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The Experiences of the Managed: case management in the Aotearoa New Zealand prison system

Abstract

In 2011, the Department of Corrections/Ara Poutama Aotearoa (Corrections) began a series of initiatives aimed at reducing reoffending, including introducing case management. In 2016 Corrections stated that case management had led to improvements in four areas: the assessment of prisoner needs; prisoner motivation to complete activities; scheduling of programmes; and levels of reintegration support. Using in-depth qualitative interviews of seven men formerly in prison in Aotearoa New Zealand, this study explores the perceptions that the formerly imprisoned have of case management, and examines the four improvements identified by Corrections. While based on a small and unique sample group, the study provides interesting indicative insights into case management in the prisons of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Keywords case management, prisoner management, prisons, prisoner rehabilitation, sentence planning

The introduction of case management to Aotearoa New Zealand's prisons in 2011 was part of a broader move to an offender-centric correctional philosophy, with a specific focus on end-to-end management of people in prison throughout their sentence (Ryan and Jones, 2016; State Services Commission, Treasury and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2012; Thorby, 2013).¹ Case management, broadly, is a complex interpersonal relationship between a person in prison and the professionals responsible for their care (White and Graham, 2010), comprising a range of roles, including sentence planning, course scheduling, managing disciplinary issues, supporting engagement with therapeutic and educational programmes, and assisting the individual with transition from prison to the community on release (Thorby, 2013). This shift in approach from sentence planning – arguably an early model of case management – was well informed by international research and best practice models (for instance, see Godley et al., 2000; Leutwyler, Hubbard and Zahnd, 2017; Porporino and Robert, 1982; Sullivan, McDonald and Thomson, 2016).

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This study examines the statements of Corrections that the introduction of case management has led to improvements in the assessment of prisoner needs, prisoner motivation to complete activities, scheduling of programmes, and levels of reintegration support (see Ryan and Jones, 2016).

Overview of case management in prison settings

There is a general lack of coherence in the literature regarding what case management means in prison settings (Partridge, 2004; White and Graham, 2010). Some argue that 'case management should be viewed as the hub of offender rehabilitation' (Purvis, Ward and Willis, 2011, p.5), while others view the role as an intermediary between interventions such as educational and therapeutic programmes (Maguire and Raynor, 2017). White and Graham (2010) argue that case management refers to the complex relationship between a person in prison and the professionals responsible for their care, with the aim of reducing reoffending. As noted above, other literature similarly suggests that the role of prison case management involves risk assessment, sentence planning, managing disciplinary issues, engaging the individual with relevant therapeutic, educational and vocational support, and assisting them in the transition from prison to the community on release (Thorby, 2013). Overall, best practice suggests that the case management relationship is not just about scheduling courses and sentence planning; it is a complex interpersonal relationship that can affect motivation to change and recidivism (Maguire and Raynor, 2017).

Case managers usually come from a range of backgrounds (White and Graham, 2010), and are expected to have various competencies, including empathy and motivational skills (Maguire and Raynor, 2017). The skill level of the case manager matters to case management's success: research has found that individuals who are managed by more highly skilled staff are less likely to be reconvicted (Dowden and Andrews, 2004). Dowden and Andrews' meta-analysis of 273 studies of correctional practice analysed the importance of five dimensions of practice: effective use of authority; appropriate modelling and

reinforcement; problem solving; effective use of community resources; and the quality of interpersonal relationships. They found that the latter four dimensions of practice are all positively associated with significant reductions in reoffending rates. Research also shows that case managers should be of the view that people in prison have the capacity for change (Smith and Schweitzer, 2012). Seeing and engaging with the individual as a person is of key importance and contributes to the quality of the relationship; it seems that case management relationships require personal connection to have impact (Davies, 2006).

Robinson (2005) argues that case management, despite its name, is a human process, not a management process. If done well, it can be a therapeutic relationship

release. A holistic approach should be undertaken by the case manager, paying attention to mental health needs, attitudes, housing needs and employment opportunities (Maguire and Raynor, 2017).

Clearly, best practice case management is an intensive process, which requires adequate funding to work optimally. High prison populations and stretched resources make achieving effective case management difficult.

Emergence of case management in Aotearoa New Zealand's prisons

Sentence planning, rehabilitation programmes and cultural responsiveness
Despite the issues faced, there is an evidence base supporting the overall efficacy of case management (Sullivan, McDonald

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that benefits the individual immensely (Dowden and Andrews, 2004). Purvis, Ward and Willis (2011) studied case management in Australian prisons and found that there is a tendency to underestimate the impact that a strong case management relationship can have. One of the most important factors in this relationship is trust. The development of trusting personal relationships between case managers and people in prison is a notoriously difficult undertaking, but is possible (Sullivan, McDonald and Thomson, 2016).

