

UnitingCare West Outreach Services and The Good Lives Model of Offender Rehabilitation

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Reintegration Puzzle conference, Perth, September 1st 2009



Outreach Services

- UnitingCare West is a not-for-profit community services organisation committed to achieving justice, hope and opportunity for all, and works to support and empower in particular those most in need in the WA community.
- It is responsible for the delivery of a specialist re-entry service for sex offenders and men serving life and indeterminate sentences in metropolitan prisons in Western Australia.
- This paper describes the aims of the service and its ongoing work in developing a rationale for the service that is underpinned by the Good Lives Model (GLM) of offender rehabilitation.

Outreach Services

Funded by the Department of Corrective Services to:

- Provide support to men in prison who are serving life or indeterminate sentences and sex offenders.
- Assist prisoners in preparing for release and provide transitional support.
- To provide post-release support to access essential services and accommodation.

History

- Outreach Services has been operating for over 27 years, originally through the initiatives of an ex-prisoner in Wilga, a small town north of Boyup Brook, but from 1990 in the metropolitan area of Perth.
- Until recently the service was run on a volunteer basis. The Project Manager and program co-ordinator for most of this time was Keith Lerner who was largely responsible for the development of the current service delivery model.

Where it all began – Wilga 1982



Maintenance Challenges







The back yard



Wilga timber mill

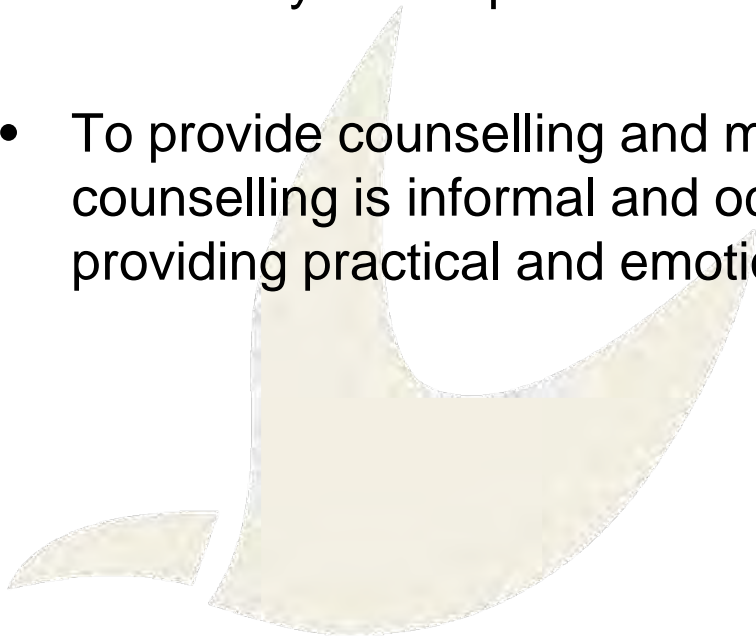


Rush hour



Goals of the Service

- To provide both emotional and practical support to prisoners.
- To provide accommodation for prisoners released from prison for a period of 3-6 months after exit, and assist them where necessary to find permanent accommodation.
- To provide counselling and mediation for prisoners. This counselling is informal and occurs naturally in the course of providing practical and emotional support.



Model of Practice

Outreach Services is based on the premise that:

- **ex-prisoners are largely responsible for their own futures.**
- **many of the problems that ex-prisoners experience when released into the community are best addressed through the provision of practical, social and, at times, emotional support.**

Staff who deliver the service, both paid and voluntary, are strongly committed to working in a non-judgemental way with their clients, using methods which can be characterised as based on **'compassionate listening'**.

Service Model

(1)

- Outreach Services offer support to its clients by spending significant amounts of time with each person both prior to release from prison and in the first months following release into the community.
- Contact is initially made in prison at the client's request, and then support is offered through regular fortnightly meetings in prison with Outreach Services volunteers and support staff. Outreach Services are also able to sponsor home leaves from prison prior to release.

Service Model

(2)

- The main post-release service offered is in the form of supported accommodation. UnitingCare West owns a small number of properties which it is able to lease to ex-prisoners for a short-term period (ideally up to six months, although longer leases are possible).
- Areas of post-release support include assistance with transport, financial counselling, finding permanent accommodation, employment, education and training, and general support in establishing community networks and re-establishing family relationships where appropriate.

Service Model

(3)

- Approximately 50 men are associated with Outreach Services, although this number was until relatively recently much higher, around 80.
- Half of current clients are still in prison, 7 are in UnitingCare West supported accommodation, and 12 are living independently in the community. All are, or have been, long term prisoners serving over 3 years in prison.
- Clients include those who are Governor's Pleasure (indeterminate sentence prisoners whose release is determined by the Attorney General), and those who are subject to the Dangerous Sexual Offenders legislation (which requires them to be monitored by the police on an ongoing basis).

