

Circular 12/2002 – Initial Interview

2.1 The social work function

- 2.1.1 Applying the extended sentence model to all statutory throughcare prisoners requires an increased emphasis on continuity of risk and needs assessment, sharing of relevant information between prison and the community and across disciplines and agencies. As with Extended Sentence prisoners, allocation of a supervising officer at the start of the custodial sentence and early identification of the supervising authority are important features.

3. Importance of information exchange

- 3.1.1 In order for these new throughcare arrangements to be effective, all agencies and professionals involved will need to communicate effectively with each other. These will include:
- Social workers in the community (supervising officers)
 - Prison-based social workers
 - Prison psychologists
 - Personal officers
 - Other prison-based specialist staff

This communication will be a particularly important feature at the following stages:

- following admission and during the initial stages of the custodial sentence
 - in the context of visits of Supervising Officers
 - at points of significant change in the prisoner's circumstances, including completion of prison programmes or risk assessments
 - in preparation of reports for referral to the Parole Board or other pre-release planning
 - on recall or other return to custody while on post-release supervision
- 4.3.4 The initial notification to the local authority must be accompanied by a request to appoint a **Supervising Officer** to the case. The notification, together with the request to assign a Supervising Officer, must be made within 7 days of receipt of the relevant information from court. In practice, the Governor will generally discharge the above responsibilities through the social work unit in the prison.

4.4 Social Work Unit in Prison

- 4.4.1 All prisoners subject to mandatory supervision on release must be interviewed by prison social work staff. These interviews should take **within 7 days** of receipt of the relevant information from the court.

The purpose of this interview is to:

- establish whether there are any immediate problems of a personal or family nature to be dealt with;
 - inform the prisoner of the social work services available in the prison, together with an indication of what contact to expect from the unit and the community based Supervising Officer, including his / her liability to mandatory supervision on release, irrespective of early release on parole; and
 - inform the prisoner of the parole / SRO system and process.
- 4.4.2 For Schedule 1 offenders, this interview must also combine the purposes outlined at paragraph 324 of Throughcare National Standards and SWSG Circular 11/94 and SPS Circular 60/94. An updated and amalgamated version of these circulars will be issued for consultation shortly.
- 4.4.3 On receipt of notification of the Supervising Officer, social work staff in the prison unit will wish to ensure that s/he has copies of the relevant information they have received from the sentencing court. That information should include:
- the indictment;
 - the previous convictions libelled in court;
 - the social enquiry report, psychologist/psychiatric and medical reports etc; and
 - the trial judge's report
- 4.4.4 Prison social work staff should liaise with community social workers to ensure that any work already undertaken with the prisoner in the community prior to sentence is built into the sentence planning for the prisoner.