

National Objectives for Social Work Services in the Criminal Justice System: Standards - Throughcare

CHAPTER 11 : SCHEDULE 1 OFFENDERS - SPECIFIC PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

313.This Chapter provides details of the responsibilities placed on local authorities in respect of the imprisonment and preparation for release of offenders convicted of offences against children. It replicates SWSG Circular 11/1994, which replaced SWSG Circular 4/1979. A corresponding Scottish Prison Service Circular, 60/1994, addressed to governors of all penal establishments, advises governors of actions to be taken by prison staff and managers in respect of these prisoners.

314.This Chapter sets out the procedures to be followed to ensure that social work departments are notified when prisoners convicted of offences against children are to be released from custody. It outlines the key principles and issues surrounding the engagement of such offenders in programmes to assess and address their offending behaviour and sets out the range of circumstances under which the release of these prisoners can take place. It identifies tasks for social workers in prisons during an offender's sentence and leading up to his/her release and specifies complementary action to be taken by social work staff in the community during this period.

315.This Chapter takes account of developments in national policy, standards, and practice guidance. It is informed by increasing knowledge about the prevalence of some types of offences against children and the types of behaviour involved. The policy and procedures are set within the context of local authority and other agency responsibilities for child protection, as outlined in The Scottish Office document "Effective Intervention".

316.The procedures set out here focus on the particular contribution which local authority throughcare services must make to child protection, and fulfil part of the Secretary of State's Action Programme on Child Abuse, set out in Circular SW9/1988. They are intended to promote child protection by:

316.1ensuring early follow-up, by social workers in prisons, of prisoners identified by court staff as having been convicted of a relevant offence against a child;

316.2ensuring that such prisoners are subject to an assessment of the extent and seriousness of the risk they will constitute to children on their eventual release;

316.3ensuring that such prisoners are offered access to programmes to help them reduce the risk they pose to children on release (see paragraph 333 below);

316.4ensuring local authorities consider any implications for the protection of children arising from the future release of an offender and ensuring that this information is also available to the Parole Board or others involved in consideration of such prisoners for discretionary release; and

316.5assisting the development of a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to the release of offenders convicted of offences against children by the sharing of information amongst relevant agencies, both in the prison setting and in the community.

317. This Chapter sets out actions to be taken in respect of the release of prisoners whose current custodial sentence is for a relevant offence against a child. It provides directions which apply to adult prisoners and young offenders, whether they are to be released unconditionally at their normal release date or are being considered for discretionary or conditional release under any of the following arrangements:

317.1 home leave;

317.2 the Training for Freedom Scheme;

317.3 parole, non-parole licence, life licence or statutory after-care;

317.4 supervised release order; or

317.5 any other form of supervision

Definitions

318. In the context of this document, child means person under the age of 16 (see fuller definitions at end of Chapter); prisoner means, as appropriate, a convicted adult prisoner aged 21 years or more, or a convicted young offender under 21 years of age (but see paragraph 345.2 and 345.3 for specific directions in relation to work with remand prisoners). Relevant offence means any offence set out in Schedule 1 to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995, i.e.

318.1 any sexual offence committed against a child

318.2 any offence under the relevant sections of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937, or

318.3 any assault on a person under 17 years of age leading to that individual's bodily injury (subject to the comments in paragraphs 321 and 322 below).

319. An explanatory list of relevant offences and further definitions is to be found at the end of this Chapter. The appropriate social work department may be any one or more of the following local authorities, depending on the circumstances of the case:

319.1 the area in which the prisoner's own children are living;

319.2 the area in which the child or children previously offended against is/are living;

319.3 the area to which the prisoner is to be released and where there are children in the household or hostel which he/she is to join; or

319.4 the area to which the prisoner is to be released even when it seems that there are apparently no children involved.

