

Case Study #14

SHORT-TERM PRISON PROTOCOLS, SCOTLAND

Short-term prison protocols facilitate short-term prisoners to re-integrate more successfully into the community, providing support prior to and following release.



APPROACH

The Short-Term Prison Protocols have been developed over the last three years following initial discussions with senior Perth & Kinross Council officials and managers at HMP Perth and the Scottish Prison Service. It was then taken on by a multi-agency working group.

The Protocols see short-term prisoners attend 'surgeries' when they are six to eight weeks away from release. Staff from local authority housing departments and Shelter, local authority drug and alcohol teams, health workers, and staff from employment and training agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and Perth College provide help and support to prisoners to ensure they have the best chance possible of getting on with their lives after release.

Help is given to set prisoners up in short-term accommodation, tackle substance abuse and health issues and to get them into jobs or training. Dealing with these factors will divert people away from crime and reduce the risk of people coming back into the prison system, thereby saving money which can be reinvested.



IMPACT

Scotland's Justice Minister launched Short-Term Prison Protocols in Perth in June 2010. The initiative was led by Perth & Kinross Council and has since been replicated in two other local authorities. Early stage evaluations in Perth saw a dramatic drop of emergency, unplanned homeless applications from prisoners leaving custody, namely from 75 during 2008/09 to only 3 in 2010/11. Results are very positive with all prisoners accessing secure accommodation maintaining their tenancies and to date not reoffending.

The protocol was highlighted as an example of good practice at a Prisoners and Housing conference held by Shelter in 2010, as well as an "excellent approach providing advice and preventing homelessness" by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Short-term prisoners do not have the same level of support upon leaving jail as longer-term prisoners, and often find themselves homeless, without a job and with a substance misuse issue.

Sources

Early Years Transformation Horizon scan



Department
for Education

