

JUDGES' UPDATE

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Information for the Judiciary

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Can community work be a punishment that fits the crime?

The Community Probation Service is testing the practicalities of having community work offenders serve their time in a way that fits their crime.

Chief District Court Judge Russell Johnson recently raised the issue with Probation and Offender Services General Manager Katrina Casey and Assistant GM Tracy Mellor.

"During our discussions Judge Johnson indicated that judges would be interested in being able to direct the type of community work that would be done by individual offenders," says Katrina.

"He was particularly interested in being able to ensure that the work they undertook directly related to the offending they had committed. An obvious example is that offenders guilty of graffiti offences would be required to remove graffiti when completing their community work hours."

Katrina says while it may not be possible to match punishment with crime in all cases, the concept is a good one. "Our frontline staff are well aware that exposing offenders to the aftermath of their offending can help change their attitudes and behaviour."

The service has asked a steering group of community work managers, Probation Officers and supervisors around the country to test how far the Department can actively support such an approach. The trial will also give the service an idea of how many offenders this could apply to each year, what types of offending it could apply to, and what percentage of offenders committing these types of crimes could actually complete their hours (or a proportion of their hours) on a matched type of work.

The service will also look at what impact the approach has on the offender and their sentence and whether it can be done with both agency placements and work party placements.

Further discussion will occur with Judge Johnson as the trial progresses and managers will also discuss progress in their centres with local judges.

YOUR INPUT

Judges' Update is distributed quarterly to the judiciary, courts, and Parole Board. If you have any comments or suggestions for this publication, please contact:

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DEPARTMENT
OF CORRECTIONS

Changing perceptions of community work

While some think the sentence of community work is neither effective nor enforceable, our experience shows otherwise.

Annual figures show 74.2 percent of community work sentences were successfully completed in 2005/06. That's 21,073 out of 28,400 new sentences imposed.

This compares with successful completion rates in the 2001/02 year of 70 percent for periodic detention and 67 percent for community service.

In the 2005/06 year, the service laid 13,182 breaches of community work.

Raising compliance, finding appropriate work and projects, and effectively managing offenders through their sentences remain a priority, with staff working to find innovative and sometimes inventive ways to make sure those hours get done.

Hard cases

Some offenders have disabilities, conditions, or circumstances that prevent them starting their sentence immediately. In such cases, Probation Officers are encouraged to work with the offender and any community work sponsors to ensure the hours eventually get served.

For instance, one Tauranga offender coping with a chronic illness was unable to start his sentence for several months.

But his Probation Officer maintained contact to keep the offender motivated, and once he was fit enough, found suitable work for the offender. The sentence has since been completed.

Innovative solutions

Where pregnancy or childcare is an issue for offenders, the Community Probation Service has found innovative solutions. These include the clothing recycling work party in Dunedin that operates inside school hours and provides a variety of duties to suit all abilities.

This family-friendly arrangement has raised compliance among women and raised funds for a local charity.

Moving with the times

Lack of transport has in the past been a barrier to compliance for offenders in remote areas who have no transport, or who have been disqualified from driving. Community work staff have addressed this by seeking projects and agency placements closer to where offenders live, and in other cases, collecting offenders on the way to the work project.

This has raised compliance with community work sentences and helped reduce the risk of offenders re-offending by driving while disqualified. It has also given small and remote communities the opportunity to access offender labour.

Supported Accommodation Service Update

The Supported Accommodation Service (the Service) has been underway in Auckland for ten months now.

Run in conjunction with Auckland PARS and Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC), the Service caters for newly-released prisoners in the Auckland area who are subject to parole or release conditions and have no alternative accommodation.

The offenders will also have other reintegrative needs that Auckland PARS will be able to address.

The Service has seven properties leased by HNZC or private landlords to Auckland PARS, which are then sub-leased to participating offenders for up to three months. There are plans to

increase that number to eight, which will make a significant difference to helping prisoners with accommodation and other reintegrative needs.

Two offenders have successfully completed their tenancies and moved on to other housing. Four others are currently in supported accommodation and 12 are on the waiting list pending release by the New Zealand Parole Board.

As with all offenders on community-based sentences/orders, Community Probation Service staff work to ensure the offender meets their conditions of release and that the offender is suitable for the property being offered by Auckland PARS.

Offenders in the Service are expected to pay rent and expenses and must also comply with the "house rules" that Auckland PARS directs. Offenders work with Auckland PARS Case Workers, and their Probation Officer, to achieve reintegration goals with the main focus on finding more permanent accommodation.

Auckland PARS spokesman Graeme Page says PARS is looking for people who want to make a real change in their lives. "We already accommodate a lot of people now with private providers. The difference with this Service is that we can give the offenders extra support in remaining offence-free while acquiring important life skills."

Reintegration boost for child sex offenders

The Department is introducing a new tool to reinforce the way we manage child sex offenders to enhance their reintegration and safeguard the public.

