

National Objectives and Standards for Social work Services in the Criminal Justice Services.

PRE-RELEASE WORK: PAROLE AND STATUTORY SUPERVISION

Phase 1: Notification of Release Date

105. Much of the task of the social worker in the prison is directed towards assisting prisoners to prepare themselves for release.

106. As part of this process, social workers in prisons must try to engage the prisoner in the development of a realistic and achievable release plan. The social worker must make it clear that this will involve the identification of problems and issues, and that the worker and the prisoner will need to agree how best to tackle these problems, involving community-based resources as necessary.

107. At least 4 weeks' notice of notification of the release date should be given by the Governor to the local authority in the area where the prisoner intends to reside on release. The appropriate local authority social work department must nominate a Supervising Officer within 7 days of receipt of notification of the date of a prisoner's release on parole or statutory licence.

108. When earlier notification of release is given in respect of long term or life licence prisoners, the local authority must also advise the Parole Board of the Supervising Officer within 7 days.

Phase 2: Following Notification of Release Date

109. Notification of a prisoner's release date will, in most cases, be the trigger for more detailed planning for release and should mark the start of more intensive involvement by the nominated Supervising Officer in the community.

110. The social worker in prison must liaise with the social work department team for the area in which the prisoner intends to reside. The purpose of this is to exchange information, review the provisional action plan outlined at paragraph 88 above, and to identify problems arising from the prisoner's release plans at this stage.

111. The principal task during this period is for the social worker in the prison, the Supervising Officer in the community and the prisoner to review the initial action plan outlined at paragraph 88 above, indicating pre and post release arrangements in respect of the prisoner. Detailed planning must begin not less than 7 days after notification of release. Where advance notice of release exceeds 3 months, this detailed planning must take place during the last 3 months in custody.

112. The Supervising Officer is required to visit the proposed release address prior to the prisoner's release; following this visit any potential problems which the release of the prisoner to that address may generate should be identified and necessary steps taken to resolve such problems.

113. During the early part of this period the Supervising Officer will continue to focus particularly on issues to be addressed in the community, whilst the focus of

work in the prison will be the immediate needs of the prisoner. Close liaison between these 2 workers is clearly essential at this stage to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the prisoner's release.

114. In every case, the 2 strands of pre-release work must be brought together formally at a meeting to be convened by the social worker in the prison at least four weeks before the release date. This should be a meeting between the prisoner, the social worker in the prison and the Supervising Officer. Other interested parties (i.e. community-based addiction agencies, employment-related agencies, relevant staff in the prison) may be invited, as appropriate.

115. The purpose of the meeting is to refine the prisoner's pre- and post-release plans, to agree the allocation of tasks and to indicate the likely level of contact with the Supervising Officer during the first 3 months after release. It must provide an overall assessment of needs and address any outstanding issues surrounding accommodation, finance, employment relations and personal or behavioural problems experienced by the prisoner. Social workers may need to encourage the prisoner to examine the mechanisms his/her family and friends may have evolved to deal with his/her absence, and to recognise the problems this may generate on return to the community. The meeting must also identify action still to be taken, must agree priorities, and must aim to ensure that all necessary contacts and arrangements with other agencies (e.g. DSS, Housing Departments) are effected before the prisoner's release.

116. A written note of agreements reached at the meeting must be prepared by the social worker in the prison and circulated to all participants.

117. It is essential that the prisoner is advised of progress in implementing actions, if necessary through additional meetings.

118. In many cases the social worker in the prison may be required to facilitate contact between the prisoner and relevant agencies in the community prior to release. Key staff in those agencies should be encouraged, wherever possible, to visit the prisoner prior to his/her release.

PRE-RELEASE WORK: NON-PAROLE

Phase 1: Notification of Release Date

119. Advance notice of the release date should be made by the prison Governor to both the social work unit in the prison and the local authority in which area the prisoner intends to reside, as soon as it becomes clear that a prisoner will be released on non-parole licence. In the case of a prisoner who opts out of the parole system, this must be at least 6 months prior to the release date.

Phase 2: Following Notification of Release Date

120. The pre-release process as outlined for parole (see paragraph 109) should be followed but the tasks outlined should be completed 4 months prior to release.

121. Where available, the initial action plan defined in the course of this process should be reviewed at a meeting of the prisoner, social worker in prison, community-based social worker and any specialist agency during the last month prior to release. The written record of this review must be forwarded to all

relevant parties by the social work unit in prison within one week of the date of that review, but always prior to release.

122. In the event of prisoner non-co-operation, every effort shall be made by the social work unit in prison to encourage the prisoner to co-operate with the process.

123. In the event of partial co-operation, the process relating to drawing up pre-release and supervision plans, should nevertheless be undertaken as far as possible, notwithstanding the level of co-operation from the prisoner;

124. Where the prisoner declines to engage with the process, the pre-release planning meeting will not normally be required. Discussions should be conducted between social workers by means of telephone and letter. The prisoner must be advised of the outcome of all such discussions

125. The prisoner should also receive in writing an indication of:

125.1 the nature and timescale of the release processes;

125.2 the advantages and benefits to be accrued from co-operation;

125.3 a reminder of the mandatory nature of social work supervision on release together with the sanctions for non-compliance; and

125.4 an invitation to contact the social worker in prison or the community based Supervising Officer at any time regarding these or other matters.

PRE-RELEASE WORK : SHORT SENTENCE LICENCE

126. Prisoners are released on mandatory supervision on a short sentence licence where:

126.1 they had previously been released from custody on mandatory supervision, and

126.2 committed a new offence during that period of supervision; and

126.3 for that offence and for breach of supervision, received a new custodial sentence of **between 6 months and 4 years**.

Pre-Release Work

127. As far as possible, the Standards in relation to non-parole licences should be followed (see paragraph 119).