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS AT COURT TO IDENTIFY RELEVANT CASES AND NOTIFY RECEIVING ESTABLISHMENTS

320. Arrangements have been made for procurators fiscal to include the victim's age on the complaint or indictment in all relevant offences involving a victim aged under 16 years (and to draw the attention of Sheriff Clerks to other cases) and for Sheriff Clerks to mark the warrant of committal in all such cases which result in a custodial sentence. Local arrangements will be put in place immediately, in each prison, to ensure that the social work unit in the prison is advised, within one working day, of the reception of every such case and is supplied with a copy of any social enquiry prepared for the court appearance (see SPS Circular 60/1994). Additional information (including, in every case, a copy of the relevant parts of the complaint or indictment, and, where available, psychiatric or other reports) will be forwarded by Sheriff Clerks or the Clerk of Justiciary to the receiving establishment within 5 working days of the sentence, and marked for the attention of the social work unit. These arrangements should ensure that social worker in the prison can make initial contact with a convicted offender on the basis of the fullest information available about the precise nature of the offences and, where appropriate, the offender's own circumstances. It must be emphasised that this information is necessary to inform judgements about risk, and should only be shared with others on a 'need to know' basis.

321. The full procedures set out in here may not necessarily require to be implemented in every Schedule 1 case, but cases which do not require full implementation are likely to be infrequent.

322. The full procedures must always be implemented in cases involving a sexual offence, in cases where the offender will be subject to a supervised release order and in cases where the circumstances of the offence are such as to suggest that the offender is likely to constitute a risk to children generally, or to a specific child or children. The procedures may not, however, require to be implemented in full where these conditions do not apply. As an example, they may not require to be implemented where a Schedule 1(3) offence, involving physical assault, has occurred in the course of violence between young people of a similar age. Decisions not to implement the procedures can only be made when full information about the nature and circumstances of the offence, and the offender's characteristics has been obtained and has been assessed in respect of future risk to children. In completing these tasks the social worker in the prison must consult with relevant community-based colleagues about the nature and circumstances of the offence, particularly any risk to a child (see paragraph 329). The decision not to implement the procedures must be approved by the social worker's line manager; the decision, and the reason for the decision, must be recorded in the case file.

THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER IN THE PRISON

323. The main task of social work staff in prisons in respect of prisoners convicted of offences against children are:

323.1 assessment of indicators of future risk to children including any risk which may arise during the period of imprisonment and from the eventual release of the offender. Assessment of the prisoner's readiness to address the offending behaviour;

323.2 to assist in the development and delivery of some elements of intervention programmes within the prison setting, in conjunction with other staff and specialists in the prison. It is the responsibility of the Governor to ensure co-ordination of all these contributions;

323.3 to assist prison management in the co-ordination of a range of interventions from specialists and from prison staff, designed to modify, contain or control the offender's behaviour;

323.4 liaison and co-ordination in respect of the development of appropriate release plans for offenders convicted of offences against children; and

323.5 preparation of prisoners for release.

Informing the Prisoner

324. Within 2 working days of receipt of the information from the court, the social worker in the prison must advise the prisoner of the range of consultations and administrative arrangements surrounding his/her eventual release, as set out in this section. The social worker must explain the purpose and implications of these arrangements, the role of the social worker and the limits of confidentiality, and must advise the offender of his/her rights and obligations. These include the right to refuse to participate in any treatment programme which may be offered during imprisonment, the right to decline to participate in the parole process, and obligations in respect of release subject to statutory supervision. The social worker must also give an indication of the services available in prison to assist the prisoner to address the offending behaviour. (Where prisoners subsequently choose not to engage with any intervention programme in the prison, the social worker in the prison must remind them of the arrangements set out in this section whenever consideration is being given to any form of discretionary release, and prior to normal release.) Prisoners must also be advised that they may make representations to the relevant Directors of Social Work / Chief Social Work Officers (see paragraph 319) and to the Parole Board or Governors who are considering discretionary release. Such representations are likely to include concerns which prisoners may have about unreasonable constraints on their liberty following release, particularly regarding access to children.

