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## July 13 Update

### **STREAMLINING THE PAROLE PROCESS TOGETHER (END TO END REVIEW PROGRAMME)**

#### **Introduction**

Dear Colleague

The Public Protection Casework Section (PPCS) in the NOMS Offender Management and Public Protection Group and the Parole Board (PB) have established a programme of work entitled ***Streamlining the Parole Process Together***, which is taking an end to end review of the Generic Parole Process (GPP). The aim is to improve current practices, avoid duplication of effort and remove needless steps or processes that are preventing the most effective and efficient delivery of parole reviews.

This work is vital in terms of ensuring the most efficient, robust and fair process is maintained, against reduced resources and rising caseloads. It has been overseen by the multi-disciplinary GPP Monitoring Board, which reviews the progress and delivery of the outcomes.

This letter is to update and inform you of developments so far.

**Russell A'Court**  
PPCS

**Martha Blom-Cooper**  
Parole Board

## The initiatives

Seventeen initiatives were identified last autumn, ranging from specific targeted improvements through to more global changes, linking in with the Transforming Justice Agenda, and in particular the work related to transforming rehabilitation of offenders. Eleven of these initiatives are directly aimed at the parole review end to end process.

The first of these was implemented in January of this year, which saw the transfer of the witness booking function for oral hearings from NOMS to the Parole Board. Other work streams, such as tightening the GPP timetable, improving NOMS case management throughout the GPP, streamlining the Parole Board Direction making process, including opening it up to the use of video conferencing, and improving compliance rates for Directions, are all being progressed over the next few months.

## Consultation with Partners

In developing the thinking behind these initiatives, PPCS and the Parole Board are consulting with a wide range of stakeholders. Having varied and multi-disciplinary input into the development will allow us to capture all views and comments and enable us to make informed decisions on any changes to the process that will lead to improvement in effectiveness and efficiency:

- In January the Parole Board held a stakeholder event which was attended by over 60 stakeholder representatives from all partners involved in the parole process, together with representatives from victims' groups, Prisoner groups, other UK Parole Boards and a number of special interest groups.
- The Parole Board issued a short survey to NOMS agencies, legal representatives, and others to identify good attributes of case management, areas of change and improvements to processes, and asking for suggestions on other ways to improve the service and

case management, and in particular to reduce deferrals.

- In May, the Parole Board consulted its membership on similar themes at two workshops which were attended by approximately 180 members.
- In June and July, PPCS and the Parole Board arranged regional Parole Practitioner Forums, which are currently underway and will engage over 400 frontline staff, all of whom are involved in the parole process.
- The GPP Monitoring Board includes representatives from Ministry of Justice Sentencing Policy and Transforming Rehabilitation Units and this ensures that the initiatives can take account of emerging thinking and plans for the future, particularly in relation to the Probation Service.

## The Prisoner

In January this year, the Parole Board launched its first ever offender survey to capture the understanding and experiences of offenders who have been through a parole review. The survey was developed as an "easy read form" and approximately 6000 copies were distributed to prisons throughout England and Wales. The survey was publicised via *Inside Time* and over 1150 responses were received.

The results indicate that on average 80% of offenders feel ready for their review, are represented by a solicitor, read their dossier, understand their dossier and understand the final decision letter. Whilst this is positive it does mean that on average 20% of offenders are without a solicitor, do not read and understand their dossier and do not understand the final letter. As a consequence of this, the Parole Board is now looking at how it can help those offenders who struggle with their parole review, and in particular how to make its decision letters easier to understand. There are some concerns with access to legal representation and the Parole Board raised these concerns in its response to the government consultation on Transforming Legal Aid. The findings of

the survey will be reported fully in the August edition of *Inside Time*.

### What has been delivered already

NOMS started delivering electronic dossiers to the Parole Board, using pagination software, 12 months ago. Not only is this a much more efficient way of developing the dossier, it is a secure way of transmitting sensitive personal data (not only about the offender but about staff working with the offender and the offender's victims).

As mentioned earlier in this letter, the transfer of the witness booking process from NOMS to the Parole Board took place in January and the principle benefit was to reduce the chain of communication so that the PB (who schedule oral hearings) talk directly to the relevant witnesses, rather than via prison staff. The overwhelming feedback is that following initial teething problems, the new process is an improvement and welcomed by all partners in the process. There is now improved recording functionality on PPUD to store witness contact details and unavailability for up to a year ahead.

The Parole Board has produced a simple "Parole Journey" guide. The guide sets out in seven stages the key aspects of the parole process and identifies the key players at each stage. It is not a comprehensive technical document, as these are already in existence, but instead aims to provide an easy reference tool to remind each of us who else is involved and how important it is that we all play our part at the right time, in order effectively to manage parole reviews. The document can be downloaded from the website:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/parole-board>

### Next steps

The key themes from all of the above events and activities will be brought together into the End to End Review work. As you can imagine there has been a huge variety of suggestions for improvements and changes already and some have already been considered and implemented. We will continue to consult over the

summer and analyse feedback through the various work streams.

The timeframe is to have all research and information gathering concluded by the end of August so that proposals can be developed during September. A consultation will then take place with a final proposal going to the GPP Monitoring Board in December. It is expected that any changes to the parole process will be implemented from 1 April 2014.

The Parole Board will be publishing information and updates onto the website so please do check it out now and again:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/parole-board>

Should you wish to be involved or offer comments and suggestion please send them to: [parolehelpdesk@noms.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:parolehelpdesk@noms.gsi.gov.uk) and [info@paroleboard.gov.uk](mailto:info@paroleboard.gov.uk)