

EFFECTIVE MEASURES FOR THE TREATMENT OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS AND THEIR REINTEGRATION INTO SOCIETY

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to give an overview of the core treatment programme components provided by the Correctional Services Department (CSD) of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in the correction of young offenders. It is prefaced by a brief definition of a young offender and the spectrum of sentencing options for this particular group of offenders. The discussion then focuses on the major components of the programmes catering for young offenders and the role of the community in rehabilitation work and concludes by offering a glimpse of the way ahead.

II. DEFINITION OF YOUNG OFFENDERS

According to Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child, a “child” means every human being below the age of 18 years. The Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance defines “adult” as a person who has attained the age of 18 years. The legal age of criminal responsibility in Hong Kong is seven years and a “child” is interpreted as a person under the age of 14 years. A “young person” refers to a person of between 14 years and 16 years of age.

The CSD of Hong Kong considers those under the age of 21 years to be young offenders. The Criminal Procedure Ordinance specifies that no court shall sentence a person of or over 16 years and under 21 years of age to imprisonment unless it is of the opinion that no other method of dealing with such person is appropriate. In the management of penal institutions, the Commissioner of Correctional Services has the statutory duty and power to set aside a prison or a portion of a prison to accommodate inmates under 21 years of age. The Prison Rules and the newly enacted Long-term Prison Sentences Review Ordinance require a regular review of sentences of prisoners who are under 21 at the date of conviction. Prisoners under 21 may be required to attend compulsory educational classes. Persons sentenced to imprisonment of three months or more before attaining the age of 21 years and released before attaining the age of 25 years are subject to statutory post-release supervision. Only persons aged not less than 14 and not more 21 years of age may be sentenced to detention in a training centre. Those under 25 years of age may be sent to a detention centre. Accordingly, the term “young offender” is generally adopted to include offenders aged seven to 20. In Hong Kong, the CSD and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) are responsible for providing services for this group, but no person under the age of 14 years shall be placed in the custody of the CSD. Notwithstanding the slight variation in definitions, it is manifestly clear that the legislature intended to provide differential treatment in the correction of young offenders.

III. SENTENCING OPTIONS FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS

The criminal justice system of Hong Kong provides the courts with a wide range of options in dealing with offending youths, each of them operated by the CSD or the SWD under different ordinances. Due to the limited length of this paper, only the programmes under the purview of the CSD will be discussed in the following sections.

A. Pre-sentencing Assessment

For any programme to be effective, whether institution-based or community-based, an essential factor is giving a young offender an appropriate sentence. To determine the appropriateness of a particular programme, or to match the rehabilitative needs of a young offender to a programme, the court obtains and considers information about their circumstances, taking into consideration any data which is relevant to the character of the young offender and his or her physical and mental condition. In the case of the CSD, any young offender who is considered for training in a detention centre, a training centre, or a drug addiction treatment centre must be remanded for a period not exceeding three weeks to undergo assessment.

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In the process of pre-sentencing assessment, an intake officer interviews the young offender and conducts field and home visits before compiling a report on the social history of the young offender. In 2006, a total of 4,633 assessment reports were written for the consideration of the courts. The major criterion for admission to a drug addiction treatment centre is drug dependence at the time of admission. For the detention centre, the young offender must be physically fit to take part in rigorous physical exercises, mentally sound and intellectually able, with no previous experience in a prison or a training centre. Those who, for a variety of reasons, are found to be unsuitable for the detention centre or drug addiction treatment centre, primarily due to their criminal sophistication or physical, mental, or intellectual deficiencies, which require a longer period of comprehensive correctional training, may be considered for admission to a training centre. Though the law stipulates explicitly that no court shall sentence a person under 21 years of age to imprisonment unless it is of the opinion that no other method of dealing with him or her is appropriate, a considerable number are still sentenced to a term of imprisonment because of the gravity and seriousness of their offences.

In other words, the CSD runs an informal system of first receiving the young offenders at the detention centre at the earliest stage of their deviation from the law, their graduation from the training centre, perhaps a diversion to a drug addiction treatment centre due to drug dependence, and eventually prison, mainly in accordance with the advancement of their criminal careers and incorrigibility.

In recognition of the significance of pre-sentencing assessment and the need for a comprehensive enquiry into the most appropriate programme of treatment for convicted young offenders between 14 and 25 years of age, the CSD and the SWD jointly established the Young Offender Assessment Panel in 1987. With the services provided by the Panel, the lower courts of law (magistrates) may first refer a convicted young offender to the Panel for comprehensive assessment before passing sentence. In 2006, the Panel received a total of 194 referrals from magistrates and 82% of its recommendations were accepted.

