

Keeping communities safe

How serious violent and sexual offenders are released and managed in our communities

What can you do?

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger of any sort of crime, or if you have concerns about someone acting suspiciously, call the Police on 111.

If you want to find out about or have input into local safety initiatives in your community, contact your local council or talk to your local Citizens Advice Bureau. You can also check with local schools or community groups about any community safety plans or meetings in your area.

If you want information about Neighbourhood Watch in your area, or for tips on keeping yourself and your family safe from crime, contact the Community Constable at your local police station or visit www.police.govt.nz.

If you would like more information about ways to keep you and your family safe from crime, you can contact these agencies using your local phone book, or check out their websites, listed below:

- NZ Police – www.police.govt.nz
- Neighbourhood Support (also www.ns.org.nz)
- Child, Youth and Family – www.cyf.govt.nz
- Ministry of Justice – www.justice.govt.nz
- Department of Corrections – www.corrections.govt.nz
- Victim Support – www.victimsupport.org.nz
- New Zealand Parole Board – www.paroleboard.govt.nz

More information

An extended version of this brochure is available in booklet format. It has more information about how prisoners are released and managed in our communities, and the measures taken to keep communities safe.

You can get a copy of the booklet "Keeping Communities Safe – How serious violent and sexual offenders are released and managed in our communities" or more information about the work of the Department of Corrections by:

- visiting www.corrections.govt.nz
- phoning your local Corrections office (under 'C' in the white pages)
- phoning the National Office on 04 499 5620.

Introduction

Violent crime constitutes around 10% of all recorded offences, and sexual offences less than 1%, but the physical and emotional damage they cause is substantial.

Many people, communities, groups and organisations in New Zealand are dedicated to making sure the people who commit these crimes are identified, convicted, and punished appropriately. These include government agencies such as the NZ Police, Child, Youth and Family, the Department of Corrections, and the Ministry of Justice. These agencies have a mandate to help create safer communities through protecting the public and reducing re-offending.

Violent and sexual offenders

People who commit violent or sexual offences live in all communities and are of no single age, gender, ethnicity, or position in society. In most cases, the people who commit violent or sexual crimes are not strangers to their victims. For example, 85% of child sexual abuse is committed by someone known to the child or their family.

What happens to offenders?

Many are caught and convicted, and held accountable by being sent to prison and/or being given a sentence that places conditions on them while living in the community. Those who have committed sexual offences against children may also be subject to an Extended Supervision Order.

People convicted of serious violent or sexual offences will usually serve lengthy sentences in prison and, where possible and appropriate, will undertake treatment programmes aimed at reducing their likelihood of re-offending.

This brochure focuses on this group of offenders.



DEPARTMENT
OF CORRECTIONS

ARA POUTAMA AOTEAROA

Sentencing people

After a person is caught, charged with, and convicted of an offence they will appear in Court before a sentencing judge.

In sentencing, judges will be guided by the law and by information and evidence gathered about the offence and the person concerned. This is provided by individuals and agencies, including the Police and Corrections, and any victims.

Releasing people from prison

Almost every person sent to prison will one day leave. Before a serious violent or sexual offender is released from prison careful planning is undertaken to reduce their likelihood of re-offending.

The New Zealand Parole Board is responsible for making decisions about the release of people eligible for parole, home detention (under proposed new legislation, home detention will be imposed by the Court), or compassionate leave.

The Board does not decide the release date of people whose sentences entitle them to be automatically released, including people on short prison sentences (two years or less) who are released after serving half of their sentence.

Under the Criminal Justice Act, the Board can impose conditions on people who are required by law to be released after serving two-thirds of their sentence and those who have served their full sentence in prison.

What is considered when releasing people from prison?

Community safety is the main priority for the Board when making decisions about releasing prisoners and setting conditions for them in the community.

Before a prisoner is released, the Board considers the risk they may pose to the community. It considers detailed reports provided by Corrections staff and can consider information from others.

The Board then decides whether to impose restrictions on the person's release through parole and/or conditions. The Board also imposes special conditions on offenders subject to Extended Supervision Orders.

Getting information about an individual offender

The Privacy and Official Information Acts protect everyone's right to a certain level of privacy and prohibit the release of certain information about individuals, including people convicted of an offence.

This means you can only be given information about someone if they have given their consent for their personal information to be released to you, or if you are a registered victim of that person's offending.

In some cases, sharing information is in everyone's best interests, including the person released from prison and their family. For example, if the person has a significant history of violent or sexual offending, the Police and Corrections may notify immediate neighbours or agencies (such as schools) that the person is being released, and provide information and guidance.

Working effectively with serious offenders

New Zealand law continues to evolve to allow us to deal more effectively with people convicted of serious violent and sexual offences. This means an increasing number of measures can be used to manage people released from prison to better safeguard the public.

Agencies such as Corrections also continue to refine their practice and improve their methods to deal more effectively with the people they manage.

More information about these measures can be found in the booklet "Keeping Communities Safe – How serious violent and sexual offenders are released and managed in our communities".

This booklet is available through your local council, Citizens Advice Bureau, and from the Department of Corrections.

To contact Corrections visit www.corrections.govt.nz or phone your local Corrections office (under 'C' in the white pages) or the National Office on 04 499 5620.