

For discussion on
3 July 2007

Legislative Council Panel on Security

Latest Developments in the Provision of Rehabilitative Services by the Correctional Services Department

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the latest developments in the provision of rehabilitative services by the Correctional Services Department (CSD).

Background

2. It has been the mission of CSD to provide a safe and humane environment for the detention of prisoners and persons on remand. The Department also strives to facilitate the return of prisoners to the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of comprehensive rehabilitative services.

3. The effectiveness of CSD's work in rehabilitation is not only affected by the quality of the custodial regime and rehabilitative programmes, but also the motivation and responsiveness of offenders towards such programmes, as well as community acceptance of rehabilitated persons. Against this background, CSD established a Rehabilitation Division in 1998 to co-ordinate its rehabilitative services and programmes, and to cultivate community involvement in the provision of such services. The rehabilitative services provided by CSD include pre-sentence assessment services, prisoners' welfare and counselling services, psychological services, education programme, vocational training and supervision services. To strengthen its services, the Department has recently started implementing a Risks and Needs Assessment and Management Protocol for Offenders, and has substantially enhanced the vocational training and education for offenders. Details of these developments and CSD's initiatives in promoting community involvement are set out below.

Risks and Needs Assessment and Management Protocol for Offenders

4. With the assistance of the Correctional Service of Canada and

the Chinese University of Hong Kong, CSD has developed a Risks and Needs Assessment and Management Protocol for Offenders. The Protocol is a systematic evaluation of prisoners' custodial and re-offending risks and rehabilitative needs to facilitate their safe detention and provision of matching rehabilitative programmes. The Protocol comprises the following two major components :

- (a) comprehensive assessment of offenders' custodial and re-offending risks and their rehabilitative needs; and
- (b) rehabilitative programme matching for offenders.

5. Under the Protocol, offenders are assessed and classified based on their custodial risks, re-offending risks and rehabilitative needs. The assessment on custodial risks could facilitate prison management in terms of managing threats of self-harm, escape and violence. The assessment of offenders' risks of re-offending and rehabilitative needs would facilitate the Department in arranging tailor-made rehabilitative programmes for offenders based on their risks and needs level. Having regard to their responsiveness towards such programmes, offenders having higher risks and needs will receive more intensive intervention programmes.

6. Since October 2006, CSD has started conducting custodial risks assessment for all local inmates (i.e. persons admitted to Training Centre, Detention Centre, Rehabilitation Centre and Drug Addiction Treatment Centre), prisoners and persons on remand. Assessment of re-offending risks and rehabilitative needs has also been conducted for all local inmates and local prisoners with sentences of two years or above. So far, 1 964 inmates and prisoners have undergone such assessment. As a second stage of the Protocol, CSD has implemented rehabilitative programme matching for offenders in inmate centres starting from January 2007, which includes education/employment/vocational training programmes, substance abuse treatment programme, offending behaviour programme and family/community support programmes. As at end May 2007, a total of 1 146 group sessions have been organised for 898 participants.

7. CSD will further enhance the risks and needs assessment of offenders, delivery of recidivism prevention programmes and social re-integration programmes later this year. As the Protocol is a new initiative, there is room for refinement. CSD will continue to take a step-by-step approach to implement the Protocol and learn by experience through regular reviews.

Vocational training for offenders

8. CSD provides vocational training for offenders to enhance their employability by providing accredited and market-oriented vocational training.

9. Inmates under the age of 21 receive half-day compulsory vocational training on technical or commercial skills. CSD regularly reviews the vocational training courses to ensure that they are in line with market needs. The current courses cover the following areas -

- (a) Technical skills
 - Air-conditioning and refrigeration
 - Bricklaying, plastering and tiling
 - Computer servicing
 - Decorative joinery
 - Electrical fitting and installation
 - Electrical and electronics servicing
 - Mechanical engineering craft
 - Plumbing and pipefitting
 - Vehicle body painting

- (b) Commercial and services courses
 - Beauty care
 - Clothing
 - Computer-aided drafting
 - Food and beverage service
 - Office and commercial practice
 - Printing and desktop publishing

10. Adult prisoners are required to engage in useful work under the Prison Rules (Cap. 234A) unless excused on medical grounds. Gainful employment of offenders not only helps to maintain a stable custodial environment, but also facilitates their rehabilitation through developing a good work habit and a sense of responsibility.

