Support for Excellence programme

June 2009

Peer Review and Development (PRD) in the prison service: Five prisons work together to jointly review and develop their learning and skills provision

LSIS
LEARNING AND SKILLS IMPROVEMENT SERVICE

This case study examines how five prisons formed a PRD group, planned and delivered a review and used the findings to improve their literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision. It also describes how PRD is helping them improve the quality of learning and skills across all their establishments.

It will support leaders and managers by describing the PRD cycle and by giving practical advice on how to form a PRD group and carry out PRD activities effectively.

Group Details

KB One
- HMP Bullwood Hall
- HMP/YOI Chelmsford
- HMP Kingston
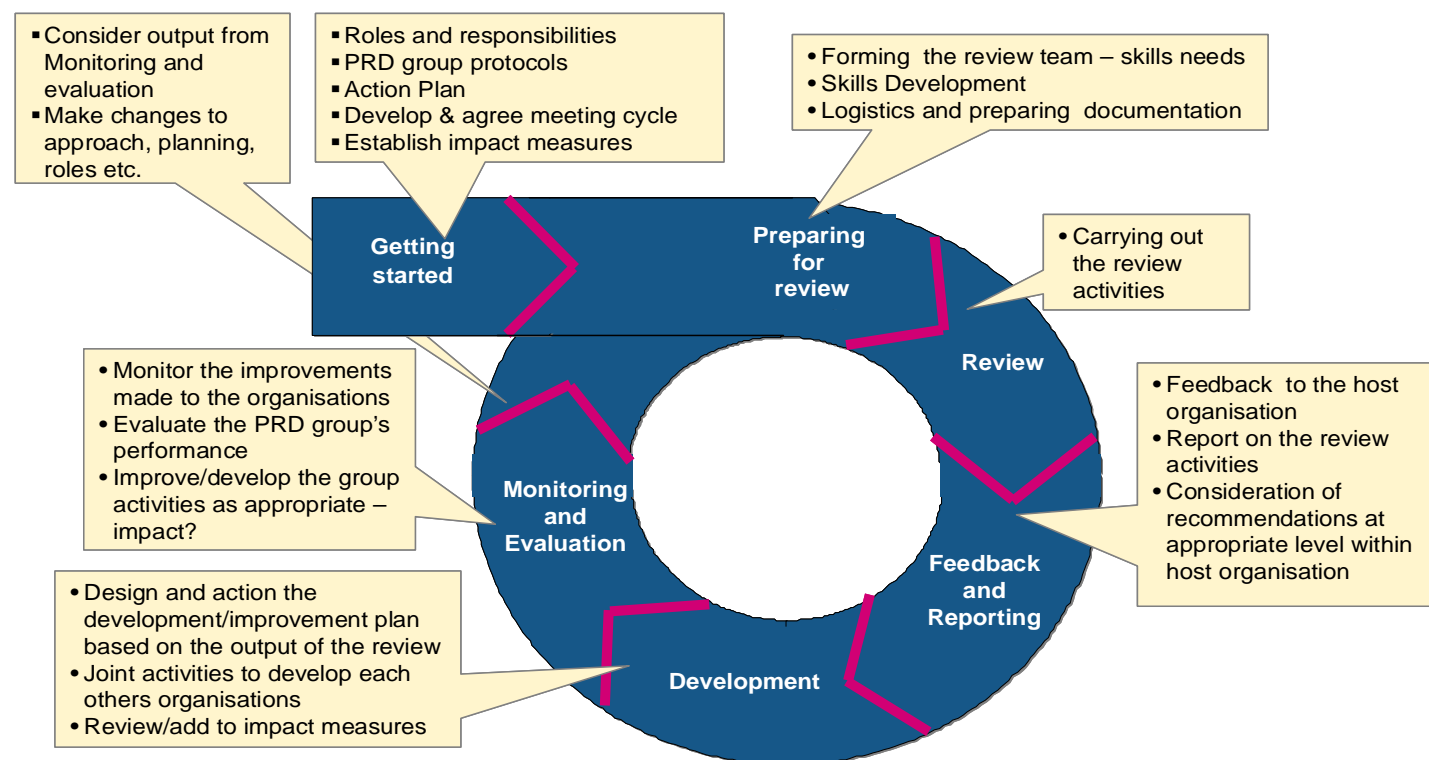- HMP The Mount
- HMP Winchester

> "PRD has enabled me to expand my knowledge and skills at using evidence to make accurate judgements"

Background and context

Peer Review and Development (PRD)

PRD is a collaborative quality improvement activity involving a group of organisations working together to review each other's capacity for self-improvement.

PRD has both an assessment function (review) including benchmarking and the validation of self-assessment judgments, and an improvement function (development), including joint action planning and support in the sharing and transfer of good practice.

Getting started
- Roles and responsibilities
- PRD group protocols
- Action Plan
- Develop & agree meeting cycle
- Establish impact measures

- Consider output from Monitoring and evaluation
- Make changes to approach, planning, roles etc.

Preparing for review
- Forming the review team – skills needs
- Skills Development
- Logistics and preparing documentation

Review
- Carrying out the review activities

Feedback and Reporting
- Feedback to the host organisation
- Report on the review activities
- Consideration of recommendations at appropriate level within host organisation

Monitoring and Evaluation
- Monitor the improvements made to the organisations
- Evaluate the PRD group's performance
- Improve/develop the group activities as appropriate – impact?