There are five major correctional programmes catering for the treatment of young offenders, all of which are of institution-based residential modality.

B. Treatment Programmes

1. Sentence-oriented Main Programmes

The CSD is managing a detention centre, rehabilitation centres, training centres, drug addiction treatment centres and prisons, i.e. a spectrum of criminal sanctions and correctional programmes for offenders aged 14 or over, who cannot be otherwise dealt with in the community. Tailor-made sentence-oriented treatment programmes are devised to cater for the different needs of offenders with different backgrounds. They are briefly illustrated below.

(i) Detention Centre

An alternative to imprisonment for male young offenders aged between 14 and 25, who do not have a long string of previous convictions and whose offences are not serious in nature. The rigorous programme provides young offenders with 'short, sharp, shock' treatment emphasizing strict discipline, hard work, physical training and foot-drill. It aims to teach offenders respect for the law, self respect, an awareness of neglected capabilities in legitimate pursuits, and an ability to live with other people in harmony.

(ii) Rehabilitation Centre

This is another alternative to imprisonment for young offenders aged between 14 and 21, particularly those who are not physically fit for the Detention Centre programme. Discipline training in Phase I (2-5 months) is followed by a period of residency in a half-way house setting in Phase II (1-4 months).

(iii) Training Centre

This is an intermediate sanction between imprisonment and the Detention Centre or a Rehabilitation Centre for young offenders aged between 14 and 21. The orderly and structured training programme aims to develop the character of a young offender. It combines with the personal influence of members of staff and education and vocational training to form the basis of the programme. All inmates undergo half-day education classes and half-day vocational training in accordance with their levels of educational attainment and vocational skills. They are also encouraged to take an active part in indoor and outdoor extra-curricular

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activities, for example, Scouting, Guiding, Outward Bound courses, the Hong Kong Award for Young People (the former Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme), etc. Offenders shall be subject to three-year statutory supervision after discharge.

(iv) Drug Addiction Treatment Centre

This is for drug addicts who are convicted of minor criminal offences. The aims of this programme are threefold: detoxification and restoration of physical health; treating the inmate's psychological and emotional dependence on drugs; and preparation for the inmate's reintegration into society.

After admission, every inmate is given symptomatic treatment for drug withdrawal syndrome. The treatment of psychological dependence is effected through the work programme as well as individual and group counselling aimed at improving the inmate's health and courage, cultivating positive work habits, and establishing self confidence and a sense of responsibility. Inmates also attend compulsory remedial educational classes and participate in various recreational activities. A specially designed Relapse Prevention Programme, aided by tailor-made videos, assists inmates in gaining better insight into their drug problems and prepares them psychologically prior to their release.

A progressive system is devised for the above programmes and a Board of Review assesses the progress, attitude, effort and response of each inmate every month. An inmate must have secured suitable employment or a place in a school before he or she is determined by the Board to be released, to be followed by a 12-month statutory aftercare supervision period (except Training Centre supervisees). During the post-release supervision period, the ex-offender can be recalled for a further period of detention if any of the supervision conditions are breached.

(v) Imprisonment

Young offenders, male or female, sentenced to imprisonment are accommodated in institutions purposely set aside for them. These institutions operate a programme based on half-day education classes and half-day vocational training with the term of imprisonment subject to good conduct and industry. Their sentences are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are receiving treatment in their best interests. A supervision order with provision for recall is made against a young prisoner who, before his or her 21st birthday, is sentenced to serve a term of imprisonment of three months or more and is released from prison before his or her 25th birthday.

2. Needs-oriented Supplementary Programmes

Apart from the aforementioned sentence-oriented treatment programmes, the CSD has also developed a variety of needs-oriented supplementary programmes to cope with the unique rehabilitative needs of specified groups of offenders. Some such programmes are explained below.

(i) Substance Abuse Awareness and Recidivism Prevention Programme

This programme aims to encourage offenders with substance abuse problems to receive necessary intervention and to facilitate their reintegration into the community.

(ii) Violence Prevention Programme

The purpose of this programme is to provide violent offenders with comprehensive psychological treatment services to reduce violent reoffending, tailored according to an evidence-based, specialized risk-needs assessment.

(iii) Offending Behaviour Programme for Young Offenders

This course helps young offenders to develop positive attitudes and skills instrumental to rehabilitation.

