes conducted office-based interviews or based their community service order suitability assessment on information provided by the author of an offender’s social inquiry report (general assessment) (McIvor 1992). Of note, is that the introduction of Scottish national standards and objectives for community service resulted in cessation of pre-sentence assessments (McIvor 1992). In addition, the costs of matching offenders to work placements varied across schemes, but a trend was observed that schemes with riskier caseloads, (and commensurate greater levels of absenteeism), appeared to give more time to placement allocations and had higher allocation costs per placement (McIvor 1992). In addition, McIvor (1992) found a strong correlation between the average levels of absences and hourly supervision costs for community service staff across schemes or, in other words, higher offender attendance levels at work placements were associated with lower costs. McIvor (1992, p. 72) concluded that, ‘increased cost-effectiveness could, therefore, be achieved through a tightening up of the enforcement process which would reduce the level of absences without affecting the overall likelihood of breach.’ It is noted that the introduction of the Scottish national standards for community service was projected to provide greater consistency in enforcement practices across schemes, but this did not occur within the study timeframe (McIvor 1992).

**RECIDIVISM AND RECONVICTION STUDIES**

Research about community service has been inclined to gauge the success of their operation in terms of their outcomes, focusing especially on their effectiveness in reducing offenders’ recidivism or imprisonment or in influencing their attitudes towards future offending (Henning 1997; MacKay & Rook 1976; McCulloch 2010a, 2010b; Oxley 1984; Rook 1978). McIvor (2002, p. 1) asserts that, ‘offenders on community service consistently have lower reconviction rates than would be predicted by their criminal history, age and other relevant characteristics.’ Rex and Gelsthorpe (2004) support this assertion, noting that a number of British studies found slightly lower rates of reconviction for community service compared to other penalties (see Lloyd et al. 1995; May 1999; Raynor & Vanstone 1997), a difference that could not be discernibly accounted for. May (1999) concluded that the sentence itself could have a possible effect on reconviction.

**Comparison studies of community service and other sentencing outcomes**

The earliest known Australian study of community service was an evaluation of the operation of Tasmania’s Work Order Scheme (MacKay & Rook 1976), an optional alternative to short terms of imprisonment, introduced into the Tasmanian criminal justice system in 1972. As well as considering operational aspects of the scheme, the study compared the recidivism outcomes of a sample of offenders sentenced to Work Orders compared to a short-term imprisonment control group. The study concluded that, when imposed instead of prison, community service produced lower rates of reconviction and about half of those sentenced to community service had avoided imprisonment and about half had not (MacKay & Rook 1976; Pease 1985). Specifically, of the community service group, forty-seven per cent committed further offences and nineteen per cent subsequently went to prison, while of the short-term imprisonment group, sixty-two per cent committed further offences and forty per cent subsequently went to prison (MacKay & Rook 1976). It is important to note that the accuracy of this comparison is limited because the prison group had a more extensive criminal record than the community service group (MacKay & Rook 1976). Similarly, Pease et al.’s
(1977) British reconviction study compared recidivism outcomes between a community service treatment group and an imprisonment control group, based on data from a previous descriptive study of experimental community service schemes (see Pease et al. 1975). The study found that less than half (44.2%) of the offenders in the sample re-offended and were reconvicted within twelve months of the community service order being made (Pease et al. 1977). This was in the same range of reconviction as that of a group recommended for, but not given, a community service order. The study concluded that there was no evidence of reduced rates of recidivism following community service, but the small sample size and inadequate control group, (in terms of its compatibility to the treatment group), limit the accuracy of this comparison (Pease et al. 1977).

A more recent matched sample study used longitudinal official record data on 4,232 adult offenders in The Netherlands to compare community service recidivism outcomes to those of short-term imprisonment and found significantly reduced rates of recidivism among the community service offenders (Wermink et al. 2009; Wermink et al. 2010). The researchers noted that this finding applied to both male and female offenders across different age groups and for the short- and long-term (Wermink et al. 2009). Notably, over an eight-year follow up period, recidivism rates among the community service sample were half that for the short-term imprisonment sample (Wermink et al. 2009). A series of studies were also undertaken in Switzerland that compared community service outcomes with those of other sanctions, including non-custodial sentencing options. Killias et al.’s (2000a, 2000b; 2010a; 2010b) randomised, controlled trials compared the reconviction and other outcomes of community service with electronic monitoring, heroin trials and short-term imprisonment. Several findings were inconclusive, but definitive findings were reached in the community service and electronic monitoring study, which randomly assigned two-hundred and forty people to either sanction to compare outcomes (Killias et al. 2010a). Measures included reconvictions, self-reported delinquency and gauges of social integration such as marriage, earnings and arrears (Killias et al. 2010a). That study found, with marginal significance (p < 0.10), that those assigned to electronic monitoring reoffended less than those assigned to community service and that they were more likely to be married and living in better financial situations (Killias et al. 2010a).

As McIvor’s (1992) study was not constructed with a comparison group, she was unable to parallel community service reconviction rates with those of other sentences. Instead, she compared reconviction rates in her study with those reported in other studies and found that they appeared to compare favourably. She drew the tentative conclusion that overall, reconviction following community service appeared to be no worse than reconviction following other sentences (McIvor 1992). Just under a third of offenders in McIvor’s study were reconvicted while undertaking their community service order, but the unreliability of official data and self-reports from offenders meant that she was unable to estimate how many of these reconvictions were attributable to new offences during that period (McIvor 1992).

### Community service and recidivism outcomes

Offenders in the Scottish study were more likely than before, to be imprisoned following community service, and the likelihood of at least one instance of imprisonment increased the faster offenders were reconvicted after being first sentenced to community service (McIvor 1992). Analysed over four years, the risk of reconviction appeared greater during the first two years and greatest in the first six months following the imposition of a CSO than at any other time (McIvor 1992). Notably, McIvor (1992) found that the shorter the time span between their community service sentence and most recent court appearance, the less likely offenders were to be reconvicted. This suggested that one way the community service schemes could potentially reduce reconviction rates was to decrease the time lag between an offender being sentences to a community service order and commencing the actual work. According to McIvor (1992), the introduction of the Scottish national standards and objectives for community service resulting in reduced delays in
commencing work in most places. It is interesting to note that the Probation Board of Northern Ireland (PBNI), in their recently introduced Best Practice Framework, have included as a performance measure of their community service scheme that an offender should commence work within ten days of sentencing (PBNI 2012). A prior inspection of the PBNI in 2009 found that this target was being met in only 36% of cases, a decline from 48%, two years earlier (CJINI 2010).

Age and prior criminal history were found to be, in the community service studies that examined such measures, a reliable predictive factor for risk of recidivism (MacKay & Rook 1976; McIvor 1992; Pease et al. 1977) – a finding that is consistent more broadly across the criminal justice system (Andrews & Bonta 2010; McIvor 1992; Turner 2010b). Although the sample was small, McIvor (1992) found that younger offenders (under 21 years) were most likely, and older offenders (30 years or more) least likely, to be reconvicted and those with prior justice offences, community service sentences or custodial sentences were more likely to be reconvicted. Reconviction rates were also higher for offenders in the sample who experienced personal or social problems while subject to a community service order (McIvor 1992). McIvor affirms this finding as consistent with that of other studies, which suggest a greater likelihood of recidivism for offenders whose problems, associated directly or indirectly with their offending behaviour, are not adequately resolved (McIvor 1992). Other factors in McIvor’s (1992) study found to increase offenders’ likelihood of reconviction included, a history of statutory social work supervision, existing social work involvement, unmarried status and no prior work experience. The highest rate and frequency of reconviction in her study was among offenders with existing additional statutory orders at the time of sentencing or with a history of previous statutory social work supervision in the preceding two years (McIvor 1992). Similarly, in their Tasmanian study, MacKay and Rook (1976) found that younger age, (75% of recidivists were 16 to 20 years), an unstable work record, and unmarried status correlated with increased recidivism rates, among other factors such as: history of irregular family relationships; below average intelligence; history of property offences and to a lesser extent, person and conduct offences; and prior Children’s Court record. Notably, a UK Home Office study examining the influence of social factors (such as unemployment and substance misuse) on reconviction, found better than predicted reconviction rates among offenders given community service, even once social factors had been taken into account (May 1999).

McIvor’s (1992) study found that offenders’ self-predictions of future recidivism could serve as broad indicators of their rate and frequency of reconviction, to the degree that she considered the application of this method to practice warrants further exploration. Specifically, after completing their community service orders, offenders were more likely to self-predict reoffending if they had presented at the time of sentencing with higher numbers of previous convictions, a recent history of statutory social work supervision and were known to have alcohol-related problems – factors that were all found to be associated, to varying degrees, with the probability or frequency of recidivism (McIvor 1992). Conversely, offenders were less likely to predict reoffending if they reported in the study that they had found their community service experience to be worthwhile (McIvor 1992). Importantly, McIvor also found that offenders who reported their community service experience to have been very worthwhile had, on average, less new convictions and marginally fewer reconvictions than offenders who described their experiences as less or not at all worthwhile (McIvor 1992). In addition, this was particularly evident when offenders had a history of mandated social work supervision or were unemployed (McIvor 1992). McIvor (1992) noted that although there may have been important differences between offenders who most valued their community service experiences and other offenders in the study, the available background variables did not appear to explain these differences. This important finding and its implications for practice in community service are examined in greater detail in the section of this review that deals with the so-called ‘McIvor criteria’ (Rex et al. 2004) and views of key stakeholders in community service.

While the CS Pathfinder study did not include a reconviction analysis, it did examine changes in offenders’ attitudes towards future offending following community service, using a standardised pre- and post-
assessment tool (Crime PICS II) (Rex et al. 2004). Based on the results of second administrations of Crime PICS II, significant reductions in pro-criminal attitudes and in self-perceived problems were apparent; and in around thirty per cent (241) of cases both an improvement in attitudes and a reduction in problems was evident (Rex et al. 2004). In addition, results from questionnaires administered three months post-completion of community service revealed that more than fifty per cent of the one thousand, eight hundred and fifty-one offenders reported being in full-time employment; more than a third reported experiencing a change in status; and eighty-four per cent reported no further charge or court appearance since completing community service (Rex et al. 2004). Although these findings appear positive, without the input of findings from a reconviction analysis, the conclusions reached in the study are provisional (Rex et al. 2004). Using reductions in recidivism rates as their benchmark, these and other studies appear, on the whole, to have demonstrated the effectiveness of community service schemes, but while recidivism is an oft used measure of success in criminal justice, this approach is not without its critics. Immarigeon, for example, argues that, ‘measurements of recidivism too frequently assume that the interventions they assess were properly designed, skillfully implemented or actually determined behavio[u]ral change…it is important to look beyond recidivism to qualitative aspects of the processes that produce behavio[u]ral change.’ (1995, np)

### COMPLETION RATES OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

The analysis of completion rates is an indicator of ‘success’ for community service in so far as they facilitate assessment of the degree to which the courts’ requirements that offenders perform work for the community have been accomplished (McIvor 1992). However, this approach is purely quantitative and does not account for other elements of potential worth in community service. Bazemore and Karp (2004, p. 8) argue that, ‘In themselves, hours completed may be viewed as a weak if convenient indicator of the value of service projects.’ In addition, the availability and completion of unpaid community service work is an important contributing factor to the establishment of public and judicial confidence in community service schemes (Anagnostaki 2011; McIvor 2010; Oxley 1984). In the key studies that looked at this, completion rates for the community service schemes were noticeably high, to the point that the schemes were considered a success by this measure (MacKay & Rook 1976; McIvor 1992; Rex et al. 2004). There is an obvious relationship between completion rates and recidivism in that breaches for recidivism impact on completion rates. As breaches can also be prompted by absenteeism, defaulting or other forms of non-compliance, these issues, as well as enforcement are linked to a more comprehensive analysis of community service completion rates.

#### Length of order and offender breach rates

Seventy-five per cent of the offenders in McIvor’s (1992) sample had at least one absence and the cause of most breaches across the Scottish community service schemes was repeated unauthorised absences. McIvor found that higher breach rates in the Scottish community service schemes appeared to correlate with a longer time for an offender to complete an order; and the longer the community service order, the more unauthorised and authorised absences (McIvor 1992). According to McIvor:

> ‘These results suggest that lengthy delays in completing their CS work may have adversely affected offenders’ motivation and their compliance with the requirements. It is also possible, however, that offenders took longer to complete their orders because they had absences from work. (McIvor 1992, p. 67)

She reported further that, calculated from the first work placement session, offenders in her sample who had no absences completed their placements within an average of 124.7 days, but those with one or more absences averaged 193.0 days until completion (McIvor 1992). Of relevance, are further findings of the study by the Judicial Commission of NSW (Houghton 1991), which examined the views of nineteen correctional
community service organisers in NSW about the operation of community service orders. These staff reported that there were substantial challenges involved in securing and maintaining enough appropriate agency placements to accommodate offenders on community service and that offenders sometimes had to wait for placements to become available before commencing their community work (Houghton 1991). The staff considered this to be a significant problem and provided the following explanation:

> Both the diversionary and rehabilitative impacts of the scheme are lost if the immediacy of the situation is not utilized. If offenders are ‘put on hold’ for weeks or months before they begin to serve their sentence, the impact of appearing in court – the reprimand as well as the threat of imprisonment – is lost. The offender may become unmotivated and must be then coaxed through the sentence, consuming the valuable time and limited resources of the organisers. (Houghton 1991, pp. 28-29)

In addition, the staff reported that this could lead offenders to abscond or not attend, become subject to breach action and ultimately end up in custody (Houghton 1991). The Judicial Commission’s report noted that in 1988 forty per cent of the proceedings for breach of community service orders resulted in the court imposing a full-time custodial sentence, compared to only twenty-three per cent for breach of recognizance (Bray 1990; In Houghton 1991). Moreover, almost all (95%) of the staff in the study sample cited absenteeism as the most common reason for commencing breach action against an offender and they suggested that this was worsened by initial delays in an offender commencing community work (Houghton 1991). Suggestions from the staff to improve attendance rates included assisting offenders with transport to their work placements and noted poor public transport as a problem, especially on weekends (Houghton 1991).

Based on an assessment of procedures at the different Scottish schemes, McIvor concluded that stricter enforcement of absenteeism appeared to improve attendance rates ‘without affecting the overall likelihood of breach’ (1992, p. 72). Improved attendance levels at placements were also associated with decreased scheme costs, examined in greater detail later in this review (McIvor 1992). As noted in the section of this review on recidivism studies, the Scottish schemes also varied in how long it took between the time an offender’s community service order was made and the commencement of their first work session and this would also affect the total duration of a community service order. It appears then, at least in the case of the Scottish schemes, that firmer enforcement policies combined with prompt commencement of community service work following the issuing of an order to an offender can assist to improve completion rates and therefore, also reduce recidivism rates.

**Offender characteristics and breach risk**

McIvor identified and examined offender characteristics and factors associated with increased risk of breach in her study sample and concluded that, compared to those who completed their community service orders, offenders who were breached had more prior convictions and custodial experience (McIvor 1992). In addition, she found that breach rates were higher among offenders previously subjected to statutory social work supervision and those with a history of accommodation problems or no work experience (McIvor 1992). Although some factors clearly could assist as broad risk of breach indicators, she cautions that these should not, independently of other considerations, be used to simply preclude offenders from community service schemes (McIvor 1992). The first Home Office study on community service (Pease et al. 1975) also found that offenders with longer criminal records were less likely to complete their community service orders, but that offence type was not a predictive factor for the manner of termination. Comparable findings were made by MacKay and Rook (1976) in relation to the characteristics of offenders linked to increased default rates on the Tasmanian Work Order scheme. These included: an unstable work record; irregular family relationships; lack of legal representation; prior Children’s Court record; history of property offending; and previous imprisonment (MacKay & Rook 1976). The researchers remarked that neither an unstable work record nor
irregular family relationships were of themselves a predictor for offenders defaulting, despite defaulters tending to have these attributes, but that the rate of defaulting could possibly be limited if careful consideration was given to offenders’ family relationships and work record prior to sentencing (MacKay & Rook 1976). It seems possible then, that one way to increase completion rates might be to target these offender risk factors for breach as part of community service processes.

Similarly, more recent British research found that offenders who were more successful in completing CP Pathfinder projects were those in more stable situations, with existing education or employment and more mature in age and no high risk of continued offending (Rex et al. 2004). Unsurprisingly, given the established link between younger age and risk of recidivism, lower rates of performance were apparent for younger offenders with higher OGRS (Offender Group Reconviction Scale) scores (Rex et al. 2004). Interestingly, similar results were found in an American study (Minor et al. 1999) that conducted a case outcome analysis of young people referred for sentencing by their peers, (as an alternative to judicial sentencing), to teen courts across ten sites in Kentucky in 1997. The study found that more than seventy per cent of the young people completed their sentences and slightly less than a third reoffended in the twelve month follow-up period, but that sentence completion rates were significantly lower for those sentenced to community service and recidivism rates significantly higher among young people with a prior criminal history, as well as those sentenced to curfews (Minor et al. 1999). In addition to the other offender risk factors for breach identified in these studies, it is clear that younger age, coupled with prior criminal history are pertinent factors that should be considered in the design and operation of community service schemes. In particular, community service schemes that are targeted at adult offenders and staffed by people trained in this regard, should give some consideration to the specific risk, need and responsivity factors of younger people.