Development
- Design and action the development/improvement plan based on the output of the review
- Joint activities to develop each others organisations
- Review/add to impact measures

KB One

The group was brought together by Milton Keynes College who was the OLASS provider for the five prisons. The providers had not worked together as a group before, but there were existing relationships. They shared a desire to continuously improve the quality of their learning and skills provision. The group viewed PRD as an opportunity to review their progress through external validation by peers, who would act as critical friends, and secondly as a chance to be better prepared for inspection.

Useful tips
- Get support from your Governor
- Develop a shared vision
- Build on existing relationships
- Jointly agree protocols at the start
- Jointly agree the action plan
- Put dates in the diary for future meetings
- Involve the OLASS provider in the process

"Being part of the group has been extremely valuable in terms of self-development and the support of other prisons"

Approach

Overview

The group met, formed, carried out their first review, gave feedback and jointly developed an action plan over a five month period. Subsequent reviews have been planned and delivered over a three month period.

The five members of the group and the OLASS provider met four times to set up their group and plan the review. The review took two full days and involved 17 members of staff and the host organisation. The group met twice after the review to plan improvements for both the host and the group as a whole. Subsequent reviews have involved a similar commitment.

First review and feedback

The host chose strand two (literacy, numeracy, ESOL) as the theme, as it had been identified in the SAR as an area of weakness. There were two planning meetings; the first agreed objectives, sources of evidence, size of the review team and overall methodology; a second dealt with logistics e.g. security, keys, timetabling.

There were 17 people in the review team; four Head of Learning and Skills (HoLS), five education managers, three curriculum heads, two gym managers, two contract managers and one coordinator. The team was selected based on the skills and knowledge required by the review theme.

Members of the review team were briefed on PRD, the host prison, theme and methodology by their own HoLS and were given a relevant section of the SAR. Staff at the host prison were also briefed, particularly on the need to be open and honest.

The review took two days with the second day being used for feedback and planning. On day one the review team carried out lesson observations and interviews. They used a pre-designed template to record their findings which enabled them to concentrate on key issues. Their aim was to find three strengths and three development areas. They had lunch together and shared findings. This meant they could focus the afternoon activities on gaps or uncertainties.

On the second day, the review team developed a report which was presented to the Governor. It contained evidence based feedback on the strengths and weaknesses. Managers were given feedback in respect to their area and staff were given one to one feedback on their performance.

The group worked together and created a development plan for the host based on the findings from the review.

Useful tips
- Plan and prepare the review in detail
- Use a template to record findings
- Pool information at lunchtime
- Encourage host staff to be honest
- Be objective during the review
- Give evidence based, constructive feedback that identifies strengths and areas for improvement
- Plan joint development activities where relevant

"PRD has enabled the staff from other prisons to work together in a more formal way."

Next steps

The group reflected on their performance at the first review. They agreed that:
- the host lead should have a purely administrative role as there wasn't time for them to be part of the review
- the team would be briefed together instead of separately at their own establishments and they should meet before the review.

The group intends to:
- hold a review at each of the remaining four prisons before the end of their first year
- produce a summary of good practice found at each of the reviews to help dissemination
- be proactive in planning and measuring the impact of PRD so they can justify their continued involvement to their Governors.

Useful tips
- Agree at the start how to evaluate the performance of the group and the review process to inform improvements

Results/ Impact

For the host
- The level of support given to some strand two (literacy numeracy and ESOL) teachers was improved.
- The profile of literacy and numeracy was raised across the prison
- New ILPs for strand two were designed and introduced
- A new MIS tracking system to monitor achievement of strand two was designed and introduced
- Better used was made of peer mentors in classrooms by including them in the lesson planning
- Regular meetings to share good practice regarding use of peer mentors in classrooms were introduced

For the other members of the group
- They revisited and revised their SARs
- They gained skills in making judgements
- They gained experience in giving constructive feedback
- Some gained experience of leading the review team
- Some are considering developing a peer mentoring system

Lessons learnt

About PRD
- PRD is now a very important part of the quality improvement activities at each of the prisons involved
- PRD has a significant impact on the host organisation as well as on those taking part in a review
- PRD is a great staff development opportunity
- The cost of time and resources allocated to PRD is outweighed by the benefits

About strand two (literacy, numeracy, ESOL)
The host identified:
- that their allocations process compared well with those used by the other group members
- that there was good rapport with learners
- that there was a strong partnership between the HoLS, the OLASS provider and the rest of the prison
- where good strand two teaching was taking place and where improvements could be made
- which resources were being used effectively and which were not
- that although the peer mentoring scheme was praised by learners, it wasn't being used effectively in some classrooms
- there were missed opportunities to re-enforce literacy and numeracy knowledge and understanding across the activities
- there was insufficient use of MIS.

"The College has started a programme of internal inspections to monitor the impact of action and development plans coming out of PRD."

Advice for those new to PRD

- Be clear about role and responsibilities within the group
- Be enthusiastic and positive – you get out what you put in
- Recognise and plan for the time commitment involved
- Have the support of the Governor
- Plan to measure and identify impact from the start
- Be honest and open during the review process
- Give feedback sensitively and recognise good practice as well as areas for improvement

Further sources of information

For more information about PRD go to the SfE Resource Centre on the LSIS Excellence Gateway
http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=resourcecentre