



Refining Criminal Justice Outcomes: An Evidence-based Programme for Reform

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Background:

- Part 1 of this Briefing Paper series explored the individual and social problems that cause vulnerability to offending
- Part 2 surveyed successful trial, sentencing, and rehab programmes over the last 20 years
- This final part draws the findings together to make a set of 18 recommendations for reform.

Issues:

- Crime is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by an individual's personal, social, and resource challenges
- These are also affected by historical deprivation which lead to discrimination and the experience of institutional barriers to accessing welfare services
- In addition, regional under-development and economic stagnation make poverty generational
- This gives rise to poverty in a multitude of forms which often lead to despair and alienation
- These can be considered “push factors” that lead someone into a life of crime
- The philosophy of punishment, delays in getting cases to court, and a programme “lottery” that determines whether you receive rehabilitation and reintegration services can keep people locked in a life of crime, a sort of “lock factors”.

Findings:

- What would interrupt these “push” and “lock” factors are institutional, administrative, and procedural reforms that would streamline the trial process and provide appropriate services for offenders at the point of need (including for as long as is needed after release)
- Such programmes need to be multidisciplinary and collaborative among relevant government agencies
- They should be culturally meaningful, evidence-based, and holistic
- A general set of principles which characterise this is:
 - Reparation in sentencing
 - Pro-social in rehabilitation
 - Long-term in reintegration.

Moving forward:

Improving court processes

- Increase holistic criminology knowledge among court officers through a series of seminars with a professional accreditation process
- Research and explore more creative sentencing options including supplementing punishment with desistance-oriented programmes, resulting in guidebooks for sentencing agencies
- Better legal representation for dependants by reviewing legal aid and funding for community law centres (Ideally, more and better quality legal representation is required)

- Expand support for vulnerable defendants (such as those with mental health, disability, and literacy issues) through dedicated funding at the legal aid and community law centre levels
- Review prison sentences for an agreed set of offences, particularly where harm does not arise and which could be more effectively addressed with behavioural or resource inputs
- Research the possibility of implementing inquisitorial options in the criminal courts
- Expand funding for research into treatment of serious offending, particularly with respect to violence and sexual harm and including those who are habitual, persistent, or systematic offenders. (This should also include research into the crossovers between psychosis and such offending.)

Refining reintegration programmes

- Develop and implement a casework approach to offender management, including the production of guide books and a training programme
- Bring together relevant stakeholders to produce and review culturally-specific programmes
- Draw together regional- and iwi-specific contribution in programme design and delivery in a national corrections forum
- Develop and implement programmes that address correlational dimensions of crime
- Improve and fund holistic post-sentence programmes
- Improve and fund wraparound services that meet the complex needs of offenders post-sentence
- Foster a culture of rehabilitation and restoration in justice agencies through a programme of training
- Remove programme “lottery” across prisons by expanding rehabilitation services and strengthen oversight of programme delivery.

Community development

- Rapid expansion of victim support services, expansion of funding for research into victimology, and public education campaigns to promote better understandings of victims’ needs and how these should be delivered
- Cross-government strategy to address poverty and economic stagnation at the regional and community levels rather than only at the demographic level (ie. community poverty reduction rather than child poverty reduction). Such a strategy should be coordinated with the Living Standards Framework and policies associated with the Wellbeing Approach to produce a comprehensive policy configuration
- The development of economic proposals to regenerate the regions that have experienced economic stagnation over many decades. Such a proposal document should include options to cross-measure social development indicators and regional investment funding, deepen infrastructure inputs, and expand tax and subsidy incentives for industries (including start-ups) to locate in the regions.

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This paper is available at:

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/article/refining-criminal-justice-outcomes>