Assessment and Planning

325. Within one month of the prisoner's admission, the social worker in the prison must complete a preliminary assessment of the extent to which the prisoner seems likely to present a continuing risk to children during imprisonment or following release. As part of this process, the social worker must assess the prisoner's willingness to co-operate with any course of action and engage in any intervention programme available within the prison setting, designed to reduce that risk. Social workers must have accurate information about the charges proved or admitted in court, and any other relevant information made available to the court, in order to carry out their assessment function effectively. There will be occasions when contact must either be delayed or may only be of a relatively superficial nature, whilst further enquiries are undertaken by the social worker in the prison to secure the required information.

326. In all Schedule 1 cases, judgements about the future risk posed to children should be based on the following factors: the circumstances and nature of the offence; the prisoner's attitude to the offence; frequency and severity of previous offending (if known); any history of substance misuse; willingness and motivation to address offending behaviour.

327. In cases involving sexual offences, the following additional factors must also be considered when forming judgements about future risk:

327.1 Nature of offence - degree of sexual intrusiveness (intercourse may indicate greater risk):

327.1.1 duration or frequency of abuse, as stated in indictment or complaint (the longer the duration and more frequent the abuse in the current offence, the greater the future risk);

327.1.2 use of physical violence or aggressive coercion; and

327.1.3 intra-familial or extra-familial abuse (extra-familial abuse may be indicative of more generalised risk to children).

327.2 Victims - age of victims (the younger the victim, the greater the risk):

327.2.1 whether the victim was known or unknown to the offender (selection of unknown victims is indicative of greater risk);

327.3 Previous convictions - previous convictions for sexual offences;

327.3.1 previous convictions for non-sexual offences (the greater the number and variety of convictions, the greater the risk);

327.4 The extent of the prisoner's denial or minimisation of the offence;

327.5 The extent to which the prisoner accepts responsibility for his/her behaviour;

327.6 The prisoner's views about the impact of the offence on the victim(s) (the less the understanding of its impact, the greater the future risk); and

327.7 The prisoner's willingness and motivation to engage in programmes to address his/her offending behaviour.

328. It is essential that social work staff in prisons recognise, and make appropriate use of, the contribution which prison officers and specialist staff, primarily psychologists and psychiatrists, may make to the process of reaching judgements about future risk assessment.

329. It must be borne in mind, however, when assessing the general indicators of future risk, that in many such cases previous offences may have been undetected. Any analysis of frequency of offending must, therefore, be approached with caution.

330. Social workers in prisons must be responsive to the needs of the child(ren) in their work with prisoners, including initial assessment, especially where there is the possibility of ongoing contact between the child(ren) and the prisoner (see paragraphs 345.4 and 345.5). They must therefore liaise with their colleagues in the community who may have been involved with the case at an earlier stage, or may currently be working with the victims(s) and/or the prisoner's family. It can be anticipated that offenders may seek to deny or minimise the harm done, and staff must always strive to encourage them to be realistic about their offending, the risk they pose to others, and about the steps they should take to reduce that risk. Assessment of likely risk, and assessment of the offender's motivation to change are closely interlinked. Where an offender is willing to work towards change these assessments should lead to the formulation of a planned

programme of action to achieve change, to prepare for release and to reduce future risk.

331. Risk assessment is a task which must be conducted at regular intervals throughout the sentence, irrespective of a prisoner's participation in intervention programmes. It should always be informed by the factors set out in paragraph 326 above. Whenever possible, a prisoner who has declined to participate in such a programme should be offered further opportunities to engage in work to address his/her offending.

332. Whenever a prisoner is transferred, the Governor of the receiving prison must ensure that the social work unit is advised immediately of the prisoner's admission. The social work unit in the prison must contact the prisoner within 5 working days of that notification, to advise the prisoner of available opportunities to tackle his/her offending, and to update the most recent assessment of risk.

