

For discussion on

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Legislative Council Panel on Security

Latest Development of Rehabilitative Services Provided for Persons in Custody and Review on the “Risks and Needs Assessment and Management Protocol for Offenders”

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the latest development in the provision of rehabilitative services by the Correctional Services Department (CSD) and the outcome of the review on the Risks and Needs Assessment and Management Protocol for Offenders (the Protocol).

Background

2. CSD is committed to providing a safe and humane environment and suitable rehabilitative services for persons in custody, which will facilitate their re-integration into the community after serving their sentence. The rehabilitative services mainly include vocational training, education and various psychological counselling services, of which the purposes are to improve inmates' vocational skills, help them secure gainful employment after release, and assist them to correct their delinquent behaviour and address psychological problems.

Latest Development of Rehabilitative Services

Vocational Training

3. The majority of young persons in custody¹ aged under 21 have to receive half-day education and half-day vocational training. Since

¹ Detainees of the detention centre must receive other forms of training in accordance with the Detention Centres Ordinance (Cap 239) and young persons under remand generally have a shorter period of custody. CSD will provide suitable education services for them having regard to their individual needs.

January 2011, CSD has jointly launched the Teen's Programme with the Vocational Training Council (VTC) in the Lai Chi Rehabilitation Centre, Chi Lan Rehabilitation Centre and Lai King Correctional Institution. The courses offered include beauty care, business and office operations, hairdressing, and training related to air-conditioning and refrigeration. The Teen's Programme provides a bridging path for its graduates to enrol in VTC courses which require Secondary 3 level or equivalent, with a view to attaining recognised vocational qualifications. Since its implementation, 122 young persons in custody have participated in the Programme.

4. Currently, CSD works with various training providers such as the Employees Retraining Board (ERB), Construction Industry Council (CIC) and VTC in providing full-time and part-time market-oriented vocational training courses to eligible adult persons in custody who are serving a sentence of no less than six months and with remaining sentences from three to 24 months on a voluntary basis. In 2010-11, CSD provided around 1 280 training places while around 1 300 persons in custody applied. In 2011-12, the number of training places provided by CSD was 1 282 whereas that for 2012-13 will be increased to 1 311. If an eligible inmate cannot enrol in a training course of his choice, he may apply for another course and CSD will make arrangements as far as practicable.

5. Six new training courses were introduced in 2011, including Chinese culinary and restaurant service, catering and banquet service, beauty care, warehouse keeping, webpage design and basic programming, and overhead crane operator course. In 2012, CSD will offer new service industry training courses of tourism and product promotion. Besides, CSD is assisted by a number of non-government organisations (NGOs) and agencies² in terms of continuing to enhance the vocational training element in correctional services industries, such as metal work, joinery and laundry service.

Employment Support

6. CSD collaborates with various employers and business organisations to help enhance the employability of rehabilitated persons. Since 2004, CSD has set up a network of Caring Employers to provide employment opportunities for rehabilitated persons. As at end-January 2012, a total of 249 organisations/companies/persons have registered as Caring Employers of CSD and offered 898 jobs to rehabilitated persons. CSD staff will provide job referrals and vocational guidance for

² The NGOs and related agencies include the ERB, VTC, CIC, Occupational Safety & Health Council, Hong Kong College of Technology, Clothing Industry Training Authority, etc.

rehabilitated persons having regard to their interest and expertise. They will also maintain liaison with the Caring Employers who have employed rehabilitated persons in order to follow up on their employment.

7. Starting from 2011, CSD has been cooperating with the Society of Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention, Hong Kong (SRACP) in providing persons in custody with information on job vacancies. After coordinating the job vacancies information provided by the Caring Employers, SRACP will pass the information to CSD on a regular basis for displaying in penal institutions. Interested persons in custody can send application forms directly to SRACP and the latter will arrange job interviews for them.

8. In August 2011, CSD jointly organised a Job Fair titled “Give Rehabilitated Offenders A Chance” with the Merchants Support for Rehabilitated Offenders Committee on a trial basis at Pik Uk Prison. 26 employers participated in the Job Fair to provide employment opportunities for local persons in custody who would be released within three months. Apart from providing persons in custody with opportunities to gain interview experience, the Job Fair also helped to promote the message of offender rehabilitation and extend the support network of Caring Employers, with a view to securing more equal employment opportunities for rehabilitated persons.

9. In conducting open recruitment exercises, the Government does not require applicants to declare their criminal records in the application forms. Rehabilitated persons will therefore be considered on an equal basis with other applicants. It is the recruitment policy of the Government that appointments to the civil service should be based on the principle of open and fair competition. In considering applications for a civil service post, the Government, as an equal opportunity employer, would select the most suitable candidate for the post concerned, having regard to the applicant’s character, qualifications, abilities and merits. Government departments do not keep statistics specifically on whether the successful applicants have criminal records. CSD will continue to work with the commercial sector, NGOs and the public sector to provide assistance in employment for rehabilitated persons.

Education Service

10. CSD provides education for most of the young persons in custody under the age of 21. To enhance language and computer education, multi-media learning centres have been set up in all institutions for young

inmates. To tie in with the New Senior Secondary curriculum, CSD has been teaching eligible inmates new subjects and preparing them to sit for the concerned examinations. For adult persons in custody who wish to pursue academic studies after work, CSD will provide guidance and advice, and help them enrol in suitable courses as well as applying for relevant financial assistance³.