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**Reasons for absenteeism and record-keeping practices**

The most common reason given for absences among the offenders in McIvor’s (1992) sample was illness, followed by family, other appointments, commitments and court attendance. Oxley (1984) found, in her South Australian study, that of those offenders whose orders had not terminated, fifty-nine per cent had authorised absences and thirty-nine per cent unauthorised absences. The main reason provided by these offenders for absences was also sickness or injury, followed by other work commitments (Oxley 1984). Likewise, the earlier Tasmanian study (MacKay & Rook 1976) found that illness (7.8%) and working for an employer (5%) were two of the main documented reasons for authorised absences. Notably, the leading reason for authorised absences in this study was because projects were suspended (9.1%) (MacKay & Rook 1976). This highlights the complex issue of what and how information about absences, which may lead to breach action and thus impact on completion rates, is recorded in community service schemes. Attention was drawn to this issue in reviews of community service schemes in Jersey and South Australia. The report on the Jersey scheme noted that:

> In a small minority (8%) of absences that were recorded as ‘Acceptable’ we could not discern how or why the reason was judged to be acceptable. We would observe that Acceptable absences were less likely to be fully explained than Unacceptable absences in the file record. No doubt this is due to the officer understanding the need to evidence absences. (Ingram & Clark 2012, p. 40)

Oxley (1984) also found that there were inconsistencies in the way such information was recorded in the early stages of the South Australian scheme and cited several case examples of the use of discretion by individual community service officers, as well as by agency supervisors, in enforcing the conditions of an offender’s community service order. She reported that, following the first six months of the scheme’s operation it was bearing repeated non-attendance cases, in response to which, a ‘number of enforcement proceedings [were] initiated, bringing the attendance problem into line.’ (Oxley 1984, p. 114) McIvor (1992) also examined this issue in her study and reported that among community service officers, there was general consensus about
what constituted an unauthorised or authorised absence when prior notice was provided, but less agreement when no notice was provided. As noted, McIvor (1992) concluded that stricter enforcement of absenteeism appeared to improve attendance rates without altering the general probability of breach. In turn, improved attendance levels at placements were associated with decreased scheme costs, which are examined in greater detail later in this review.

**Role of assessment and support in completion rates**

McIvor’s (1992) study found that pre-sentence suitability assessments for community service orders did not appear to improve the quality of staff decisions and she observed ‘no difference in the incidence of breach among schemes that conducted pre-sentence interviews and those that did not.’ (McIvor 1992, p. 60) McIvor acknowledged that it was beyond the scope of her research to analyse any other potential benefits provided by pre-sentence assessments with offenders (McIvor 1992). Such benefits could include, for example, evaluating an offender’s suitability for an alternative program (Leivesley 1986) or matching individual offenders to an appropriate type of community service work and placement, a process that appears common, at least insofar as it is regularly mentioned in the literature, to many community service order schemes (Bevan 1983; CIJNI 2013; DoCWS Victoria 1982; Oxley 1984; Tasmania DoJ 2008). Oxley (1984) examined community service assessment and selection processes in the South Australian scheme to determine the role of rehabilitative aims of the scheme in these processes. She determined that, despite the prevailing view among correctional staff that matching an offender to a placement was important for successful outcomes, the process was limited by legislation that made stipulations about the proximity of projects to offenders’ homes; level of volunteer involvement and tangible benefits to the community, to the extent that rehabilitation was not found to be the overriding consideration in placing offenders (Oxley 1984). In Scotland, McIvor (1992) established that while some of the schemes interviewed offenders at the pre-sentence stage to match them to placements, most did not use them for this purpose, but instead interviewed offenders shortly after sentence – notably, these schemes also appeared to take greater account of offenders’ preferences. The study found that offenders who took part in deciding where their placement should be, tended to express positive views about their work placement, although this did not appear to affect overall compliance and completion rates (McIvor 1992). Nonetheless, this issue was address in the implementation of the Scottish national standards and objectives for community service, which meant that offenders had more input, within specific limits, into decisions about their placement and work type (McIvor 1992).

McIvor’s (1992) study found that despite the exclusion offenders from community service who were assessed as having problems that would tend to unfavourably affect their completion of the order, many offenders in the study experienced problems anyway, to varying degrees of seriousness, while undertaking their community service order. As noted, reconviction rates were higher for offenders in the sample who experienced personal or social problems during their community service order (McIvor 1992). While most of the Scottish schemes offered offenders general guidance and/or referral to services, two of the schemes offered more comprehensive social work support and seemed to attain somewhat higher than anticipated completion rates with riskier offenders (McIvor 1992). It does not appear then that pre-sentence suitability assessments, as they were conducted in the Scottish schemes, were very effective in reducing the breach rates of offenders on community service. However, the provision of appropriate levels of support to offenders who experienced personal or social difficulties while completing their community services orders did appear to be somewhat effective in this regard. The results suggest then that social work assistance should be available to offenders on community service orders and that there is an intrinsic connection between providing assistance to offenders and enforcement (McIvor 1991). It is important to note that most community service staff expressed willingness to extend their role in providing support and guidance to offenders, but expressed concerns about associated resource limitations and gradually obscuring the distinction between community service and probation (McIvor 1991). It should also be noted that Scotland has a long history of delivering
Experiences of community service, placement type and completion rates

The Tasmanian study (MacKay & Rook 1976) found that region and project type impacted on offender attendance and conduct and that differences between specific projects could be attributed to some extent, but not entirely, to differences between supervisors, administrators and effectual matching of offenders to supervisors. Interestingly, inclement weather was found to positively affect the rate of attendance, possibly due to the fact that community service participants who reported for duty, but were given an early dismissal due to poor weather conditions, were still credited with a full day’s work (MacKay & Rook 1976). McIvor (1992) observed in her study a connection between offenders’ experiences of community service and the occurrence of absenteeism. Specifically, offenders who described their community service work placements as enjoyable and their community service experience as very worthwhile had lower levels of unauthorised absences (McIvor 1992). Lower rates of absenteeism were also recorded for offenders in the Scottish schemes allocated to personal tasks (e.g. care duties, organising sporting or other group activities), rather than practical work (e.g. painting and decorating, kitchen and cleaning tasks, gardening), in voluntary agencies (McIvor 1992). Offenders who completed their community service in agencies had lower rates of authorised and unauthorised absences than those in group placements (McIvor 1992). McIvor noted that she was unable to further investigate the connection between the order outcomes and the types of work conducted in an agency setting, due to the small numbers of offenders in agency placements who were breached (McIvor 1992). The study found a tendency to allocate offenders to group placements, who had a history of social work supervision and who were therefore at greater risk of breaching their community service orders (McIvor 1992). However, whether or not an offender had prior social work involvement, appeared to have no bearing on the rate of authorised and unauthorised absences among offenders in group placements (McIvor 1992). McIvor concluded that ‘The likelihood of breach was found to be related to the type of setting (group or agency) in which offenders completed their community service work.’ (McIvor 1992, p. 72) She noted that this finding could be attributed to the greater numbers of ‘riskier’ offenders allocated to group placements, as well as to the inconsistencies in practice between group placement supervisors and agency supervisors in the recording of absences (McIvor 1992). Nonetheless, there appear to be two implications for practice in this regard; firstly, to better balance the distribution of higher-risk offenders across the range of placement options in order to reduce their risk of ‘contamination’ (Trotter 1993, 1995) and breach through group placements; and secondly, to develop clear record-keeping procedures and enforce these in relation to the documentation of absenteeism.

Contamination effect of group work sites

In Australia, Trotter (1993) examined the impacts on offenders of association with other offenders whilst undertaking unpaid community work in Victoria. He considered whether some worksites are more likely to have a positive or negative effect on offenders in comparison to other worksites and to determine if there existed a relationship between the nature of Victorian community service work placements and offending rates of participants in the programs (Trotter 1993, 1995). The study found that in comparison to offenders who undertook their community work alone or in community agencies, offenders placed on community work with other offenders were significantly more likely to breach their order and were more likely to re-offend with substantially and significantly higher recidivism rates (Trotter 1993). Conversely, recidivism rates among offenders placed on individual worksites were between thirty and fifty per cent lower than the rates of offenders in group placements (Trotter 1993). Trotter (1993) also found that offenders who were placed on both individual sites and group sites at different times during their orders were less likely to breach, in comparison to offenders placed on group sites for the duration of their community work, and also more likely
to breach in comparison to offenders placed on individual sites. However, he noted that the numbers of offenders who experienced both group and individual worksites were relatively small to the degree that the difference with the other groups was not statistically significant (Trotter 1993). In relation to work site placements, the study concluded that: the impact of being placed on worksites with other offenders appears to be independent of other factors (e.g. training of supervisors, risk levels of the offenders or number of hours to which the offenders were sentenced); the influence of worksite placement appeared to diminish after the period of community work had been completed; and its influence was greatest among younger offenders (Trotter 1993). According to Trotter, 'The findings of the study are consistent with and provide a practical example of criminological theories which suggest that offenders are likely to learn from a pro-criminal peer group...[and] it suggests that contamination theory may operate within community correctional programs.' (Trotter 1995, p. 175)

The findings of Trotter’s (1993) study appear supported by other studies that have examined the importance of not mixing lower and higher risk offenders, due to the risk of ‘contamination’ for the lower risk offenders (Andrews et al. 1990; Latessa & Lowenkamp 2006b; Lowenkamp & Latessa 2004; Lowenkamp et al. 2006). Latessa and Lowenkamp explain that, ‘placing low-risk offenders in with high-risk offenders may lead to an “education” in anti-social behavior for the low-risk offender.’ (Latessa & Lowenkamp 2006a) As noted, Trotter’s (1993) study found this to be the case, regardless of the risk levels of offenders. Hence, given the connection between group community service work sites and increased rates of recidivism and breach for offenders placed in these groups, community work service schemes that rely on, or have as their majority, group placements are likely to be less successful in terms of their overall completion rates. Notably, in this regard, a recent review of the Jersey community service scheme found that most offenders completed their community service work on work parties, rather than individual placements. The authors of the report on the review commented, ‘It was notable however that where Individual Placements were utilised these had resulted in successful outcomes as perceived by beneficiary and client.’ (Ingram & Clark 2012, p. 40) There are of course resource implications for correctional services in locating, assessing and maintaining such placements for community service, which must be considered (McIvor 1992; Tasmania DoJ 2008). Administrators may need to weigh up the financial and other costs associated with managing multiple individual placements against the apparent risk of breach and contamination posed by cheaper and easier to coordinate, group placements.

‘MCIVOR CRITERIA’ AND VIEWS OF KEY COMMUNITY SERVICE STAKEHOLDERS

Another method of gauging the effectiveness of community service schemes is to ascertain the views of key stakeholders. In community service schemes, key stakeholder groups usually include the following people: the offenders subject to community service; administrators of community service schemes, including representatives from all levels of staff, but particularly, community service supervisors and their managers; sentencers who have the authority to impose community service; and beneficiaries of community service, including community agency work placement supervisors. This section deals largely with the views of offenders and beneficiaries and to a lesser extent, the views of community service staff. Their views are covered in greater detail in the sections of this review that deal with supervision of offenders provided by community agency supervisors and various models of community service schemes. The views of sentencers have largely been covered already in the sections of this review dealing with community service as an alternative sanction to imprisonment and its use in fine default schemes and will therefore not be repeated in this section.
McIvor (1992) found that while offenders reported no clear preference for group or agency placements, there was a preference for placements that: offered large amounts of contact with beneficiaries; allowed offenders’ to develop skills; and where it was obvious that the work was directly beneficial to recipients, in comparison to placements that concentrated on relatively unskilled practical tasks. Importantly, she found a significant relationship between offenders who considered their community service experience to be worthwhile and increased compliance rates and reduced rates of recidivism (McIvor 1992). This was particularly evident when offenders had a history of mandated social work supervision or were unemployed (McIvor 1992). McIvor (1992) identified that the following three elements caused offenders to view community service as worthwhile:

1. regarding the work as useful;
2. high levels of contact with beneficiaries; and
3. the opportunity to acquire skills.

According to Rex et al. (2004, p. 1), ‘These have since become known as the McIvor criteria, and have been used as a benchmark for evaluating CS placements.’ Indeed, two of the CS Pathfinder projects, (Case Studies A and F – see Table 1), used the McIvor criteria as a standard against which to evaluate the effectiveness of their community service work placements (Rex et al. 2004).

Views of offenders

In her study of community service in Scotland, McIvor (1992) examined offenders’ experience and attitudes towards community service and the associated types of work as a measure of their success. She found that notwithstanding the inconvenience and restrictions it placed on their time, most offenders had positive experiences of their community service order (McIvor 1992). Indeed several offenders continued to attend their placement after the order was completed and others expressed willingness to do so (McIvor 1992). This aligns with the findings of many other studies that concluded offenders are generally positive about their experience of community service and in some cases continue to work at their placement beyond the mandated period of their orders (Leibrich et al. 1986; Miner & Seth 1983; Oxley 1984; Pease et al. 1975; Rex et al. 2004; Wood 2012). Similar finding were made in a British Home Office study (Mair & May 1997) that examined the views of more than twelve-hundred offenders on community-based orders in the first half of 1994. The study included offenders subject to community service (4%) and combination orders (12%) and found that of those who has undertaken community service: almost twenty per cent found nothing negative about the experience. Offenders reported that, among other benefits, community service was an opportunity for productive work, the gaining of new skills and experience, and meeting other people (Mair & May 1997). Conversely, one quarter found nothing positive about community service at all, reporting it to be an inconvenience (the most common complaint), restriction of freedom, unpaid work, or waste of time and boring (Mair & May 1997). Notably, half the offenders in the sample considered there to be ways in which it could be improved and made the following key suggestions for improvements to community service: (1) provide a broader range of work; (2) allow offenders more choice about what needs to be done while on community service; (3) provide more equipment and resources; (4) make some payment to offenders for their work; and (5) provide more assistance to offenders in finding permanent employment (Mair & May 1997).

In Australia, Alder and Edward’s (1992) survey results of forty-nine women on community based orders in Victoria found that almost three quarters (71%) were performing unpaid work as a condition of their orders.
and that most of these women (68%) enjoyed the work. Positive features of the work were reported by the women to include skills acquisition, renewing their self-esteem and spending time with the other women, while some women did not enjoy the work and described it as ‘boring’ or ‘unreasonably hard’ (Alder & Edwards 1992). The study found that most women were allocated to community work placements that involved female gender-traditional work, such as cleaning, sewing or caring for children and in general, the women appeared satisfied with this, though some expressed a strong dislike for traditionally male work, such as gardening or painting (Alder & Edwards 1992). Feedback from the women about ways of improving community service included the provision of more job variety; more opportunity for educational attainment; and the provision of childcare. The researchers noted that, ‘The issue of community work was discussed at great length, indicating its important role in the community based order and in the lives of the women.’ (Alder & Edwards 1992, p. 50) Clearly, even if this feedback cannot be fully realised in the scheme, it is useful in terms of better understanding the needs and motivation of offenders on community service.

'Real work’ and skills accreditation

A component of the McIvor criteria was that community service placements should provide offenders with the opportunity to acquire skills and the suggestions provided by offenders in the studies by Mair and May’s (1997) and Alder and Edwards (1992) indicate a desire for community service to provide them with opportunities for ongoing employment and educational attainment. Relevant to this, are the findings of the CS Pathfinder projects study, conducted in England and Wales (Rex et al. 2004). The projects aimed to develop the existing community service research base to examine what approaches in community service could be effective in reducing recidivism (Rex et al. 2004). In doing so, the study examined the impacts of: pro-social modelling (PSM); skills accreditation (SA); skills accreditation combined with pro-social modelling (SA + PSM) and tackling offending-related needs (TON). (A detailed overview of this study is provided in Table 1.) The study concluded, on a provisional basis, that the best results were achieved by projects that focused on skills accreditation (SA), while the coupling of SA with PSM appeared effective also (Rex et al. 2004).

Several other studies have made findings that support the basis for and use of the McIvor criteria as a method for evaluating the effectiveness of community service work placements (McCulloch 2010b). For example, the importance of offenders viewing the community service work as useful is highlighted in a study by Wood (2012) on restorative community service (RCS). His study examined the views of young offenders, who undertook restorative community service, regarding this sentencing initiative introduced to the Clark County Juvenile Court’s (Washington, USA) in 2001. Fundamental to this new approach was the court’s replacement of the use of work crews with work placement sites situated at existing community organisations, which involved changes to both the location and structure of community service work (Wood 2012). This shift was predicated on the court’s implementation of a broader restorative justice framework, but also due to identification of specific problems with the use of work crews (Wood 2012). These problems included a recognition that at times, the function of community service work in these crews was just “busywork”, that is, its only purpose was to keep the young people occupied (Wood 2012). Staff reported that this sometimes resulted in “fronting”, where bored young people displayed confrontational attitudes towards other young people, but especially towards their supervisors (Wood 2012). In addition, concern was raised about the labelling of young offenders as ‘criminals’ due to their involvement in work crews and the public perception of these. Wood (2012) found that most of the young people appeared to accept the legitimacy of their community service work and saw it as ‘real work’, rather than just ‘busywork’, which he observed to be a perceptual shift from the previous use of work crews. In addition, he noted that although young people recognised the punitive elements of their community service and frequently complained about having to work, complaints about the purpose or nature of the work were substantially less frequent (Wood 2012). Wood explains this, as follows:
‘[W]hile youth clearly perceived their “required” participation in [community service] work as punishment, there was also a sense articulated by many youth that such work also had some legitimate purpose or end beyond their own punishment. This was clear not only in observed conversations and interactions, but in the surprising return of a smaller number of youth offenders who volunteered at sites after their service obligation was completed.’ (Wood 2012, p. 702)

However, despite the finding of this and multiple other studies about the value of ‘real work’ or work that is useful beyond just as a punishment for the offender on community service, there is ample evidence of work placements in community service schemes designed solely for ‘busywork’ (McCulloch 2010b). Such an approach emphasises the punitive, rather than rehabilitative aims of community service. Moreover, there is equally ample evidence to demonstrate that punitive, deterrence-based interventions, do not work to reduce recidivism and are, in fact, linked to increases, rather than reductions in recidivism (McGuire 2000).