Ideally, people in prison need a consistent relationship with one case manager and interactions should happen face to face (Maguire and Raynor, 2017). Prisons can tend to operate on a 'pass-the-parcel' system, where the person is passed between case managers (Robinson, 2005). Case management should ideally be a continuous process, starting early in the person's sentence and continuing after

and Thomson, 2016), and thus it was introduced in Aotearoa New Zealand's prisons in 2011. Case managers replaced the role of sentence planners when the new system was introduced. In the previous system, sentence planners would meet with people upon entering prison and conduct a living needs assessment and a reintegrative needs assessment, and assess whether they were deemed at high risk of reoffending by way of a pre-disposing criminogenic needs assessment. The sentence planner would then use the information gathered to create 'a tailor-made programme that aims to upskill the inmate and halt the cycle of offending', which was reviewed on a six-monthly basis (Department of Corrections, 2004, p.10). In the new system, part of the case manager's role has involved taking over the scheduling and planning of rehabilitative programmes. Case managers now lead the rehabilitation of people in prison, and are present in every prison nationwide (Symonds and

Beales, 2014). They exist within a multi-disciplinary collaborative approach, which includes clinical psychologists, kaumātua, prospective employers, prison officers, and the whānau and friends of the person in prison, as well as the individual themselves (Thorby, 2013).

The role of the case manager is to develop an offender plan² in collaboration with the person sentenced or remanded in custody, and to provide them with support and advice (Community Law, 2015; Ryan and Jones, 2016). Case managers are supposed to act as agents of change, motivating people to find alternative ways of coping and behaving to meet their needs. They can achieve this in various ways, including motivational interviewing and

In regard to the scheduling of programmes on the offender plan, case managers are responsible for sending offender plans to schedulers, who place people onto waiting lists for programmes. One challenge to the successful completion of programmes is that people in prison may perceive them as a ‘tick-the-box’ exercise, taking part primarily to increase their chances of getting parole. In 2013 it was found that Corrections was facing challenges in the efficient scheduling of programmes (Office of the Auditor-General, 2013). In 2016, the Office of the Auditor-General completed a follow-up report which found that Corrections was still in need of further improvements to scheduling programmes and that it lacked

women with Māori services, and supporting them to engage in tikanga Māori programmes which helped them to build a sense of agency and positive self-identity. The study also found that the participants benefited from a case management approach that was collaborative between staff and the individual receiving case management, in order that they feel valued and listened to. For this to be a success, the relationship needed to be based in a mutual trust enabled by adequate contact time, and staff needed to be cognisant of the unique needs of women in prison. Overall, Bevan identified five key principles for working with women: recognising difference; practising collaborative planning; designing rehabilitation pathways that work for women; and supporting staff to work with women.

As in all research on criminal justice in Aotearoa New Zealand, there are unique implications for Māori. Around half of the prison population identifies as Māori, while Māori make up only 15% of the total population (Gluckman, 2018; Sullivan, McDonald and Thomson, 2016). Case management approaches that are ‘one-size-fits-all’ are ineffective for Māori populations, and planning needs to be tailored to the specific cultural needs of the individual.

The Office of the Auditor-General (2013) found that people leaving prison appreciated having their case manager, prison officer and probation officer working collectively to support reintegration.

modelling prosocial behaviours. Importantly, case managers must make an assessment of readiness for change, and target interventions appropriately (Thorby, 2013).

While prison programmes are arguably important, the reality is that they are not especially effective. In Aotearoa New Zealand, overall effect sizes in regard to expected rates of reimprisonment of all rehabilitative intervention programmes inside prisons lie between a modest 3% and 8% (Johnston, 2017). The Special Treatment Unit Rehabilitation Programme (STURP) targets high-risk violent males and is considered successful by Corrections, despite Corrections’ own data showing that it only reduces reoffending by between 4% and 13% (ibid.). This leaves case managers in a position of scheduling people for programmes which may not be very effective in reducing reoffending, but may well have other, less tangible, positive impacts.

scheduling software. In 2021, the chair of the New Zealand Parole Board, Sir Ron Young, and the chief ombudsman, Peter Boshier, also raised serious concerns about the scheduling of programmes too late in people’s sentences (Cook, 2021; Whitten, 2021).