Gender-specific Rehabilitation for Female Persons in Custody

11. In general, female offenders are often found to have emotional and interpersonal relationship problems that may be related to their experience of being abused. Unless these problems are properly dealt with, female offenders may bring further harm to the community after release, especially to their children and families in the long run. To address problems specific to female offenders and to meet their treatment needs, CSD has set up a specialised psychological treatment unit for female adult persons in custody named “Psychological Gymnasium (PSY GYM) in Lo Wu Correctional Institution in March 2011.

12. The PSY GYM is a personal growth and emotion treatment centre for women. Its services include the provision of in-depth psychological assessment for female persons in custody with moderate to high re-offending risk and with rehabilitative needs. They will then be provided with a range of gender-specific systematic treatment programmes, with a view to helping them develop positive thinking and proper skills for managing emotions and interpersonal relationships.

Development of Risks and Needs Assessment Tools for Sex Offenders

13. To improve the rehabilitation of sex offenders, CSD launched a five-year project on the development of assessment tools for sex offenders in collaboration with the Psychology Department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2010. The project aims at developing a comprehensive set of tools for assessing the re-offending risks and treatment needs of adult and young sex offenders. The assessment tools will serve as a useful reference for local mental health professionals in terms of assisting them to provide recommendations to the Court and statutory review boards on rehabilitation of sex offenders. It will also help improve the overall quality of rehabilitative programmes for sex offenders

³ Financial assistance includes subsidies from the “Prisoners’ Education Trust Fund”, “New Life Foundation”, “Prisoners’ Education Subsidy Fund”, “Care of Rehabilitated Offenders Association Foundation” and the Open University of Hong Kong.

so that necessary arrangements can be made in accordance with their risk level and rehabilitative needs. The project will complete in March 2015.

Community Engagement

14. To a large extent, the effectiveness of rehabilitation work hinges on the degree of community acceptance of rehabilitated persons. Against this background, CSD has been sparing no effort in organising education and publicity campaigns to appeal for community support for them.

15. CSD will continue to work with over 80 NGOs and community organisations to enhance rehabilitative services and support for persons in custody. As some inmates are the breadwinners of their families and their families may face financial difficulties as a result of their imprisonment, CSD collaborated with Yan Chai Hospital to introduce the Yan Chai MY Rehabilitation Foundation in July 2011 to provide financial assistance to the minor children of those persons in CSD's custody.

16. Besides, CSD has made arrangements for young people to attend education talks and forums on offender rehabilitation, and to visit correctional institutions where rehabilitated offenders will share their experience through which young people can gain a positive understanding of them.

Review of Risks and Needs Assessment and Management Protocol for Offenders

17. CSD has been implementing the Risks and Needs Assessment and Management Protocol for Offenders since October 2006. Under the Protocol, the reoffending risks of persons in custody are assessed and identified mainly on the basis of their age at admission, nature of offence, number of convictions, history of drug abuse, level of education and employment status etc. After assessment, matching rehabilitative programmes will be provided for those who are willing to accept the services according to their identified needs in different domains (including family/marital, employment, community integration, social network, drug abuse, personal/emotional, and attitude on delinquency), with a view to helping them re-establish family relationship, improve social skills, enhance job search skills, correct their delinquent thinking, manage their emotion, enhance the understanding of community support and handle their drug abuse habit, etc.

18. At the initial stage of implementation, the targets were mainly young offenders and inmates, and local persons in custody with longer sentences (i.e. two years or above). The Protocol has been extended to adult offenders and local persons in custody with a shorter sentence (i.e. 12 months or above) at a later stage. Up to January 2012 since its implementation, more than 19 600 persons in custody underwent re-offending risks and rehabilitative needs assessments. Among them, some 11 400 persons in custody have taken part in a total of some 22 600 sessions of rehabilitative programmes.

Review

19. The Protocol has been implemented for five years so far. In 2011, CSD conducted a review to compare the recidivism rates within 3 years after discharge among those persons in custody who had received matching rehabilitative programmes under the Protocol and those who had not. Results show that among the young persons discharged from penal institutions in 2007 (the first year of the implementation of the Protocol), 1 862 underwent rehabilitative needs assessments. 1 537 of them had received matching rehabilitative programmes and their overall re-offending rate was 45.9%, while the re-offending rate of the remaining 325 young persons who had not received matching rehabilitative programmes was 60.6%. The findings reveal preliminarily that re-offending is less common among those who have received matching rehabilitative programmes.

20. CSD has also conducted a questionnaire survey among participants who have completed the matching programme by inviting them to give self-assessment of the degree they agree with the various objectives (“1” denotes “do not agree” and “5” denotes “fully agree”). According to the preliminary analysis, the respondents generally agreed that they had a positive change in their attitude towards their family (4.11 on average), had enhanced their job-searching confidence and skills (4.01 on average) and had a marked improvement on their attitude on delinquency (4.29 on average) etc.

21. Since the Protocol has only been implemented for about five years, the coverage of the review is limited to young persons in custody discharged in 2007 and their status within a 3-year timeframe upon release. CSD will continue to take a step-by-step approach to implement and fine-tune the Protocol in the light of actual experience. It will also continue to collect more data for evaluating the Protocol so as to conduct a more comprehensive and in-depth assessment of its effectiveness.

Way Forward

22. CSD will continue to keep its rehabilitative programmes under constant review and actively promote offender rehabilitation across various sectors of the community to appeal for public support for rehabilitated persons, with a view to building a safer and more harmonious society.

**Security Bureau
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