**Views of beneficiaries**

Notably, victims are absent from key stakeholder groups in community service and no studies appear to exist that have tried to gauge the effectiveness of community service by examining the views of specific victims. Instead, the views of community beneficiaries are sought, who act in community service schemes as representatives of the broader community or a generic victim for the purpose of ‘symbolic restitution’ (Bazemore & Maloney 1994). This appears to lend support to those who argue that community service schemes, while restorative in kind, differ from other restorative justice approaches that emphasise the importance of involving the specific victim in the restorative process (Umbreit 1997). Evaluating beneficiaries’ satisfaction with the work undertaken on community service is another way to measure the effectiveness of community service schemes, particularly against its rehabilitative, reintegrative and reparative aims (McIvor 2010). According to McIvor (2010, p. 52), ‘The views of beneficiaries provide an important indication of the benefit to the community of unpaid work undertaken by offenders, though this aspect of the sanction has tended to receive relatively scant empirical attention.’ Studies that have examined the views of beneficiaries have found that, on the whole, beneficiaries consider the schemes to be worthwhile and that they gain considerable benefit from the unpaid work provided by offenders (CJINI 2010, 2013; Leivesley 1983; McIvor 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 2002, 2010; Pease et al. 1975).

For instance, McIvor (1992) found in her study that in most cases, the work performed by offenders on community service in Scotland was highly valued by the individual and agency beneficiaries. Most beneficiaries were happy with the standard of work performed by offenders; considered the standard of supervision to be high; and were willing to use local community service schemes again (McIvor 1992). Agencies reported that they were overall, happy with the level of support provided to them by local community service schemes in supervising offenders and that they frequently reaped long term benefits as offenders remained in the placements beyond the mandated period as volunteers or in fewer cases, paid employees (McIvor 1992). These findings were further supported by the results of national surveys of individual (567) and agency (172) beneficiaries carried out in Scotland in 1990, which revealed overall high levels of satisfaction (McIvor 2010). Notably, the survey found that more than half of the agencies (58%) reported that after the offenders had completed their community service orders, some offenders had continued to work with the agency, beyond their mandated hours and a significant number of the agencies (41%) had invited offenders to continue working with the agency as either a volunteer or paid employee (McIvor 2010). According to McIvor, this points to the ‘reintegrative potential of unpaid work’ (McIvor 2010, p. 52). In addition, McIvor’s own study (1992) found that the perception of some beneficiaries was that community service improved the self-esteem, self-reliance and responsibility of offenders, as well as their social skills, and it was more likely to result in positive change in offenders’ attitudes and behaviour than imprisonment. Interestingly, McIvor (1992) observed that the incidence of offenders committing crimes
against community service beneficiary agencies or individuals was low, particularly in work teams, but a perceived risk of becoming victim to crime was the reason most cited for the exclusion of offenders convicted of certain offences.

### Community service for graffiti removal

One study was found in this review that looked specifically at the intersection between community service and graffiti removal programs. The study, described in a report on local government responses to graffiti vandalism in South Australia in 1998 (see Walter 1999), interviewed nineteen local councils about their experiences using adult and youth community service order schemes for graffiti removal. Of these nineteen councils, nine used neither the adult nor the youth community service order scheme within their graffiti program, ten used either or both of these schemes, and of these ten, one could not comment due to only recently assuming responsibility for graffiti work (Walter 1999). A key difference between the adult and youth community service order schemes in relation to graffiti work was that the adult scheme was available on a ‘user pays’ basis, while the youth scheme was gratis. While councils provided mixed reviews about the use of community service order programs, the majority reported not having experienced any problems and some considered that community service order schemes were best used to clean up large areas of graffiti that required concentrated effort (Walter 1999). Notably, several councils reported that “the key thing [for successful involvement] was supervision by a known person.” (Walter 1999, p. 19) A number of issues were reported by councils, based on actual experience with community service order schemes or as reasons for not using them. These included: more referral numbers or mandated work hours for young people than is required for graffiti clean-up, creating the problem of finding additional work; the quality of work and reliability of offenders; initial problems with commitment, punctuality and regularity (related to adult schemes); and problems with individual CSO participants’ attitudes (Walter 1999). These councils noted a requirement for substantial supervision to ensure outcomes, which they considered the major barrier to the use of community service order schemes, particularly in relation to the challenges of using a large group efficiently for this type of work (i.e. keeping everyone occupied) (Walter 1999). These concerns appear to validate the need for offenders to be engaged in ‘real work’ on community service schemes, not just for their sake, but also for the benefit of the community work supervisors. Other concerns raised by councils included potential liability and Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) risks and objections to the ‘user-pays’ system (relevant only to the adult scheme) (Walter 1999). Notably, the inability of community service order schemes to provide a rapid response to graffiti, (owing to the limits of contractual arrangements and fixed operating hours), was another key issue, since this is considered a best practice approach to dealing with the issue of graffiti (Walter 1999).

### Importance of relationships

The importance of the relationships between offenders and the community service supervisors is a theme that emerges from the evaluations of community service schemes in this review. For example, McIvor (1992) reported that offenders in the Scottish schemes generally described their community service experience as positive and acknowledged the significance of their relationship with their supervisor. In regards to the Tasmanian Work Order Scheme, MacKay and Rook write that, ‘much of its success can be directly related to the relationships developed between many employees and the persons for whom they work, especially pensioners.’ (1976, p. 22) The ‘employees’ referred to by MacKay and Rook are the offenders subject to the Work Order Scheme. MacKay and Rook conceptualise the relationship between offenders and their supervisors as an intermediate outcome of community work, one that impacts on the effectiveness of the overall scheme in terms of the offender’s rehabilitation. They comment that: ‘Experience has shown that inter-personal relationships developed between employee and supervisor to a quite remarkable extent and in some cases resulted in a complete change in the anti-social attitudes adopted by employees.’ (MacKay & Rook 1976, p. 26) In a similar vein, a study in Queensland that examined the views of thirty young female offender
about juvenile justice programs and services found that the most critical factor in altering the attitudes and behaviour of these young women was the development of a positive relationship with their worker (Murray 2000). Specifically, the researchers found that:

[T]he quality of the nature of a one-to-one relationship with their worker from the Department or a community agency was identified as the most significant factor in determining whether the young women felt that they gained anything valuable from their order. With respect to community service orders, the young women’s perception of the workers in an agency was identified as being more significant than the nature of the activity or work they undertook. (Murray 2000, p. 21)

This is an interesting finding because it suggests, at least in this case, that unlike most other community-based orders, the role of workers outside the probation service appears to be equally important to the role of correctional workers in the overall effectiveness of community service. This suggests that due consideration should be given in the matching process, not only to issues such as, the appropriateness of the type of work, the location of the placement, co-offenders, but also who will supervise the work.

MacKay and Rook (1997) speculated that the nature of the Tasmanian Work Order Scheme, because of its involvement of unpaid volunteers, created an environment that encourages the fostering of relationships. In particular, they suggest that because the community agency supervisors or volunteers do not have any statutory power over the ‘employees’ or offenders, this is conducive to the development of a more trusting and casual relationship than that between an offender and a correctional worker. They write, ‘The employee quickly becomes aware that his supervisor does not represent the Probation and Parole Service, or indeed the Law, in any way, and feels free to discuss any besetting problems in a more relaxed way.’ (MacKay & Rook 1976, p. 26) Interestingly, the offenders in McVor’s (1992) study sample in Scotland reported that they would be disinclined to seek assistance from their community service officer if they had problems during the period of their order. Whether or not the offenders placed in community agencies would have sought assistance from their agency supervisors was not addressed in the study. In Washington State, Wood (2012) reported in his study of the Clack County Juvenile Court’s restorative community justice scheme, that the large majority of interactions between young offenders and volunteers were work-focused and not offence-focused. He noted that this was partially explained by volunteers having been requested not to ask about the reasons for a young person’s community service involvement, but that nonetheless, the work placements were characterised by ‘parallel participation’, where hierarchies (i.e. work division and performance) were mostly shaped by the nature of the work (Wood 2012). This is clearly different to the nature and hierarchical structure of the relationship between young offenders and their correctional workers, as these relationships are likely to be characterised by clearly delineated lines of authority, with interactions focusing more explicitly on the young person’s offending behaviour. The young people in Wood’s sample mostly reported that their community work experiences were positive, in that volunteers were generally supportive, nurturing, forgiving, and non-judgemental towards them.

Community agency supervision

However, more recent findings of a review of the Tasmanian community service order scheme noted concerns held by correctional staff about the quality of supervision provided to offenders on community service placements by volunteer supervisors (Tasmania DoJ 2008). The reviewers provided two main examples of what staff considered to be poor quality supervision: firstly, that supervisors were unclear regarding the limits of appropriate offender behaviour while subject to a legal order and were not enforcing appropriate behaviour; and secondly, incidents that occurred on-site were not reported by the supervisors to community corrections in a timely manner (Tasmania DoJ 2008). According to the reviewers, ‘support for CSO supervisors is limited and there is a perception that CSO supervisors are poorly equipped to deal with the client group, are at times unable to set appropriate boundaries with offenders and are not consistent in reporting inappropriate
behaviour.’ (Tasmania DoJ 2008, p. 4) The audit report also noted that in some instances staff considered that agency CSO supervisors were not just unable to deal with offenders’ inappropriate behaviour or report back incidences to the Department, but were in fact unwilling to do so (Tasmania DoJ 2008). A consequent recommendation of the review was that the Department of Justice consider paying and supporting the CSO supervisors through induction, training and supervision as ‘professional members of the team delivering the CSO scheme’ (Tasmania DoJ 2008, p. 35).

In New South Wales, an investigation by the Independent Commission Against Corruption into the administration of the community service order scheme found corrupt behaviour involving a correctional staff member, four volunteer CSO supervisors and four offenders on community service (ICAC 2006). Specifically, the investigation found evidence of unlawful behaviour on the part of the correctional officer, as well as that the CSO supervisors had falsified offenders’ records of working hours and provided the offenders with inappropriate work projects that benefited the supervisors personally (ICAC 2006). Notable examples of this corruption include accepting payment from offenders in return for the falsifying their record of work hours and redirecting the community service work of offenders to private residential premises belonging to family members (ICAC 2006). As a result, the ICAC recommended a number of changes to the NSW community service order scheme that included a system of regular and ongoing accreditation and review for work placement agencies and a set of standards for individual CSO supervisors to ensure their appropriateness (ICAC 2006). These findings appear to support those of McIvor (1992) regarding the requirement for more consistent record-keeping procedures pertaining to offenders’ work hours and attendance.

Importance of a pro-social modelling (PSM) approach

Returning to the findings of Wood’s (2012) restorative community service study, he observed that there were minimal instances of overt labelling of the young offenders by volunteers, but several instances of chastisement or criticism for perceived idleness and some ‘brusque’ responses to information offered by young people about their offences. Similarly, in the Victorian study of adult women offenders (Alder & Edwards 1992), the majority of the women expressed positive views about their community service experiences. However, interviews with the women who had more negative views about community service revealed that the women attributed their unsatisfactory experience to the poor relationships with their work placement colleagues or supervisors (Alder & Edwards 1992). The researchers described this finding, as follows:

‘[A]...prevailing theme was one of dissatisfaction with work relationships, particularly with the supervisors. These women expressed strong feelings of being “degraded” and “put down”, excluded and generally discriminated against by supervisors and other agency workers.’ (Alder & Edwards 1992, p. 48)

These findings appear to emphasise the importance of a pro-social modelling (PSM) approach among community service supervisors, as well as correctional staff who work with offenders. Results of studies in England and Scotland that examined the impact of PSM training on the practice of community service supervision observed positive impacts on both community service staff and their practices following the training. McCulloch reported that staff and offender responses in the Scottish study suggest that:

[W]hile the training certainly supported the application of a PSM approach in practice, staff training was only one factor contributing to this outcome (with a worker’s experience, knowledge, beliefs, general attitude and attributes identified as equally significant) (McCulloch 2010b, p. 16).

It is important to note that these studies were conducted with community service staff employed by correctional services in Britain and Scotland, not with community agency or volunteer community work supervisors. Given the level of contact that community agency supervisors have with offenders on community
service and the obvious impact of the nature of their relationship with one another, it seems likely that training in a PSM approach could benefit these supervisors as well. That is notwithstanding the factors that contributed to an overall positive outcome from the PSM training, outlined by McCulloch in the quote above.

The complexity of compliance

Research around the rehabilitation process for offenders indicates that a crucial factor to encourage offender compliance is effective engagement and relationship between offender and worker, where workers develop an understanding of and address clients’ beliefs, attachments and perceptions of the legitimacy about what and who it is they are complying with and why (Turner 2010a). It is clear from the Tasmanian, Victorian and Washington State studies that offenders’ relationship with their community service supervisors played an important role in their overall experience of community service. This is interesting when considered alongside McIvor’s (1992) finding of a link between offenders’ experiences of community service and the occurrence of absenteeism, particularly that offenders who reported that their placements were very enjoyable and worthwhile had fewer absences. When first examined, these findings appear to offer a relatively simple method of ensuring an offender’s compliance with the conditions of a community service order, at least in terms of their attendance requirements: provide an offender with a good experience and the offender will comply through attendance. This acumen is summarised by Rex, as follows:

Although she does not apply this perspective in her work, McIvor’s (1992) study of community service in Scotland (where offenders’ appreciation of certain types of placements was associated with higher rates of compliance and lower rates of subsequent recidivism) points to the possibility that a positive experience may generate a commitment to comply with the law. (Rex 1999, p. 378)

However, research findings related to why offenders do and do not comply with the conditions of their legal orders suggests greater complexity in understanding the mechanisms of compliance (McCulloch 2010a; Robinson & McNeill 2010). For example, not discounting the insights provided by McIvor’s findings, McCulloch (2010a) argues that the dynamics of offender compliance with community service is substantially more complex than just ensuring a positive work placement experience. To illustrate this, she reiterates the following findings from a small Scottish study on the impact of training in pro-social modelling (PSM) on community service supervision practices:

While the majority of those interviewed – staff and offenders alike – agreed that the nature and quality of the worker/offender relationship made a difference to the CS experience, and even ‘supported’ attendance and compliance, responses were routinely qualified by an attention to other ‘stronger’ influencing factors on the attendance/compliance dynamic. (McCulloch 2010a, p. 19)

Specifically, staff in the study sample indicated that offenders’ attitudes and problems were more significant, as well as the substantial influence of broader organisational and socio-political limitations, while offenders noted the substantial influence of their co-workers, the assumed outcomes of non-compliance and, most importantly, the kind of work they were expected to perform (McCulloch 2010a).
PART 4: MODELS AND BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

MODELS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

Not much attention has been paid in the literature to the issue of identifying or determining effective models for the operation of community service schemes, possibly owing to the array of variations in program operation between jurisdictions. This has clearly been a challenge for researchers. Notwithstanding these variations, a 2002 review of the international use of community service in criminal justice, identified two main models of community service from a diversity of administration methods, as well as the inherent benefits and drawbacks of these models (Harris & Lo 2002):

**Independent model**

The first model, which we have termed the 'independent model', was characterised by the separation and independence of community service schemes from mainstream probation services. These schemes were exclusively operated by community service coordinators (Harris & Lo 2002). Major advantages of this model include its cost-effectiveness and limited potential for up-tariffing or net-widening, while the major disadvantage is the potential for problems with role clarity, related to worker responsibilities and the aims of probation and community service more generally. According to the authors of the review:

No major problems arise when community service workers work with offenders put under deferred prosecution, unsupervised probation, or compensation orders. However, when community service is used as a condition of probation or when offenders are sentenced to undertake both community service and probation, the lines of authority between probation officers and community service workers sometimes become blurred. Eventually, it leads to communication problems, cultural divide, and professional rivalry between the two parties, especially when they have contradictory objectives... (Harris & Lo 2002, p. 441)

Interestingly, in their study of offenders on probation in Britain, including those on community service and combined orders, Mair and May (1997) observed that in the majority of cases, (71%), the community service order was managed by a specialist in community service and not the same probation officer who managed the probation order. Moreover, they found that while the community service components ran for between forty and one hundred hours, many offenders appeared unclear about the length of these, with over half claiming that the duration was longer than one hundred hours (Mair & May 1997). Also relevant is the finding of a review of community service in the Jersey Probation and After Care Service (JPACS) that among the community service team, ‘there was a sense of ‘separateness’ from the rest of JPACS’ (Ingram & Clark 2012, p. 40). The review noted that this was acknowledged by the staff, who suggested it might be related to different operational issues, such as different working hours (Ingram & Clark 2012). Moreover, feedback from staff and beneficiaries of community service, suggested that the implementation of ‘formal three way meetings (with client, Community Service Officer and Probation Officers) for those on Combination Orders could increase the sense that the scheme is part of the JPACS’. (Ingram & Clark 2012, p. 40)

Similarly, a relatively recent audit report of the Tasmanian community service order scheme (Tasmania DoJ 2008) identified a number of issues that stemmed from having separate roles for the management of the scheme in some regions, as follows:

- as the management of community service orders mainly entails administrative tasks, the skills and expertise of offender managers are not being maximised;
staff held the view that working solely on community service orders is unchallenging, demotivating and deskillling;

as only a small number of people who have knowledge about the community service order scheme and the offenders, this poses a risk to the organisation if those staff members are unavailable;

there is no flexibility in the role of offender managers in the community service orders scheme to provide other facets of the service during period of higher work requirements; and

community service order learning opportunities are not available to new staff, due to the management of community service orders being separate from the core work of offender managers.

To address these issues, the reviewers suggest a number of changes to the structure and administration of the scheme, fundamental among which was the development a state-wide community service unit to provide a centralised, separate, but connected approach to the duties that are not ‘core business’ for offender managers (Tasmania DoJ 2008). The reviewers justify this on the grounds that, compared to managing offenders on other orders, managing community service schemes entails a different set of skills. They suggest specifically that community service managers (or workers) require greater administrative and advisory skills (e.g. for the management of work placement sites) than their offender manager counterparts, who in turn, require greater skills and experience in the assessment and management of criminogenic risk and triggers for offending behaviour, than community service managers (Tasmania DoJ 2008). Finally, the reviewers assert that, ‘Examples from the literature and from practice in other jurisdictions, illustrate that CSO schemes should be managed by separate, but integrated, groups of community corrections staff.’ (Tasmania DoJ 2008, p. 34)

Unfortunately, this is not supported by any references to research or other literature and no reference list is included in the report, so the veracity of the statement cannot be determined. It is noted that no such definitive evidence or preference towards a particular model of community service administration was found in the literature examined for this review.