Intervention Programmes

333. The Scottish Prison Service is committed to the provision of opportunities for prisoners to take responsibility for their offending behaviour and take steps to reduce re-offending following release. Governors are required to develop appropriate regimes to assist this. Social work units in prisons and other professional staff have a key role in developing and delivering intervention programmes designed to address particular forms of offending behaviour, and in assisting governors to provide these opportunities for prisoners. These programmes frequently involve contributions from a range of specialists and disciplines within the prison or based in the community, such as psychologists, psychiatrists, medical staff, education staff, etc. An important task for social work in prisons is to contribute to the co-ordination, by prison management, of these various specialist contributions as part of the regime plan of each prison.

334. Offenders convicted of offences against children may require access to a range of specialist programmes, depending on the nature of the offence, including specialist programmes for the perpetrators of sexual abuse, programmes focusing on violence and anger management, and programmes to teach relaxation techniques. In common with other prisoners they may also require access to a range of other services and resources, to address other problems they may face, e.g. accommodation, alcohol misuse, etc.

335. The development, consolidation, and maintenance of intervention programmes for offenders convicted of child abuse should be a feature of regime plans and social work unit plans in all establishments containing such prisoners. The highest possible priority should be given to this group within competing demands on social work resources; where existing resources are judged to be insufficient to allow the implementation of intervention programmes, SPS management must be consulted about whether additional resources on a permanent, temporary, or sessional basis, can be secured.

336. The timing of such intervention programmes will be a matter for careful consideration and must take account of a range of factors; key issues affecting the timing of an individual's inclusion in any programme might include sentence length and date of release (if known), likely length of stay in the establishment, nature of programme as well as the individual offence circumstances. In the case of indeterminate sentence prisoners, the timing of intervention must be realistic in relation to the individual's prospects of release on licence.

337. In each case the main purpose should be to seek to maximise the impact of the programme and to try to influence behaviour following release (for example, by assisting an offender to maintain contact with the social work department on a voluntary basis, following release). It is critically important that, where prisoners have commenced a programme of intervention, they are allowed to complete the programme prior to transfer to another prison. Prison management must take all steps necessary to ensure that this occurs.

338. It should be noted that at present there has been little systematic evaluation of the long-term effectiveness of any such programmes. Local authorities should seek to provide their staff with regular updates on practice development elsewhere and on any research into programme effectiveness. SWSI will assist this task through the exercise of its responsibility to provide and disseminate knowledge about good practice.

339. Monitoring and evaluation of the performance and outcomes of any such programme is a complex but essential task for both social work and prison management. In order to facilitate effective evaluation, programme goals must be realistic, achievable, clearly defined and consistently applied. Whilst there is opportunity to effect change, the scope for change may be limited and this should be recognised in order to avoid unrealistic expectations. Achievable goals might be to increase an individual's understanding of his/her offending behaviour or to achieve some understanding of the effect of such behaviour on victims.

Planning and Preparation for Release

340. Social work departments must give particular attention to providing adequate protection to previous and potential victims, and to the value of involving offenders in community-based programmes to control their offending behaviour following release. An enhanced level of contact between workers in prisons and their colleagues in the community must be a feature of the pre-release period. It is also essential that effective liaison at both management and service delivery levels take place between child protection staff and local authority staff with responsibility for social work services in the criminal justice system.

341. In advance of any form of release, including temporary release under the home leave schemes, the social work unit in the prison must take all reasonable steps in the time available, to ensure that the appropriate local authority has all relevant information to enable decisions to be taken about any action required to protect children.

342. Where at least 5 working days advance notice is given, this information must be provided in writing by the social worker in the prison, following consultations with other staff who may have been involved with the prisoner. Where less notice is given the information must be conveyed by telephone. This must include any new and relevant information about the prisoner's circumstances since conviction (including details about any ongoing contact with the child), any involvement in intervention programmes during imprisonment, response to such contact/involvement, availability of community-based support for the prisoner, the prisoner's own views about his/her offence and future plans, and a preliminary assessment of risk.

