

Community Return: A Unique Opportunity

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Summary: Community return is a novel and unique incentivised, structured and supervised release programme for prisoners combining unpaid work for the benefit of the community with early release and resettlement support. In its development, no equivalent or similar initiative was identified anywhere in the world and none had been reported in academic reviews or criminal justice literature. This paper describes the development and implementation of the Community Return Programme, the results of a descriptive evaluation of the first twenty-six months of Community Return, discusses key issues arising and looks to the future of the Community Return Programme.

Keywords: imprisonment, sentence management, conditional release, resettlement, re-entry, reparation, supervised release, community service, evaluation, multi-agency working, Prison Service, Probation Service, Ireland.