There is scant literature on prison case management in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, Corrections has investigated the use of case management for women in prison (Bevan, 2017). Bevan investigated the views and experiences of 35 women in prison, ten case managers and 13 Corrections officers. They found that working in a culturally sensitive way is a vital element of case management. Sometimes, this looked like the case manager simply asking Māori women where they were from and building a relationship based on conversations about places that were sacred and grounding to them. It also included connecting Māori

Reintegration

The transitional period when a person is released from prison and begins to reintegrate into the community is crucial to successful rehabilitation (Smith and Schweitzer, 2012). For the majority of people being released from prison, this is a high-risk period for reoffence and reimprisonment (Huebner and Berg, 2011). This transitional period is usually where things fall apart, due to inadequate connections between case management services inside prisons and external services (Maguire and Raynor, 2017). These issues are exacerbated by the reality that case managers are preoccupied with getting the person through their sentence, as opposed to preparing them to cope with the realities of life after prison (ibid.).

To manage these concerns, researchers have found that reintegration should be a part of case management; case management should not abruptly end on release

(Ricciardelli, 2018; Taxman, 2004). Reintegration should be incorporated into sentence planning, in order to give people the best chance of successful resettlement in their communities (Pasma et al., 2023).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, case managers are responsible for supporting people in prison to transition into the community. The best approaches to this tend to use a collaborative inter-agency perspective (Sullivan, McDonald and Thomson, 2016), partnering with community groups, non-governmental organisations, iwi and state agencies. The Office of the Auditor-General (2013) found that people leaving prison appreciated having their case manager, prison officer and probation officer working collectively to support reintegration. In 2016 it was found that the system remained in need of further collaboration and alignment between agencies to improve reintegration efficacy (Office of the Auditor-General, 2016). Maguire and Raynor (2017) argue that a handover model, which sees the person handed from case manager to probation officer or other service, is not ideal because it disrupts the case management relationship. Instead, they argue that maintaining continuity should be paramount and that a case manager should remain engaged post-release.

Four improvement areas identified by Corrections

The Department of Corrections has stated that the introduction of case management has led to improvements in four areas:

- the assessment of prisoner needs;
- prisoner motivation to complete activities;
- scheduling of programmes; and
- levels of reintegration support (see Ryan and Jones, 2016).

This study examined these four areas of stated improvements, alongside overall perceptions and experiences of case management in Aotearoa New Zealand's prisons.

Methodology

The research topic was developed in 2021 in conjunction with the Salisbury Street Foundation, whose staff identified that case management was in need of

investigation through their day-to-day engagement with their residents and their extensive experience working with people released from prison. It was through the Foundation that the sample of participants was found. The Foundation is a residential therapeutic community centre for men on parole, located in Christchurch. It is a charitable trust that has existed since 1979, and supports formerly imprisoned men to reintegrate into the community (Hough, 2003).

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the University of Canterbury's Human Research Ethics Committee in October 2021. Prior to formally interviewing participants, the interviewer attended an

were male adults aged between 18 and 48 at the time of entering prison for their most recent sentence, sometime between 1996 and 2015. Four identified as Māori, one as European Māori, one as Cook Island Māori and one as Pākehā. Their time served inside prison on their most recent sentence varied from between six and a half years to 25 years. All were released in 2021. Two participants had indeterminate sentences of life imprisonment and preventive detention respectively.³ All of the participants had committed serious violent and/or sexual crimes, such is the demographic of the Foundation's residents.

The data was analysed manually

Any changes to case management should address the lack of timely access to rehabilitation programmes simultaneously. Otherwise, changing case management is likely to be ineffective.

informal dinner at the Foundation, to get used to the environment and allow potential participants to become more comfortable with her being in their space. The interviewer then ran an information meeting in November 2021 to introduce the research topic and answer any general questions potential participants had. At this meeting, information sheets and consent forms were distributed, and in the following days participants interested in taking part in the research informed a liaison person at the Foundation, who arranged interview times. Due to a combination of time pressure and a relatively small overall pool of potential participants (around 20 men live at the Foundation at any given time), seven participants were recruited. They were interviewed during November and December 2021.

Data was collected through qualitative in-depth audio-recorded interviewing of between 25 minutes and an hour for each participant. All of the seven participants

through the use of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of working with qualitative data in order to identify, analyse and then report on patterns (themes) (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Patterns were identified by reading and rereading of the interview transcripts. They were then coded and organised manually.

All participants were released directly from Christchurch Men's Prison to the Salisbury Street Foundation on parole. The participants had been imprisoned at various other locations during their sentences.

Results

The results are discussed below in five sections. First is an overview of the participants' experience of case management. This is followed by four sections which address the four areas of improvement identified by Corrections: the assessment of prisoner needs; prisoner

motivation to complete activities; the scheduling of programmes; and the level of reintegration support.

