



Sentence Planning

December 2012

The new Prison Service Instruction on Sentence Planning, **PSI 41/2012** is for all prisoners who have a sentence plan.

It is especially for:

- people on an IPP sentence or
- people on the new Extended Determinate Sentence (EDS)
- people who have a learning disability.

Sentence plans describe the activities that someone should complete while in prison and on licence. They aim to:

- reduce the risk of reoffending and serious harm
- support resettlement.

They focus on **risk**, especially for people who are on an IPP or the new Extended Determinate Sentence (EDS).

The PSI explains that prisoners should be encouraged to engage with the sentence plan and be involved in setting targets.

In addition, sentence plans must be realistic. They should not just be a list of interventions and offender behaviour courses.

As well as containing activities that relate to risk they should consider the needs of the prisoner.

These could be:

- individual factors - like drug dependency or poor problem solving skills
- social factors - such as housing, employment, strengthening relationships and building community ties.

The PSI also explains that the activities on the sentence plan should be achievable. This means that an intervention should not be in the plan if a prisoner has been assessed as unsuitable for it.

If an intervention cannot realistically be delivered before the end of the sentence, then other options must be considered. In situations where interventions are not available or not suitable, then alternative activities that meet the needs of the prisoner and target the risk should be found.

The PSI says that education, employment and housing are likely to be essential parts of most prisoners' sentence plans.

When the Parole Board considers releasing someone, they will look at whether:

- the prisoner can show a change in behaviour, thinking and attitudes
- there a clear plan to manage any risk.

Offending Behaviour Programmes

The PSI explains that not all prisoners will be suitable for, or need to do offending behaviour programmes. Offending behaviour programmes are considered more suitable for medium and higher risk prisoners. Low risk prisoners will benefit from services relating to rehabilitation which might be provided by the prison or an outside agency.

Many offending behaviour programmes are not suitable for people with poor literacy or a low IQ level. There are a few adapted programmes available for sex offenders and an adapted thinking skills programme is being piloted. However, these are not available in most prisons. If adapted programmes are not available, the sentence plan should take an individual approach. This could be one to one work. If English is not a prisoner's first language, then it may be possible to deliver work through an interpreter.

Reviewing the sentence plan

Sentence plans should be reviewed whenever there is a change of circumstances. The PSI makes it clear that interventions can be removed from the sentence plan if they are no longer appropriate.

There have been a number of successful court cases taken against NOMS by prisoners that could not make progress in prison. These have highlighted the difficulties that IPP prisoners and people with a learning disability are experiencing. It is important that people in prison are able to make progress in their sentence.

This new policy provides clearer guidance for prison staff and prisoners about sentence planning. It encourages a much more individual approach. This engages with the prisoner and focuses on more effective resettlement activities as well as risk.