

CS27: HMP RYE HILL IEP REVIEW

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Context

As part of the Rectification Notice issued to HMP Rye Hill in 2007 for failing to deliver its contractual requirement, the prison was required to conduct a review of its Incentives and Earned Privilege (IEP) scheme.

The IEP is a scheme that aims to encourage prisoners to conform to prison rules and standards of behaviour, and to address the reasons why they committed offences. Positive behaviour is recognised and rewarded by progression upwards through several levels. This can include the opportunity for prisoners to purchase additional items to have in their cells, or additional access to family visits. A pattern of negative behaviour results in moving down the levels, which can mean loss of free association time with other prisoners and the withdrawal of access to certain types of employment.

Reporting on their Inspection of the prison in 2007, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons stated that: *"The incentives scheme, designed to assist staff to manage prisoners by rewarding good behaviour had been subverted. Prisoners who refused to engage with the regime, and many whose behaviour was so bad that they ended up in segregation, were on the enhanced or super-enhanced levels"*.

Prison Dialogue (PD) was engaged to work with a senior manager seconded to HMP Rye Hill to review the IEP policy, processes and practices. It was felt that a different approach including a consultation exercise with both staff and prisoners would increase prison wide knowledge and workings of IEP.

Aims and Objectives

The Prison Director and her SMT were trying to change the interface between staff and prisoners. They wanted a culture that included on-going purposeful engagement, appropriate relationships between staff and prisoners, clear boundaries, a common understanding of values and shared expectations about standards of behaviour. The Director wanted PD to use the review of the IEP scheme to help to develop this new culture at HMP Rye Hill, with staff and prisoners participating in policy formulation. The aim was to increase the

staff's understanding of the IEP process as a management tool, and develop their confidence to implement its sanctions in a more transparent process.

PD welcomed the opportunity to support this cultural change initiative across the whole prison, knowing that the Dialogic approach is well suited to such an initiative, and the contract reinforced the developing relationship between GSL (subsequently G4S) and PD.

Method: Activity, Participants and Duration

PD was keen for this enquiry into the effective use of IEP to be across the whole prison, and to include prisoners, staff and management. The enquiry would inform the design and implementation of the new IEP scheme, and staff and prisoners would easily adjust their behaviour to the new rules because they had been involved in thinking it all through. By starting a Dialogic engagement between staff, prisoners and management, the structure was created for on-going Dialogues between these groupings.

At a full staff meeting The Director announced that a consultation exercise would take place across the whole prison. She said this was an opportunity: *"where all of us, staff and prisoners will have the chance to have our say about what standards of behaviour are required, how we will challenge poor behaviour and how we each of us will step up our responsibilities to the community that is Rye Hill"*.

The enquiry process was designed to provide an opportunity for managers, staff and prisoners to shift their understanding of each other through exchanging their experience. It was also aimed to develop a common understanding of IEP process and what it intended to achieve. PD worked directly with the Unit Managers to run the sessions on their units and every effort was made to ensure that the Unit staff also took part in their session. As the sessions were convened in an open space on the unit, prisoners could see and hear the discussion and decide whether or not they wanted to participate. It was a transparent process with a summary of the views expressed made available to everyone. Since most of sessions were held in open spaces this allowed individuals to listen and participate in the Dialogues even if they did not want to contribute by speaking up themselves. At the close, the data that had been gathered from the sessions was collated and submitted to the Senior Manager completing the review.

In November 2007 16 IEP Review consultation sessions were held across all 8 Residential Units plus 5 in the Industries Workshop, 2 with Prisoners working on Prison Maintenance and one with staff only. Facilitation was provided throughout by two PD facilitators. A total of 141 prisoners signed attendance and an estimated further 60 were on the periphery of discussions. 21 Prison Custody Officers, 12 Managers and 7 Senior Managers took part.

Outcomes

The sessions provided good in-depth information that was used to review the IEP policy and processes. All who participated in the Dialogues across the prison were informed of the outcomes of their discussions, including explanations being provided about why some suggestions were not taken forward. Working extensively across the whole prison, including in more local areas, meant the whole prison was talking and thinking together. There was a 'buzz' about the place and people clearly liked being involved in stimulating and purposeful conversation. The transparent process shifted the dynamics on the Units positively towards Dialogue as a more effective way of communicating between staff and prisoners.

For PD the deliberate extension from working with the Leadership Team to working with the rest of the prison was very constructive. It did help to consolidate the position of PD consultants to GSL, and subsequently G4S.

Learning

Use of dialogue in a consultation process leads to open learning on all sides, and makes an immediate adjustment in behaviour possible. Creating an inclusive 'container' or atmosphere for good Dialogue in various locations for sessions focussed on prison business can have a big impact over a short period of time.