11. To enhance the vocational training for adult offenders, CSD provided, as a trial scheme, full-time vocational training to eligible adult prisoners at Lai Sun Correctional Institution (LSCI) in 2004 and 2005 on a voluntary basis. Based on the experience gained in the trial scheme and to strengthen the training programme, CSD has established and operated a pre-release vocational training centre at LSCI since July 2006 to provide full-time market-oriented training, including Mechanical Engineering Craft,

Language & IT, Book-keeping & Accounts, Desktop Publishing & Printing, Junior Chef Training, Food & Beverage Service, and Hairdressing, for male adult prisoners. As at end May 2007, 125 prisoners were undergoing full-time vocational training at the centre. The first batch of prisoner-trainees have attempted a total of 315 public examination papers and trade tests with an overall passing rate of 91%. Apart from the vocational training provided at LSCI, CSD also provides part-time vocational training courses for prisoners in other adult institutions for both male and female offenders. In 2007-08, CSD will provide over 500 such part-time training places on top of the 200 training places in the pre-release vocational training centre at LSCI.

12. Providing offenders with education opportunities in prisons is also crucial to their employability after discharge. For young offenders, CSD's policy is to offer them appropriate courses bridging to the mainstream school education. Having regard to the introduction of a new senior secondary education curriculum in Hong Kong, the Department has started the necessary preparation for the introduction of new subjects in 2009 for eligible inmates and to prepare them to sit for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination in 2012.

13. For adult offenders, the Department has been promoting distance learning in recent years. With a grant of \$1.1 million from the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, CSD has set up a new subsidy scheme, namely the Jockey Club Inmates' Education Subsidy Scheme, for four years starting from October 2004. The scheme provides financial assistance to needy prisoners to pursue general education and acquire vocational qualifications. Coupled with the assistance provided under the Prisoners' Education Trust Fund, adult offenders enrolling in distance learning course have increased from 184 in 2003 to 226 in 2006.

Community Involvement

14. Community acceptance and support is essential to the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into society. CSD has established since 1999 the Committee on Community Support for Rehabilitated Offenders (CCSRO) to advise on rehabilitation programmes, as well as reintegration and publicity strategies. The CCSRO comprises community leaders, employers, education workers, professionals and representatives of non-government organisations (NGOs) and government departments.

15. Apart from the CCSRO, CSD has been in partnership with many community organisations, merchants and trade associations¹ to work for the benefit of offenders and rehabilitated persons. The various initiatives include the running of a professional beautician certificate course and a hairdressing course for female prisoners, and the launching of a district-based “One Company One Job Campaign” in recent years. In addition, the Department has also been working closely with NGOs in the provision of services to prisoners and inmates. The number has increased from 26 in 1998 to over 60 in 2007. These NGOs are actively involved in various services ranging from the provision of counselling and religious services, to the organisation of cultural ventures and recreational projects in correctional institutions. Examples include the employment guidance services for prisoners run by the Society of Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention, Hong Kong; and music therapy classes organised by Hong Kong Christian Kun Sun Association.

16. To strengthen cooperation amongst NGOs and provide them with an opportunity to exchange views on matters relating to rehabilitation services, CSD holds annual forums with NGO representatives. In addition, a web-based messaging platform, the ‘NGO Platform’, has been set up to provide users with an interactive site for open discussion.

17. On the publicity front, the Department has launched a series of publicity activities to appeal for public support for rehabilitated persons. These initiatives include the Personal Encounter with Prisoners Scheme, Green Haven Scheme and “Options in Life” Student Forum. In order to broaden the scope of public involvement, the Department has formed a CSD Rehabilitation Volunteer Group since 2004 to address the educational, social and recreational needs of prisoners.

Way Forward

18. The Department will continue to review and improve its rehabilitative services and programmes to promote offender rehabilitation across the community in the interest of building a safer and more inclusive society.

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¹ These organisations include, among others, the Care of Rehabilitated Offenders Association, Lok Sin Tong Benevolent Society, Kowloon, Merchants Support for Rehabilitated Offenders Committee, Rotary Clubs, International CICA Association of Esthetics, Zonta Clubs, Lions Clubs, etc.