Probation-dependent model

The second model, we have termed it the ‘probation-dependent model’, was characterised by domination from the probation services, which subsumed community service schemes. Offenders, required to undertake community service, were supervised in these schemes, either solely by a probation worker or by a probation worker with support from a community service worker or a staff member from a community agency, but never just by a community service worker (Harris & Lo 2002). Therefore, when community service is a condition of probation, the probation officer, not the community service worker, holds supervisory responsibilities, including making breach decisions (Harris & Lo 2002). The review’s authors suggest this is the model’s major advantage:

This helps ensure coherence between probation and community service components and minimizes professional conflict. Another alternative is that probation officers select suitable placements and make recommendations to the court. Offenders are administratively placed with the sponsoring organizations, which supervise the sentence. The probation officers monitor progress and take action if necessary. Both alternatives of the second model center on probation, but they manage to solve the inherited problems and interorganizational conflicts associated with the first one. (Harris & Lo 2002, p. 441)

However, the disadvantages of this model include the higher cost, due to the qualification levels of probation staff, and its potential for up-tariffing and net-widening (Harris & Lo 2002).

Notably, although McIvor (1991) and McWilliams (1989) have emphasised that it is important for community service offenders to have access to support for various practical and personal difficulties, McIvor makes it clear that, ‘This is not, however, a plea for the increased ‘probationisation’ of community service for this
would...almost certainly reduce its credibility with the courts and lead to even greater inconsistency in its use.’ (McIvor 1992, p. 180) McIvor (1992) suggests that the way to achieve a balance is not by recognising community service as a distinct sentence, but by recognising it as a tariff measure where the number of mandated work hours corresponds to the seriousness of the offence. In addition, she considers that the schemes should operate according to social work values that allow offenders opportunities to make the most of their abilities, while maintaining or boosting their self-esteem and dignity (McIvor 1992).

**EXISTING BEST PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE**

The two most recent key studies (see CJINI 2013; Wood 2012) made explicit and specific reference to principles of best practice in community service. It might be that this indicates a growing interest in the identification and implementation of effective practice principles in community service more generally and would make this review, a timely one. The overall quality of supervision provided to offenders in the community by the Probation Board of Northern Ireland (PBNI) was evaluated against the practice standards outlined in the PBNI’s *Best Practice Framework incorporating the Northern Ireland Standards* (2011). This approach was wholly implemented on 1 April 2012 and introduced the following four main changes to the *Northern Ireland Standards*:

1. introduction of a Best Practice Framework;
2. three varying Levels of Application, (Lower, Standard and Higher), throughout the PBNI’s work, based on the ‘risk’ principle and in recognition that client cases are individual and require distinct and differing degrees of assessment, planning, intervention and review;
3. development of Best Practice Guidance to aid professional judgement when applying the standards; and
4. an improved emphasis on evaluating effectiveness including inputs, outcomes and the PBNI as a learning body (CJINI 2013).

The developers of the *Best Practice Framework* suggest that it ‘takes into account existing models of practice and research findings, including those from research into desistance and what is effective practice.’ (PBNI 2012, p. 9) These include the principles of RNR and program integrity, multi-modal approaches that target an offender’s preferred ways of learning, readiness to change, motivation and strengths, and community oriented approaches that are within community context and use social network supports (PBNI 2012). In addition, the following key concepts from desistance research are promoted as part of the framework:

- staff are required to have an awareness of what encourages desistance;
- as each offender has a distinct set of risk, needs, strengths and responsibility issues, assessment, case plans and interventions should be individualised;
- incorporate strengths of offenders and their social networks and opportunities for offenders to foster, practice and exhibit new knowledge and skills;
- offenders must be able to recognise opportunities for change (e.g. ways in which work can assist to reduce risk of recidivism);
- necessity for practical assistance to cope with and address social problems;
- the supervising officer’s role may need to be more active in the early stages to sustain belief and hope that change is possible, in order to support desistance;
- the offender can be assisted to accept more responsibilities as supervision and desistance progresses;
- ‘personal redemption’ as in making amends can be a significant part of desistance and can include assisting others to cease offending and positive offender reparation opportunities;
- importance of creating, boosting and continuing motivation, and harnessing what people are motivated to do (approach goals) and not motivated to do (repel goals);
• importance of incentives to fortify and maintain change;
• importance of relationships to encourage desistance, including that between worker and offender; and
• importance of significant others and means to support desistance including family involvement and engagement (PBNI 2012)

It is evident that important elements of the Best Practice Framework do indeed appear to be grounded in research findings about effective probation practice. The Framework has been used as the partial basis of the most recent evaluation of the PBNI’s supervision of offenders in the community, but has not itself been empirically tested. That is, no experiment has been undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of complying with the PBNI Best Practice Framework to derive desired outcomes from community service. It has been included in this review as an example of what exists in other jurisdictions in terms of attempting to define and accord with principles of best practice in community corrections.

In his study on use and effects of restorative community service at the Clark County Juvenile Court (CCJC) in Washington State, USA, Wood makes mention of ‘best-practice literature on the use of community service in restorative justice, for those that support its use within this approach.’ (Wood 2012, p. 704) Unfortunately, he is not clear about what this literature actually is, but it seems likely, given his reference to the fact in his methodology, that he is referring to best-practice guidelines provided to him by the court as background information to the study (see Wood 2012, p. 692). Nonetheless, in light of the uniqueness of this explicit pairing of a restorative justice approach with community service, it appears worth examining as part of this review. According to Wood (2012), key aspects of best-practice within the use of restorative community service include:

• proportionality of the community service work to the offense;
• relevance of the community service work to the offense and/or harms caused;
• the quality and purpose of service work, including work that meets local and immediate community needs;
• the use of community service work as a part of a larger set of restorative programs and practices that ideally include the use of victim–offender mediation, restitution, victim services, etc.; and
• service that is ‘victim’ driven to the greatest degree possible.

To this end, Wood notes the use of Victim Offender Mediation (VOMs) and input driven by victims through its Victim Impact Program (VIP) in the CCJC. In VOMs, victims could request that offenders undertake their community service work at a specific kind of location, often a setting that would be related to the crime. According to Wood, where victims made no specific requests:

‘community service was linked to existing local organisations in ways that fit with Bazemore and Maloney’s (1994, p. 29) argument that youth should “be placed in positive, productive roles in the community which allow them to experience, practice, and demonstrate ability to do something well that others value.” (Wood 2012, p. 705)

While the findings of Wood’s study cannot be generalised to other community service schemes, they are a valuable contribution to the research in providing some guidance for ways to more overtly enhance the restorative nature of community service and address the concerns of those who see community service in its current form as merely ‘symbolic restitution’ (Bazemore & Maloney 1994).
PART 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FROM THIS REVIEW

This review has shown that much of the research to date has focused largely on the effectiveness of community service in meeting its aims as an alternative sanction to prison and as a method of saving financial costs associated with imprisonment. However, due to the ongoing inconsistent use of community service by sentencers, in sometimes imposing community service in place of custody and at other times, imposing it in place of non-custodial sanctions, it is clear that community service has failed to realise these aims.

Nonetheless, it is also evident that when compared to short-term imprisonment outcomes, community service appears to do better in terms of lower overall recidivism rates. Moreover, there are consistent findings from evaluations of community service schemes that the general completion rates of offenders on community service are markedly high. While less research has focused on the rehabilitative potential of community service, including its reparative and reintegrative aims, there are consistent findings and themes that have emerged in this review from the studies that have examined these objective components. These findings and themes are indicative of community service practice principles that could be considered, at least at this stage, to be current ‘best practice’. However, the varying degrees of rigour that support these best practice principles is acknowledged by categorising them according to ‘what we know’, ‘what we think we know’ and ‘what we need to know’.

What we know: current best practice principles

The following findings appear well-supported by the research evidence outlined in this review and can therefore be regarded as current best practice principles for the operation of community service schemes:

**Practice principle 1:**

Community service schemes are more effective in terms of meeting all and any of their aims if offenders view the community work as meaningful and worthwhile.

**Possible practical implications:**

Community work placements should be assessed against the *McIvor criteria to ensure they offer offenders the following:

1. useful work (i.e. ‘real work’ instead of ‘busy work’);
2. lots of contact with community service beneficiaries; and
3. the opportunity to acquire skills.

* It is noted that these criteria could be considered somewhat subjective. Please see principles eight and nine for suggestions about consultation with offenders. Specific to these principles consultation could take place with offenders to ascertain their existing interests, knowledge and skills in order to build on these for an overall worthwhile community work experience.

**Practice principle 2:**

Community service schemes achieve better completion rates and associated lower rates of recidivism when they exclude the use of work crews or gangs or other such group placements in favour of more individual placements in the community.
Possible practical implications:

Community service schemes may need to commit greater resources and time to securing reliable and appropriate individual placement options for offenders on community service. It is acknowledged that in some situations and locations this may not be feasible and group placements may be the only realistic option. In these circumstances, every effort should be made to achieve the following:

1. provide offenders with the opportunity to undertake part of their community work at an individual placement, as this has been linked to better outcomes than offenders who undertake all of their community work in a group placement;
2. provide appropriate levels and quality of supervision to offenders on group placements, ensuring the groups are not too large; and
3. reduce the potential negative effects of contamination in group placements by minimising their use where possible and ensuring lower risk offenders are not associating with higher risk offenders.

Scheme administrators should weigh up the financial and other costs associated with managing multiple individual placements against the apparent risk of breach and contamination posed by group placements.

Practice principle 3:

Community service supervisors who employ a pro-social modelling approach to their working relationships with offenders achieve better compliance and recidivism outcomes than other supervisors.

Possible practical implications:

Community service schemes should ensure training and ongoing supervision is provided to staff in adopting a pro-social modelling approach to their practice with offenders. Given the prevalence of the use of external community agency volunteers or staff for the purposes of supervising offenders on community service, consideration should be given to extending such training to them.

Where this is not feasible, the following practices could be undertaken to support community agency supervisors to utilise a pro-social approach:

1. The provision of guidelines for community agency supervisors that outline expectations about their role, including the use of a pro-social modelling approach;
2. Regular meetings with correctional administrators of community service schemes and community agency supervisors to discuss practice and supervision issues, including the use of a pro-social modelling approach – such meetings should not be primarily focused on administrative issues, although these may be relevant as well; and
3. Demonstration of the use of pro-social modelling by correctional staff, not just in their interaction with offenders, but also in their interaction with community agency supervisors.
**Practice principle 4:**

Community service schemes with consistent and transparent practices promote confidence from the public, judiciary and offenders in their effectiveness and legitimacy, essential to the ongoing viability of community service schemes.

**Possible practical implications:**

Community service schemes should ensure that policies pertaining to the maintenance of records of offenders’ work hours and attendance are clear and that the practices are consistent. A regular and ongoing internal audit system could assist to ensure this.

**Practice principle 5:**

Community service administrators should be mindful of the existence of any bias in the referral and selection processes for their community service schemes that may exclude certain groups of offenders based on their gender, age, cultural background and health status and ensure that equal opportunity for participation in community service is provided to all offenders.

**Possible practical implications:**

Community service schemes should examine their existing procedures and records to determine if any selection and referral bias is evident in their processes. Where evident, steps should be taken to rectify this and the following may assist in this regard:

1. Educate staff responsible for making referrals and recommendations for the suitability of offenders to community service about these areas of bias and ensure their procedures are equitable and consider alternative options for offenders from these groups, considered unsuitable for community service;
2. Provide any statistical or other evidence of such bias to court administrators and members of the judiciary through appropriate channels to raise awareness of these issues;
3. Meet and consult with community agency representatives that provide work placements to develop strategies to make existing placements more appropriate or to establish new work projects and placements to accommodate the needs of traditionally excluded groups of offenders.

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**What we think we know: current promising best practice principles**

The following findings appear supported to some degree by the research evidence outlined in this review and can therefore be regarded as principles that appear promising in terms of best practice for the operation of community service schemes:

**Practice principle 6:**

Community service schemes that prove timely commencement of offenders on community work placements after sentencing have higher completion and lower breach rates.

**Possible practical implications:**

Community service schemes may need to set specific time-frame targets to reduce any delays in the time between an offender being sentenced to a community service order and commencing the actual work. Where
delays are unavoidable, regular contact and communication should be maintained with offenders on waiting lists in an attempt to retain their motivation and reassure them that every effort is being made to commence them on their order.

Practice principle 7:

Offenders on community service who have input into the type of work and placement they are allocated to have a more positive experience of community service.

Possible practical implications:

Most community service schemes have existing processes for attempting to match offenders to appropriate placements. These would seem to provide an ideal opportunity to allow offenders input into the choice of the preferred placement and work type. Although offenders’ preferences cannot always be accommodated, the process of exploring these options with offenders in a respectful way and clarifying what is and what is not possible during their community service is in line with the established effective practice of working collaboratively with offenders. Moreover, a meeting between community service staff and offenders at an early stage in their community service order is an opportunity to achieve the following:

1. Role clarification – particularly pertinent when there is more than one worker involved, as well as when a community agency supervisor will be involved. Workers should explore offenders’ expectations of community service and clarify any misconceptions.
2. Assessment of offender’s self-predicted risk of reoffending either during or after their community service – this appears to be a surprisingly accurate method of predicting an offender’s likelihood of reoffending. Given that many actuarial risk assessments are not generally a feature of community service, this may be an alternative method to better assess risk factors for recidivism and develop strategies to mitigate these risks for individual offenders. Such an approach may require a rethinking of the role of community service staff, which is considered under the next principle.

Practice principle 8:

Community service schemes that provide more comprehensive support to offenders on community service achieve greater completion rates.

Possible practical implications:

Following on from the previous practice principle, a meeting between community service staff and offenders at an early stage in their community service order could provide an opportunity for staff to identify any potential or existing problems for offenders that may adversely affect their ability to successfully complete their community service. These issues could be addressed through the development of a basic case plan or contract in consultation with the offender and other relevant staff, including community agency supervisor to guide and assist the offender to complete their community service.

Practice principle 9:

Community service schemes that have stricter enforcement of absenteeism achieve greater completion rates.

Possible practical implications:

This principle should not be viewed as advocating for a punitive approach to managing absenteeism, rather it involves encouraging consistency in the practice of recording attendance and completion of work hours, as well as what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable absences and when discretion can be employed. Expectations about such practices should be clearly documented and made available to all stakeholders in
community service schemes. In addition, expectations about the levels of support provided to offenders to assist them to meet community service attendance requirements, such as the provision of transport or travel vouchers, should also be consistent and made clear to all stakeholders.

**Practice principle 10:**

Community service schemes that involve high numbers of young offenders should ensure they are operating, where possible to established principles of effective practice with children, adolescents and young people.

**Possible practical implications:**

Given the high numbers of young people and correspondingly high breach rates of these young people on community service, scheme administrators should ensure staff and supervisors are appropriately trained and experienced to work with this population. In addition, expectations of young people in terms of attendance and other areas of compliance, should be mindful of their developmental stage and capacity and this should be reflected in community service procedures and policies.

**Practice principle 11:**

Community service schemes should engage in a process of ongoing evaluation and review that engages key stakeholders to assess their views of the effectiveness of the schemes.

**Possible practical implications:**

A formalised and regular review system may need to be implemented by community service administrators if one is not already in place.

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**What we need to know: gaps in the research and literature**

It is not possible, on the strength of the available evidence about community service to advocate for a particular model or approach, currently in operation. In addition to the requirement for further research into the areas listed above, the following key questions remain unanswered by this review and point to gaps in the available evidence base and literature on community service:

What models of community service are most effective?

What role does the risk principle play in community service, other than in group placements?

What works for offenders who are female, Aboriginal or from ethnic minorities on community service?

To what extent can community work which is consistent with best practice principles reduce the incidence of non-compliance and recidivism and meet the other objectives of community service?

To what extent would the ‘promising’ principles referred to above be supported by further research?

Which of the best practice principles have the most impact on compliance, recidivism and the other objectives of community service?

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**CONCLUSION**

The previous questions are only some of the questions that remain unanswered about community service. It is clear that there is generally a need for greater research into the rehabilitative potential of community service. In their first report of the British experimental community service schemes, Pease et al. (Pease et al. 1975, p. 52)
45) assert that, ‘The success or otherwise of community service, as of any other penal measure, is assessed by change in behaviour of the offender.’ If this is the case, then more robust, empirical research is essential to develop greater knowledge, not only about what works in community service, but also how, why and for whom it works, for the development of evidence-based, best practice principles in community service.
**APPENDIX 1.: TABLE 1. KEY STUDIES IN THE REVIEW**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study reference and related literature</th>
<th>Brief overview</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Study outcomes relevant to the research question</th>
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<tr>
<td>Community Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (2013), <em>An inspection of community supervision by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland</em>, Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland, Belfast, viewed 13 June 2013. <a href="http://www.cjini.org/CJNI/files/78/78040759-0c4f-449b-b36b-647dd986eb51.pdf">www.cjini.org/CJNI/files/78/78040759-0c4f-449b-b36b-647dd986eb51.pdf</a></td>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> This is first comprehensive inspection of probation practice by the Community Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) that examined how the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PJNI) supervised offenders in the community. The evaluation was undertaken while the PJNI experienced continuing mounting demand for their services. <strong>Aims:</strong> The inspection aimed to: 1. assess the performance of the PJNI in supervising offenders in the community, including those subject to community service (CS); 2. ensure the existence of a legacy of both personal and organisational learning by involving probation managers and officers in the review of case files, along with assessors from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of</td>
<td><strong>Case review samples:</strong> Included: Sample 1 - Licence Cases (includes determinate custodial sentences, extended and indeterminate sentences for public protection): o 35 Total (35%): 20 lower/medium and 15 higher level of application (risk). o Offenders aged 18yrs+, first released from custody on licence (parole), excluding re-release following recall (revocation) from 1 January 2012 – 28 February 2012. Sample 2: Community Order Cases (includes probation orders, community service orders, combination orders): o 65 Total (65%): 13 lower, 38 medium and 14 higher level of application (risk). o Offenders aged 18yrs+, sentenced to community orders from 1 January 2012 – 31</td>
<td><strong>Document review:</strong> Documentation and data provided by the PJNI, including the PJNI Best Practice Framework incorporating the Northern Ireland Standards, policy and procedure documents, multi-agency procedure documents and the PJNI Corporate and Business Plan. The PJNI Best Practice Framework is based on research on effective practice in probation, including: o the risk-need-responsivity principles; o principle of program integrity; o key findings from desistance research; o multi-modal approaches that target an offender’s preferred ways of learning, readiness to change, motivation, and strengths; and o community oriented approaches that are within community context and use social network supports. <strong>Outputs:</strong> There were 22 cases where the offender was ordered to undertake CS. In all cases, the placement was matched to the offender, work placements were deemed to be sufficiently demanding and of community benefit. In 95% of cases, CS placements appeared to take account of the offenders’ assessed level of risk. In 12 of 16 relevant cases (75%), placements facilitated skills development and/or educational attainment, regardless of there being no requirement of the PJNI to ensure this. Reviews were typically undertaken at the proper times, but some were not as thorough as possible in regards to considering changes to all relevant issues. This was especially</td>
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3. Probation (HMI Probation); and benchmark the performance of the PBNI in comparison with other probation services and practice in England and Wales.

