

22nd July 2008

BOURNEMOUTH THRESHOLD DIALOGUE

Where everyone learns
but nobody teaches

PRISON DIALOGUE: HMP DORCHESTER

Tuesdays 2.00 – 3.30pm Chapel

The things that affect us all

Participants: 12 Offenders & 3 Others (Prison Staff, Barnardos & PD)

LEARNINGS

"Police charge you knowing there's no evidence, that it's going to get dropped. That's enough to get you recalled straight off. My Probation told me I was recalled on 'probability' – it's too much power. Give the decision back to the judges."
(Offender)

"My Offender Supervisor agreed with me that Guys Marsh was a bad idea for me. We decided on treatment at Channings Wood. Then he goes on leave and next thing I've got staff trying to ship me to Guys Marsh. They haven't got a clue."
(Offender)

"Your best bet is to ask the expert – your brief. You can come in here and get any number of answers from a group like this and they might all be rubbish. There's no sense in worrying over something which might not happen."
(Prison Staff)

Honesty brings consequences and that prevents people from speaking up about their needs.

"What is the aim of this group? I ask because X (prisoner) got me in here today and said it was about reducing re-offending. No offence to anyone, but all I've heard so far is people going on about their individual issues. I thought it was supposed to be about bigger stuff than that – the things that affect all of us."
(Offender)



Some people come in here to tell their own story, others want to use the group to address systemic issues. Both are connected to each other and both have their place.

"I don't want to be fed drugs, I want to come off. I've been using since I was 13 years old and the magic wore off ages ago. Why don't I give up? Because I don't know any different. I don't know about life, don't know how to look after myself, have a relationship, how to do 'normal' things. I always go back to what I know."
(Offender)

"On my last sentence, I was that prisoner. I was pro-active, focused. I did all the courses, did the footwork and jumped through the hoops. But when I got out I realised the support wasn't there – there's nothing, plus there are new hoops out there you don't even know about in here."
(Offender)

"And that's the biggest issue – I can't, we can't be honest with the people who ought to know what are needs are, because if we are, that honesty brings consequences. It might be a recall or an MDT and extra days on our sentence. Every part of the system is geared up towards making us more secretive."
(Offender)

Drugs are a problem. Take that problem away and you're left with even bigger issues.

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.