

17th June 2008

BOURNEMOUTH THRESHOLD DIALOGUE

Where everyone learns
but nobody teaches

PRISON DIALOGUE

Tuesdays 2 - 3.30pm Chapel HMP Dorchester

It could have been so different

9 Offenders, 1 Staff members, 2 External Agencies and 1 from PD took part

Learnings

"When I got arrested my partner said, 'if you'd been honest about your using we could have sorted it out, got you the help. It could have been so different.' That really hit home. Why couldn't I tell her? Why did I have to carry on to self-destruction?" (Offender)

"There's a new government initiative to strengthen links between offenders and their children and families. I'm tasked with helping this prison improve their visiting arrangements in favour of that objective." (Agency)

"I've been given all the help possible and still screwed it up. The (Police team) said 'you've been dishonest with us.' What do they expect? I'm a criminal, they're the police. I want to break the cycle but I only know crime and prison." (Offender)

These sessions are serving as a useful induction process for people who are new to prisons.

Not being honest about your issues and needs, either to those closest to you or to agencies trying to help, is a shortcut to disaster.

Offenders want to participate more in their communities and need the support to be able to do so.

"It's good to see you (PCSO) getting involved with the communities on the ground. That shows me that perhaps there's a future for the youth of today. It helps that you've come in here to talk with us. We're not just the labels that society puts on us, we're not two-headed monsters. I'd like us to invite more community and civic people to come in – even the Mayor." (Offender)



"An Offender Manager came in to see clients last week. I said 'how big is your caseload?', she said '78', I said 'how do you manage that?', she said 'I don't, I firefight – the phone rings with someone chasing a report, I dig out the file and write it.' My own caseload is just 29 offenders – but they take up all my time." (Staff)

"I disagree with you. It's not about public protection or reducing re-offending – it's about the numbers, the statistics. What boxes can be ticked, what criteria can be met in order to satisfy this or that requirement. That's why the system doesn't work – it can't just be about that." (Offender)

"We can talk here until we're blue in the face or dust in the ground – unless all of us drive together towards action for change we'll all be sat here saying the same things in two years time." (Staff)

"Every saint has a past, every sinner has a future." (Offender)

Bournemouth 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 Bournemouth Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership.