



## Restorative Prisons

### Case Study: HMP Buckley Hall

#### **Background**

HMP Buckley Hall is a category C training prison in Rochdale, Lancashire. Its operational capacity is 445 and its reception criteria is 'sentenced male category C prisoners, primarily from the North West and Greater Manchester who are wanting to progress to open conditions'.

Following an unannounced inspection in June 2016 the report was reasonably good in areas such as leadership, time out of cell, education, resettlement and safety. Despite the inspectorate finding a deterioration in the area of respect, they felt Buckley Hall has the potential to be a high performing establishment.

In the same month as the inspection, Restorative Solutions began a 12 month initiative to introduce and embed restorative approaches across Buckley Hall to resolve conflict among prisoners, among staff, and between prisoners and staff. A whole prison restorative approach that improves respect and relationships at all levels contributes to a safer, more secure and more supportive environment for prisoners and staff alike.

#### **Overview**

Operational and non-operational staff and prisoners have been trained in restorative approaches to bring conflicting parties together, predominantly on the wings but also in workshops, gym, education and anywhere else conflict occurs. Restorative approaches are now being used to resolve conflict between prisoners and prisoners and prisoners and staff. Managers have also used restorative approaches to resolve conflict between staff.

#### **Training**

The training in restorative approaches is 100% tailored to the prison environment and to staff and prisoners. It runs at Foundation Level (1 day) and Practitioner Level (3 day).

Prisoners are selected using agreed criteria, interviewed for suitability and trained to the same level as staff. Suitable staff and prisoners who have completed the Foundation Level are selected to progress to Practitioner Level. This model provides an effective mix of skills and abilities across the whole prison.

To date a total of 46 staff and prisoners have completed the Foundation Level and 26 have progressed to and completed the Practitioner Level.

### **The Restorative Approach**

For low level conflicts and disagreements trained prisoners and staff conduct informal restorative meetings. For more serious or complex matters they use formal restorative conferences. The use of co-facilitation between staff and prisoners is working successfully where appropriate. Regular joint staff and prisoner meetings take place to share knowledge and experiences.

As of October 2017 restorative approaches were used in 56 cases of conflict. Informal meetings were used in 29 of these cases and formal conferences were used in 16 cases. Approximately half of these cases were verbal altercations and just under half were incidents of violence. Incidents of debt and bullying were also addressed successfully using well managed restorative interventions.

A restorative approach is not an alternative to the formal Incentives & Earned Privileges (IEP) system or adjudication process but it is working effectively as an early intervention to prevent minor conflicts escalating and to reintegrate prisoners back into the mainstream prison following a significant conflict and adjudication.

In November 2016 the MoJ's white paper on *Prison Safety and Reform* highlighted the Restorative Prison initiative at HMP Buckley Hall to encourage governors to take a restorative approach in dealing with low level violence where appropriate.

### **Learning Points**

The key lessons learned across this pilot initiative show that a whole prison restorative approach is most likely to succeed when:

- The selection and training process is robust
- Both staff and prisoners are trained, enthusiastic and actively promoting the initiative
- Staff and prisoners work together on planning, preparing and delivering restorative meeting and conferences
- As many people as possible support the initiative, including prisoners, staff and the SMT
- The restorative approach is written into policies and procedures in the establishment
- The approach is embedded across all functional areas

### **Training Feedback from Staff and Prisoners**

"I will use Restorative Approaches in every relationship for the rest of my life."

"Restorative Approaches, a powerful process that really works."

"The Restorative Approach was really good. I can't wait to use it and make a difference."

"I believe this is a positive tool to use in various situations/incidents to help reduce violence and resolve any disagreements."

"It will be a very useful tool to use and develop not only for prisoners but for the establishment."