Overview of the experience of case management for participants

Participants' perceptions of case management changed across their sentences. Overall, participants viewed case management positively by the end of their sentence. This generally seemed to be because of the increased time spent with their case manager, which was compelled by preparation for Parole Board hearings as they came closer to their parole eligibility dates. However, this positive experience was not present throughout the duration of sentences, with participants reporting having mixed views at the start of their sentence.

While it is not known if there was no case manager assigned during this time, clearly the relationship was scant enough that the participant could not recall it. Another participant had an irregular experience, seeing his case manager on an as-needed basis throughout, which worked well for him. Again, the length of time spent with a case manager per meeting during the intermediate part of each participant's sentence varied, between five to ten minutes and an hour, with three participants seeing their case manager for about half an hour at a time.

All but one participant expressed a positive view of the last period of case management on release, when they were engaging with their case manager more regularly. It appears from these participants'

case management led to improvements in the assessment of prisoner needs (Ryan and Jones, 2016). The insights from this study indicate that these participants were pleased with the assessment of their educational needs, but they felt that their cultural needs were not well provided for. For this demographic, it appears that further improvements are needed in the way that case managers handle early engagement with people entering prison who may not be ready to engage with comprehensive assessment at the start of their sentences, as is the current process.

Participants were asked about their experiences with comprehensive assessment interviews. This interview occurs once someone has been sentenced (Department of Corrections, n.d.-a), and is the first engagement they have with their case manager inside prison that is directly aimed at assessing their needs. Two participants did not remember having an interview, while the remaining five did. Corrections notes that the interview is supposed to be a process that is done *with* the individual, not *for* them. For those participants who did remember having an interview, they did not feel part of the process. On the whole, participants reported feeling that they were told what their plan would be, that it was already written and that what they had to say about it was not relevant.

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Two of the participants reported not being assigned a case manager until between a year and four years into their sentence. Another two participants said they saw their case manager less than once a month, and another two reported seeing their case manager one or two times a year. The final participant reported that his experience could not be put down to a specific frequency. Those who did see a case manager in the first year or so of being in prison reported varied input in terms of time, ranging from between five to ten minutes to an hour or more per meeting.

As participants settled into the middle of their sentences, their case management experience also became more settled. Participants reported seeing case managers more frequently, between one to two times a year, and three to four times a year. One participant, who had a case manager for the first part of his sentence, reported that he had no case manager for around three years during the middle of his sentence.

experiences that Corrections may have been weighting the intensity of case management towards the end of their sentences. This may seem logical, given that people need support when they go to Parole Board hearings and approach release. However, participants expressed that they needed intensive case management at other times also. This reflects other literature, which emphasises the importance of continually building a quality relationship (Davies, 2006; Purvis, Ward and Willis, 2011; Sullivan, McDonald and Thomson, 2016). Overwhelmingly, participants also reported waiting until alarmingly close to their parole eligibility dates to be put onto programmes, with some waiting years. This issue has been raised recently by the chief ombudsman and the chair of the New Zealand Parole Board (Cook, 2021; Whitten, 2021).

Examining Corrections' statement one: the assessment of prisoner needs

As noted above, Corrections has stated that

Oh yep the Offender Plan, the assessment would take place. However I didn't understand fuck all of it ... he [the case manager] was trying to explain it the best way he could to me as well ... but reality is ... I didn't even succeed at school and now we're doing that ...

Some participants spoke of not feeling ready to address their criminogenic needs at the time of their interview. Participants expressed that they were still processing their sentencing, the nature of their offending, and the impact this all had on their lives, their victim or victims, and their

wider whānau and community. Some participants found it difficult to adjust to being in prison and did not feel that they were in the right headspace yet to engage with sentence planning. Participants expressed a sense that case managers were part of a system that was against them, not for them, and this added to their lack of engagement. One participant found his interview more difficult because he could not culturally engage with his case manager, and they struggled to communicate due to language differences.

Participants were also asked about how their cultural needs were assessed and met by their case manager. On the whole, the participants felt that assessment of and responsiveness to their cultural needs was lacking. Some felt that the assessment of cultural needs was not catered for by case management. This was complicated by issues outside the case manager's control, such as particular cultural programmes and resources not being available at all prisons. This seemed particularly prevalent in South Island prisons, with participants reporting being told they would need to transfer to a North Island prison to access cultural programmes. This would mean giving up visits with whānau, which they were understandably not prepared to do:

I wanted to develop the Cook Island side of me ... They [the case manager] said 'yeah you can, but you have to go to Auckland to do it'. I said 'fuck off man, the rest of my family are right here.' ... I didn't get that. I didn't get that cultural help.