(iv) Relapse Prevention Course for Inmates Undergoing Drug Addiction Treatment

This programme focuses on improving inmates' efficacy in dealing with problems of substance abuse and minimizing relapse through increasing their motivation to change their drug-taking behaviour, identifying high risk situations relating to drug-taking, and developing skills to deal with these high-risk situations.

(v) Sex Offender Evaluation and Treatment Programme

This programme aims to provide comprehensive and systematic psychological evaluation and treatment services for sex offenders in a therapeutic environment with a view to enhancing their motivation for treatment.

(vi) Educational Programme

This programme is to provide offenders, both young and adult, with opportunities to better themselves through education and to assist them in participating in public examinations.

(vii) Vocational Training

This programme is to assist offenders in acquiring vocational skills which may help them seek gainful employment after discharge and thus start a new healthy life.

IV. FACTORS CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF TREATMENT PROGRAMMES

The various treatment programmes mentioned in the last section have been devised to cope with the different rehabilitative needs of different groups of offenders. How successful these programmes are depends on to what extent they are able to achieve the community expectations or their pre-set aims. In this section, the critical success factors of treatment programmes are to be elaborated, which naturally form the basis or standard of measuring their success. We thereafter take a look at the measures currently used and then try to see if there is any inspiration to be taken from this review.

A. Reoffending Behaviour

The ultimate objective of all treatment programmes is to assist rehabilitated offenders to reintegrate into the community as law-abiding citizens. Leading them not to reoffend is the core critical success factor of treatment programmes. Should this mission not be achieved, the longer the interval between discharge and reoffence, the more successful is the concerned treatment programme.

Certain treatment programmes are tailor-made to help offenders change their offending behaviour and promote their psychological wellbeing, such as those targeting sexual offenders and violent offenders. Whether these rehabilitated offenders recommit crimes of a similar nature determines the effectiveness of these treatment programmes.

B. Other Rehabilitative Needs

Believing that having a healthy lifestyle impacts positively on rehabilitated offenders, the Department has been introducing various educational and vocational training programmes to assist their rehabilitation. Therefore, public examination results and vocational training that helps rehabilitated offenders to seek employment after discharge are ways of measuring the programme's success.

C. Stakeholders' Perspective

Our existence is to satisfy stakeholders' needs or to meet expectations of various parts of the community. If this is true, how our stakeholders, such as the public and even the offenders, assess the success of our treatment programmes seems to be of paramount importance.

