

## **FACILITATION TRAINING FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE STAFF: Creating a local facilitation team for Dorset Threshold Dialogue**

**by Jane Ball and Peter Garrett**

### **Context**

In October 2003, Prison Dialogue began working with staff and prisoners in HMP Dorchester on a whole-system intervention aimed at shaping a decent and effective local prison<sup>1</sup>. Integral to the Prison turnaround plan was engagement with the community in a through-the-gate intervention called Threshold Dialogue, a prison based, community-linked programme to work with offenders and agencies across the 'threshold' (ie the prison gate) prior to and post release<sup>2</sup>.

In 2008 Threshold Dialogue entered a new phase focussed on embedding the programme in local ownership and operation in Bournemouth and Dorset, to enable long term sustainability without Prison Dialogue. The Threshold Dialogue network was increased to include 6 prisons and community sites across the area, to follow the offender journey and fit with local interests. A three-tier structure was established for local inter-agency ownership and operation. Leadership and strategy was established through the statutory Governance Board<sup>3</sup>, local process and practice was managed through the Operations Group and the Facilitation Team was set up and trained to provide sustainable facilitation for all of the Dialogues across the all of the Threshold Dialogue sites.

Funding was provided by the Bournemouth Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership<sup>4</sup> to train the facilitators.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The overall aim of the training was to enable local ownership and local delivery for Threshold Dialogue to sustain the programme. Enough facilitators from the various agencies involved were required to facilitate all of the Dorset Threshold Dialogue sessions (up to 6 a week) in pairs and write up the sessions

for publication. The aims and objectives of the training were for the members of the Facilitation Team to:

1. Understand what Dorset Threshold Dialogue is aiming to do and be able to speak about it clearly and with conviction to others.
2. Know what your role is as a member of the Facilitation Team in realising Threshold Dialogue and understand practically how to play your part.
3. Meet colleagues from other agencies and explore how to work with together as an interdependent Facilitation Team.
4. Be clear about how to conduct yourself and facilitate a Dialogue group in a prison.
5. Learn a facilitation framework for Threshold Dialogue and develop Dialogic group work skills.
6. Learn what is required for record-keeping, feedback and report compilation.

### **Method: Activity, Participants and Duration**

The first Facilitator Training 'Owning the Dialogue' was held at the headquarters of Bournemouth Churches Housing Association in September 2008. There were 11 participants from the Police, Prisons, Bournemouth Borough Council Safer and Stronger Communities Team, CRI - Crime Reduction Initiative (drug treatment services) and BCHA - Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (supported housing provider). It was opened by a Superintendent from Bournemouth Police, who was Chair of the Governance Board, a strong advocate of Threshold Dialogue and the key influential sponsor in this phase.

The Training consisted of a two-day session, a one-day session three months later and a period of practical experience in-between. The content was designed to prepare people to run a Threshold Dialogue session in pairs. It included learning about the role of the facilitator before, during and after the Dialogue, Dialogue Practice Skills (Check-in, Check-out, Dialogic Modes, Dialogic Actions and Dialogic Practices), setting ground rules, co-facilitation and reporting.

The session report was crucial to the skill development of the facilitators because it required them to notice what was happening, to listen in order to be able to quote statements, to understand and report what people were

learning and to name an overall theme. As facilitators learnt how to complete the colourful session reports they understood more about the purpose of the Dialogue sessions and what they were aiming to achieve. These reports were circulated to all the stakeholders. This promoted awareness of the themes and issued raised in the groups.

<b>14<sup>th</sup> Sept 2010</b>	<b>BOURNEMOUTH THRESHOLD DIALOGUE</b>	Where everyone learns but nobody teaches
<b>PRISON DIALOGUE: HMP DORCHESTER</b>	<b>That's Life</b>	
<b>Tuesdays 2 – 3:30pm Chapel</b>	<b>Participants: 23 Offenders, 1 Prison Staff, 1 Police, 1 Magistrate &amp; 1 CJD</b>	
		<b>LEARNINGS</b>
<p>"We are limited as to what jobs we can get with a criminal record because no-one wants to hire you." (Offender)</p>	<p>"You can't get a job while you are on a methadone prescription due to restrictions with operating machinery etc..." (Offender)</p>	<p>"We need to be able to arrange CRB checks to be done prior to them leaving prison so they are employable sooner rather than later." (Prison Staff)</p>
<p>"We have spoken before about a multi agency run hostel which includes police to make a safe environment where users trying to stay clean can be housed without the fear of others waving drugs under their noses but it's all about funding." (Police)</p>		<p>Agencies are doing what they can with the resources available.</p> <p>You have to accept some accountability for your previous misdeeds.</p> <p>Some difficult choices have to be made.</p>
<p>"You have to work with your probation officer. They are responsible for writing your reports so even if you have to grovel, it is in your own best interest." (Magistrate)</p>	<p>"Why can't they legalise heroin for us real addicts. It would cut down so much crime." (Offender)</p>	<p>"I know they have been trialling the treatment of addicts in approximately 4 towns in the country by issuing certain extreme chaotic addicts with heroin (under medical supervision) when all other methods have failed. The trial is called R.I.O.T." (Police)</p>
<p><small>B'Mouth Threshold Dialogue brings Bournemouth offenders together in open conversation with the agencies responsible for their supervision and support. Dialogues are themed on the issues affecting re-offending. The process starts in custody and continues post-release in the community, emphasising support, challenge, responsibility and early intervention. Threshold Dialogue is supported by B'mouth Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership.</small></p>		