January 2012.

Excluded: Orders where the only requirement is an attendance centre, or an electronically monitored exclusion or curfew requirement.

**Key combined total case sample demographics:**
- Levels of application: Higher 25 (25%), Standard 59 (59%), Lower 16 (16%)
- Male (87%)
- White (96%)
- Unemployed (>75%)
- Substance misuse condition (>50%)
- Violent offences history (31%)
- Drug offences (15%)
- Previous or current perpetrator of domestic abuse (33%)
- Child protection concerns (32%) – offender as the source (94%)
- Vulnerability or risk of suicide concerns (32%)

**Human participants:**
*Stakeholders within the criminal justice system:*
- 73 different probation staff: Belfast region (35); rural region (31);
- 41 probationers, aged 18+; and
- 14 people registered with the PBNI Victim Information Scheme.

The effectiveness of the operation of the PBNI CS scheme was measured against the standards for best practice in CS, outlined in sections 4cs of the *Best Practice Framework*. These include guidelines for:
- CSO suitability assessment (including combination order suitability, issues of equality and medical assessments; reporting of breaches; Risk of Harm (RoH) to others assessments and reviews; induction; provision of order and case plans; work contracts, instructions and amendments; referrals; offender contacts; placement availability, suitability and assessment; recording of offender work attendance and performance; general assessment reviews; transfer of CS orders; non-compliance procedures relating to attendance, behaviour, enforcement and non/acceptable absences; and termination or expiry of CSO hours.

**Limitations:**
The evaluation was conducted against a set of criteria that, although supported by research evidence, has not been empirically tested. That is, no experiment has been undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of complying with the PBNI *Best Practice Framework* and the HMI Probation in England and Wales’ Offender Management Inspection (OMI 2 program), to derive desired outcomes from community service. In addition, consistent with the purpose of the inspection, the study focused and reported on outputs, rather than outcomes.

**Fieldwork:**
Reviews of 100 cases supervised by the PBNI on community orders or released from prison on licence (parole).

Collection of quantitative data, using problematic where there had been a significant change to the case, (e.g. breach, recidivism, etc.). More consistent implementation of the *Best Practice Framework’s* stipulations for bringing forward a review in such circumstances was required.

**Description:** This study is a component of a broader 3-year case study on the use and effects of restorative justice interventions at the Clark County Juvenile Court (CCJC) in Washington State, USA.

**Human participants:**
*Included:*
- 1 Court administrator;
- 4 court managers and 2 mediation and victim staff; as well as ‘several’ probation staff and ‘other select participants’ (exact figures not provided).

**Interviews**
*Formal interviews:*
- 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted in total with the following participants and respective focus:
  1. Court administrator and managers – the court’s reasons for adopting RCS.

**Outcomes:**
*Community service settings:*
The type of work that young offenders performed varied greatly and this did not appear to matter substantially to most young people. Key differences were found between ‘ongoing sites’, where community service settings:

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**Aims:**
Explore CCJC’s implementation and use of ‘restorative community service’ (RCS) as part of its larger implementation of a restorative justice framework, between 1999 and 2005, including:
1. the sorts of institutional changes created by the court, including rejection of work crews in favour of ‘real work’ within community locations;
2. the variety and characteristics of social interactions, notably how youth and volunteers ‘made sense’ of their work;
3. the practical implications of findings for restorative justice advocates for using community service in a youth context; and
4. the theoretical implications of findings for research on community service in sociology and criminology.

**Excluded:**
Youth sex offenders and/or youth with specific mental health needs. Interviews with court staff involved in working with these young people were not carried out.

2. Probation staff – court’s previous use of community service, transition to RCS, and probation staff views on the use of RCS.
3. Mediation staff – use and effectiveness of RCS in restorative meetings.

**Informal interviews:**
100+ lengthy and typically impromptu discussions were conducted at the court or outlying sites, where the researcher was based, virtually on a weekly basis, for lengthy periods between 2003 and early 2006. Participants included those previously mentioned, as well as community RCS volunteers and community organisation representatives (including those who supervised several RCS sites).

More than 12 informal interviews were conducted with the court’s RCS coordinator; ‘at least’ 10 informal interviews with the court’s RCS manager about the implementation and use of RCS and 30+ discussions were held with RCS volunteers and site supervisors (exact figures not provided).

**Participant observation**
The researcher, as participant observer, took part in volunteer ‘work’ at 13 RCS sites, (several attended more than once by the researcher), and adhered to the same CCJC guidelines as RCS volunteers.

**Volunteer/young offender interactions:**
The large majority of interactions between young offenders and
Non-participant observation:
Observation of a range of meetings, including, court meetings (managerial, staff, interagency); Victim Offender Mediation (VOMs); other ‘restorative alternative’ (RA) meetings; community outreach; and meetings between probation staff and offenders.

Secondary sources:
Review of existing literature and analysis of data provided by the court, (e.g. protocols, mission statements; best-practice guidelines; meeting minutes; total hours for RCS; RCS offender completion rates (aggregate data only) and volunteer participation numbers).

volunteers were:
- work-focused and not offence-focused, (partially explained due to volunteers having been requested not to ask about the reasons for a young person’s RCS participation);
- characterised by ‘parallel participation’, where hierarchies (i.e. work division and performance) was mostly shaped by the nature of the work; and
- positive in that volunteers were generally supportive, nurturing, forgiving, and non-judgemental towards young offenders, with minimal instances of overt labelling, but several instances of chastisement or criticism for perceived idleness and some ‘brusque’ responses to information volunteered by young people about their offences.

Nature of the work performed – ‘real work’:
- Most young people appeared to accept the legitimacy of their community service work and saw it as ‘real work’, rather than just ‘busywork’ created just for offenders – a perceptual shift from the previous use of work crews.
- This sense of “real work” appeared predicated by: (1) the young people’s assessment the purpose of their work, and (2)

**Description:** This article discusses findings of research studies conducted on community services (CS) in Europe that also examined the effect of pro-social modelling (PSM) training. The article also reports the findings of a small scale Scottish study that aimed to evaluate the impact of PSM training on the practice of CS supervision within a criminal justice system.

**Human participants:** Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. 12 CS staff were interviewed and of these:
- 3 were female and 9 were male; and
- their time spent in the job ranged from 6 months to 12 years, but was mostly at the higher end of the scale.

A multi-method approach to data collection was employed, primarily using qualitative tools.

**Document review:** Attention was given to relevant agency and national data information systems. This included documentary analysis of national criminal justice social work statistics and agency breach rates for comparative three-year periods.

**Outcomes:** Two main conclusions were developed from the findings:
1. The training had positive impacts on CS staff and the CS supervision practice.
2. The nature of training impact appeared to be one of endorsement, ‘reinforcement’ and/or ‘development’ of existing practice, rather than direct intervention.

- Although young people frequently complained about having to work, complaints about the purpose or nature of the work were substantially less frequent.
- That young people saw their work having a legitimate, intrinsic purpose was evidenced by a number (unspecified) of young people who returned to volunteer at their community service sites after their mandated period had expired.

**Limitations:**
1. The degree to which findings from RCS sites can be generalised to the use of community service by the CCJC and more broadly.
2. Limited information provided by researcher about the sample (exact number, demographic information, etc.) involved in the research.
Aims:
The specific aims of this study are to:
- demonstrate if and to what degree the training of CS staff in PSM demonstrably effects staff practice and, where possible, service outcomes; and
- contribute to understanding of the wider processes affecting training impact and service development in CS in general.

From 3 CS work teams that comprised 2 day teams and 1 evening team, 25 offenders agreed to participate. Of these:
- 22 were male, 3 were female;
- the majority had a reasonable amount of CS experience (19 had been on CS for longer than 3 months); and
- most were eager to discuss their opinions and experience.

Pre-training and post-training staff questionnaires:
- sent to all staff who attended the training for self-completion and return; and
- 10 of a possible 12 completed questionnaires were returned.

In-depth, semi-structured staff interviews:
- conducted with all twelve staff who attended the training;
- carried out within the agency;
- audio recorded; and
- for a duration of around 45 minutes.

Specific related findings include:
- There was substantial evidence of staff learning, with promising indicators of learning transfer in essential areas.
- The training appeared to achieve its intended outcomes, with evidence most apparent for outcomes 1 and 3. The degree to which the training influenced these outcomes is more problematic to measure. Staff and offender responses suggest that although the training definitely supported the use of a PSM approach in practice, staff training was just one contributing factor among others, (i.e. workers’ experience, attitude, knowledge, beliefs, and attributes), considered as significant.
- The training appeared to encourage an enriched learning/reflective culture amongst the staff group.
- A small minority of the staff group appeared unaffected by the training.
- In certain key outcomes areas, i.e. ‘the provision of support help and guidance’, and ‘reducing the level of breaches and reviews’, the impact was also limited, or definitely more ‘complex’.

Limitations:
Three semi-structured focus groups:
- conducted with three CS work teams, involving 25 offenders in total;
- carried out within the agency without staff present;
- conducted by two researchers; and
- for a duration of around 60 and 75 minutes.

Kirkpatrick’s (2006) four level model of evaluation was adopted as an overarching framework, directing evaluation at the following four levels:
1. staff reaction;
2. staff learning;
3. staff behaviour; and
4. service outcomes.

Initial analysis started with thematically coding responses to the questionnaires and interview questions. Then additional themes that emerged beyond the answers to the questions were identified and coded. A comparative analysis of offender and staff responses was then completed.

The methods adopted for the evaluation were limited by the focus of the study and the resource available. Specifically the following factors need to be acknowledged:
- The evaluation was modest in its aim and sought primarily to evaluate training impact on staff learning, behaviour and practice, with attention to service outcomes where feasible.
- The study did not attempt a ‘before and after’ comparison of staff practice or service outcomes. In part, this reflects the fact that a similar training was delivered to an earlier staff group two years previously, therefore any pre-training measurement would be compromised. In addition, the resource required to create such a measurement was beyond the scope of this study. No comparative control group was identified for like reasons.
- The absence of direct observational data and, in turn, the reliance on participant perspectives requires acknowledgement of the potential for bias in the data gathered.
- The small sample size and the limited information available concerning the larger population of CS staff and offenders limits the representativeness of the findings.


**Description:** This study is a thematic inspection by the Community Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland’s (PBNI) arrangements for persons to perform unpaid work as part of Community Service Orders (CSOs) and combined orders (COs). The last of such full inspections was in 1997. At the time of the inspection 786 people were subject to CSOs and 127 to COs in Northern Ireland, representing 24% of PBNI’s statutory orders, supervised at any one time.

**Aims:** The aim of this inspection was to ascertain the degree to which PBNI has effectively implemented its legislative mandate and Northern Ireland Standards.

The Probation Board (Northern Ireland) Order 1982 mandates PBNI to ensure that arrangements are made for persons to perform Community Service Orders in accordance with the legislative authority detailed under Article 13 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1996. The stated purpose of a CSO is to prevent further offending by re-integrating the offender into the community by:
- successful completion of affirmative and challenging

**Human Participants:**
- PBNI staff at all levels
- Offenders at varied locations, including minority groups
- Placement providers
- Sentencers (judges and magistrates)

Of the 913 people under PBNI supervision on CS and COs on 31 Dec 2008:
- 786 were subject to CSOs (increase of 17% since Jan 2007), of whom 91% were male;
- 127 were subject to COs (an increase of 1% since January 2007), of whom 96% were male; and
- 10 were juvenile CSOs and less than 10 were juvenile COs.

**Document review:**
- A review of existing documents and literature included:
  - relevant PBNI and other papers, legislation, policies, procedures, standards, service requirements;
  - literature that related to other jurisdictions’ CS schemes;
  - analysis of data comprising the period January 2007 - December 2008 inclusive, PBNI data (i.e. pre-sentence reports, trends, caseloads, internal audit and monitoring reports), costs, reconviction data; and
  - CS case record samples.

**Fieldwork:**
- CS placements were observed and structured interviews, questionnaires and focus groups were conducted with the listed sample groups.

The following key themes were assessed:
1. CS scheme management – staff distribution and training, internal monitoring, enforcement, audit, order commencement and completion time frames, resourcing;
2. offender and community and outcomes relevant to CS;
3. adjournments for pre-sentence reports (PSR), and recommendations for CS and Combination Orders (COs),

**Outcomes:**
The CJINI concluded that the PBNI’s CS scheme is ‘well managed against Northern Ireland Standards’ and that the strengths of the PBNI were in delivery mechanisms and supporting structures – elements within their control. The report noted the following specifically:
- Schemes that delivered satisfactory standards of work were correspondingly appropriately resourced and managed.
- Consistent practice was observed between rural and urban areas.
- Proper attention was given to diversity.
- The CS work was clearly positive, socially useful and of community benefit.

The CJINI’s main recommendation was that the PBNI develop an Action Plan to improve:
- the delay in time between an Order being made the offender’s commencement of work (only 36% commenced work within the required 10 days of court hearing time frame);
- the average number of hours worked per week by offenders (86% of offenders were offered five or more weekly hours, but only 28% of offenders actually
unpaid work;
- adhering to disciplined conditions; and
- community reparation through the undertaking of work that is of social use.

The key inspection objectives were to assess the extent to which the PBNI had:
1. established and achieved suitable targets in regard to CS case management, including risk of harm (RoH) management, via application of the Northern Ireland Standards;
2. allotted adequate staffing and other resources to achieve the targets;
3. formed partnership relations with community groups and other providers as essential components of the CS scheme; and
4. communicated adequately with sentencers and other key stakeholders.

- assessed against PSR outcomes; court type and location trend analysis; equal opportunity (e.g. accommodation of female and young CS offenders, urban/rural differences, foreign nationals, placement location safety; health and safety standards;
- work placement suitability – manual work variety, personal interaction and learning opportunities for offenders;
- CS offenders’ reconviction rates;
- ‘best value’ cost analysis of the CS Scheme;
- cross-jurisdictional comparisons; and
- PBNI’s plans for future development of the CS scheme.

The success of the CS scheme was measured against a set of standards, approved by the Northern Ireland Office that took effect from September 2006. Known as the Northern Ireland Standards, they detailed levels of service and practice required of the PBNI and aim to provide a framework for the effective supervision of offenders (see 2006 Northern Ireland Standards).

The CJINI noted that PBNI shortcomings were responsible for 22% of the failures to achieve the target for the required minimum number of weekly hours worked (5 hours), and 37% of failures to commence work on time. They further noted and generally supported the PBNI’s view that when undertaken by offenders over a longer period of time CS work is more memorable and demanding in terms of discipline, routine development and community integration, rather undertaking a greater number of hours over a shorter period of time. However, in light of the findings of the low average number of hours worked per week by offenders, the CJINI urged the PBNI to alter the expectations regarding the number of hours worked, instead of having a ‘one-size fits all’ approach to completing orders.

Limitations:
The purpose of this study was to
assess the effectiveness of the PBNI’s CS schemes against the Northern Ireland Standards, a set of criteria that while appearing sound, has not been empirically tested. The findings of the study cannot be generalised.


**Description:**
This article reports on the findings of the Community Service Pathfinder (CRP-CS) projects, sponsored by the UK Home Office under the Crime Reduction Programme. The projects were part of an overarching ‘What Works’ strategy under which the Joint Prisons/Probation Accreditation Panel was to ratify a core syllabus of demonstrably effective offender programs. Their goal was for these programs, as well as community service, to be delivered by 2003/04 to 60,000 offenders. The aim of the CS-CRP projects is to develop the existing CS research base to examine what in CS could be effective in reducing recidivism, concentrating on the following promising approaches or change models:
- Pro-social Modelling (PSM)
- Skills Accreditation (SA)
- Skills Accreditation AND Pro-social Modelling (SA + PSM)
- Tackling offending-related needs (TON)

**Aims:**
The key aims of the evaluation were to address the following specific questions:

**Human Participants:**
This study included 1,851 offenders who entered the Pathfinder projects after January 2000 and whose orders ended by 30th November 2001. The precise sampling periods differed between areas. The following are key characteristics of this offender sample group:
- 74% were subject to CP orders;
- 64% serving 100 CS hours or less;
- 28% convicted of motoring offences;
- 23% convicted of violent offences;
- 27 years was the average age;
- 8% were female, with a somewhat older profile than the males;
- 11% were from ethnic minority groups;
- Low-medium was the assessed risk level, with 47 being the average OGRS score;
- Comparatively low scores were registered for self-perceived problems and pro-criminal attitudes on Crime PICS II;
- Assessed by staff as having high levels of motivation and social support for achievement of CS hours at the beginning stage;

**Document review and data analysis:**
The report on the evaluation is based on the following key sources and information:
- Probation area databases – criminal justice characteristics, supervision records and termination details;
- Resource expenditure data during pre-project, set-up and project operation periods;
- In-county comparison group data of 84 offenders in Norfolk and 105 in Leicestershire; and
- Out-of-county comparison group data of 596 offenders in Lancashire and 206 in Warwickshire.
- Home Office Offenders Index – OGRS (Offender Group Reconviction Scale) scores;
- Individual offender termination summaries and assessment forms completed by staff; and

**Fieldwork:**
- Interviews with 127 members of staff ranging from ACPO to CS supervisors and administrative staff
- Crime PICS II – administered in the initial 6

This final report presented findings on outputs and intermediate outcomes and noted that a study on reconviction would be an important component to the overall evaluation of the effectiveness of the Pathfinder projects.