D. Current Measures to Ensure the Effectiveness of Treatment Programmes

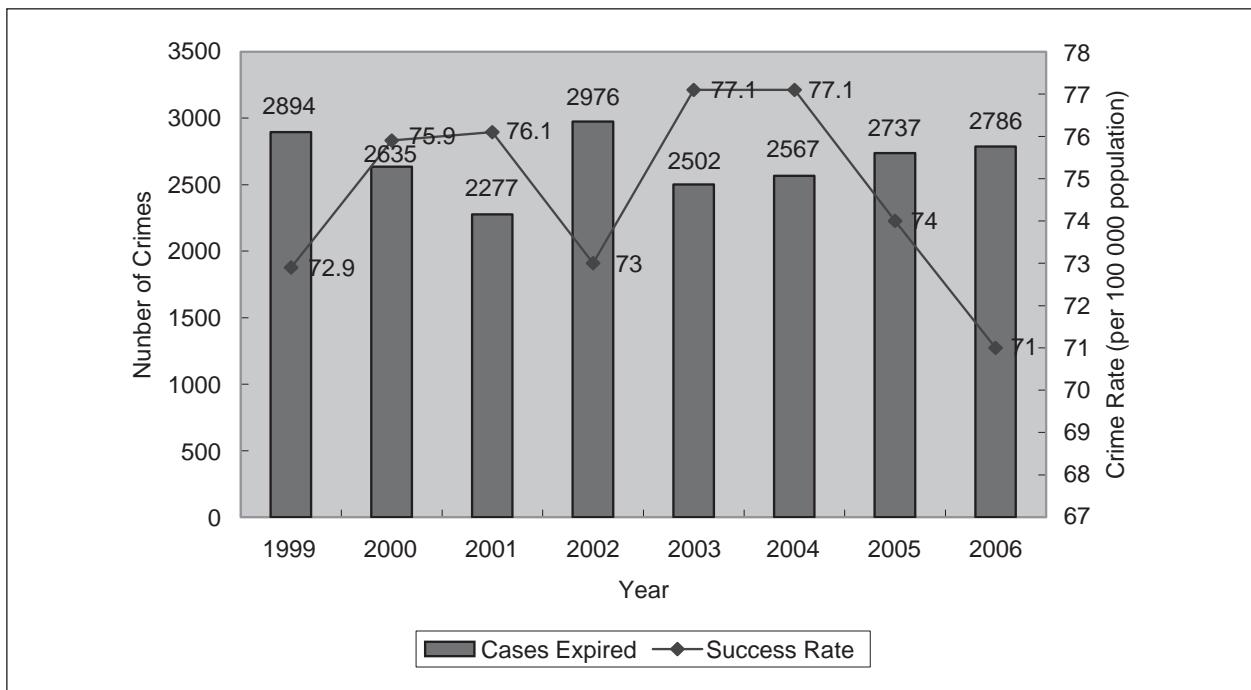
1. Success Rates

Persons released from the detention centre, rehabilitation centres, training centres and drug addiction treatment centres, certain young prisoners, and prisoners released under various supervision schemes, are required to receive statutory supervision from CSD aftercare officers. Such requirement is to ensure continued care and guidance, thus is conducive to their rehabilitation. The success rate of these aftercare services is defined as the percentage of supervisees who have completed the statutory supervision without reconviction of a criminal offence. Drug addiction treatment centre supervisees must also remain drug free. The following figures reflect the success of various treatment programmes.

As shown in Figure 1, a total of 2,786 persons completed statutory supervision in 2006 and the overall success rate was 71%. Success rates for various programmes were 95% for detention centres, 96% for rehabilitation centres, 70.8% for training centres, and 56.3% for drug addiction treatment centres.

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Figure 1: Success Rates



2. Recidivism Rates

The recidivism rate refers to the percentage of readmission within three years of discharge of all local convicts released from CSD custody. Different time spans may sometimes be used to take a look at the time it takes the recidivist to reoffend after discharge. It provides a simple and easy-to-understand figure to summarize the performance of local offenders in leading a law-abiding life after discharge from CSD custody. Apart from providing timely feedback to facilitate CSD programme planning and monitoring, it helps other criminal justice components monitor the recidivism trend so that prompt action can be taken to contain the problem and fight crime, thereby contributing to keeping Hong Kong a safe city.

In order to better reflect the actual reoffending behaviour of rehabilitated offenders, we compare the recidivism rates of different categories such as by gender, age and type of offence. This is to allow administrators to better allocate scarce resources and to identify room for improvement. The recidivism rate in 2005 was 45.1% and in 2006 was 43.3%.

