

No offence while in prison

-the Swedish model "Victim protection service"
and staff training in victim awareness

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The Swedish model

- The "Victim protection service" was introduced as a development project for men convicted of domestic violence and sexual offense at the prison of Johannesberg and Skogome in 2007
- The Swedish Prison and Probation Service (PPS) noticed that many women wanted to continue to have contact with the offender despite the fact that they have been victims of serious crimes. The PPS had no methods to deal with the victim's safety, therefore the "Victim protection service" was developed
- "The Victim protection service" has expanded and is available at nine prisons, for offenders convicted of domestic violence or sexual offense

- In short, the “Victim protection service” is a way for offenders and victims to have a safe meeting at the prison
- The difference between a “normal” guarded visit and a visit in “Victim protection service” is that correctional staff take an active role in the visit and lead the conversation that focuses on the crime

Aim

- The aim of the “Victim protection service” is to increase the safety of identified victims and reduce the risk of recidivism of offenders
- The offender shall, through the work with “Victim protection service”, find new ways to interact with their family/victims and take responsibility for his crime
- Prevent manipulation of and mental stress on victims
- Be a place for constructive and respectful meetings

Target group

- The target group for “Victim protection service” can also include children, parents and other relatives who have experienced and / or witnessed abuse
- Even “potential victims” should be taken into account. These can, for example, be new partners and stepchildren of a man previously convicted of domestic violence and/or sexual violence

Professionals included in "Victim protection service"

- Prison officers with special training
- Psychologist
- Prison officers working with the treatment programmes; *IDAP* (Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme) or *ROS* (program for sexual offenders)

Tasks

Those working with “Victim protection service” have five key focuses;

- Identify offenders relevant for “Victim protection service”
- Investigate the circumstances to approve contact between offender and victim (phone and visits)
- Cooperate with external actors (for example social services or NGO:s)
- Participate in visits
- Follow up

Before visit in "Victim protection service"

- The victim's desire to visit and maintain relationship with the offender.
- The offender's attitude and ability to take responsibility for the crime and motivation to change
- Visits in "Victim protection service" is a gradual process to allow victims and offenders to have contact without participation of the PPS in the room, if we consider that it is safe for the victim.

Important principles during a visit in the “Victim protection service”

- Two people from the PPS must always take part in the visit
- Victim and offender should never be left alone in the visiting room
- The time frame for the meeting will be decided and clarified before the meeting
- No decisions will be made in the visiting room during the ongoing visit

A visit in the "Victim protection service"

- Encourage the victim to assume an active role
- Working with the violence in focus, avoid denial
- Give the victim the opportunity to describe feelings towards the offender and the crime
- Talk about healthy and unhealthy relationships – power and control

Why is the "Victim protection service" a successful model?

- A structured way and awareness of how the Swedish PPS can protect victims and take responsibility during the time in prison
- A way to help the offender to understand their criminal behaviour and work with change, for example participate in treatment programs
- **The relationship between the victim and the offender is not a private matter. It is the PPS's duty to take responsibility for the offender's development as well as protection of the victim during the time in prison. The "Victim protection service" is a good example on how it could be done.**

Why staff training

- The "Victim protection service" requires competent staff
- "Private matter"?
- Lack of knowledge about the criminal behavior
- Risk of repeated victimisation
- Work environment – being able to cope with what one experiences

Learning outcomes

IDENTIFY

- Knowledge of the criminal behavior
- Knowledge of victimisation
- Knowledge about the relationship between victim and offender

ACT

- Develop skills to intervene when facing criminal behavior
- How to protect victim and how to treat victims professionally
- How to support respectful relationships

General and specialized training

- Victim awareness in basic training for all staff
- Specialized training for officers working in "Victim protection service"
- Focus on child victims, violence in a close relationship, sexual violence, gender-based violence, hate crime

Learning activities

- Lectures
- Film, documentary to make the interaction between offender and victim visible
- E-learning
- Mentors in Violence Prevention

”My life my lesson”

- 1 in 10 children in Sweden grow up seeing, hearing or knowing of violence occurring within their family. Research shows that this can be just as traumatic as being directly abused. That is 1 in 10 children who don't feel safe in their own home or with their parents
- In “My life my lesson” we meet 17-year old Felicia and her siblings trying to cope with everyday life amidst their fathers abuse of their mother. It is a film about the relationship between the child and the offender