343. Where a prisoner is due for normal release, at the end of his/her sentence, and is homeless, the social worker in the prison should follow the action set out at paragraph 364.

THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

344. Those responsible for protecting a child at risk in the community must review both the assessment of that risk and any resulting protection plan, to take account of changing circumstances. These include changes in the family situation and those of the offender at each stage of the criminal justice process: the investigation; trial; outcome and disposal; the offender's return to the community.

345. In responding to cases which have both child protection and criminal justice dimensions, the social work department must ensure that plans to protect the child(ren) and intervention and management plans for known abusers are complementary. The development of a more specialised, functional approach to the organisation of social work departments will require a high level of co-ordination and co-operation between child protection staff and their managers and staff and managers involved in criminal justice work. Key tasks for these workers are outlined below.

345.1 In all cases the child protection worker must, wherever possible, establish the circumstances of an alleged offence, in order to assess the extent of the current and future risk to the victim and to other children including those with whom the alleged offender has had contact.

345.2 The social worker who has responsibility for investigating a child abuse referral must notify the relevant social work unit in the prison when he/she knows that an alleged abuser has been remanded in custody. Where such information comes to the attention of senior social work department management (for example, from the police) managers must also ensure this is communicated to relevant social workers in the prison. Whenever possible, the social worker in the prison should make contact with the prisoner to offer assistance with any problems arising from remand. Contact at this stage may form the basis for continuing work, either in prison or in the community, in the event of a finding of guilt.

345.3 Where the offender has been convicted and remanded for reports, the worker preparing the social enquiry report must liaise with the social worker in the prison and incorporate into that report any relevant information from this source or from third parties: the SER must provide an initial assessment of the risk posed by the offender to current victims and to other children.

345.4 Where an offender is imprisoned for offences against a child, and that child is the subject of child protection procedures, the social worker responsible for the child must ensure that the social worker in the prison is fully informed about the circumstances of the child and the family so that the realities of the situation, from the perspective of the child and other family members, can be taken into account in direct work with the prisoner (see also the National Standards Supplement on Effective Intervention). The child's social worker must also ensure that the social worker in the prison is invited to contribute, either in person or in writing, to all child protection case conferences and to other statutory review mechanisms.

345.5 In cases of intra-familial abuse it is the responsibility of the child's social worker to explore the child's wishes with regard to ongoing contact between the prisoner and the child, and to assess what might be in the child's best interests. Where there is continuing contact between a prisoner and his/her children, the worker must seek to ensure that such contact, particularly access visits, is

consistent with the child protection plan and does not jeopardise the child's welfare. Where necessary the local authority may seek to limit or control access, using the appropriate legal channels. If the child is subject to a supervision requirement any alteration to access arrangements should be sought through the Children's Hearing System.

345.6 When a pre-release notification is received (see Annex C, Form T/C CP 1) the local authority must decide whether any further steps, including registration, require to be taken, in order to protect children. It may be appropriate to convene a case conference for this purpose. The local authority's decision and the information on which this is based, must be included in the local authority response to the social worker in the prison (see Annex C, Form T/C CP 2).

345.7 Where an offender is to return to the community subject to some form of statutory supervision, the Supervising Officer must liaise closely with child protection colleagues, and must participate in at least one pre-release meeting (involving the prisoner, the social worker in the prison and any other relevant staff or workers) to be convened by the social worker in the prison.

CHILDREN'S HEARINGS SYSTEM

346. Where the child or children are not already subject to a supervision requirement, local authorities are reminded of the provision in **section 37(1A) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (as amended by section 83 of the Children Act 1975)**. This states that on receipt of information suggesting that a child may be in need of compulsory measures of care local authorities should cause enquiries to be made and, if it appears that the child may be in need of compulsory measures of care, give to the Reporter such information as they may have been able to discover.