In comparison to the difficult experiences participants had in regards to their cultural needs, it appeared that their educational needs were generally well assessed and met by their case managers. Participants reported successfully completing NCEA qualifications, tertiary courses and apprenticeships.

The residents of the foundation are men who have been convicted of serious violent and/or sexual offences, with generally high needs. As a result, the participants all have complex personal backgrounds and criminal histories, and are likely to be in need of more intensive support than other people released from

prison. Some participants perceived that their case managers did not adequately understand or respond to their needs. Case management is only one facet of an intricate system, and cannot be expected to resolve the wide array of issues presented by individuals in prison deemed at high risk.

The insights indicate that these participants, perhaps because of their complex needs and long sentences, may not have been ready to engage in assessment of their needs at the start of their sentences. There is a need for case managers to be aware of each person's readiness to engage and the reasons behind any lack of engagement, and to reassess this as they progress through their sentence. The

individuals with long histories of antisocial behaviour. One participant reported that, for him, it was less about motivation and more about the risk of losing his prison job if he did not complete activities. Having a job in prison provided him with a sense of stability that he did not want to lose:

Um not so much motivate, told you this is what you have to do and you either accepted that or you didn't ... I've always had a job in prison and so they held that job over your head. If you didn't do the programme, you'll lose your job.

However, participants appreciated receiving positive feedback and affirmation

On the whole, case managers were seen as instrumental in participants getting into the programmes they needed in order to achieve rehabilitation and to get approved for parole.

insights here also indicate that there may be room for improvement in the assessment of cultural needs, and that case managers could be hamstrung by the limited availability of cultural programmes.

Examining Corrections' statement two:

prisoner motivation to complete activities Participants were interviewed about the impact their case manager had on their level of motivation to complete activities on their offender plan. The insights gathered indicate that there may be room for improvement in terms of the impact case managers have on prisoner motivation to complete activities.

Most participants expressed unclear or negative feelings as to whether their case manager motivated them to complete activities, such as rehabilitative programmes. It should be noted that developing motivation can be a difficult task, and particularly so when it comes to

from their case managers. It appears that simple verbal acknowledgements of one's attempts at making change were impactful. Verbal validation from case managers has the potential to be a strong factor in a prisoner's level of motivation. International literature supports the use of positive affirmation in motivating change (Smith and Schweitzer, 2012).

The insights indicate that there may be room for improvement in regards to motivating people in prison to complete activities on their plan. However, it should be made clear that these participants may be more difficult to motivate than other individuals in prison, and that these findings may not be generalisable in that sense. Most participants were either dubious or did not feel that their case manager motivated them. This small and unique participant group may well be more difficult to motivate than others, given their relatively complex needs. They may also

have higher levels of distrust of the prison system in general, which could affect their drive to complete activities. However, it appears that simple things, such as affirmation and praise, may be a good place for case managers to start.

Examining Corrections' statement three: the scheduling of programmes

The case management process involves identifying programmes and courses that meet a person's rehabilitative and reintegrative needs. Those programmes and courses are then scheduled for people

Parole Board hearing, even though he would not have been eligible to be paroled without finishing the programme.

The findings of this study echo the criticisms of others. As noted above, the issue of major delays in accessing programmes was openly criticised in 2021 by the chair of the New Zealand Parole Board, Ron Young, in a letter to the corrections minister (Cook, 2021). He said that issues with resourcing meant that people were waiting years for rehabilitation programmes, which was having a flow-on effect of delaying their release because they

International research has found that although it is commonplace for timing of access to programmes to lean towards the end of a person's sentence (based on the idea that the skills learnt will be used upon release), there may be disadvantages in this approach. Clarke, Simmonds and Wydall's UK study of 62 people in prison, 33 correctional staff and five people formerly in prison found that this model acted to disadvantage motivated individuals who were not at or near parole eligibility dates, and they recommended that access to courses begin at mid-sentence, in order that people get time to learn skills and then practice them prior to release (Clarke, Simmonds and Wydall, 2004). A more recent study of 18,940 people (Papp, Wooldredge and Pompeco, 2021) found that, for several programmes, more time between completing a programme and being released corresponded with a lesser likelihood of returning to prison.

Having programmes scheduled so late in a person's sentence appeared to have an impact not only on parole and rehabilitation, but also on individual behaviour during the sentence and their ability to engage effectively in programmes once they eventually came around. One participant showed considerable insight into how the delay in accessing programmes contributed to a lack of progress, and in fact worsened his behaviour:

If you're trying to change someone ... my opinion is change it from the beginning. Don't wait ... By the time I became eligible for these programmes it was too late. I'd clocked up charges ... I didn't have tools to deal with what I, what I accumulated over the years was embedded in me. I had no tools ... I couldn't comprehend what the programme was trying to teach me.