**Outputs:**
Of the 1,851 orders terminated by the end of November 2001, 1,347 (73%) were completed successfully. Offenders who were more successful in completing projects were:
- In more stable situations, with existing education or employment (probably where qualifications had been attained);
- Not too young; and
- Without a high risk of continued offending.

In relation to skills accreditation and employment:
- 54% of those enrolled for skills accreditation gained awards;
- Those in comparatively stable situations appeared most likely to achieve awards;
- Of cases where the relevant data was available, just under 15%
1. Were the intended elements (described above) implemented in practice?

2. Have the projects had impacts on outputs (functioning and attendance), intermediate outcomes (skill, employment and training gains; attitudinal, behavioural and offending changes)?

3. Are such changes connected to subsequent decreases in rates of reconviction?

4. How do the costs of the project inputs correlate to the outputs and outcomes?

Note: In April 2001, the community service (CS) order in England and Wales was renamed community punishment (CP) order and the combination order became the community punishment and rehabilitation (the combined) order. For the sake of clarity, this study has utilised the new names of the orders and used the term ‘community service’ to refer to work undertaken by offenders subject to a CP or combined order.

- 3% in unstable accommodation, thus appearing comparatively settled;
- more than 50% in education or employment (but unemployment rates were high in particular areas);
- 51% achieved some school-leaving qualification, while 22% assessed by staff as having some rudimentary skills problems (an inverse relationship existed between these factors); and
- 6% reported use of Class A drugs, while 36% acknowledged connections between their offending and alcohol use.

**Included projects and areas:**

The study included 7 CRP-CS projects across 10 probation areas that implemented the promising approaches or change models in a variety of different methods and combinations.

**Pro-social modelling (PSM)**

- Case Study A = Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire – applied principles of pro-social modelling and legitimacy to supervision of all CP orders, except those undertaken in individual placements. Evaluation included orders of 60 hours or more with a target of 620 orders during a 6 month period. Placements were audited against the McIvor criteria. Enhances a pre-existing Institute of Criminology and

**Compliance and performance findings, included:**

- 75% of offenders were rated as achieving very good/good levels of compliance and 81% very good/good levels of performance according to staff ratings on termination summaries, (completed for offenders who successfully completed their CSOs); and
- among these overall high levels of compliance and performance, lower rates of performance were apparent for younger offenders with higher OGRS scores.

**Outcomes:**

Based on second administrations of Crime PICS II:
- significant reductions in pro-criminal attitudes and in self-perceived problems were apparent; and
- in around 30% of cases (241) both an improvement in attitudes and a reduction in problems was evident.

- (170) offenders underwent an improvement in their employment status while on CS; and
- these improvement tended to apply to younger offenders and those with marginally higher OGRS (Offender Group Reconviction Scale) scores.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study A = Cambridgeshire joint pilot project from October 1997.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills accreditation (SA)</td>
<td>Case Study B = Norfolk/Suffolk – accredited skills of offenders by using nationally recognised award framework. There were 150 offenders enrolled in the project, which operated in Ipswich and 3 centres in Norfolk and had a comparison group from different areas of Norfolk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study C = Gloucestershire – accredited skills of offenders via the Open College Network (OCN), with involvement from ETE (Employment Training and Education) staff. Goal was to enrol 150 offenders in the project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study D = Northumbria/Durham – accredited offenders in 6 main skills in combination with pro-social modelling by CS supervisors. Project covered Northumbria and one division in Durham, targeting 200 offenders on CP orders (not combined orders) of 90 hours or more.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tackling offending-related needs (TON)</td>
<td>Case Study E = Hampshire – built on the prior development of practice to tackle offending-</td>
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Termination summaries:
- 60% of offenders were considered to have undergone positive change and have good prospects for future change;
- there was considered to be less noticeable effect on employment status, though views were more favourable in areas where the emphasis of the project was skills accreditation;
- almost two-thirds of offenders were considered to have no or a low probability of recidivism, which the researcher concluded to be a likely reflection of the relatively low risk profile of offenders at the beginning.

Offenders expressed the following views in CS worker questionnaires:
- overall positive views on CS as part of a sentence; and
- 91% agreed that CS was an opportunity to do something for other people and 77% that it was an opportunity to learn new skills.

The following findings were based on the calculation of component scores to reflect different aspects of offenders’ experiences on CS:
- the way in which offenders saw themselves as being treated was overall positive, with an average score of almost 80%;
- on levels of motivation and value to the offender, scores were largely quite high (averaging...
related needs, in placements managed by the Probation Service and also by partnership agencies, including pro-social modelling and acquiring skills for employment. Project first targeted 600 offenders, (400 in probation and 200 in partnership group placements), not including those subject to CP orders of less than 60 hours or combined orders, but subsequently, this was reduced to 500.

- **Case Study F = Somerset** – combined several elements of prior practice to trial whether effective practice can be delivered in an isolated rural context. It targeted 400 orders in the project and offending-related needs; used pro-social modelling; audited placements against the McIvor criteria; and undertook skills accreditation.

- **Case Study G = Leicestershire** – a new initiative selected from a joint bid with Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and Lincolnshire that integrated the combined order, mainly via joint induction and supervision planning, to tackle offender-related need and accredit skills of offenders. City-operated with a county-based comparison group and a target of 200 orders.

67% and 63% respectively; on value to the beneficiary, scores averaged 54%; and offenders reported that they were more likely to see the CS experience as influencing their propensity to offend (76%) than their attitudes (58%) or behaviour (47%).

Three months post-completion of CS and based on follow-up questionnaires, the study found that:

- more than 50% of the offenders reported being in full-time employment;
- more than a third reported experiencing a change in status; and
- 84% reported no further charge or court appearance since completing CS.

**Additional costs of the Pathfinder Projects (at the time of the study)** were found to be:

- per offender between £114 and £1,700, while the average unit cost of a CP order was reported to be £1,700; and
- although this appears to be a large increase in cost, much of the expense came about in the shape of opportunity costs, (i.e. the work displaced other activities).

The study drew the following provisional conclusions:

- these outcomes suggest that the
best results were reached by projects that focused on skills accreditation (SA);
- nevertheless, the costs of pro-social modelling (PSM) were lower;
- the coupling of SA with PSM appeared effective; and
- projects that prioritised offender-related needs (TON) did not appear to produce overall positive outcomes, conceivably due to a lack of clear focus.

Limitations:
Without the input of findings of a reconviction analysis, the conclusions reached in the study are provisional. It was not known how reconviction rates relate to OGRS predictions, to other characteristics of offenders, or to the outputs and intermediate outcomes reported by the study.


**Description:** This British study involved a survey, conducted in the first half of 1994, of offenders on probation. The study excluded offenders subject solely to community service orders, but examined offenders’ experiences of dual orders (including community service orders) and orders that included community service.

**Aims:** The study aimed to learn more about the impact of probation from the organisational and human perspectives.

**Organisational and human participants:**
*Included:* Random sample of 3,300 offenders from 22 of the 55 probation areas in England and Wales, who had been sentenced to a probation or combination order. Of this sample group:
- 84% were serving a probation order;
- 12% a combination order;
- 4% a probation order, as well as a separate community service.

**Fieldwork:** An initial survey of the offender sample group, followed by interviews with 1,213 offenders from the original sample group. Interviews focused on offenders’ opinions about:
- their problems;
- their attitudes toward offending; and
- their views on process of supervision.

A section of the questionnaire survey asked about the experiences of those who has undertaken community service:
- almost 20% found nothing negative about the experience,
point of view of those supervised by eliciting the following offender information:
1. their backgrounds;
2. their experiences of probation; and
3. their views about the helpfulness of probation in addressing problems and stopping recidivism.

order; and

82% reported previous convictions with burglary and theft being most common first convictions.

Excluded: Offenders serving only community service orders, due to this increasing researchers’ access to offenders for the study.

combined order group and in relation to community service.

reporting it to be an opportunity for productive work, the gaining of new skills and experience, meeting other people, somewhere to go and something to do or just that was enjoyable;

one quarter found nothing positive about it at all, reporting it to be an inconvenience (most commonly reported negative aspect), restriction of freedom, unpaid work, or waste of time and boring; and

half considered there to be ways in which it could be improved.

Respondents made the following key suggestions for improvements to CS:
1. provide a broader range of work;
2. allow offenders more choice about what needed to be done while on CS;
3. provide more equipment and resources;
4. make some payment to offenders for their work; and
5. provide more assistance to offenders in finding permanent employment.

In the case of combination orders:

community service (CS) ran for between components 40 and 100 hours;

many respondents appeared unclear about the length of their CS components with over half claiming that the duration was longer than 100 hours;
- in the majority of cases, (71%), the CSO was managed by a specialist in community service and not the same probation officer who managed the probation order;
- the most common type of work was painting and decorating, followed by gardening.
- Men were more likely than women to have undertaken these two activities;
- young offenders (16-20 years) were more likely than oldest offenders to have undertaken painting and decorating;
- older offenders (36 years or more) were more likely to have worked with the elderly and made toys or crafts than young offenders;

Of the 12% serving a combination order, the following is a breakdown of how they had been working in their last session of CS:
- 82% in a group;
- 10% alone; and
- 5% in a session directed by an agency other than probation.

The study concluded that CS was overall perceived by offenders as positive and that the results were similar to the findings of McIvor's (1992) study.

**Limitations:**
Due to the small sample size, the findings specific to the group on combined orders did not reach
| Description: This study was funded by the Australian Criminology Research Council and the Victorian Office of Corrections, (now known as the Victorian Department of Justice), and involved the teaching of the 'integrated supervision model', to a group of Community Corrections (CC) Officers in Community Based Corrections in Victoria. The principles of the 'integrated supervision model' include: 1. using pro-social modelling and reinforcement; 2. using problem solving; 3. employing empathy; and 4. focussing on high risk offenders. The study sought to consider whether Community Corrections Officers (CCOs) who received this training carried out the principles, and whether their clients offended less compared to a control group. The study also considered the impact on offenders of association with other offenders, whilst undertaking unpaid community work. Specifically, it considered whether some worksites are more likely to have a positive effect on offenders in comparison to other worksites, or alternatively, whether some worksites are more likely to have a negative effect on offenders, in comparison to others. It considered  |
| Human and organisational participants: During 1991 and 1992 the data was collected for this study in the Victorian Office of Corrections. Included:  |
| Document review: Information was gathered from client files.  |
| Outcomes: General outcomes from the study included:  |
| - clients, supervised by CC officers involved in the project, indicated that they received more help with their problems and felt more supported in comparison to two client control groups; and  |
| - clients receiving supervision by the CC officers in the project had more than 30% lower breach and imprisonment rates in comparison to the control group clients.  |
| The study also reached a number of conclusions related to specifically to community service:  |
| - in comparison to offenders who undertook their community work alone or in community groups, offenders placed on community work with other offenders:  |
| - were more than 30% more likely to breach their orders;  |
| - were more likely to re-offend and had substantially and significantly higher recidivism rates, on the measures used in this study – recidivism rates on all 3 recidivism measures were 30-50% lower among offenders placed on individual worksites (the difference on each of the measures is significant within the 0.05 level using a two tailed statistical significance).  |


whether offenders placed on worksites with other offenders are more likely to breach their orders, or to commit further offences, than offenders placed on sites where they work alone or where they work alongside members of the community.

**Aims:**
This study had 3 key aims:
1. to determine if it were possible to teach community Corrections Officers the principles which appear related to effective supervision;
2. to determine whether the principles related to reduced client reoffending;
3. to examine whether the nature of community work placements, in community based corrections in Victoria, Australia, was related to offending rates of participants in the programs.

Specific to the last aim, the study sought to examine whether offenders placed on worksites with other offenders had higher recidivism rates in comparison to offenders who were placed on individual worksites, where they either worked alone or with noncriminal members of the community. **Note:** The results of the 'integrated supervision model' component of the study are not as comprehensively reported in this table or in the literature review as the results of the community service.

In relation to offenders who were placed on both individual sites and group sites at different times during their orders, the study found:
- they were less likely to breach, in comparison to offenders placed on group sites for the duration of their community work; and
- more likely to breach in comparison to offenders placed on individual sites;

It should be noted however that the numbers who experienced both group and individual worksites were relatively small (33) and the difference with the other groups was not statistically significant within the 0.05 level using the chi square test.

**Excluded:**
110 offenders – due to not undertaking community work as part of their orders.

In relation to work site placements, the study concluded that:
- the impact of being placed on worksites with other offenders appears to be independent of other factors (e.g. training of supervisors, risk levels of the offenders or number of hours to which the offenders were sentenced);
- the influence of worksite placement appeared to diminish after the period of community work had been completed and its influence was greatest among younger offenders;

The findings of the study are consistent with and provide a practical example of criminological...
component of the study.

theories which suggest that offenders are likely to learn from a pro-criminal peer group. It is argued that the particular contribution of this study is that it suggests that contamination theory may operate within community correctional programs. The study points to evidence that criminal peer group associations in the community are related to criminal behaviour. Some evidence exists that institutional programs may have a 'contaminating effect' and this study suggests that this effect may extend to community correctional programs.

The results of this study also suggest that there may be criminalising effects present in other correctional programs which involve the mixing of offenders with each other. The results perhaps sound a note of caution regarding the use of group programs in corrections generally and it is argued that there is a need for more research in this area.

Limitations:
The findings of the study need to be interpreted with some caution given the general lack of research in this area. It has classified the type of community work site in very broad terms. It distinguishes only between worksites where offenders work alongside each other and worksites where they work alone or with community groups. It does not consider the relative impact of more meaningful work versus less

| STUDY 1: An evaluative study of community service by offenders in Scotland |
| Description: | This program of research, involved 5 separate, but related studies that examined the extent to which the community service order (CSO) scheme in Scotland met the stated range of policy objectives. |

| Description and aims of Study 1: | This study aimed to identify and optimise effective practice in community service, rather than evaluate the viability or effectiveness of community service in comparison to other measures. Notably, identification of good practice was contingent on an appraisal of the comparative effectiveness of the existing diverse operational arrangements across schemes. Specifically, the study aimed to: 1. identify the characteristics of offenders on orders and the organisational and human participants: Included:  o A total of 12 community service (CS) schemes in 4 local authority social work departments – purposely selected because they broadly represented the range of Scottish practice, but were organisationally or procedurally different from one another.  o 406 Offenders across the 12 CS schemes, whose CSOs were terminated (successfully or otherwise) between 1 Sep 1987 |

| Organisational and human participants: Included: | Document review: Offenders – background information was obtained from their community service case files and social enquiry reports. Aggregation of this data provided a composite representation of practice within the schemes. The rate of successful completion, based on all orders completed or breached (not including revoked orders in the interests of justice), was the primary outcome measure for relative effectiveness of practice. |

| Outcomes: | Main characteristics of offenders on CSOs and the factors associated with increased breach risk:  o offenders were typically male, young, unemployed and single, with at least one prior conviction, no history of imprisonment, and had received the CSO for offences related to criminal damage or dishonesty, a minor assault or breach of the public order;  o slightly less than half the sample had, either as a child or adult |
factors associated with increased breach risk;
2. assess the comparative effectiveness of practice through an examination of different procedures in different schemes and their relative effectiveness in achieving specific outcomes;
3. examine offenders’ experience and attitudes towards community service and the associated types of work; and
4. examine the extent to which the courts used community service as an alternative to imprisonment or detention.

and 31 May 1988.

- Organisers, officers and assistants in the 12 schemes.

Excluded:
- Very small schemes – due to not yielding sufficient numbers of cases during the study’s fieldwork period.
- Offenders where breach proceedings had commenced but where, at the conclusion of the recruitment period, CSO revocation application outcomes remained unknown.

Rates of acceptable and unacceptable offender absences were used as an intermediate outcome measure.

The key aspects of practice that were examined included:
- Offender suitability assessment procedures for a CSO;
- methods employed to match offenders to suitable work placements;
- enforcement practices adopted in response to non-compliance; and
- schemes’ response to offenders’ family, social or personal problems while completing their CSOs.

Fieldwork:
A researcher visited each of the schemes on an almost monthly basis for case file extraction and informal discussion and familiarisation with scheme policies and procedures.

Questionnaires:
Offenders were invited to undertake these at the time of, or as soon as possible after, the completion of their order to determine:
- their attitudes toward unpaid work;
- nature of any encountered family, social or personal problems;
- their comprehension of enforcement policies operating in the schemes;
- their opinion about how CSOs were perceived.

Organisers, officers and assistants in the 12 schemes.

and due to their offending, been subject to social work supervision;
- at the time of sentencing, approximately one third of the sample were already subject to mandated orders (the majority to probation);
- most of the sample group had stable living and positive family arrangements and few had issues with alcohol and other drugs;
- unsuccessful referrals were more likely than successful referral for CSO to be single; remanded in custody at the time; have a higher number of custodial sentences; and be awaiting sentence on sexual crimes, justice offences or offences against the public order;
- offenders considered unsuitable tended to be, at the point of referral, single, unemployed, previously remanded in custody and subject to another legal order;
- offenders were found unsuitable for reasons of presenting as unlikely to complete a CSO due to a lack of motivation or their personal and social situation;
- failure to attend assessment interview, substance abuse and poor history of response to social work supervision were common factors across schemes that deemed offenders...
could be improved; incidence of reoffending (charges and convictions) during CS; and
their self-predicted likelihood of recidivism.
The response rate was approx. 33% (136 offenders).
Questionnaires were also provided to staff in the 12 schemes to ascertain details of policy and practice.

