

CORRvolunteer

Issue 4: 2008

News for Volunteers working with the Department of Corrections

From the General Manager's Office



Harry Hawthorn, General Manager, Prison Services

Last year marked an important landmark in the long history of volunteer involvement in prison services in New Zealand.

Our comprehensive review of volunteer policy underlined the Department's commitment to strengthening the links with community volunteers and their organisations, as part of our goal of reducing reoffending.

After extensive consultation and careful deliberation, I am delighted that we are now able to launch a new volunteer policy and operating standards. This issue of CORRvolunteer is largely dedicated to introducing the new policy and mapping the way forward.

Since the last issue, we have also seen the inauguration of the new Prison Volunteering Advisory Group (PVAG). This too represents a major step forward and is symbolic of the strong partnerships the Department is building with key stakeholder groups.

Many of you participated in the consultations surrounding the volunteer policy review, either individually or through your volunteer organisations. Not only was this invaluable in helping us to chart the way forward, but reassuring too. Your collective interest and passion for providing better outcomes for prisoners underscores the important role prison volunteers will continue to play in the work of the Department.

Harry Hawthorn
General Manager: Prison Services

Department launches its new volunteer policy

On 1 April 2008, the Department launched its new volunteer policy and operating standards after a thorough review and consultation process, stretching back to March 2007.

The new policy is aimed at supporting the Department's vision of a 'professionalised prison volunteering service, built on the principles of community participation, diversity, self-improvement and value-added services.'

You can view the new policy in full on the Corrections website by visiting <http://www.corrections.govt.nz/public/communityassistance/volunteers/>. If you don't have internet access you can request a copy by telephoning 04 495 8428.

Volunteer coordinators

The introduction of volunteer coordinators in 2006/07, initially for a 12 month trial period, has proved a success and has been warmly received in all quarters. As a consequence, a number of volunteer coordinator positions are on track for establishment on a permanent basis from 1 July 2008.

A restructure of Prison Services is due to be completed by 1 July 2008. There will be three rather than five regions, Northern, Central and Southern. Each region is further divided into three areas. Volunteer coordinator positions will be aligned to the new Prison Services areas.

Simple but professional processes

The Department is committed to recognising the importance of volunteers by putting in place professional and unambiguous procedures. During the coming months we will be phasing in brief role descriptions and volunteer agreements to set out the Department's expectations and what you can expect in return. Standard approval terms of two years will help to provide consistency and transparency.

The trial of a new prison entry access card for all approved volunteers will represent a significant step forward. Based on swipe card technology, it will record all your approval details and facilitate smoother access. It will

also record all your visits as a volunteer, bringing an end to manual attendance sheets and the worry of getting a signature every time.

This will be piloted over the coming 12 months. Subject to a positive evaluation, we will be looking to implement across all prisons shortly after.

The new regions

Northern

Area 1: NRCF and Auckland
Area 2: ACRP and Mt Eden
Area 3: ARWCF and Spring Hill

Central

Area 1: Waikeria
Area 2: Tongariro/Rangipo and Hawke's Bay
Area 3: Manawatu, New Plymouth and Wanganui

Southern

Area 1: Wellington, Rimutaka and Arohata
Area 2: Rolleston, Christchurch Men's and Christchurch women's
Area 3: OCF and Invercargill

Training that prepares and protects

All newly-appointed volunteers will be required to undertake mandatory induction training before commencing their duties. This is essential to ensure that all volunteers are properly equipped to undertake their duties; are fully aware of their rights and obligations with regard to health, safety and security and; understand the special requirements of the prison environment.

The Department will be working with volunteer organisations to ensure that induction training is available on a regular basis, and is delivered to a high standard, across the country.

Offsetting the costs of volunteering

The Department recognises that, for some, increasing fuel costs present a barrier to volunteering, particularly in rural areas. In recognition of this, the annual petrol voucher allowance for qualifying volunteers will increase to \$150 from 1 July 2008.

Qualifying volunteers will be exempt from any tax liability on these payments.

Better representation for volunteers and their organisations

A key objective of the volunteer policy review was to achieve better representation for volunteers and their organisations. The Prison Volunteering Advisory Group (PVAG) was launched in February. This represents the primary conduit for meeting the Department's commitment to consulting with volunteers and their organisations on policy and operational matters that impact on volunteering.

