



Press Release

For immediate release

11 September 2008

Justice Minister Visits 'Offender Compact' Pilots in Shropshire

Justice Minister David Hanson MP was in Shropshire today to meet with offenders in Shrewsbury Prison and those being supervised on probation by West Mercia Probation Trust who have signed up to new 'Offender Compacts' being piloted in the area.

Under the scheme, offenders enter into an agreement with the prisons and the probation service. This sets out what is required of them and demands that they behave well and take responsibility. Any advantages they receive in prison or the community must be earned through commitment, hard work and delivery against the aims of their individual Sentence Plans.

A new 'End of Custody Report', linked to the Compact, is also being piloted for those serving prison sentences of less than 12 months. These recognise positive behaviour and engagement in constructive activity, and can be presented to employers on release to help offenders get back into work.

Shrewsbury prison and West Mercia Probation Trust were amongst those selected to run pilot schemes for six months with the aim of rolling the scheme out across all prisons and probation areas next year.

Justice Minister David Hanson MP said:

"These compacts require offenders to behave well and follow the rules, but to show commitment beyond that. They can be given set objectives and could be asked to give something back to the community.

"Protecting the public is paramount and it is right to punish offenders through prison and community sentences, but we must also reduce the chance that they will reoffend. By providing the sort of opportunities I have seen today, we will allow them to turn away from crime through education and training.

“I want the public to understand and have confidence in the basis on which offenders, especially those in custody, are granted access to certain privileges. These can and will be taken away if behaviour fails to meet certain standards.”

David Chantler, Chief Executive of West Mercia Probation Trust welcomed the new initiative, he said;

“This extends the government’s thinking about matching rights and responsibilities into the area of supervision of offenders. We welcome the clarity and transparency of these compacts. Which leave offenders in no doubt of what is required of them”.

“This is a valuable initiative in improving offender’s compliance with their orders and thereby avoiding a return to court and eventually custody. It is a ‘win-win’ situation”.

The Compact will be referred to throughout the offender’s period of custody or supervision either to emphasise the need for improvements in behaviour, or to acknowledge personal achievement during the sentence. If the rules of the Compact are at any time broken, offenders could face the possibility of penalties or being taken off their programme of training.

ENDS

Editors Notes:

1. The Minister will visit West Mercia Probation Trust, Telford Office at 13.30pm to meet staff and see offenders carrying out training in literacy and work skills as part of their Offender Community Compact. You will have the opportunity to speak to the Minister, talk to offenders and staff.
2. Media are asked to arrive at 13.30pm at Telford Probation Trust.
3. Please contact Suzanne Colley in the Ministry of Justice Press Office for further information on 0203 334 3524.

Local contact – Karen Simmonds 07974 169254