As noted, these insights reflect the recent criticisms levelled at Corrections by Boshier and Young, and they indicate that there may be an issue within the system in the resourcing of programmes. Some participants found themselves waiting years to access rehabilitation programmes, and for participants in prison with complex needs, this created issues in their

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to complete during their sentences. This section explores the participants' experiences of the scheduling of programmes, and the impact it had on their time in prison and their rehabilitative process. The indicative findings are that the scheduling of programmes was an issue for these participants.

On the whole, case managers were seen as instrumental in participants getting into the programmes they needed in order to achieve rehabilitation and to get approved for parole. Participants felt that their long sentences meant that they were not put onto rehabilitation courses until they were close to their parole eligibility dates, or the end of their sentence. This could mean waiting years before starting any programmes. For instance, one participant reported waiting eight years until he got into his first rehabilitative programme. He reported that his start date for another programme was scheduled for after his

could not get parole without showing they had addressed their offending. Also in 2021, the chief ombudsman, Peter Boshier, mirrored Young's concerns in the media and said that people were getting access to programmes too late in their sentences to create meaningful impact, and that this issue had worsened due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Whitten, 2021). In 2023 the ombudsman released a report commenting on repeated findings of his own investigations, and those of former ombudsmen, which noted the lack of meaningful activities for people in prison, including inadequate access to rehabilitation and reintegration programmes (Boshier, 2023). Boshier's report then noted that there had been some improvements in this regard in the last few years (since the time of the interviews for this study), but he considered more changes were needed for people on remand in particular.

rehabilitative progress. However, criticisms of case managers in this regard are unfairly placed, as it seems this is a wider resourcing issue.

Examining Corrections' statement four: the level of reintegration support

Corrections has identified that well-planned reintegration is a crucial part of successfully rehabilitating prisoners and supporting them to live crime-free lives in the long term (Ryan and Jones, 2016). The findings of this study indicate that the current case management process may not be meeting the level of reintegration support that this participant group needs, particularly because case management does not formally extend beyond a person's custodial sentence. For this group of participants, particular focus was placed on their transition to the Salisbury Street Foundation, given that they were all paroled there. Having served long sentences for serious violent and/or sexual crimes, these participants may have more complex reintegration journeys than the average.

Part of the process of reintegration involves organising where someone will live after prison, and for all participants this process led to an increase in contact with their case manager. Case managers provided reintegration support by connecting participants with services in the community. This primarily meant facilitation of the participants' transition to living at the Foundation, but also included engagement with other organisations, such as addiction and cultural services. This is an important part of reintegration: individuals convicted of more serious offences who engage with community services on release are more likely than those who do not to desist from crime (Maguire and Raynor, 2017).

One participant had a very good reintegration experience that he felt was well facilitated by his case manager. This particular case manager was assigned to him for about two years, which he found helpful as he was approaching release. Three participants spoke of going on day or overnight visits to the Foundation prior to being paroled there. This seemed to be a helpful part of the transition. Participants also spoke of how essential it felt that case managers and Foundation staff collaborated during the process.

Some felt that they were primarily being supported to reintegrate by other prison staff. For instance, one participant reported that a Corrections officer took the opportunity of the Covid-19 pandemic (and therefore less management around the prison) to help him start transitioning out to the Foundation by moving him to a self-care unit. For another participant, staff from a programme he was on recommended the Foundation for him. These situations are evidence of multi-disciplinary management of people in

under the management of Corrections for life. Most participants did express a desire to see their case manager outside prison, even if it were just in the form of a final debrief meeting to thank them for the contribution they had made to their lives. One participant suggested that it would be helpful for case managers to come to the regular progress meetings participants have at the Foundation. Another participant on an indeterminate sentence did see his case manager informally when she was visiting the Foundation. He found

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prison, the type of collaborative approach that Corrections actively promotes (Thorby, 2013). There were unique complications for participants who had moved from prisons around the country for the purpose of being paroled to the Foundation from Christchurch Men's Prison. Fragmentation and disconnection between case managers at different prisons made the process feel unnecessarily long and frustrating for some.

None of the participants had any level of formal or planned interaction with their case manager once they left prison. The growing relationship between prisoner and case manager seems to end abruptly at the time of release, and prisoners are left with no sense of conclusion to the relationship. Participants expressed that this felt like a painful and sudden end:

As soon as you walk out those doors, they don't want to know you ...