Interviews:
These were conducted with a sub-sample of 28 questionnaire respondents in the offenders’ homes and they allowed more detailed topic exploration and the inclusion of additional interest areas. Interviews were also conducted with organisers, officers and assistants in the 12 schemes to ascertain details of policy and practice.

Comparison group:
A study was also made of offenders who were unsuccessfully referred to the schemes, between 1 Apr and 30 Sep 1987, in order to gain some understanding of the selection criteria utilised by the schemes and the courts’ sentencing practices. For each unsuccessful referral background information, (less comprehensive information available than that for the successful referrals) was obtained and it was recorded whether or not:
they had been assessed as suitable for a CSO (including any
unsuitable for a CSO;
o the majority of those sentenced to CSOs received stand-alone orders and were allocated to group placements in teams of workshops; just over 50% of those allocated to individual placements were employed on practical tasks;
the factors that mostly determined work placement choice included the offender’s specified interest, nature of their offence, their attitude and skills and their work commitments;
the most often allocated to group placements tended to be younger and have a history of statutory social work supervision;
women were almost habitually allocated to personal tasks in agencies;
most completed their CSOs;
repeated unauthorised absences prompted the most breaches;
75% had at least one CSO absence with the most common reasons being, illness, family, other appointments, commitments and court attendance;
There was general consensus about what constituted an un/authorised absence when prior notice was provided, but less when no notice was provided;
Compared to those who completed their CSOs, offenders
reasons for unsuitability); and appropriate work could have been available for them to undertake. The details of the alternative sentences that the sample received were also obtained.

who were breached had more prior convictions and custodial experience; and breach rates were higher among offenders previously subjected to statutory social work supervision and those with a history of accommodation problems or no work experience; The researcher notes that although some factors clearly could assist as broad risk of breach indicators, these should not simply preclude offenders from CSO schemes, in isolation of other considerations. The scheme is deemed successful due to its high completion rate.

Main findings related to effective practice:

- Pre-sentence CSO suitability assessments did not appear to improve the quality of staff decisions, but were more expensive, while other benefits potentially obtained from pre-sentence contact with offenders was beyond the research scope;

- Most schemes interviewed offenders shortly after sentence to match them to placements and these appeared to take greater account of offenders’ preferences than those that matched offenders at the pre-sentence stage;

- Offenders were more likely to express positive views about their work placement if they took part in deciding where it
should be, but this did not appear to affect overall compliance and completion rates;
- higher breach rates appeared to correlate with a longer time to complete a CSO – the longer the CSO, the more un/authorised absences;
- schemes varied in how long it took between the time an order was made and the first work session;
- stricter enforcement of absenteeism appeared to improve compliance without affecting overall breach rates or therefore, the scheme’s success rate;
- the higher failure rate of group placements appeared to be due to their higher numbers of ‘riskier’ offenders;
- the higher proportion of un/authorised absences in group placements could in part be due to the types of offenders, but also due to differences in the recording of absenteeism between paid CS supervisors and agency staff;
- offenders allocated to personal tasks, rather than practical work, in a voluntary agency and those who enjoyed their placement and found CS to be very worthwhile, had a lower rate of unauthorised absences;
- despite the exclusion offenders who were assessed as having
problems that would tend to unfavourably affect their CSO completion, many offenders subject to a CSO experienced problems to varying degrees of seriousness;
- in general, schemes offered guidance and/or referral to services for offenders;
- two schemes that offered more comprehensive social work support seemed to attain somewhat higher than anticipated completion rates with riskier offenders;
- most offenders reported that they would be disinclined to seek assistance from the CS officer if issues arose;
- most CS staff expressed willingness to extend the social work substance of their work, but noted related concerns about resource limitations and increasingly blurring the distinction between CS and probation;

Main findings related to offenders’ experience and attitudes towards community service and the associated types of work:
- most offenders had positive CSO experiences and acknowledged the significance of their relationship with their supervisor;
- there was no apparent clear preference for group or agency placements;
placements that concentrated on relatively unskilled practical tasks were seen as less worthwhile and rewarding, while positive views were expressed about placements that offered large amounts of contact with beneficiaries, allowed offenders’ to develop skills and where it was obvious that the work was directly beneficial to recipients;

- several offenders continued to attend their placement after the CSO was completed and other expressed willingness to do so;
- most considered the CSO to be an inconvenience due to its restrictions on their leisure time and the constant commitment that it required; and
- none considered the actual work to be punitive or harsh.

The following features of the CSO experience were associated with offenders finding CS very worthwhile:

- having substantial opportunity to gain practical and interpersonal skills;
- considering the work to be very useful; and
- having a lot of contact with the beneficiaries of the work.

There is an association between offenders perceiving the work to be very worthwhile and increased compliance rates and reduced rates of recidivism. This was particularly evident when offenders had a history of mandated social work supervision.
or were unemployed. Although there may have been important differences between offenders who most valued their CSO experiences and other offenders, the available background variables did not appear to explain these differences.

Main findings related to the extent to which the courts used community service as an alternative to imprisonment or detention:

- it is estimated that less than 50% of the offenders sentenced to CS had been diverted from a custodial sentence;
- most offenders were under the impression from comments made in court by the sentencer that their CSO was in lieu of a custodial sentence;
- sentencers expressed their view that CS is not solely an alternative to custody, but tended to impose custodial sentences, (except where mitigating factors present), should offenders fail to comply with CSO conditions and be returned to court;
- up-tariffing was apparent in a few cases, in spite of the view of sheriffs that this phenomenon, owing to inconsistent court application of CSOs, was unlikely; and
- sentencers disagreed with the suggested introduction of various approaches to foster increased consistency in the use
of CSOs, on the grounds that this would limit their independence and discretion.

The study found that introduction of the Scottish national standards and objectives for CS reduced the variation in practice across schemes, resulting in the following changes:
- pre-sentence interviews were no longer conducted by CS staff;
- offenders had more input, within specific limits, into decisions about their placement and work type; and
- delays in commencing work were reduced in most places.

In addition, the following were projected changes (not able to be evaluated within the study period):
- greater consistency in enforcement practices;
- increased concentration of effort within social work departments to provide services to offenders and their families; and
- stronger incorporation of CS with the broader range of social work services to the criminal justice system.

Finally, although intended, the standards had limited impact on inconsistent CSO sentencing practices.

| STUDY 2: The comparative costs of community service and custody | Description and aims of Study 2: This study, conducted by Martin Knapp and Eileen Robertson of the Personal Social Services Research | Organisational participants: Included: The same 12 community service (CS) schemes in 4 local authority | Data analysis: CSO operations and associated costs were grouped into the following activities: | Full methodology and outcomes reported in McIvor (1989) and Knapp, Robertson & McIvor (1992; 1989). |


The following outcomes were reported relating to costs and cost-effectiveness:

- Pre-sentence CSO assessments had cost-implications, but did not appear to significantly influence either the type of offenders found suitable for CS or subsequent rates of non-compliance and breach. More expensive schemes conducted pre-sentence assessment interviews in offenders’ homes, while less expensive schemes conducted office-based interviews or based their CSO suitability assessment on information provided by the author of an offender’s social inquiry report (general assessment).
- Increased enforcement to reduce absenteeism could improve the cost-effectiveness of CSO schemes, without influencing the overall probability of breach.
- Costs of matching offenders to work placements varied across schemes and the data were difficult to interpret.
- Schemes with riskier caseloads (and commensurate greater levels of absenteeism) appeared to give more time to placement allocations and had higher allocation costs per placement.
- While CSOs were less expensive (£1044) than alternative...
The overall cost savings are only relevant if CS is used consistently as a replacement for imprisonment and not as a frequent replacement for cheaper non-custodial sentencing options, such as fines.

- There is a strong correlation between the average levels of absences and hourly supervision costs for CS staff across schemes.

The study did not appraise the financial or market value of offenders’ unpaid work due to potential ‘technical difficulties’.

**STUDY 3: Sentencers’ perceptions of community service by offenders**

See also: Carnie, J. (1990), *Sentencers’ Perceptions of Community Service by Offenders*, Scottish Office Central Research Unit, Edinburgh.

**Description and aims of Study 3:**
This study, conducted by Jim Carnie, (funded by the Criminology and Law Group, Scottish Home and Health Department), examined sentencers’ perceptions of CS. A partial aim of this study was to assess the degree to which courts were using CSOs as alternatives to custodial sentences, as intended by the introduction of the national operating standards for Scottish CS schemes in April 1989, rather than in lieu of other non-custodial sentences.

**Organisational and human participants:**
- 2 High Court Judges
- 21 Sheriffs
- 5 District Court Clerks
- 14 lay justices

Research mainly focused on sheriffs’ views, since they had the most opportunities to employ CSOs.

Sample comprised both large and small courts from 7 sheriffdoms, located in both urban and rural communities.

**Fieldwork:**
Conducted between June and August 1989, just after the introduction of the Social Work Services Group national standards in April 1989 and before the expected date of the full implementation of the standards and objectives in June 1990.

**Interviews:**
A total of 27 qualitative interviews were conducted with 42 respondents and sought to obtain sentencers’ views on:
- the purpose and philosophy of the CSO;
- the use of CS in relation to other sentencing options;
- their experiences and attitudes

Full study outcomes and limitations reported in Carnie (1990).

**Outcomes:**
In general, sentencers:
- disagreed with the suggested introduction of various approaches to foster increased consistency in the use of CSOs, on the grounds that this would limit their independence and discretion; and
- considered that a stimulating and productive placement experience could positively influence offenders’ behaviour and attitudes.

The majority of sheriffs considered...
toward the operation of CS schemes; and
○ the guidance encompassed in the national standards and the intended expansion of the schemes.

that:
○ CSOs should mainly be imposed when a custodial sentence would otherwise be justified, but occasionally, with some offenders, it could be used when imprisonment was not a suitable option (one fifth viewed CSOs as an independent sentence to be matched to offenders’ needs);
○ imprisonment was the most appropriate response to breaches of CSO requirements – this was unless convincing mitigating circumstances could be shown, but in spite of the risk of prematurely escalating offenders up the sentencing tariff;
○ a key mitigating factor was an offender’s apparent level of commitment to CS, while other factors included the nature of the original offence and recommended revocation reasons.

These findings preclude using the resentencing of offenders following revocation of a CSO as a trustworthy benchmark for evaluating the diversionary impact of CSOs.

It appeared evident that offenders were sentenced to imprisonment as the result of a breach of CSO, despite the CSO having been initially imposed in place of a non-custodial sentence. Notably, the rate of imprisonment following breach (65%) was greater
than the estimated rate of diversion from custody, but the breach rate was higher for offenders assessed as having an intermediate or high risk of custody than for those at low risk.

In relation to increased provisions for offenders to be diverted from custody to CS, one quarter of sheriffs gave one of the following responses:

1. they would make use of these provisions;
2. more CS places did not equate to more people being suitable for CS, so it was unlikely they would make use of greater placement availability;
3. by placing CS more decisively among the range of sentencing options, these provisions would improve the credibility of CS;
4. they would be tempted to use CS in some instances as a fine replacement due to the large numbers of people unable to pay their fines.

There were conflicting views between CS staff and the judiciary about the appropriate use of CSOs. CS staff considered it to be an alternative to custody, while the judiciary considered that CS should be an independent sentence. Despite imposition of National Guidelines to clarify the intention of CSOs as an alternative to custody, courts continued to impose CSOs in lieu of non-custodial options. Legislative
Changes were made after the study period and their impact could therefore, not be evaluated.

CS staff were reluctant to assess an offender as unsuitable for CS on the grounds that a custodial sentence was not warranted, as this was seen as outside their role and to be preempting decisions of the court.

| STUDY 4: Community service orders: assessing the benefit to the community |
| Description and aims of Study 4: This study, funded by the Social Work Research Centre, aimed to assess the degree to which:
  1. CS work was valued by both individual beneficiaries and voluntary and statutory agencies that offered work placements; and
  2. agency placements facilitated offenders to become integrated with other volunteers and staff.
  It also sought to:
  3. identify any problems experienced by these beneficiary groups. |
| Human and organisational participants: |
| o Eight of 9 mainland social work department that had been recipients of CS work during 1989. |
| o Individual CS work beneficiaries. |
| o Agency CS work beneficiaries. |
| Fieldwork: Postal questionnaire surveys were dispatched to the mainland social work department sample group between Jan and Feb 1990. |
| 1602 questionnaires were dispatched to individual beneficiaries and 567 completed questionnaires were returned. Brief questionnaire with predominantly fixed choice items and some open ended that sought information about:
  o characteristics of the placement agency;
  o types of tasks undertaken by CS workers;
  o the usefulness of CS workers to the agency, its clients and users;
  o the degree of offender integration with agency staff and other volunteers; the incidence and kinds of problems that had been experienced by agencies to offer further placements; and
  o the types of offenders agencies would be unwilling or disinclined to offer placement to. |
| Outcomes: In most instances the work performed by offenders on CS was highly valued by the beneficiaries and this applied to both agencies and individuals. This finding is consistent with that of similar research. |
| Most beneficiaries were happy with the standard of work performed by offenders, claimed that the standard of supervision was high and were willing to use local CS schemes again. |
| Agencies reported that they were overall happy with the level of support provided to them by local CS schemes in supervising offenders and that they frequently reaped long term benefits as offenders remained in the placements beyond the mandated period as volunteers or in fewer cases, paid employees. |
| The incidence of offenders committing crimes against CS beneficiary agencies or individuals was low, particularly in work teams, |
**STUDY 5: Reconviction among offenders sentenced to community service**

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<tr>
<th><strong>Description and aims of Study 5:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>This study aimed to analyse reconviction among the offenders who were questionnaire respondents in study 1. It was conducted in late 1991, around 3.5 years after the original research. Specifically, the study aimed to:</td>
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<td>1. Record the reconviction rates during the 4-year period after the imposition of the initial CSO;</td>
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<td>2. Investigate the comparative incidence and type of reconviction preceding and following the imposition of the CSO;</td>
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<td>3. Identify factors associated with reconviction;</td>
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<td>4. Assess the effect of offenders’ experience of CS on subsequent reconviction; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Explore the association between offenders’ self-predicted likelihood of reoffending and actual reconviction.</td>
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<th><strong>Human participants:</strong></th>
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<td>134 offenders who completed their community service orders (CSOs) between Sep 1987 and May 1988.</td>
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<th><strong>Data analysis:</strong></th>
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<td>Questionnaire responses from STUDY 1 were analysed, particularly those pertaining to self-predictions of recidivism. The Scottish Criminal Record Office (SCRO) provided de-identified, statistical data regarding reconviction among 134 of the 136 questionnaire respondents from STUDY 1, (not enough information was available to locate police records for two offenders). From their electronic records, the SCRO provided reconviction data for the entire sample that allowed a 3-year follow up. This included the number of new convictions per offender since date of original CSO imposition and during the 2-year period immediately before the CSO sentence. For each recorded conviction, the SDRO provided the following information:</td>
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<td>Sentence date;</td>
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<th><strong>Outcomes:</strong></th>
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<td>This study found that:</td>
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<td>o Offenders’ self-predictions of future recidivism could serve as broad indicators of their rate and frequency of reconviction, to the degree that the application of this method to practice warrants further exploration;</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Reconviction following CS could not be compared to reconviction following other sentences due to a lack of comparison group, but the reconviction rates reported in this study appeared to compare favourably with those reported in other studies;</td>
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<tr>
<td>o The highest rate and frequency of reconviction in this study was among offenders with existing additional statutory orders at the time of sentencing or with a history of previous statutory social work supervision in the preceding 2 years;</td>
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Crime type (according to police classification system);  
- Disposal/s;  
- Type of sentencing court (Sheriff Summary, District, High, etc.). Where appropriate, a marker was included to signify break of the CSO.

- Offenders whose experiences of CS had been especially rewarding were convicted less frequently and lower numbers of these offenders were reconvicted for offences involving dishonesty;
- It appears that for offenders who possibly had limited opportunities to make prior valued community contributions, the quality of CS was most significant; and
- A tentative conclusion was drawn that overall, reconviction following CS appeared to be no worse than reconviction following other sentences.

Analysed over 4 years, the risk of reconviction appeared greater during the first 2 years and greatest in the first 6 months following the imposition of a CSO than at any other time;

Based on data from the 3 years following the date of receiving a CSO:
- On average, offenders had 2.4 new convictions for 3.7 offences;
- Most reconvictions were for offences against public order (e.g. malicious damage, breach of peace) (41.8%); offences involving dishonesty (e.g. theft) (34.3%); violent offences (24.6%) and justice offences (mostly breach of bail) (24.6%);
- A small number (9) of offenders accounted for almost half the
offences involving dishonesty (71/133) and a smaller number (4) accounted for almost a third of these offences (43/133);
- the most obvious relationship between type of offence on conviction and previous offence was for those offences involving dishonesty;
- offenders with prior justice offences, CS sentences or custodial sentences were more likely to have been reconvicted;
- reconvicted offenders tended to commit similar offences to those for which they had been convicted in the 2 years preceding their CSO sentence;
- there was a greater likelihood of at least one instance of imprisonment the faster offenders were reconvicted after being first sentenced to a CSO;
- no estimates could be made, due to the unreliability of official data and self-reports from offenders, of the number of reconvictions attributable to new offences committed while offenders were subject to a CSO;
- just under a third of offenders were reconvicted while undertaking their CSO;
- offenders were more likely than before to be imprisoned following CS;
- age was linked to the likelihood of reconviction with younger offenders (under 21 years) most likely and older offenders (30
years or more) least likely to be reconvicted.

- a history of statutory social work supervision was connected with an increased rate reconviction and offenders with existing social work involvement were more frequently convicted (6.5 new convictions) than those recently without (3.3 new convictions) and those who had never had this (3.2 new convictions);
- single offenders and those without prior work experience were convicted more frequently; and
- the shorter the time span between their CS sentence and most recent court appearance, the less likely offenders were to be reconvicted.