You can view the Terms of Reference for the Group and read notes from the first meeting by visiting <http://www.corrections.govt.nz/public/communityassistance/volunteers/>

Valuing and celebrating volunteers

New initiatives will be launched this year to celebrate the important contribution prison volunteers and their organisations make to prison life. Watch out for news soon of special events to mark Volunteer Awareness Week in June and International Volunteer Day in December.

Any questions?

Should you have any questions about the new policy, its implementation or likely impact, please feel free to contact me on (04) 495 8428 or email volunteering@corrections.govt.nz

Russell Underwood, National Advisor:
Volunteers

Prospective ESOL tutors sought

The Department is in discussions with ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Home Tutors about forming an exciting new partnership to provide English tuition to prisoners.

We will be working with ESOL Home Tutors and other voluntary organisations to seek volunteers who are interested in being trained to provide this service to prisoners. If you are interested in learning more, please email volunteering@corrections.govt.nz or phone Russell Underwood on (04) 495 8428.

Keep yourself safe, but just in case

The Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) is something of a Kiwi icon – providing comprehensive 24-hour, no fault, personal injury cover to all New Zealanders. However, do you know what cover ACC provides for volunteers?

ACC cover for volunteers is more limited than for employees. However, here are some answers to some commonly asked questions:

Will ACC cover the cost of treatment for injuries suffered by a volunteer?

Yes. ACC will cover the cost of treatment for any injury suffered by a volunteer, whether it was suffered during their voluntary work, in their paid employment, or in any other situation. They may also be entitled to 'social rehabilitation' – for example, home help and childcare.

What about weekly compensation?

If a volunteer is injured while doing voluntary work and has to take time off their paid employment, they are eligible for weekly compensation from the second week of their time off work. Weekly compensation does not apply to volunteers not in any paid employment, as they have not lost any income.

What happens if I cause an injury to another person while working as a volunteer?

If you injure someone else while doing voluntary work, and as long as the injury is covered by ACC, you cannot be sued for compensatory damages. This also applies to volunteers who accidentally inflict injuries on someone while giving first aid, if that volunteer is not a registered health care professional.

Where can I access more information?

You can access more comprehensive information on how ACC provisions apply to volunteers at <http://www.acc.co.nz/claims-and-care/getting-help-from-acc/WCMZ002232>

It's the message not the messenger

For Tongariro/Rangipo Assistant Chaplain Liz Webster, the road to prison volunteering was a particularly long one – involving a family move from South Africa to New Zealand. After a few false starts, Liz became involved in

prison ministry and has never looked back. Liz shares her story with *CORRvolunteer*.

My involvement with the prison started by taking church services in two units at Tongariro/Rangipo once a month. Before long, Prison Chaplain Maku Potae invited me to start weekday bible studies. I recall driving home to Taupo from Turangi feeling a little shell-shocked. Surely it was a crazy idea to have a woman teaching bible studies in a male prison?

However, a number of subsequent events brought it home to me that God had called other women to do the same thing, and I should have peace about it.



Liz Webster pictured with Andrew Austin from Taupo Baptist Church

Before long, I had made myself available as an Assistant Chaplain. My church helps me with fuel costs and I have received a number of donations along the way to keep me 'on the road'.

People ask me if I am afraid to go into a male prison to teach. All I can say is, the moment I walk through those security gates, I feel peace and joy flood my heart.

I count it as a real privilege to minister to the men on a weekly basis. They are like thirsty sponges, soaking up everything I can teach them, and clearly so taken with the message that they don't notice the messenger.

Farewell and thanks

It is with some sadness that we farewell three of our valued Volunteer Coordinators who are off to new pastures overseas.

Jeanette Voyce, who has achieved such remarkable progress in the Wellington prisons, left the Department in March to undertake a long-planned 'trip of a lifetime' travelling the waterways of France.

Renee Jones, who has been such a fantastic advocate for prison volunteers in South Island,

is swapping Christchurch for Bournemouth, on the south coast of England, in May.

Carol Carwell-Cooke who Hawke's Bay prison volunteers will know very well, is joining the Kiwi exodus across the Ditch, to start a new life in the Melbourne area.

On behalf of the Department and the wider prison volunteering community we thank them for their hard work and dedication and wish them well for the future.

Contact Us

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Have you changed address or ceased volunteering? Please let us know by phoning (04) 495 8428

Volunteer Coordinators

The Department of Corrections' Volunteer Coordinators (VCs) are responsible for the overall coordination of volunteer engagement, training, administration and monitoring and are your first point of contact for all local issues. The VCs are;

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