

PRISON DIALOGUE LIMITED

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2004

In our estimation as trustees, 2004 has been perhaps the most significant year for Prison Dialogue since it was first registered as a national charity in 1995. As Christopher Graves, Director of the Tudor Trust who has supported the charity over the last three years, wrote in a letter to Jane Ball, Prison Dialogue's Co-ordinator:

"It seems to me that this was the year that Prison Dialogue gained a full understanding of the complexities and frustrations of working with the Prison Service! In building strategic alliances with individuals within the Service, you have become more discerning about where to channel your energies and build relationships. This is no mean feat and I feel sure will stand you in good stead as the work develops"

This year, the charity has profited from the insights built up over a number of years, translating the discernment and alliances and all the learning into action. The focus and clarity of purpose achieved in 2003 has resulted in:

- the consolidation of the work in 2004 in the charity's first whole-system intervention in HMP Dorchester
- a level of financial viability that has been the fruit of a concentrated fundraising strategy developed and implemented during the year
- a context for the work with HMP Dorchester in longer-term planning that includes a second prison in the same SW Area and continuing liaison with the Local Criminal Justice Board, and encompasses the next five years of the charity's development.

The vision for Prison Dialogue's work outlined in the first year of the Tudor Trust funded project was to bring about *"deep cultural change in the penal system.....by addressing the way that relationships are formed and sustained within existing regimes; through working on the ground, at an operational level, with all who live and work within prisons (i.e. prisoners, officers and associated staff); and within the context of a continuum from arrest to resettlement"*. This aspiration continues to inspire and inform the Charity's work. But 2003 had also been the year in which we discovered in HMP Blakenhurst that:

- the active and secure sponsorship of the Number One Governor was essential as we had always known, but not sufficient
- deep cultural change was never going to be possible without engaging with the whole of the Senior Management Team, and subsequently with all of the staff
- without staff and prisoners being truly committed to the work, and feeling it will actually make a difference to them we would continue to be blocked from raising the status of the intervention from group work to whole system change
- we needed to be much more 'streetwise' to the whole range of sub-cultural and interpersonal dynamics in the system if we were to achieve Prison Dialogue's vision of working with the whole continuum in a prisoner's experience from arrest to resettlement

The move the Management Team has made to consolidate all its resources and energies in the whole system project at HMP Dorchester is significant in that it is enabling us to address the inhibiting constraints that had previously limited the potential of the work to effect change across the system as a whole. The experience gained over recent years in practice development, prison based work, people development, writing and evaluation, securing high level sponsorship and community dialogue, will now be focused on the achievement of a successful action research project in partnership with HMP Dorchester and a second local prison in the South West Area.

HMP Dorchester's vision is to become a centre of excellence in resettlement, where prisoners will be seen as being on a resettlement journey from the moment they arrive that all of the staff in the prison contribute to. The work of Prison Dialogue is to help them to

realise this vision. It is significant for us as trustees that we now have a shared project plan 'Shaping a decent and effective prison' that, has been written jointly by Sarah Hill and Jane Ball for Prison Dialogue and Steve Holland, the prison's Governor with explicit sponsorship from the South West Area Manager, Jerry Petherick.

Steve has been a principal sponsor of the Charity's work in the past at HMPs Long Lartin and Blakenhurst where he was the former Deputy Governor. His support in securing funding from within the Prison's own budget and the Local Criminal Justice Board, and now his direct collaboration on the intervention itself, has been invaluable. He has personally brought a level of dedication and clarity to the work that is evident in the thoroughgoing way in which the project is being taken forward, ensuring clarity about priorities, striving to secure the engagement of staff, seeking ways of framing the intervention as part of 'core business', developing and incorporating an ongoing monitoring and review process and developing plans to disseminate the learning gained throughout the prison and to the wider prison service.

Timelines have been agreed for all interventions in 2005 - 2007, and attention now returns to securing funding for the coming 3 years. At the time of this AGM, we have secured a further year's support from the Tudor and Mulberry Trusts, and have a number of significant applications for core funding pending, including: the Network for Social Change, J.Paul Getty Jr. Charitable Trust and Community Fund. We also have an agreement from the Centre for Social Justice at Coventry University to provide course fees for a PhD studentship to support our research and evaluation of the intervention.

It is the intention of the Charity, with the reputation of the work established through the development and circulation of the research as an integral part of the intervention, to be in a position to secure statutory funding as the basis for increased staffing levels and longer-term expansion of the work beyond 2007.

Many people have contributed significantly to the achievements of this year, but the trustees wish to pay particular tribute to the extra-ordinary level of energy and dedication that Sarah Hill has brought to Prison Dialogue as the Project's Manager. She has held primary responsibility for advancing the core elements of the programme at HMP Dorchester, for implementing the fundraising strategy, and together with Jane Ball for putting together a series of comprehensive presentations of the work of Prison Dialogue. These serve as a distinguished account of what all of us that have been involved with the Charity feel now has the potential to be a major influence in the evolution of the whole National Offender Management System. Our warm thanks to you Sarah. The work would not have been possible without the dedication and largely voluntary contributions of the rest of the project team, Milda Zinkus and Andrew Miller.

We also wish to acknowledge the contribution of one of our own number over that period. Generally the trustees themselves keep to the background, as is appropriate in our view. But we know that Sarah in turn has profited considerably over the last year from the coaching support from Madeleine McGill: to her too, on behalf of the Charity, our thanks.

One other shift has also taken place over the year. The Charity has been supported over a number of years by a small membership group, who have been a constant source of support and encouragement to the management, staff and volunteers involved in the work. We have changed in that time from upholding a loosely collectivist aspiration to advance the knowledge and understanding of the dialogic process in the context of the prison service. Our attention is now dedicated to supporting the work being done by those directly working for the Charity in its various projects and their long-term aspiration to contributing directly to the larger reforms of the Criminal Justice System. The trustees would now like to enlarge that group from its present small number, commensurate with the current scope and ambitions of Prison Dialogue, whose work it has been our privilege to oversee.