

THE LANCASTER FARMS APPROACH TO ANTI-BULLYING

Introduction

Bullying in recent times has become a high profile subject and one that has received much attention both in the prison system and also in the field of primary and secondary school education. Since its opening in 1993 Lancaster Farms has gradually developed a strategy that has attempted to address the issue of bullying. As a consequence of the structured approach that has been adopted, there is the belief amongst prisoners and staff that Lancaster Farms is a safe, positive and progressive environment in which to spend a period of imprisonment.

From the outset it was agreed that the Establishment should adopt a determined and pro-active approach to combating bullying. The creation of an anti-bullying policy which actively discouraged bullying and promoted consideration and mutual respect was a key objective for staff.

The development of a prison culture in which care, commitment and respect for the individual, was seen as being of great importance. It was also accepted that in order for such a culture to be successful, intimidation and violence should be reduced to a minimum.

Managing a whole prison approach

Practical measures play a very important part in complementing the anti-bullying policy that Lancaster Farms has in situ and are extremely effective in reducing the risks of bullying occurring. By providing as little scope as possible for an individual or group of individuals to bully, the easier it is to encourage the majority of prisoners to adhere to the anti-bullying philosophy.

Practical Action

A number of practical measures are in operation, which ensure that the risks of bullying taking place are reduced to a minimum;

a. Showers — Prisoners do not shower in large, unsupervised groups. On the residential units, prisoners shower either on their own or with one other person. Once in the showers the door is locked behind them, thus allowing the individual the opportunity to bathe in peace without having to worry about potential threats or assaults. In the gym, through necessity, greater numbers of prisoners do shower together, however this process is supervised closely.

b. Canteen — Prisoners are escorted to the canteen and back to their residential unit when they have made their purchases. They are supervised whilst buying.

c. Reception area — On entering, newly arrived prisoners are immediately booked in and the items they have with them recorded, with full descriptions of their possessions being entered on a property card. Items of value are marked with ultra violet responsive ink. The number of new arrivals held in this area is kept to a minimum, with staff maintaining a high profile.

d. Residential Unit Rules — Prisoners are not allowed into the cells of others. They are actively encouraged to use the wing's large well equipped and comfortably furnished association areas. Prisoners are discouraged from going to cell doors and talking through the door flaps, the conversation may be friendly, however, it could also be intimidating. Staff spend most of the

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association period actively mixing with and interacting with the prisoners, thus reducing the 'us and them' barriers and helping people to feel more at ease. Individuals who speak to staff are therefore less likely to be accused of being a 'grass' because talking to staff is a normal activity.

e. Cell searching — A structured system of targeted cell searching assists in not only highlighting those who may be bullying, but also in identifying those who may be victims. A cell with no posters on the walls or personal possessions should alert staff to the fact that the individual may be being bullied.

f. Phone cards — These are kept by wing staff and issued to the owners when requested, after use they are returned to staff. This system ensures that prisoners are not put under pressure by others to allow them to use their card.

Monitoring

A system of monitoring levels of bullying is also integrated into our anti-bullying strategy. Prisoners are questioned on a formal and informal basis regularly, to ascertain their feelings about how safe they feel at Lancaster Farms, and about their relationships with staff.

A structured system for reporting incidents of bullying, results in staff being able to act consistently when they confront individuals suspected of making threats or intimidation. Guidelines are issued to advise staff of the sanctions and options that are open to them when they encounter bullying. The introduction of a three part Bullying Incident Report form assists in evaluating the effectiveness of our policy and ensures that actions are based on fact and not as is sometimes the case 'gut feelings'. One copy of the report is entered in the prisoner's wing file and assists staff to keep up to date with an individual's progress. The second copy is for the Security Department's attention — someone involved in regular incidents of intimidation could be involved in drug trafficking or some other form of subversive activity in which intimidation may play its part. The final copy goes to the Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator who collates the information about incidents of bullying and is able to identify over a given period of time how many incidents of bullying have taken place, where they occurred, who was the bully and who was the victim.



Anti-Bullying Committees

Two Anti-Bullying Committees are currently in operation; one is made up of prison staff, the second consists of prisoners. Each Committee looks at the problem of bullying from a slightly different angle.

The staff Anti-Bullying Committee involves representatives from all areas of the Establishment, Health Carers Centre, Chaplaincy, Works, Education, BOV, Probation, Psychology and Discipline staff. The function of the Committee is to co-ordinate and initiate action which addresses the issue of bullying. Each representative is able to advise the other members about how the anti-bullying strategy is operating in their area of work and thus it is possible to obtain an overall picture of how our policy is working. If a Committee member identifies an issue which is causing concern we can address the problem as a cohesive group utilising fully, the skills of all the team.

The Prisoners Anti-Bullying sub group consists of two representatives from each of the residential units, resulting in a membership of 12. The group meets monthly, and meetings are chaired and co-ordinated by the Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator. During the meetings members receive training and information about the establishment's ongoing anti-bullying programmes. Group members give their views about how they feel the strategy could be improved from their point of view and provide a different perspective on the issue than staff. Members are encouraged to promote the policy amongst their peers, and to become involved in providing input on prisoner focused anti-bullying training.

The rationale for having two committees is to obtain a realistic and comprehensive overview of Lancaster Farms. Involvement with the Anti-Bullying Committee also allows both staff and prisoners to have a stake in the way our institution operates.

Admission

It is very important that a newly arrived prisoner is made aware as soon as possible about the radical approach taken at Lancaster Farms on bullying and therefore, this process begins as soon as he enters the Admissions Department.