This abrupt end to the relationship was true even for the two participants on indeterminate sentences, who remain

this to be a healing experience, and that it brought a sense of finality to the warm relationship they shared:

I seen her one day ... and it was really great too because I was on the outside now so we could hug and all that kind of thing.

The reintegrative period, when a person is released from prison and begins to re-enter the community, is a crucial time. This immediate post-release period is when the person released is at high risk of reoffence and reimprisonment (Huebner and Berg, 2011). Findings indicate that people leaving prison may feel that the case management relationship ends abruptly, in a way that could damage their reintegration. For the most part, participants expressed wanting the case management relationship to extend beyond release, mirroring the international literature. This provides an opportunity for Corrections to reimagine where the end of 'end-to-end' case management should be.

Discussion

The introduction of case management in Aotearoa New Zealand's prisons in 2011 was a step forward in the management of people in prison and reflects international best practice. This study explored the perceptions of seven formerly incarcerated men, and presents indicative insights into their experiences of case management.

The findings of the international literature and this study indicate that case managers need to meet people where they are in their readiness to engage. Taking the time to develop a quality, trusting and

similarly found that people do not like discussing their issues with a series of strangers, and that people in prison, like all of us, trust people as opposed to processes (Maguire and Raynor, 2017). The experiences detailed in this study suggest that effective case management is a human relationship, not a process. If done well, case management can be a therapeutic experience that benefits the person in prison immensely (Dowden and Andrews, 2004).

The international literature indicates that an offender-centric approach is the

offender plan may be an effective way to increase their chances at rehabilitation.

When it comes to *not* meeting the needs of people in prison, this may cause people to lose trust in their case manager. For the participants in this study, these gaps were usually outside the control of case managers: for instance, where someone wants to do a Māori focus course that is not available in their prison. The 2019–24 Correction's strategy, *Hōkai Rangī*, expressly commits to delivering greater outcomes for Māori prisoners (Department of Corrections, 2019). Assuming proper implementation, we should see improvements in access to cultural programmes in years to come.

Both case managers and people in prison alike are affected by the availability of not only cultural programmes, but programmes generally. Corrections accepts that 68% of people in prison have not even started any rehabilitative programmes at their first parole eligibility date (Cook, 2021). This means that many individuals are not provided with the opportunity to address their rehabilitative needs in a way that the Parole Board recognises, and can end up in prison for longer than may be necessary. Any changes to case management should address the lack of timely access to rehabilitation programmes simultaneously. Otherwise, changing case management is likely to be ineffective. For people convicted of more serious offending, lack of access to rehabilitative programmes is likely damaging, though the extent of this is unknown. Notwithstanding a lack of resources, open and honest communication from a case manager in such situations may assist in protecting the trust in the relationship.

The level of reintegration support that case managers provide to people going to residential programmes, such as the Salisbury Street Foundation, was satisfactory for this participant group. This may well be different for people who are released back into the community with less intensive post-release support. Nonetheless, the sudden end to the relationship on release is likely damaging; the extent to which this is the case is worth investigating. This abrupt end followed the time when people in this study and their case managers generally had the strongest relationship.

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warm relationship is paramount (Dowden and Andrews, 2004; Maguire and Raynor, 2017; Purvis, Ward and Willis, 2011; Sullivan, McDonald and Thomson, 2016; White and Graham, 2010). Case managers should be aware that not all individuals will be ready to engage in the assessment and sentence planning process straight away. This may be more so for those who have received a long sentence and may be struggling to comprehend their behaviour and the impacts it has had. It appears from this study that the early focus, particularly for people convicted of more serious offences, may be better placed on building the relationship, rather than jumping headfirst into assessments.

Ideally, the case management relationship would be enduring, and Corrections would actively avoid frequent changes in a prisoner's case manager. When changes must be made, carefully transitioning people between case managers may lessen the damage of breaking continuity. International studies

best way of managing people in prison (Maguire and Raynor, 2017). The current thinking in the UK reflects a shift towards collaboration between people in prison and staff, in a way that places the individual at the centre of their rehabilitation. The efficacy of this approach has already been acknowledged by Corrections and is a part of the system (Ryan and Jones, 2016). The indicative insights from these participants suggest that prisoners want to have input into their case management process. For instance, participants expressed that their input was not an integral part of the comprehensive assessment process, which is usually the first interaction between a case manager and the person entering prison. This assessment sets the sentence planning process in place, so is extremely important to the entire sentence. Prisoner buy-in to their sentence plan is important, and one way to get this is by truly including them in the assessment. Further incorporating the perspectives of the prisoner into a genuinely personalised

