

## **CS28: HMP & YOI PARC WING DIALOGUES**

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### **Context**

HMP & YOI Parc in South Wales was managed by private company G4S on behalf of HM Prison Service. It housed over 1000 male prisoners, young offenders and young people (age 15-17). Prison Dialogue (PD) had been working with the Director and her team at HMP & YOI Parc since April 2009 to develop the vision and strategy for the prison and support the cascaded engagement of managers and staff in the changes. As part of the vision each unit had been assigned a specific purpose and identity that was part of the prisoner journey, and contributed to resettlement. The intention from the outset was to introduce staff/prisoner Dialogues to improve the atmosphere on the units, responding to criticisms from Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons (HMIP) in a 2008 report. In June 2010 a lead SMT member was selected and the work began to introduce Dialogue to A Block and B Block.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The aim was to set up unit based Dialogues to establish effective relationships between unit staff, prisoners and other relevant departments, to support the unit in its purpose and contribute to the vision of the prison. To create local ownership and sustainable processes for the Dialogue, managers, staff and prisoners were included in a participative process to plan where, when, who and how the Dialogues would run. Staff would learn to facilitate the Dialogues so that they could be sustained at the prison. Improved HMIP and MQPL feedback was important.

### **Method: Activity, Participants and Duration**

Two of the more challenging residential areas of the prison were selected for the introduction of Dialogue. A series of meetings with Senior Managers, First Line Managers (FLMs), staff, prisoners and social care staff established a commitment to participate. A five month programme of weekly Dialogues ran, on Tuesday mornings on B Block and Tuesday afternoons on A Block, from Sept '10 to Jan '11. Each session was preceded with a briefing, ran for 90 minutes and was followed by a debriefing. The pre-briefing and post-session debriefing

were used to consider any issues that had arisen and to support the development of Dialogue skills and facilitation. The session began with an introduction and check-in and was then largely an open Dialogue, finishing with a check-out and record of comments from the group that was written up, published on the unit and circulated to relevant staff and managers. Approximately 15 people attended each Dialogue, and over 19 weeks, 20 different unit staff and 11 staff and managers from other areas attended the A Block Dialogue for an average of three times. Three separate training sessions were held as well as the training that was provided by PD during the Dialogues themselves and briefings. 27 people attended the training sessions, and four of them had enough training and coaching to develop dialogue facilitation skills.

### **Outcomes**

Dialogue between staff and prisoners was established on the 2 housing units, with a good level of staff involvement. At least 2 facilitators developed the skill to lead those Dialogues with a high level of competence, and a larger group of staff and prisoners learned to participate skilfully. Senior managers and staff made many comments about the positive outcomes at a review meeting at the end of the five month programme. They included: *"(it has) improved prisoner staff relationships. We saw it quickly, now the offenders see it too"*, *"The implementation of the new drug detox policy on B3 was smoother than expected"*, *"Offenders take the position that you would expect staff to take"*.

Experiencing the value of prisoner engagement and building confidence led to a better structure of forums and surgeries in these areas. After PD's input to the prison, Dialogue continued on these housing units and was introduced elsewhere, including the Young Person's Unit and the Safer Custody Unit.

### **Learning**

Unit staff and managers learned the value of prisoner engagement and Dialogue through first-hand experience. One FLM said *"in the first session I didn't really get it, but by the 3<sup>rd</sup> it all fell into place"*. Some staff learned a high degree of facilitation skill and confidence.

PD learned that it is worth taking time to build the commitment of staff before prisoners are introduced to the Dialogue. Two social care staff had a strong aptitude for Dialogue facilitation so that facilitation responsibility naturally fell to them, despite attempts to develop facilitation skill in operational staff. This

raises the question of whether facilitation can be provided by members of any of the main sub-groups involved in the Dialogue, and how to maintain a 'neutral' facilitation stance of being on everyone's side if that is attempted.

WORK IN PROGRESS