It is our aim to provide an environment which instils in the new arrival a feeling that his wellbeing and safety are of

primary importance. The development of a welcoming and safe atmosphere is however, not entirely the responsibility of prison staff who work in this department. The inmate orderlies who have involvement and responsibilities in the reception process are also encouraged to interact positively with newly arrived prisoners. Good levels of supervision, a well organised reception process, which ensures that people are not waiting to be dealt with for extensive periods of time, re-inforces our anti-bullying message. Practical measures also reduce the opportunity and scope for bullying and taxing to occur. The manner in which prisoners are first received at Lancaster Farms can significantly influence how they respond to the regime, staff and other prisoners during their stay at Lancaster Farms.

Induction

The day following arrival, all new numbers take part in the induction programme which lasts for one day. Included in the induction day is a session of approximately 75 minutes duration, which looks at the issue of bullying and explores the detrimental effects that fear and intimidation can have on prisoners, staff and the living environment. The issue of how prisoners should respond to those prisoners who are charged with sex offences is also covered.

As a consequence of this initial input the issue of bullying is brought out into the open with the message being given that staff treat the subject seriously and will act to eradicate it. It also encourages prisoners to talk openly about bullying and not to put up with it. At the end of the session all participants are invited to sign an agreement which states that they will:

- a. Not take part in any bullying.
- b. Not help others to bully.
- c. Share information which may help to prevent bullying.

From the outset therefore, everyone understands the Lancaster Farms policy on bullying – **it will not be tolerated**. Those who choose to ignore this statement of intent will not progress or gain the full benefits at our institution.

Reward

An effective system of rewarding prisoners

who behave reasonably towards their peers is also important in encouraging anti-bullying. The reward system must be carefully thought out and structured, and should support the culture. The prisoners who are progressing and benefiting from the system should be those who are actively supporting and enriching the establishment's anti-bullying culture. Such an approach however, lays open to criticism some of the historical practices adopted within prisons. The policy of putting the biggest, strongest, and on occasions, most aggressive prisoners in jobs which are seen by other prisoners as the ones that offer the best perks, for example, gym orderly or servery cleaners, can send out the wrong message. Such practices imply that the people who progress within the establishments are those who behave in, or adopt an, aggressive and intimidating manner. If positions of trust are however, given to individuals who are actively supporting the anti-bullying strategies, this reiterates the message that bullying doesn't pay.

Staff must also look at their own behaviours and actions to ensure that they are not extolling, possibly subconsciously, the message that by behaving in a particularly intimidating way, tasks can be achieved and respect obtained.

Education

Education and training of both prisoners and staff is vitally important in achieving and sustaining an anti-bullying ethos. Prisoners are made aware of how bullying can detrimentally affect their quality of life and how it can ultimately lead to victims harming themselves or even committing suicide. It is emphasised to prisoners that they have a responsibility for the well-being of their peers.

Staff are made aware of the procedures and practices that must be set in motion if they observe or encounter an incident of bullying, or suspect bullying is occurring. The benefits of supporting anti-bullying strategies should be promoted energetically. Staff from all disciplines must feel confident in their ability to confront and challenge those individuals who they suspect are bullying others.

Confrontation

The experience of being confronted about bullying should not be a negative experience,



it should be one from which the bully can feel that he has been treated fairly, understands why he has been spoken to, and is clear about what aspects of his behaviour he needs to improve.

The victim of bullying also needs to be confronted to examine why the incident occurred, confirm to him that he did the right thing by telling staff, and look at ways in which he can avoid a repetition of this form of incident. It may be that assertiveness training will help. It could be that by giving him knowledge, or by identifying and changing certain behaviours, the risks of him being subject to further bullying could be dramatically reduced.

Results

As a result of the anti-bullying initiatives we have implemented, prisoners believe that they are unlikely to come to any harm. In a recent survey which questioned 50 per cent of the prisoners at Lancaster Farms, 18 per cent said they had been bullied, but the bullying generally took the form of name calling, threats and spreading rumours; 83 per cent of respondents said there was less bullying at this prison than at others they had been in and 92 per cent said they felt safe.

Staff morale is high, and relationships based on trust and respect between prisoners and officers are the norm. Of the 27 prisoners who reported having been bullied, 20 said they had spoken to an Officer about it. The working environment is positive and one that is conducive to job fulfilment and innovation.

From the prison management's perspective, anti-bullying assists in ensuring that operation costs are reduced, sickness rates are low, damage and vandalism to property is minimal, and as a consequence of the strategy there is no requirement to regularly segregate prisoners.

Conclusion

Anti-bullying has proved at Lancaster Farms, to be a very effective tool in creating an establishment which offers a safe and positive environment for both staff and prisoners and one which provides the opportunity to use to the maximum the resources that are available. Although our policy is still far from perfect, the experience to date suggests that the implementation and operation of a focused and structured anti-bullying strategy can have a significant effect on the well-being and operational success of a prison establishment ■

CHRONIC VICTIMS

HOW MANY AND HOW TO HELP

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Crime victimisation is massively concentrated on particular individuals in particular places. 44 per cent of property crime is suffered by 3 per cent of households, and 70 per cent of violent crime is suffered by 2 per cent of people (Ellingworth et al., forthcoming). The major contributing factors to one's crime risks are the area in which one lives, the lifestyle that one adopts, and one's recent victimisation experience.

No-one will need much persuading about the area and lifestyle contributions to crime risks, although their relative

importance is politically contentious. Area differences in rates of crime are huge. For instance, Trickett et al. (1992) showed that the 10 per cent of British Crime Survey sampling points which suffered the most crime suffered over thirty times the level of crime as the 10 per cent least victimised areas. More recent work (Osborn et al. 1993, Trickett et al. in press) has clarified how lifestyle and area interact. The complex statistical work reported by the Trickett team invites scepticism from the uninitiated. However, the conclusions make such good sense with hindsight that perhaps the