3. Target Achievement of Various Needs-oriented Programmes

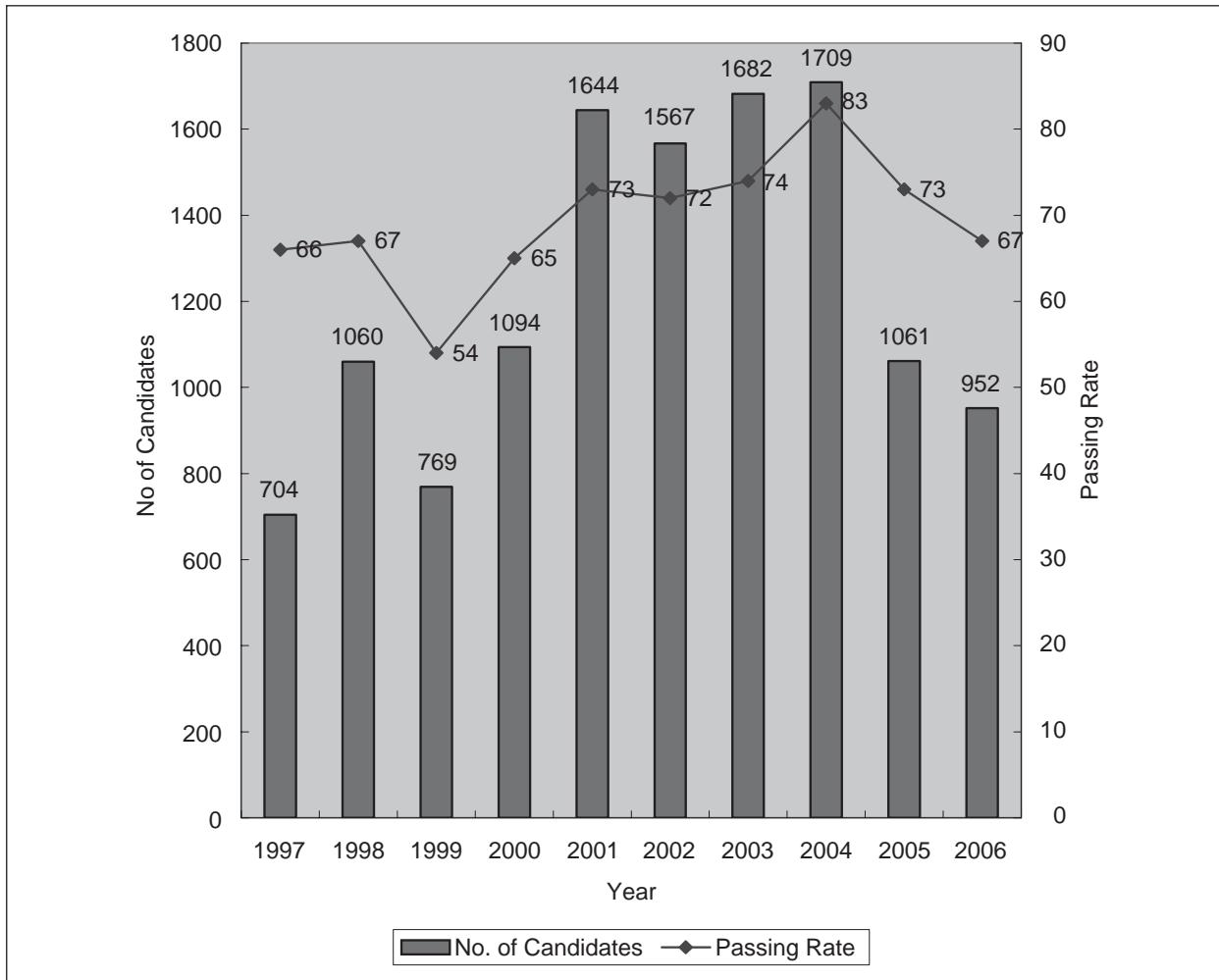
Thus far, this paper has described various needs-oriented treatment programmes devised to achieve different rehabilitative targets. The CSD has developed different measurement tools to check their effectiveness. Basically, for the programmes aiming at changing offending behaviour and promoting offenders' psychological wellbeing, the tools used may be classified into two categories. One is to compare the recidivism rates of those who have attended the treatment programme with those who have not. The other is to check whether rehabilitated offenders re-commit the offences for which they underwent treatment e.g. sex offender treatment. The observations greatly assist in refining our programmes.

4. Education

Education helps offenders improve their academic standards and interpersonal skills, and restores their self-esteem and confidence, i.e. it is good for their future reintegration. The CSD provides half-day compulsory education programmes for young offenders (under 21) and guidance to adult offenders who participate in educational studies on a voluntary basis. They are encouraged to sit external and public examinations such as the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination, the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examinations and other public examinations required by distance learning courses at degree, diploma or certificate level.

Thus, their examination results, shown in Figure 2 below, tell how successful the educational programmes are. In 2006, offenders attempted a total of 952 public examination papers and obtained an overall passing rate of 67%.

Figure 2: External and Public Examination



5. Vocational Training

Young offenders (under 21) receive compulsory half-day vocational training in industrial or commercial skills to facilitate their smooth reintegration into the community after discharge. Vocational training is also extended to adult offenders on a voluntary basis. A wide variety of courses keeping pace with developments in the community are conducted to prepare offenders to obtain accredited qualifications by taking the City & Guilds International or the Pitman Qualifications Examinations.

Apart from the examination results, whether rehabilitated offenders may apply the skills acquired through vocational training to obtain job opportunities in the same field reflects, at least to a certain extent, the success of the vocational training programmes. Such data are therefore maintained.

6. Inspiration

It is vital to listen to stakeholders in order to address the problems we face. Although we have constant contact with the public and have been listening to their expectations of correctional work, a more in-depth or scientific approach, i.e. survey, may help us understand the community more and inspire us to further develop our stakeholder-oriented treatment programmes. If we can accommodate possible unpredictable outcomes and unfavourable comments, conducting public surveys to understand community expectations of us and the public assessment of our performance is useful.

The Department has also collaborated with the School of Continuing and Professional Education of the

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City University of Hong Kong in embarking on a new project entitled "Continuing Education for Offenders" with the intent to stimulate participants' interest in pursuing further studies. A further two programmes, comprising a reading programme to promote reading culture and a mentor scheme providing learning support to individual offenders, will be launched soon.