347. Where the child or children are subject to a supervision requirement a review hearing may be appropriate. If the decision is made to refer a case to the Reporter or to initiate a review hearing, it is the responsibility of the child's social worker to inform a prisoner who is the parent of a child so referred, and to advise the social worker in the prison. When the child has not already been the subject of child protection procedures, the local authority must consider the need to invoke such procedures.

TRAINING

348. It is essential that staff involved in work with prisoners convicted of offences against children are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to engage effectively with such offenders. All staff involved in work with child abusers must also be familiar with the relevant procedures and legal framework; these should be included within the induction training and refresher programmes undertaken by these staff. Local authority Strategic Plans for social work services in the criminal justice system and for child protection services should take due account of the training needs of social work staff involved in this particular area of work (see SWSI Circular No SW2/1993, "Specific Grant for Social Work Training: Financial Year 1993/94", paragraphs 3 and 8).

349. Managers responsible for staff involved in this work need to be sensitive to these extra demands on their staff and may, themselves, require additional training to help their staff to deal with the pressures and problems generated by this area of work.

350. It is the policy of SPS to provide funding, whenever possible, for task-related training undertaken by social work staff in prisons, where such training is approved by social work department management. Training in working with child abusers would, in most cases, be deemed to be task-related. Where training opportunities are deemed to be developmental (i.e. not specific to the worker's setting), the funding of such training would, in the case of staff both in the prison and the community, fall to the local authority budget.

PRE-RELEASE PROCEDURES

Conditional and Temporary Release

351. Conditional release refers to the release of prisoners on:

351.1.1 parole;

351.1.2 non-parole licence;

351.1.3 life licence;

351.1.4 supervised release order; or

351.1.5 any other form of licence or supervision (including statutory aftercare for young offenders)

351.2 and to temporary release under:

351.2.1 interim liberation;

351.2.1a home leave scheme;

351.2.3 the Training for Freedom scheme; or

351.2.4 any other scheme of temporary release (including escorted leave).

352. Arrangements will be established immediately by prison management to ensure that the social work unit in the prison receives advance notification of any prisoner convicted of offences against children who is due to be considered for conditional or temporary release under any of the arrangements set out at paragraph 351 above (see SPS Circular 60/1994). Whenever possible this notification will be provided 4 months in advance of a prisoner being considered for conditional release on parole. Prison management will ensure that the social work unit in the prison is advised immediately it becomes known that a prisoner convicted of an offence against a child is due to be considered for any other form of release, e.g. home leave or on outside work or educational programme (see paragraphs 341 and 342). Separate arrangements will be established to ensure that the social work unit in the prison is advised immediately of the release of any prisoner on interim liberation pending an appeal and of the return to custody of any such prisoner. On receipt of such notification the social work unit in the prison must contact the relevant local authority as a matter of urgency, to advise of the situation.

NB: Where prisoners convicted of offences against children are to be considered for transfer to open, or semi-open conditions, the arrangements set out in paragraph 353 below must be used by the transferring prison at the same time

as considering transfer, to ensure that appropriate enquiries are completed in advance of a prisoner's eligibility for home leave.

353. In **every** case involving a determinate or life sentence prisoner convicted of offences against children, the social work unit in the prison must notify the relevant social work departments using Form T/C CP 1 (see Annex C) immediately on receipt of notification from prison management that the prisoner is due to be considered for discretionary release. The social work unit in the prison must also send:

353.1 details of the offender (Form T/C CP 1B);

353.2a report by the social worker in the prison, incorporating a preliminary assessment of risk;

353.3a copy of the SER (if available) and any other reports prepared for the court; and

353.4a standard form for local authority response (form T/C CP 2).

354. The social work departments which receive such notification must respond, using the standard response form (Form T/C CP 2), by the date specified by prison management on Form T/C CP 1. Whenever possible the local authority should be allowed a minimum of 4 weeks within which to prepare its response. It is for each local authority to nominate a staff member to complete Form T/C CP 2.

