

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Community Safety Committee – 18 August 2010

'Pathways' for Short Term Prisoners

Report by Executive Director (Housing & Community Care)

ABSTRACT

This paper informs the Committee on the development of release 'Pathways' for short term prisoners from Tayside accommodated at HMP Perth. It comments further upon the joint approach of agencies and the practical achievements over the past two years.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1.1 It is recommended that Committee:-

- (i) Note the terms of the present report
- (ii) Agree to the proposal to carry out a joint evaluation of the project
- (iii) Instruct the Executive Director (Housing & Community Care) to present a further report in 12 months time on the impact of the 'pathways'.

2. BACKGROUND

In July 2007 it was agreed between Senior Officers of Perth and Kinross Housing & Community Care and local Scottish Prison Service Managers, to form a multidisciplinary group to consider ways of improving basic resettlement arrangements for short term prisoners in HMP Perth who were likely to return to the Perth and Kinross area. With the establishment of the Tayside Community Justice Authority, this was in time extended to include all short term prisoners from across Tayside, i.e. Angus, Dundee and Perth and Kinross.

The purpose of forming the multidisciplinary group was to achieve a more consistent and effective approach to Service delivery in respect of Accommodation, Employability, Health and Substance Misuse. By doing so it was the view that this would not only contribute to the Government's 'Reducing Reoffending' agenda but also have a significant effect upon Community Reintegration and thus Community Safety.

The Prison Community Integration Group (PCIG) focused at the outset of the project upon short term prisoners and particularly on the four areas of provision mentioned above, i.e. Accommodation, Substance Misuse, Health, and Employability. It was the view of the Group that many prisoners had such criminogenic needs and whilst these were often addressed in respect of **long term** prisoners, often as part of a package involving Parole etc, there was very limited provision for **short term** prisoners (i.e. those sentenced to less than four years of custody).

The available data at the time indicated that the majority of short term prisoners returning to Tayside had problems with accommodation and were often released without an address to go to; those with substance misuse problems were rarely seen by agencies until after their release and contact/intervention in the community was fragmented and somewhat limited. Prisoners with health problems were often not provided with adequate services as it often took a lengthy period of time for medical records to be made available and forwarded accordingly. In addition, many short term prisoners had little or no experience of regular employment.

It was this situation which led to the formulation of the four distinct 'pathways' – Accommodation, Substance Misuse, Health and Employability.

The intention was simple and straightforward – to improve services to this client group by making access easier; to begin intervention if possible **before** release and to ensure services were focused and were not duplicated. By such means it was hoped that the resettlement of short term prisoners would be improved and that this may also improve Community Safety.

2.1 To improve the delivery and consistency of Services to short term prisoners

Progress to date

'Pathways' are now in place covering the provision of Accommodation, Substance Misuse, Health and Employability. This has entailed basic, but significant, changes in service delivery and practice as the provision has been developed from within existing budgets. The initiative has meant a range of statutory and non statutory agencies working closely together over 2-3 years, to formulate a common way of delivering these services.

Accommodation: No short term prisoner leaves HMP Perth without being referred to Housing Services at least 6-8 weeks prior to liberation. Weekly surgeries are delivered by Housing Officers from across Tayside. Consequently this provides the opportunity for timeous considered intervention and appropriate assistance.

Substance Misuse: All short term prisoners from Tayside with substance misuse problems are referred 6-8 weeks prior to release. During this period they have regular contact with Community based Drug/Alcohol workers thus making the provision of a community based service more straightforward and effective.

Health: The Scottish Prison Service and NHS Tayside have developed IT processes to ensure that short term prisoner health details are made available without undue delay.

Employability: Previously these services were fragmented, duplicated, and often not what was required by prisoners. Again, the focus has been upon making provision practical, readily accessible and meaningful. Referral is made a number of weeks prior to release and contact with the relevant agencies is ongoing subsequent to release and thereafter.

3. PROPOSALS

In conjunction with the Tayside Community Justice Authority and other partners such as the Scottish Prison Service, NHS Tayside, Shelter and Drug & Alcohol agencies, it is now planned to evaluate the outcomes of the four 'Pathways'. The PCIG, in the short term, is to develop evidential measurements and to monitor the performance of the services.

The performance data will be reported on a regular basis to the Tayside Throughcare Network and thence the Tayside CJA.

4. CONSULTATION

The Governor of HMP Perth, and other Senior Managers within the Scottish Prison Service and the Chief Executive of the Tayside CJA, have been consulted in relation to this paper.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial or resource implications arising from this paper.

6. COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES 2009-2012

The Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 lays out five Objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. The relevant three objectives are as follows:-

- (i) A Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment
- (ii) Healthy, Caring Communities
- (iii) Confident, Active and Inclusive Communities

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

An equality impact assessment needs to be carried out for functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant protected characteristics. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new and existing policies.

The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

8. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all qualifying plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS).

However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report. This is because the Committee are requested to note the contents of the report only and the Committee are not being requested to approve, adopt or agree to an action or to set the framework for future decisions.

9. CONCLUSION

This report describes the development of four particular areas of service to short term prisoners at HMP Perth and how it is envisaged that the cumulative impact of such developments will improve Community Integration and Community Safety. The 'Pathways' initiative has made the resettlement of short term prisoners across Tayside more consistent and potentially more effective.

David Burke

Executive Director (Housing & Community Care)

Note: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

Contact Officer: John Newton (01738 444244) JNewton@pkc.gov.uk

Address of Service: Acting Service Manager, Criminal Justice and Substance Misuse, St Martin's House North, King Edward Street, PERTH, PH1 5UT

Date: 27 July 2010

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion only, a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting *John Newton*



Council Text Phone Number 01738 442573