The family, as an important agent for change and a powerful protective factor for offender rehabilitation, is well-recognized by the CSD, especially in the treatment of young offenders. An Inmate-Parent Centre opened in 1999, and with the launch of the Inmate-Parent Programme in the same year, demonstrates the scope of family work in an educational as well as interactional format. The programme aims at facilitating the reintegration of young inmates into their families by enhancing communication between them and their parents.

Besides video seminars on communication and parenting with complementary VCD, other measures are also implemented. Some examples are using posters and reminder cards; talks on enhancing children's self-efficacy; emotional handling and understanding children's substance abuse; and reducing inmates' risks of reoffending by strengthening their parents' capability in supervising their children. Familiarization visits are arranged for family members to acquaint themselves with the institutional training programme. The *Never Again Programme* aims to cultivate a rehabilitative relationship between inmates and their families through the work of group dynamics. Birthday gatherings for young inmates are held in correctional institutions with the inmates' immediate family members.

For the convenience of aged, pregnant or physically disabled family visitors, a video visit system was introduced in 2001. This video conferencing equipment links centres in the city with a number of institutions in remote areas.

V. FOSTERING REINTEGRATION

A. Staged Release to the Community

According to existing legislation, all young offenders, drug addicts, those who have committed offences related to violence, sex or triad activities and been sentenced to two to six years in jail, as well as prisoners whose term of imprisonment exceeds six years, are required to be put under CSD supervision for a period of several months to a few years after release, during which time the Department will provide supervision services for them. In preparation for effective supervision, rehabilitation officers on supervision duties strive to foster a trustful relationship with inmates as well as their families and significant others during the period of detention. They also provide inmates with appropriate support and guidance to adapt to the institutional programme, and to become aware of their inadequacies and the difficulties ahead. Through regular contact and visits, prisoners discharged under supervision are assisted in leading law-abiding and decent lives.

The *Halfway House Programme* of the CSD is an extension of the rehabilitative efforts carried out within the penal institutions. Following release, supervisees in need of a period of transitional adjustment reside in a halfway house from which they go out to work or school during daytime and to which they return at night. The programme seeks to cultivate a sense of self-discipline and positive work habits within a structured and supportive environment.

B. Removing Hurdles

A gainfully employed ex-offender is much less likely to commit crimes. However, some prospective employers may harbour misunderstandings about rehabilitated offenders and their lives during incarceration. To overcome such obstacles, in 2001, 2003 and 2004, the CSD organized, in conjunction with the Centre for Criminology of the University of Hong Kong, three symposia on employment for rehabilitated offenders. Through experience-sharing by rehabilitated offenders and their employers, we have been able to cultivate a deeper understanding of rehabilitated offenders in employers of various trades and appeal to them to provide equal job opportunities for rehabilitated offenders.

In addition to a number of employers contacting the CSD after the symposia to make enquiries about the employment of rehabilitated offenders, some enthusiastic organizations in the private sector have promoted the "One Company, One Rehabilitated Offender" campaign since 2004 in three local districts, whereby job placements are made feasible for some rehabilitated offenders. This worthwhile campaign will be extended

to all 18 districts in the territory. As of 30 June 2006, we have a database of some 300 employers who have offered to rehabilitated offenders more than 600 job vacancies in 100 different trades resulting in 300 rehabilitated offenders having been successfully employed.

Being the major employer in the territory, the Hong Kong Government has established guidelines in taking the lead in employing rehabilitated offenders so long as this is not inconsistent with the public interest. The question on criminal convictions in the application form for government posts was deleted in 2003 and all applicants are subject to the same set of open and fair selection procedures. Candidates are selected based on their ability, potential and performance, as well as the qualifications, experience and level of integrity required for the post under recruitment.

As regards legislation, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Ordinance (Chapter 297, the Laws of Hong Kong) provides for the conditions under which a conviction will be spent. Such conditions include situations where:

- a) the person was not sentenced to imprisonment exceeding three months or to a fine exceeding HK \$10,000 in respect of a conviction in Hong Kong;
- b) he or she has not been convicted in Hong Kong previously; and
- c) a period of three years has elapsed and he or she has not been convicted in Hong Kong of a further offence.

The term "spent conviction" means the following:

- a) the conviction is not admissible as evidence in any proceedings save for the exceptions set out in sections 3 and 4 of the Ordinance;
- b) there is no obligation to disclose that previous conviction if asked; and
- c) failure to disclose that conviction cannot be a ground for dismissing or excluding the person from any office or employment.