Support Planning Meetings (SPMs), which bring together the offender and a network of support people, are to be considered for all child sex offenders facing release from prison or starting a community-based sentence or order.

Research and overseas experience indicate that management of such offenders needs to focus on monitoring factors that increase the risk of re-offending.

Effective monitoring involves a joint effort from relevant agencies, stakeholders and people with whom the offender has personal relationships, such as family/whānau, friends and employers.

Ideally, SPMs will happen before the offender leaves prison so that the support network is in place before they re-enter the community.

All child sex offenders are eligible to be considered for SPMs but not all will be suitable. The supervising Probation Officer assesses the suitability in consultation with their manager.

The SPM is only arranged if the offender gives their written consent.

The PO then works with the offender to decide who should be invited to attend and become part of the support network.

The network identifies risks the offender might face and works out a safety plan to help the offender deal with them.

For more information about Support Planning Meetings, contact Extended Supervision Co-ordinator Veronica Maitland at Corrections Head Office. Phone 04 460 3251.

Reducing Youth Offending Programme Update

After three years, the Reducing Youth Offending Programme pilot closed on 30 June 2006. The programme began in April 2003 as a joint initiative between Corrections and Child, Youth and Family (CYF).

As judges in the Auckland and Christchurch areas will know, the programme was established as a three-year pilot trialling the use of multi-systemic therapy to treat young offenders at high risk of progressing to chronic adult offending. Since it was established, more than 250 young offenders and their families have used the programme; 179 in Auckland and 73 in Christchurch.

The programme was one of the earliest multi-systemic therapy pilots in New Zealand. It produced a wealth of information on delivering intensive services to young offenders and delivering international models in a New Zealand setting.

During the pilot period, Corrections and CYF developed a risk-screening tool to identify high-risk youth. This was later independently validated.

The pilot also provided an opportunity to refine a model for cultural supervision.

Although the pilot programme did not achieve the desired reduction in re-offending, an independent evaluation has provided guidance on how to improve service delivery and outcomes, particularly around adherence to the multi-systemic therapy model and regarding intensity of services.

The pilot is being extended for a further period, but with a number of changes linked to both evaluation and research findings. The most significant change is that young offenders managed by Corrections will no longer be eligible for the programme. All indications are that multi-systemic therapy is more effective at reducing re-offending among the younger individuals managed by CYF.

With the support of Corrections, CYF will build on the information gathered during the pilot. The aim will be to ensure that those youths most likely to benefit from the programme are able to access it and that the quality of service delivery reaches optimal level. This will be done through two teams operating out of Auckland.

Work is currently underway on the design of the programme for the next phase and this will be communicated to stakeholders once it is confirmed.

CPS STAFF GET MOBILE

Roving CPS staff are proving invaluable in helping Service Centres that have temporary spikes in their workloads.

Each region has developed its own method of putting resources where they're most needed but all require the support of skilled staff who are free to travel, and flexible about the kind of work they do.

In the Northern Region, the Waitemata, Auckland, and Manukau Areas pool resources as Regional Manager Astrid Kalders explains. "Northern chose to share out the mobile PO numbers into the metro areas (Manukau, Auckland, Waitemata) with a practice to move staff to the work, or the work to the staff as required.

As a consequence, staff have worked around the region as necessary, says Astrid. "We have also moved work traditionally done in Auckland to Manukau; that is, custodial remands from Manukau court that would have been done by Auckland, have been done by Manukau for the past six months."

The mobile report writers are completing 20-30 reports a month, which has eliminated memos to judges explaining late reports due to staff capacity.

Central Regional Manager Heather Mackie says her staff have also spread the resource, with particular success in the Waiariki Area.

Area Manager Pauline Moran says the concept of a "rover" is working extremely well in Waiariki. "We have been so lucky in recruiting Jan Klinge, a very experienced PO who was returning to Rotorua after being overseas for some time."

Jan enjoys the variety of undertaking various assignments across the Area to cover whilst others are absent on extended leave.

"Management support for the role and for Jan is critical. We have a feedback form that managers use to have input into Jan's quarterly performance review. This is managed by a Service Manager at Rotorua, and is the one constant in Jan's working life. The process works well for Jan and me as her Area Manager," says Pauline.

"It isn't an easy role and having someone who likes variety and is prepared to be flexible makes this a winner for Jan and Waiariki Area."

Managers are now booking Jan's time six months in advance, and the Area is keen to continue her role well into the future.

Southern Regional Manager Paul Tomlinson says his region has had a dedicated roving squad since February. The roving team consists of three staff who are willing to travel three weeks out four.

"They've largely been used for report writing and as community work POs," says Executive Assistant Jo MacDonald. "They just go in and work flat tack. The feedback we've had is that it's been great."

Wellington Area Manager Gill Hood says the team made a huge difference to the Area's ability to respond to pre-sentence report requests.

"The flying squad members are very focused and have produced a large number of quality reports, often within tight timeframes."