Recent Changes

Need to balance the needs of the funding body, Dept of Corrective Service (**risk management and community safety**) and the agency philosophy and experience in working successfully with this group (**client centred**).

Small service, working with client group considered to be dangerous who present with a high level of need and attract significant community concern.

Increased demands (more referrals, small staff group, including volunteers, more difficult tasks – e.g., substance use).

-> **Discussions about further developing the Outreach model of service delivery**

Two Different Ways of Working with Offenders

The 'active recipient' model

the offender receives services that are decided by others, sometimes determined by some form of structured assessment of their likely risk and needs.

The 'active participant' model

involves the offender playing a much more active role in the decision-making process, giving him or her a higher level of control over any assessment of needs, including those that potentially increase the risk of re-offending, and how that information might be used to inform re-entry plans and services (Taxman, Young, & Byrne, 2004).



Recipient Models

- Promote community confidence that **something is being done** to manage the risk of further offending occurring (e.g., a release plan is articulated which specifies exactly what is required of each individual if they are to be considered safe enough to be allowed to live in the community).

BUT

- Possibly (and unintentionally) undermines the efforts of offenders in taking responsibility for their own behaviour, at worst fostering feelings of dependency, powerlessness, and of being coerced and punished. Are deficit focussed.
- May undermine the chances of offenders being able to live independently and successfully in the community after release.



Participant Models

- Needs are defined by the individual. Services offered are **personally relevant and meaningful**. Service providers are experienced as offering support.

BUT

- Offenders may be unable to or reluctant to address areas which are related to risk.
- Responsibilities to the community in relation to monitoring and reporting risk (breaches of trust).



Working with 'Dangerous Offenders'

The introduction of dangerous offender legislation around the world (including Western Australia) places restriction on offenders, not on the basis of offences they have committed in the past, but of **those that they *might* commit in the future** (Vess, in press).

Strongly criticised on both legal and moral grounds (Nash, 2006), but there is a **clear expectation, and even obligation, for those who work with dangerous offenders** to monitor and report risk (i.e., strike a 'proper balance' between public safety and the rights of individual offenders).

Tarasoff v University of California (1976; Calif. S.C.): “a duty to exercise reasonable care to protect the foreseeable victim of that danger” (p.345). This involves notifying the intended victim, the police or indeed “whatever steps are reasonably necessary” (p.340).



Models of Practice

- **No robust evidence base for determining good practice in offender re-integration:**
- Borzycki (2005): 185 different post-release interventions for prisoners in Australia and New Zealand, of which only seven evaluation reports were available and none of which had been published in peer reviewed journals.
- Services have to rely on **assumptions about their purposes, underlying values, and what needs to be changed** in order for such initiatives to be effective.



Good Lives Model (GLM)

- **Focuses on promoting individuals' important personal goals while at the same time reducing and managing their risk for future offending** (Ward & Maruna, 2007).
 - a) it takes seriously offenders' **personal preferences and values**; that is, the things that matter most to them in the world. It draws upon these to motivate individuals to 'live better lives';
 - b) Aims to provide offenders with the **competencies** (internal conditions) and **opportunities** (external conditions) to implement their risk management plans.



GLM and Risk?

- Criminogenic needs (dynamic risk factors) are **internal or external *obstacles* that frustrate and block the acquisition of basic human needs or 'primary goods'**.
- Primary goods are essentially **activities, experiences, or situations that are sought for their own sake and that benefit individuals and increase their sense of fulfilment and happiness.**
- Secondary goods are **the means used to secure the primary goods** and it is here that people often experience problems.
- Attempting to achieve the emotionally close relationships through sex with a child
- Searching for mastery through the domination of another individual.



What are primary goods?

Primary Good	Description
Life	Healthy living and functioning
Knowledge	Understanding the world, self and others
Excellence	In work and play
Agency	Autonomy and self-directedness
Inner peace	Freedom from emotional turmoil
Friendship	Including romantic, intimate and family.
Community	Larger social bonds and networks
Spirituality	Meaning and purpose in life
Happiness and creativity	Satisfaction and experience of novelty and change



Four major types of difficulties

- **Lack of scope** (important primary goods are neglected);
- **Inappropriate means used to secure goods** (counter-productive methods used that result in failure to obtain goods);
- **Conflict evident in a person's life plan** (the pursuit of one good lessens the chances of another being secured);
- **Lack of capacity** (internal capacity such as lack of skills, or external capacity relating to a lack of support, opportunities, etc.).



Implications?

- For Outreach Services clients, holistic services are required. Active recipient and compassionate listening models are both important. Specialist knowledge of the criminal justice system and risk management is also required.
- GLM may help Outreach Services to maintain a client-centred focus and work in ways that are consistent with the philosophy and the values of the agency, but also fulfil its responsibilities towards safely managing this group of offenders who attract so much community concern
- Potentially useful model for use in other offender transitional services.



That's all!