It is considered that the above approach, encompassing both public education and legislation, strikes a proper balance between helping rehabilitated offenders return to the community and protecting the public interest.

C. Preparing the Community

A survey covering some 1,600 discharged offenders and serving prisoners was conducted in 2000 by the CSD to heighten public awareness of the problems and needs of rehabilitated offenders and to facilitate effective planning and delivery of rehabilitative services. The survey revealed that the most immediate problems at the initial stage of their release were securing employment, improving family relationships, seeking financial assistance and looking for a dwelling place. Measures and initiatives that have been put forward to address these needs include:

- conducting suitable training to assist offenders in securing employment after release and soliciting employers to offer fair job opportunities to them;
- organizing more structured activities for offenders and their families to rebuild their relationships;
- establishing a telephone hotline manned by social workers to provide timely guidance and crisis intervention services for discharged offenders;
- providing information on non-government organizations (NGOs) and trust funds which discharged offenders with pressing financial needs can approach for short-term cash assistance;
- identifying those offenders in need of longer-term aid and referring them to the Social Welfare Department (SWD) for support under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance scheme;
- providing financial assistance to discharged offenders to pursue education programmes and employment-related courses.

While the CSD is committed to providing the best possible opportunity for all offenders to make a new start in life upon release, the efforts made by the government and the offenders themselves are not adequate. The potential for success largely depends on how ready the community is to help and support them. Common misconceptions about offenders and, to a certain extent, the prison regimes, are mainly due to lack of information and public education. This not only creates obstacles to the smooth reintegration of

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rehabilitated offenders but also leads to wastage of resources devoted to the rehabilitation of offenders.

Recognizing that community acceptance and support are essential to the successful reintegration of rehabilitated offenders, we set up the Committee on Community Support for Rehabilitated Offenders in late 1999, comprising community leaders, employers, education workers, professionals, and representatives of NGOs and government departments to advise on rehabilitation programmes and reintegration and publicity strategies. On the advice of the Committee, a series of publicity and public education activities have been organized to help the community better understand the needs and problems of rehabilitated offenders and to appeal for their support. These include community involvement activities jointly held with various District Fight Crime Committees, special TV and radio programmes, roving exhibitions, uploading the well-received and prize-winning TV docu-drama on rehabilitated offenders "The Road Back" to the CSD website for public viewing, the appointment of local celebrities and public figures as Rehabilitation Ambassadors, etc.

To assess the effectiveness of the publicity strategies, we carried out opinion polls in 2002 and 2004. The findings were encouraging, revealing that 59.5% of the respondents in 2004 agreed that publicity activities could enhance their understanding of rehabilitated offenders, and that 91.9% considered it worthwhile for the Government to continue to conduct publicity activities to appeal for community support for rehabilitated offenders. In 2002, the percentages were 43% and 83.6% respectively.

A new initiative to enhance public understanding and support of our work is the Hong Kong Correctional Services Museum. Opened in late November 2002, the museum serves to preserve and showcase the history of the Department and the evolution of local corrections from a closed system that focused on punishment to the present one that emphasizes rehabilitation and community partnership. The museum helps lift the veil on correctional work, dispel the misconceptions held by the public about prisons, enhance the Department's public image and serve as an interactive platform for our staff to share with visitors their experience in helping prisoners start afresh and the difficulties they encounter in their daily work. Up to April 2007, over 370,000 people had visited the museum.

The Department values partnership with community organizations and continues to receive support, both financial and in kind, from them to take forward projects for the benefit of offenders and rehabilitated offenders. These organizations include the Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs, Zonta Clubs, Yan Oi Tong, Lok Sin Tong Benevolent Society, Pok Oi Hospital, Yuen Yuen Institute, Care of Rehabilitated Offenders Association, International CICA Association of Esthetics and Tung Sin Tan.

To further encourage the involvement of the general public in our rehabilitation work, we formed the CSD Rehabilitation Volunteer Group in 2004 to conduct interest groups on languages, computers and other cultural pursuits for offenders in various correctional institutions and on occasion, to assist in publicity campaigns to promote the message of acceptance of rehabilitated offenders. The Group now consists of more than 180 volunteers who are mostly university students and serving teachers, and has conducted some 270 classes and served over 3,000 inmates.