The international literature affirms that being moved from prison to community organisations in a pass-the-parcel method of case management is less than ideal (Robinson, 2005). There may be opportunities here for Corrections to consider expanding case management beyond release, particularly for those who have served long sentences and may be in need of more extensive reintegrative support. Doing so would also recognise the need for services to be joined-up (Maguire and Raynor, 2017), and for case management to truly be 'end-to-end', as Corrections suggests is best practice (Ryan and Jones, 2016). If Corrections moves forward with a more extended handover process in future, the literature suggests handovers should be done with care and in the form of multiple meetings between the individual, the case manager and the relevant third party (Maguire and Raynor, 2017). This would be an improvement on the current model, which sees people being released 'out the gate' with no further interaction with their case manager.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that case management does not occur within a vacuum; it occurs within a complex system that has limited resources and overlapping, moving parts. However, while the prison system here is complex, it also has inbuilt benefits. Our small population means that we have a smaller-scale correctional system, with fewer prisons, and it operates through only one jurisdiction (Office of the Auditor-General, 2013). This gives Corrections the opportunity to make widespread improvements to case management in a controlled way. Changes could also be tested in one prison, improved, and then rolled out across the remaining prisons in a short period of time. This would give Corrections the opportunity to refine approaches and evaluate changes as they are made.

Limitations and future research areas

First, the sample group was small (seven participants), due to the short time frame in which the research process needed to be conducted (around nine months across 2021 and early 2022) and the relatively small potential participant group. However, there is scholarship supporting the importance of achieving

depth over breadth in research and aiming for saturation of themes over numbers of participants (Baker and Edwards, 2012).

This research focused solely on the experiences of men released from prison, and there may well be differences in the case management of women and gender-diverse groups. The sample group in this study are all individuals with significant criminal histories who have served time for serious violent and/or sexual crimes. Their sentences were all relatively long, and they likely have more complex needs than other

instance, the claims made by some that they were not assigned a case manager for a period of years). Research incorporating the views of case managers, and other Corrections staff, would likely fill in some of the gaps and provide explanation for some of the issues raised.

Conclusion

This study provides some indicative insights from the examination of four areas that Corrections states have improved due to the introduction of case management

Fine-tuning case management is another piece of the complex puzzle of correctional practice that may contribute to reducing reoffending; and, given that, such fine-tuning should not be done in isolation but in concert with other desirable changes.

groups. It should be clearly noted that this is a very unique sample group who have been convicted of very specific types of offences. The findings from this study are not generalisable to the prison population, but instead provide indicative insights and exploration of these participants' experiences of case management.

The length of the sentences served meant the participants sometimes struggled to remember specific details about their experiences and/or the time frames in which they had occurred. In addition, it should be noted that there was a subjective element to reporting and analysing themes, which is often the case in qualitative work as data is interpreted through the researcher's particular lens (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

This research is based only on the experiences of those subject to imprisonment, and did not take into account the views of Corrections staff. There was no way to check the veracity of statements made by the participants (for

to Aotearoa New Zealand's prison system in 2011: the assessment of prisoner needs; prisoner motivation to complete activities; scheduling of programmes; and levels of reintegration support (Ryan and Jones, 2016). While this study is based on a small and unique sample group of seven men who were formerly imprisoned, it provides interesting insights into case management in Aotearoa New Zealand prisons. It indicates that case management is a complex interpersonal relationship occurring within an even more complex correctional system, marred by complicated resourcing issues. In line with international studies, it indicates that case management is not just about managing people, but about relating to them as people and supporting their needs. Case managers are uniquely placed to act as agents of change in that relationship, particularly when the environment around them is adequately resourced. Fine-tuning case management is another piece of the complex puzzle of correctional

practice that may contribute to reducing reoffending; and, given that, such fine-tuning should not be done in isolation but in concert with other desirable changes.

¹ This article is based on a thesis that was completed in March 2022 by Laura Johnstone in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Criminal Justice (Johnstone, 2022). The full thesis can be found at <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/105194>.

² Corrections states that the offender plan 'provides the basis for managing and monitoring an offender's needs' (Department of Corrections, n.d.-a). It does so by identifying suitable programmes

and rehabilitative activities to address the prisoner's criminogenic and wider needs (Office of the Auditor-General, 2013). The plan takes into account factors including offending needs, behavioural issues, education and work goals, health and housing needs, and victim-related concerns (Department of Corrections, n.d.-a).

³ The sentences of life imprisonment and preventive detention are a particular subset of sentencing options and are indeterminate sentences. This means that while these people have a minimum non-parole period in prison and will likely be released at some point, they can be recalled to prison at any time (Department of Corrections, n.d.-b).

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