**Description:**
This study, conducted over 5 months by a senior research officer from the New Zealand Department of Justice, examines community service orders (CSOs) in South Australia (S.A.). The study proposes a model for evaluating the usefulness of CS in rehabilitating offenders and addresses whether community service reduces offending.

**Aims:**
Community service objectives in S.A. are to:
- be an alternative to prison;
- a history of statutory social work supervision was connected with an increased rate reconviction and offenders with existing social work involvement were more frequently convicted (6.5 new convictions) than those recently without (3.3 new convictions) and those who had never had this (3.2 new convictions);
- single offenders and those without prior work experience were convicted more frequently; and
- the shorter the time span between their CS sentence and most recent court appearance, the less likely offenders were to be reconvicted.


**Organisational and human participants:**
The study samples comprised:
- 49 community service projects across S.A.;
- 12 judicial officers (11 who had made a CSO by end 1982; and 1 who had not);
- Assistant Director of Department Correctional Services (DCS);
- CS coordinator;
- 2 CS officers;
- 2 CS supervisors;
- 11 of a possible 14 community agency supervisors; and
- 2 of 5 pensioner beneficiaries;

**Process-Outcome analysis**
A theoretical model is presented to explain how CS might achieve rehabilitation and considers ways that CS components (immediate outcomes) can be converted into changes in the individual offender’s attitudes and skills (intermediate outcomes), which could eventually reduce the risk of recidivism (ultimate outcome). The main processes identified as possibly facilitating these changes include:
1. the nature of the work;
2. the extent of contact with other people; and

**Outcomes:**
Of the offenders subject to CS:
- most came from stable backgrounds;
- 61% were unemployed;
- 9% had previously been imprisoned; and
- most were sentenced for property offences or those against the person.

Project type was determined to some degree by legislation that made stipulations about the proximity of projects to offenders’ homes; level of volunteer involvement and tangible
Focus on community service rehabilitation.

Data analysis and fieldwork:
Several types of information were collected from a range of sources, using a number of methods:
- DCS written information on the development of community service in South Australia;
- DCS individual offender records of 84 persons referred for a community service assessment during the first 6 months of operation – of these, 69 resulted in a CSO and 18 had terminated their order during the study period;
- DCS records about community agency involvement – 41 projects from 27 agencies;
- questionnaire responses from 12 of 21 judicial officers, representing a 63% response rate;
- interviews with DCS assistant director;
- intensive unstructured interviews with CS coordinator, officers and supervisors;
- semi-structured interviews with community agency supervisors, pensioner beneficiaries; and offenders (usually at their

Benefits to the community.

Rehabilitation was not found to be the overriding consideration by DCS when placing offenders despite their recognition of the importance of matching an offender to a placement for successful outcomes.

Key immediate outcomes from the CS projects were found to be:
- only half the offenders worked alongside volunteers;
- around half the projects provided opportunities for offenders to help people more disadvantaged than themselves;
- the reparative ideal of using CS as a way for offenders to amend for harm caused by their offending was not generally acknowledged, although CS was considered a way for offenders to ‘give something back’ to the community.

Key intermediate outcomes from the CS projects were found to be:
Nature of the work:
- almost 80% of community service hours were spent on labouring and maintenance tasks;
- around 60% of CSO hours involved high levels of contact with the public or volunteers;
- 50% of the projects involved regular or constant supervision from an agency; and

offenders.

This focus of this evaluation is on the fourth objective and aims to learn how community service rehabilitates.
home); o assessments by CS staff of 49 of a possible 69 offenders on the 49 community service projects; o assessments by CS staff of each of the CS projects; and o a small degree of observation by the researcher of some of the operations of DCS and the CS projects.

most offenders felt that the work was useful to the community and liked the work, and about half said they learned something from it.

Attendance:
 o of those whose orders had not terminated, 59% had been absent with leave and 39% without leave;
 o 21% of their scheduled work days involved authorised absences and 9% unauthorised absences; and
 o sickness, injury or work commitments were the main reasons provided for absences.

Of the 13 intermediate outcomes listed in the study’s rehabilitation model, the following 3 were considered to have been achieved in a reasonable proportion of cases:

1. enabling the improvement of antisocial behaviour (considered the most tangible outcome);
2. having a sincere sense of accomplishment or self-satisfaction; a
3. considering CS to be a valuable social experience.

In terms of the ultimate outcome of reducing recidivism:
 o the study could not provide a definitive answer due to its experimental nature and stage and the short period of the study;
 o the study found that CS officers were less optimistic than
offenders about offenders ceasing to offend; and
  o despite providing some incentives, CS was found to generally act as a deterrent, (a hassle offenders would not want to go through again), instead of a constructive opportunity for offenders to enter into a crime-free lifestyle.

In relation to rehabilitation and CS, the researcher concluded that:
  o rehabilitative objectives were inhibited as they were not considered the scheme's primary goal and were not especially pursued;
  o two identifiable strains of community service existed in practice: one providing for rehabilitation and the other for punishment;
  o although rehabilitation had very limited impact since it was not a chief reference point during stages of implementation nor ongoing operation of the scheme, this is mitigated to a small extent by the fact that rehabilitative ideals are part of staff training and experience;
  o data indicate that community service does not rehabilitate, but offenders prefer it to custody and to fines; community agencies see it as a positive development in corrections; and the courts have accepted it as a sentencing option and would like
The researcher makes the following suggestions for achieving the rehabilitation ideals of CS:

- inclusion of offenders who bestow a greater challenge for rehabilitation;
- intentional allocation of offenders to placements that offer a reasonable frequency and depth of contact with community members; and
- consideration of the definition 'community', assembling this and ensuring the scheme is kept local.


**Description:**
This is a second report on experimental community service programs conducted in six areas of England. The first report described the scheme and this report evaluates its effectiveness. The report describes three studies:
1. Displacement from custody
2. Reconviction study
3. The offence seriousness experiment

This is the first attempt to assess the use of community service as an alternative to imprisonment on the basis of data from the original experimental schemes (see Pease et al. 1975).

**Aims:**
These studies attempt to answer two

**Organisational and human participants:**
The community service programs included in this study were at County Durham, Inner London, Kent, Shropshire, Nottinghamshire and South-west Lancashire.

Note: the subjects of the study were those involved in community service at a time when the project was new and developing.
### General Questions
1. What happened in terms of subsequent reconviction to the sample of offenders who were the subject of the earlier study (see Pease et al 1975)?
2. If community service had not been available to the courts which dealt with those offenders, what other sentences would they have received?

### Study 1: Displacement from Custody

**Description:**
This study is based on the concept that for the use of every new penal sentence, an ‘old’ sentence is displaced and uses circumstantial evidence to estimate sentence substitution for community service and custodial sentences.

**Aims:**
Specifically, the study aims to estimate the number of offenders sentenced to CSOs instead of custody.

**Data Analysis:**
The use of community service as an alternative to imprisonment was assessed using the following 4 methods:
1. judgements by probation officers;
2. outcome of breaches (records from Durham, Merseyside, Kent and South Yorkshire);
3. the alternative sanction received when CS was recommended but not ordered; and
4. alternative sanctions received by offenders who had been initially referred by the court for a CS assessment, but were not ordered to undertake CS.

**Outcomes:**
The first three methods (listed in the previous column) produced estimates that community service was functioning as an alternative to custody in between 45% and 50% of cases.

The fourth estimate suggested that 19% of offenders on community service orders were diverted from custody.

### Study 2: Reconviction Study

**Description:**
This study calculated the one year reconviction for offenders who were made subject to a CSO within the first 12 months of the scheme’s operation in each of the experimental areas.

**Aims:**

**Data Analysis:**
Analysis of reconviction data for offenders subject to a CSO during the first year of operation of the CSO scheme in the experimental areas, (not within a year of the CSO termination), using a treatment and comparison group.

**Outcomes:**
Less than half (44.2%) of the offenders from the sample re-offended and were reconvicted within 12 months of the CS order being made. This was in the same range of reconviction as that of a group recommended for, but not
The aim this study was to evaluate what happened terms of subsequent reconviction to the sample of offenders who were the subject of the earlier study (see Pease et al 1975).

**STUDY 3: The offence seriousness experiment**

**Description:**
This study estimated the relative seriousness of new offences committed by offenders who were made subject to a CSO within the first 12 months of the scheme’s operation in each of the experimental areas, in comparison to the offences for which they had initially been sentenced to the CSO.

**Aims:**
The aim this study was to determine whether offenders who were reconvicted following community service committed generally more or less serious offences than those for which they had first been sentenced to community service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Case samples:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Data analysis:</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment group – 957 offences</td>
<td>The same treatment and control groups were used as in STUDY 2 and information about offences was obtained from the respective criminal records. Offences were arranged in triads to enable them to be examined for any effect of statistical regression. The triad of offences included: 1. offence which resulted in CS sentence (treatment group); 2. offence which resulted in consideration of CS sentence (control group); and 3. offences before and after that on respective criminal records (both groups). Offences were randomly ordered in a triad so that they could not be matched to a particular stage of criminal career and analysed independently by two or more researchers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group – 135 offences</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Outcomes:**
The study concluded that there is no evidence of systematic change in the level of seriousness of offences committed after a sentence of community service or in the time at risk before reconviction.

**Limitations:**
Small sample size and an inadequate control group in terms of its compatibility to the treatment group were the main limitations of this study. In addition, there are methodological difficulties in defining relative seriousness of offences.
Description: Fieldwork observation and statistical analysis. Funded by the Research Council, Australian Institute of Criminology.

Aims: The aim of this study was to evaluate the operation of Tasmania’s Work Order Scheme (WOS), an optional alternative to short terms of imprisonment, introduced into the Tasmanian criminal justice system in 1972. Operational aspects considered in the study include:
1. attendance and conduct;
2. differences between regions;
3. differences between projects;
4. the effects of weather on attendance; and
5. the effect of court breaches on attendance, termed the ‘contagion element’.

The study also compared the outcomes of Work Orders to short-term imprisonment in terms of recidivism rates.

Human participants: Included: 452 Male Work Order (WO) participants, involved in 30 projects across 5 regions, with an average of 201 individuals on WOs each week. Key demographics of this group include: more than 33% were aged between 18 and 20yrs; around 66% were unskilled workers; over 50% had ‘irregular family backgrounds’; 66% did not attain year 10 (4th year of secondary school); more than 75% rated with average or below-average intelligence; more than 50% presented with alcohol problems; 50% had a history of property offending and 33% traffic offending (notably drink-driving or driving while disqualified); 1:10 participants had no prior criminal record, and; less than 1:5 had previously been imprisoned.

Non-participant observation: The operation of the Work Order Scheme (WOS) was studied for 6 months (Apr 1975 – Sep 1975) and participants were observed for 26 weeks (an entire batch of WO participants). WO participants were accounted for weekly as either ‘present’, ‘absent with permission’ or ‘absent without leave’ and their conduct classified as either ‘excellent’, ‘satisfactory’ or ‘poor’.

Projects were classified into 3 categories:
1. Individual assistance projects (WO participants works one-to-one with an individual pensioner)
2. Person group projects (group of WO participants work for a group of people e.g. sheltered workshop, hospital, etc.)
3. Impersonal group projects (group of WO participants work on a project that does not directly involve people, e.g. railway, cemetery, etc.)

Outcomes: Compliance: attendance and conduct (defaulting):
Over 26 weeks, weekly compliance rates were:
- 63% attendance;
- 25% absence with permission, (suspended project 9.1%; illness 7.8%; working for employer 5%; personal reason 1.6%; administrative error 0.5% other 0.4%), and;
- 12% absence without leave, (refusal 10.3%; in custody 1.4%; absconded 0.5% and other 0.1%).

Highly commended or ‘excellent’ reports averaged at 6% per week, almost double the number of ‘poor’ conduct reports, which averaged at 3% per week.

Increased default rates were found to be related to:
- unstable work record;
- irregular family relationships;
- lack of legal representation;
- prior Children’s Court record;
- history of property offending, and;
- previous imprisonment.

Neither an unstable work record nor irregular family relationships were found to be of themselves a predictor for defaulting, despite the finding...
that defaulters are more likely to have these attributes. It appears that the rate of defaulting could be limited if careful consideration given to offenders' family relationships and work record prior to sentencing.

Notably, 90% of the WOS participants did not spend any time in custody during the study observation period and 4% returned after absconding.

Region and project type:
The study found that region and project type impacted on offender attendance and conduct. Differences between specific projects could be attributed to some extent, but not entirely, to differences between supervisors, administrators and ineffective matching of offenders to supervisors.

Weather:
Inclement weather was found to positively affect the rate of attendance. This was possibly due to the fact that WO participants who reported for duty, but were given an early dismissal due to poor weather conditions, were still credited with a full day's work.

Contagion element:
Following a court breach for non-compliance, there appeared to be a slight increase in the rate of absence without leave for the work party, but this was not statistically significant.
Recidivism:
Increased recidivism rates were found to be related to:
- younger age, (75% of recidivists were 16 to 20 years);
- unstable work record;
- unmarried status;
- history of irregular family relationships;
- below average intelligence;
- history of property offences and to a lesser extent, person and conduct offences, and;
- prior Children’s Court record.

Defaulting & recidivism:
The strongest relationship of all variables was between defaulting and subsequent imprisonment. Approximately 33% of the defaulters eventually went to prison while only 1:10 of those who completed their WO satisfactorily subsequently went to prison. This demonstrates a close relationship between defaulting and recidivism.

Work Order v/s Short-term Prison sentences:
1974 Work Order group:
- 47% committed further offences
- 19% subsequently went to prison

1974 Short-term imprisonment group:
- 62% committed further offences
- 40% subsequently went to prison

It is important to note that the accuracy of this comparison is limited
because the prison group had a more extensive criminal record than the WO group.

**Cost-effectiveness:**
The operating cost of WOS was found to be considerably cheaper, at $4.50 per man per week, than that of imprisonment, at $117.11 per man per week. This approximated to $1,175,000 in state saving for 1975.

**Community benefits:**
The WOS provided approximately 25 man years of work on a yearly basis to charitable organisations and disadvantaged persons.

**Limitations:**
Only thorough statistical data analysis conducted. The accuracy of the comparison between the WO and short-term prison groups is limited because the prison group had a more extensive criminal record than the WO group. Only anecdotal evidence provided for claims made about the importance of relationship between WO participants and volunteer supervisors and beneficiaries, and general benefits to offenders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description: This report describes experimental community service programs conducted in six areas of England and examines:</th>
<th>Organisational and human participants: The community service programs included in this study were at County Durham, Inner London, Kent, Shropshire, Nottinghamshire and South-west Lancashire.</th>
<th>Document analysis and fieldwork: Methods used to identify offender characteristics and those for CS suitability included: o ascertaining views about suitability in each probation and after-care area through</th>
<th>Outcomes: The following are some key outcomes from the study, as reported against the aims of the study:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Aims:
The aim of the research was to provide background data to inform a decision about the viability of the CS scheme and the consequent decision about its extension. The specific aims of the research were to describe:
1. the scheme’s background and rationale;
2. what criteria probation officers appear to use to determine an offender’s suitability for CS;
3. characteristics of the offenders subjected to CS;
4. the administration of the CS scheme, including the association between recommendations for a CSO and actual court sentencing; offenders’ CS work, including arrangements for supervision, co-workers, individual placements, duration, location

The study samples included:
1. 27 Offenders (from Inner London (18); Kent (2); South-west Lancashire (7);
2. 6 CS officers (one at each scheme); and
3. 239 Probation officers (randomly selected from 5 schemes).
Note: the subjects of the study were those involved in community service at a time when the project was new and developing.

Methods used to assess the conduct of the CS scheme included:
1. completion of a research form each time a probation officer considered a CSO in a social inquiry report;
2. participant observation at CS offices and work sites;
3. intensive interviews with probation officers in charge of the day-to-day running of the CS scheme; and
4. asking probation officers to identify completed orders they regard as ‘successes’ or ‘cases which have given them satisfaction’.

Methods used to assess the attitudes and opinions of offenders, CS officers, probation officers, work-providing agencies, trade unions and the print media about CS included
1. intensive interviews with probation officers in each area who had direct responsibility for the CS scheme;
2. questionnaires and interviews; conducting a sentencing exercise with main-grade probation officers of the probation and after-care areas;
3. Content analysis of 519 social inquiry reports from the 6 experimental areas in which CS is considered;
4. recording information from files from CS offices; and
5. obtaining criminal records info.

Offender characteristics
Between 38% and 50% of offenders subject to CS had prior records of imprisonment. The most common offence among CS offenders was property crime, which was also the most common previous offence among this group. Offenders were mostly aged between 17 and 24 years. On average, offenders on community service had three previous convictions in some areas and four in others.

CS scheme administration:
Generally, a sentence of community service was preceded by a recommendation for such an order. Community service was generally performed in the company of beneficiaries or volunteers, or both. Offenders with longer criminal records were less likely to complete their community service orders, but offence type was not found to be a predictive factor for the manner of termination.

Perceptions on CS
Mostly positive views were held about the CS scheme by offenders, CS and probation officers, sentencers, potential work-providing agencies and the press.
and time frames, length of time taken until termination; order outcomes in regards to successful completion, breach, etc.; and

5. the perceptions of relevant groups and individuals about CS.

- a postal survey of attitudes of a sample of main-grade or senior probation officers drawn from the experimental areas;
- analysis of words used by sentencers when making CSOs;
- formal interviews with sample of offenders doing CS;
- analysis of one area’s dossier of contacts with 152 potential work-providing agencies between Oct 1972 and Jan 1974; and

**Questionnaires and interviews:**

- Of the 239 probation officers, 179 (74.9%) returned their questionnaires.
- Of the 27 offenders initially interviewed, less than half, (10 in total from Inner London (6); South-west Lancashire (4) and none from Kent), were able to be interviewed a second time. The interviews took place between June and July 1973 over 5 weeks.

The study concluded that the community service scheme was viable and at times, of evident benefit to offenders involved.
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