D. Continuity and Inter-Agency Collaboration

Community participation in various aspects of the correctional and rehabilitative process builds a bridge between the community and the offenders. As a result, community attitudes towards offenders begin changing and supportive connections are formed that are more conducive to an offender's re-entry to society. At present, there are more than 60 religious bodies and non-government social services agencies working with us in providing services to help prisoners reintegrate into the community. These organizations, through the employment of social workers, peer counsellors and volunteers, render counselling, employment and accommodation assistance, and recreational and religious services for persons under our custody as well as rehabilitated offenders. Also, the Continuing Care Project implemented in early 2004 engages seven NGOs to follow up on supervisees who, after completing the statutory supervision, are still found to be in need of, and are willing to receive, counselling services.

With a view to strengthening co-operation amongst NGOs and providing all NGO partners with an opportunity to exchange views on matters relating to rehabilitation services, forums with NGO representatives have been held in the past. Besides, a web-based messaging platform has been set up to provide users with an interactive site to post up topics for open discussion.

E. Outreach Approach for Juvenile Crime Prevention

Apart from detaining offenders in a decent and safe environment, the CSD also strives to provide comprehensive rehabilitative services and programmes to offenders with the long-term objectives of protecting the public and reducing crime. In line with the Department's outreaching strategy to support the District Fight Crime Campaign, the CSD has undertaken a number of public education initiatives for youth over the years. The purposes of these initiatives are two-fold, namely to help prevent juvenile delinquency through better understanding of the harmful effects and untoward consequences of committing crimes, and to promote youth support for offender rehabilitation through encounters with rehabilitated offenders who have determined to turn over a new leaf in life. Some such initiatives are outlined below.

1. Personal Encounter with Prisoners Scheme (PEPS)

The CSD has been running PEPS since 1993, with a view to generating attitudinal and behavioural changes among youth at risk. Under this Scheme, participants will visit one of the designated correctional institutions, and have face-to-face discussions with reformed prisoners. The objective is to prompt the participants to think about the consequences of committing crimes. At the same time, the participating prisoners can develop a positive self-image and build up confidence through the experience sharing sessions. In 2006, 207 visits were arranged for a total of 3,399 young people and students under PEPS.

2. Green Haven Scheme (GHS)

The Department started the Scheme in January 2001 to promote anti-drug messages and the importance of environmental protection among young people. Under the Scheme, participants will visit the mini drug museum at the Drug Addiction Treatment Centre on Hei Ling Chau and meet with young inmates there to learn about the harmful effects of drug abuse. They will also take part in a tree planting ceremony to pledge support for rehabilitated offenders and environmental protection, and as a vow to stay away from drugs. In 2006, 33 visits were arranged for 904 participants under GHS.

3. "Options in Life" Student Forum

To demonstrate the willingness of rehabilitated offenders to contribute to society, the CSD organized a series of student forums in all 18 districts from late 2003 to late 2005 to provide opportunities for secondary school students to interact with rehabilitated offenders, and to discuss with them the detrimental consequences of committing crimes. A total of 20 student forums have been organized with 3,300 participants. In line with the CSD's community involvement strategy, arrangements have been made for similar forums to be run by 12 non-government organizations (NGOs) since 2006. The CSD provides the necessary support and guidance to the NGOs.

VI. CONCLUSION

Societies are now focusing on how best to reintegrate offenders into society and to reduce their chances of reoffending, for the good of society and the offenders themselves. The young offender rehabilitation programmes of Hong Kong Correctional Services Department aim to help young offenders develop socially acceptable behaviour and improve their interpersonal skills; strengthen their confidence and abilities to cope with stress and difficulties arising from their reintegration into society; and enhance their potential for productive and decent employment. As responsible correctional administrators, we exercise care in putting the right proportion of discipline, sanction and constraints together with rights, privileges, and measures which facilitate the young offender to change for the better, while at the same time providing for him or her protection and security, and securing a way to re-enter mainstream society. The CSD will endeavour to become a pioneer in meeting society's expectations, fulfilling our mission in the correction of offenders, and rehabilitating them as law-abiding citizens.

It is most encouraging to see that an increasing number of community organizations and the general public share the view that the community as a whole would benefit from the successful transition of rehabilitated offenders, and many have expressed interest in rendering support to them after learning of their needs and rehabilitation efforts through our publicity activities. Notwithstanding this, the CSD will continue to focus efforts on cultivating the desired corporate culture in order to match our VMV statements, empowering prisoners and rehabilitated offenders to face the challenges of reintegration into the community and enlisting community support in the rehabilitation of young offenders.