Decision to Release All Cases

355. If a decision is taken to release the prisoner, the social worker in the prison must notify the relevant local authority/authorities using Form T/C CP 3, and must include the following additional information:

355.1a copy of the release notification, including conditions;

355.2a supplementary report from the social worker in the prison, if any relevant information has come to light since the last report was prepared (including information from the prison psychologist, psychiatrists or medical staff); and

355.3 any comments which the decision-making body has asked to be conveyed.

356. The social worker in the prison must also ensure that a copy of the release notification (Form T/C CP 3) is sent, for information, to the relevant Reporter for each local authority so notified.

357. The social worker in the prison must notify the relevant social work departments of the decision immediately. This notification should normally take place at least one month before the date on which the prisoner will be released.

Decision to Release Parole, Non-Parole and Life Licence

358. Following notification of the release date, the social worker in the prison and the Supervising Officer in the community must take the required steps to pursue detailed planning for the prisoner's release; in particular the social worker in the prison must convene a meeting between the prisoner, the Supervising Officer,

and other relevant staff, to refine the pre- and post-release plans of the prisoner (see paragraphs 177 and 213). However, in the course of a pre-release programme for an indeterminate sentence prisoner there must be a similar meeting and SOHD must be informed if it is thought necessary to attach any special conditions to the life licence, so that these can be considered by the Parole Board (if this has not already been done prior to the granting of a provisional release date).

Decision Not to Release - All Cases

359. Where the decision is not to release the prisoner, the social work department(s) must be advised of that decision immediately.

360. Social work departments must be advised immediately of any changes to the information previously supplied, particularly any change in the address at which the offender intends to reside on release.

361. If it becomes known that the children previously offended against are moving, or have moved, to the area of another local authority, the new local authority must be given all relevant information and documentation currently available in order to pursue its own enquiries. In these circumstances the social work unit in the prison must advise the local authority from whose area the children are believed to have moved; that local authority must investigate the information, and if it is confirmed, must supply the necessary documentation to the new authority. The new local authority must make such enquiries as are deemed necessary to determine the extent of continuing risk to that victim from a particular offender. These procedures should be implemented in all cases of intra-familial abuse, and in cases of extra-familial abuse where there are grounds to believe that the prisoner may try to make contact with the victim following release.

NORMAL RELEASE

362. When a prisoner's normal release date is in prospect, the social work unit in the prison must advise the relevant social work departments 4 months before the normal release date, or as soon as possible. The notification should be conveyed in a standard format (see Form T/C CP 4), and should include the following additional information:

362.1a report prepared by the social worker in the prison, including an assessment of risk, information about the offender's release place and any additional information from other sources (e.g. prison psychologist, psychiatrist, medical staff, etc.);

362.2a copy of the SER and any other information provided to the court (if available); and

362.3 details of related previous convictions.

363. The social worker in the prison must also ensure that a copy of the release notification (Form T/C CP 4) is sent, for information, to the relevant Reporter for each local authority so notified.

364. Where a prisoner is due for release at the end of his/her sentence, is not subject to statutory supervision and is homeless, the social work unit in the

prison must alert the local authority for the area in which the prisoner's offence was committed, and any other local authority to which the social worker in the prison believes the prisoner may return on release (e.g. on the basis of previous known addresses, or other contacts).

365. On receipt of such notification, the local authority should make such enquiries as are necessary to ascertain whether any identifiable children are at risk from the prisoner's release. Where it can be identified that a specific child or children is/are at risk, a case conference may require to be convened, and all necessary steps taken to reduce the risk to the child(ren).

366. Where the normal release of a young offender subject to statutory after-care is imminent, the social worker in the prison and Supervising Officer in the community, must take the required steps to pursue detailed planning for the prisoner's release. In particular, the social worker in the prison must convene a pre-release meeting (see paragraphs 177 and 213).

367. In all cases involving the unconditional release of prisoners, the social work unit in the prison should encourage such prisoners to seek voluntary assistance from the social work department prior to, or immediately after release. Such ex-prisoners should be high priority for voluntary assistance.