

7th July 2009

BOURNEMOUTH THRESHOLD DIALOGUE

Where everyone learns
but nobody teaches

PRISON DIALOGUE: HMP GUYS MARSH

Meet the magistrate, the person behind the role

Tuesdays 9–10:30am Chapel

Resettlement Pathway: Accom / Attitudes, Thinking & Behaviour

Participants: 9 Offenders, 1 Prison Staff, 1 BCHA & 1 Magistrate

LEARNINGS

"In some sentences, Housing Benefit can only be paid for 13 weeks and this can end up with some people being left homeless upon release therefore making their situations far worse. I wonder if magistrates are aware of these things." (Prison Staff)

"I have known people where that is the case. Plus any belongings end up being thrown away. It's a double whammy – you lose your home, possessions and worse still birth certificates, documents, items of sentimental value. The magistrates could not care less." (Offender)

"I must admit in 3 years I have never come across that situation. You would hope that would be made clear in the pre-sentence reports. I didn't know about the Housing Benefits periods but will go back to my colleagues and raise the point. It's important to be aware of that information." (Magistrate)

It's important for those dispensing justice to understand what kind of lives the recipients have led.

"Do magistrates actually read the pre-sentence reports? They spend 2 minutes in a huddle and dispense the verdict. It seems odd." (Offender)

"We get the reports first thing in the morning and go through them properly and are fully up to speed when court begins." (Magistrate)

"I'd like to ask – do you think community sentences are more or less effective than a prison sentence? Would that have helped you?" (Magistrate)

"Everyone is different. One person can be helped by a short sharp shock but in my case going to prison made me realise I could cope with being incarcerated with no problem." (Offender)

"I feel that the magistrates were too lenient with me, gave me too many chances. If they had cracked down on me hard at an early stage, it could have stopped my offending in its tracks." (Offender)

"That's interesting. It seems there are so many different views. How many of you grew up in care, if that's appropriate?" (Magistrate)

"Almost half of you have been through the care system, most of our values come from our families and we take it for granted." (Magistrate)

"When I was young I had a healthy fear of my dad, about bringing trouble to my door. I think that discipline is vital to personal development. To be deprived of that has lifelong consequences." (BCHA)

Everyone is different and responds to different kinds of motivation. Some need the stick, others a carrot, some a combination of the two.

Your upbringing has a huge effect on your life but it's never too late to make the changes to improve your future.



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.