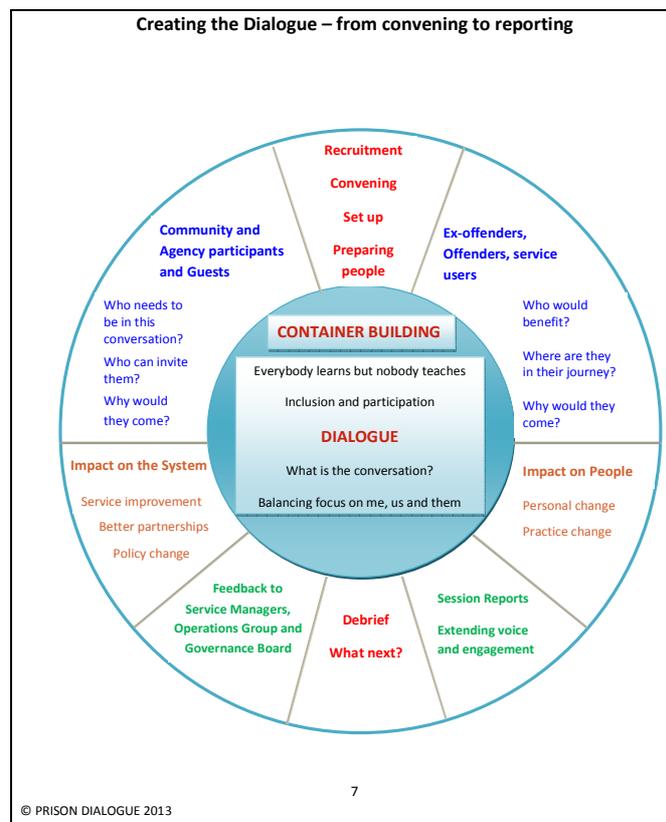
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The method was participatory and experiential including role play and Dialogue. To develop their ownership for Threshold Dialogue there was time to talk and think together about how Threshold Dialogue would make a difference to them and their work, to get to know each other and build a team, learn about different agencies and particularly about working in prisons.

Practical details about the programme were raised and worked out together. For example, it was agreed that the Police would wear civilian clothes if they came to lead a Dialogue, to mark their neutral role as facilitator. When they came as a participant they would wear their uniform so that it was clear that they were representing the Police.

Following the training, the facilitators led Dialogues in pairs, alongside an experienced Prison Dialogue facilitator. They took either a lead or support role, and the support facilitator was responsible for writing the session report. Pre-session briefing, a post-session debrief and feedback, and coaching about facilitation from the Prison Dialogue facilitator enhanced their skills and confidence. The Facilitation Team remained subject to their agency policies

and procedures and were managed and supervised by their line-supervisor. Additional support for their work in Threshold Dialogue was available through Prison Dialogue, with transparent communication to their manager.



Five three-day trainings were held between Sept 2008 and Sept 2010 and 55 facilitators were trained in all, including 3 ex-offenders.

## Outcomes

An effective team of Threshold Dialogue Facilitators was established over two years to take on facilitation at the six Threshold Dialogue sites. They had a foundation of Dialogic facilitation skills and group work skills that was transferable to other areas of their work. Reports were produced from many Threshold Dialogue sessions and made widely available. Prison Dialogue was able to reduce its commitment to Threshold Dialogue having provided the agencies with the skills, tools and structures to sustain the work.

## Learning

Facilitators learned Dialogue skills and the value of those skills. An example of their learning was that if you try to remember what someone has said for your report you will stop listening, and if you stop listening you will not remember anything that has been said. If you concentrate on listening you remember

many things that were said! They learned that these Dialogue skills enabled them to engage more effectively each other and with offenders in their system, which in turn a positive impact on reducing re-offending<sup>5</sup>.

Prison Dialogue learned that you can train people to facilitate Dialogue groups in 3 days! Further learning through facilitation practice, reflection, coaching and feedback, strengthens those skills. The structure of report writing can reinforce the Dialogue Skills and thereby help facilitation.

You can create a team from diverse agencies if they have a common purpose and clear roles. They can operate clearly within their own agency policies and procedures while they work together.

Prison Dialogue found that it was hard to sustain the facilitation team in some agencies, particularly in the voluntary sector because there was a high turnover of staff. As people gained skills, widened their horizons and became more confident through participation in Threshold Dialogue they got better jobs. The participation of statutory agencies, such as the Council, Police and Prisons, is important to provide continuity and anchor the facilitation team.

<sup>1</sup> Prison Turnaround at HMP Dorchester case study summary is available

<sup>2</sup> Bournemouth and Dorset Threshold Dialogue case study summary is available

<sup>3</sup> Dorset Threshold Dialogue Governance Board case study summary is available

<sup>4</sup> The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) are partnerships between the emergency services, local authorities, and public, private and voluntary sector agencies that work together to reduce crime, disorder and substance misuse. They were formed as a result of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

<sup>5</sup> Bournemouth and Dorset Threshold Dialogue case study summary is available

Some of the supporting documents available to Corporate Associates:

Weekly reports from Threshold Dialogue sessions; posters; leaflets; facilitation training information; Governance Board and Operations Group Terms of Reference; reports on interim programme review; other research.