

22nd July 2008

## BOURNEMOUTH THRESHOLD DIALOGUE

Where everyone learns  
but nobody teaches

PRISON DIALOGUE: HMP GUYS MARSH

Tuesdays 9.00 – 10.30am ETS Room

Stand up, take a risk

Participants: 10 Offenders & 4 Others (Prison Staff, Housing Officer, Offender Supervisor & PD)

LEARNINGS

"I want to say to you guys working in the system: 'Stand up, take a risk.' There are real problems in this jail that could be sorted out if the right people sat down with real commitment to fix it. From our side we can't push that change – it has to come from you."

(Offender)

"Like most colleagues, I need my job, need to work. That's always in the front of my mind before I speak up about issues. Yes it's fixable stuff, it requires honesty first, but I've got lots to lose if I rock the boat the wrong way." (Prison Staff)

"The way I see it, if you can stay clean in here, you're good to go on the out – if you can't you haven't got a chance. Yes, it's swimming in drugs here but so is the outside. Me and some of the other lads are managing to stay clean. We support each other." (Offender)

When there are lots of drugs in a prison, it's hard to stay clean, but for some people it is possible.

Both prisoners and prison staff worry about the consequences of trying to effect positive change in the system – it's easier to keep your head down.

Lack of response to applications causes frustration and can create a dangerous environment.

"It's like the exercise with the cross and the dot - the system has a big blind spot. It focuses on things like public protection and all the daily requirements that sustain it's function and identity as a system. It does that so single-mindedly that it fails to see the clients, doesn't see their needs, doesn't engage their pasts and futures in a meaningful way."

(Prison Staff)



"The 12 Step programme has tailed off here. You've got people coming to the gate and they're being turned away because their name's not on the list. They've been coming here for years. These groups are part of my support system. Take away that opportunity to attend and it becomes very hard for someone like me to stay positive." (Offender)

"Apps go in to Governors and vanish – no response. No 'yes', no 'no', nothing back. I applied to 12 Step in Earlestone and was told my app got shredded by someone in Carats – are you kidding me? With stuff like this going on, are you surprised this place seems dangerous?" (Offender)

(Offender)

"This has been worthwhile today. I feel more positive leaving than I did when I came in." (Offender)

(Offender)

"We could run our own group like this on Saxon." (Offender)

"We've knocked on a lot of doors today. Maybe in the future we'll open some of those doors and look inside. Thank you everyone." (Prison Staff)

(Prison Staff)

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.