

June 2009



## Peer Review and Development (PRD) in youth offending: A Youth Offending Institution and four of its partners work together to jointly review and develop their learning and skills provision

This case study examines how a Youth Offending Institution and four of its partners formed a PRD group, planned and delivered a review and used the findings to improve the transfer of data. It also describes how PRD is helping them improve the quality of learning and skills across all their organisations.

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

#### MADE group

- In Training
- Leek Connexions
- Staffordshire Youth Offending Service
- Stoke on Trent Youth Offending Service
- Werrington YOI

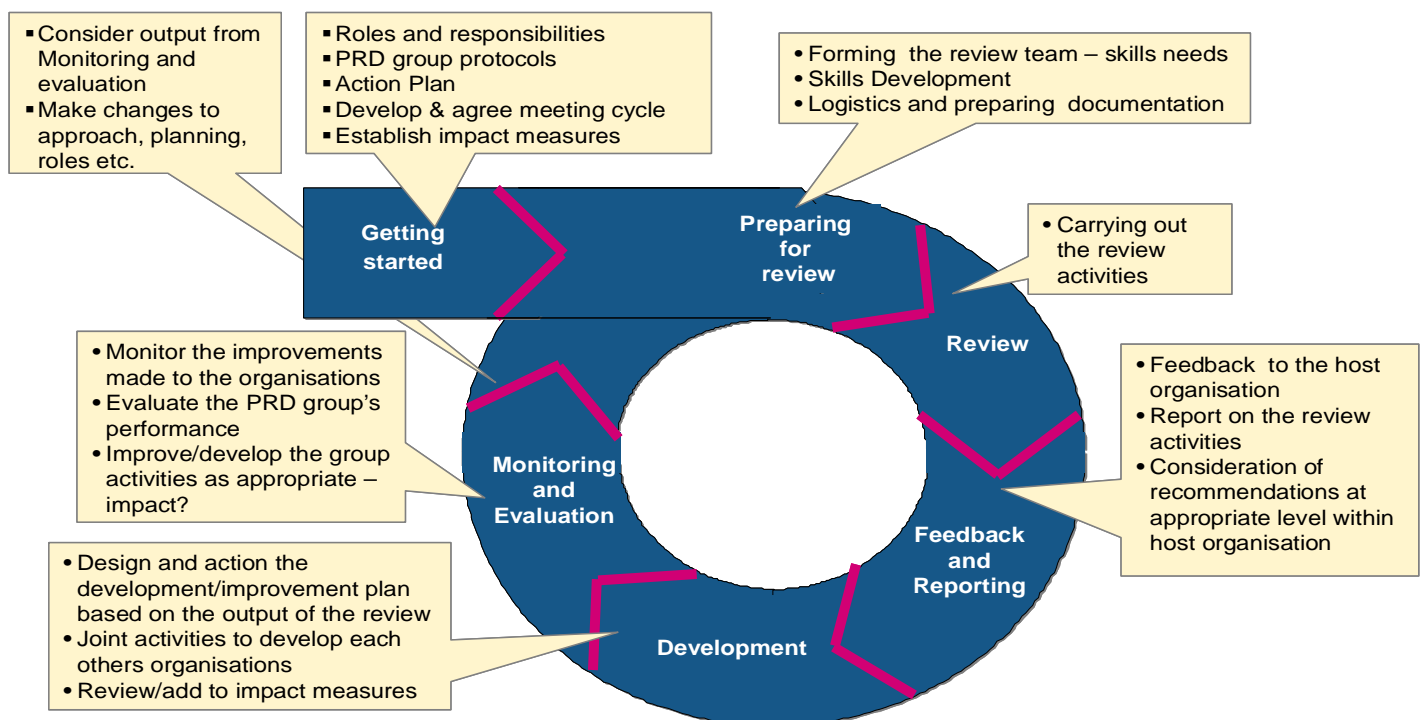
“PRD is a structured process but it allowed us to set our own protocols, theme, methodology etc so it really met our needs.”

### 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.



## MADE group

The group was recruited by the Stoke on Trent Youth Offending Service (YOS). The organisations worked together as partners of the YOI and as members of the OLASS West Sector North group. Each of the members wanted to improve their provision to the young offenders that they work with. They saw PRD as an opportunity for quality improvement as well as helping to improve the way that they worked together. They also hoped PRD would support Werrington YOI's preparation for inspection.

### Useful tips

- Build on existing relationships
- Develop a shared vision to generate enthusiasm and commitment to the PRD process
- Agree protocols at the start
- Jointly agree an action plan
- Put all meeting dates in the diary up front

“PRD has strengthened our ability to work in partnership.”

## Approach

### Overview

The group met, formed, carried out their first review and jointly developed an action plan over a six month period.

The five members of the group met five times to set up their group and plan the review. The review took one day and involved the four reviewing members and the host. The group has met three times since then to develop their recommendations for joint actions regarding the transfer of data and to consider their next steps in terms of PRD.

### First review and feedback

The group chose data transfer as the theme for their first review. They all contributed information recorded on the electronic files held on each offender and recognised that improvements were necessary.

Their planning was thorough and included several meetings. They addressed the exact focus of the review and how they would collect the evidence including the design of a checklist based on the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) Key Elements of Effective Practice. Each member of the group took responsibility for a different aspect of the review which strengthened relationships between the members.

The one day review was conducted by the core group members. This meant less impact on the prison on the day of the review and a shared understanding of the aims.

The group tracked 12 offenders who were likely to return to the community in Stoke on Trent or Staffordshire within five to seven weeks of the review date. They looked at the entire process including inputs and outputs from the employment, training and education (ETE) section of the E Asset and Aspire management information systems. They compared this with the documentation held on the 12 offenders within the prison. They also spoke to a group of offenders.

The review team shared their findings at the end of the day and scheduled a date for the following month to consider recommendations. They produced a final report which included actions for every member of the group.

### Useful tips

- Spend time planning the review, agree the objectives and methodology and consider all the practicalities
- Use a template to record findings

“It was also good for the individual organisations' staff to see everyone working together during a time of uncertainty.”

- Consider using an existing or sector specific framework to help you make judgements
- Be objective and give feedback sensitively
- Use evidence to justify your feedback
- Encourage the host staff to be open and honest
- Leave some time between sharing findings and developing solutions so you can reflect on all of the implications of what you have found

### Next steps

The group reflected on their performance at the first review and agreed that they could have included practitioners in the review team.

The group intends to:

- continue to sample files to ensure the changes made following the review are being implemented and are effective
- share their findings with other YOS teams and the YJB
- carry out similar reviews with teams in other pathways e.g. accommodation
- embed PRD into the quality process at each of their organisations
- keep a file on PRD and its impact to show Ofsted.

### Useful tips

- Make sure that you evaluate the performance of the group and the review process so that you can identify improvements

### Results/ Impact

The review has:

- helped the two YOS improve their assessment in terms of E-Asset. This is a current key area of priority for all youth offending teams across the country. The review identified where they needed to improve
- enabled Stoke and Staffordshire YOS to develop and share a consistent way to measure and assess their offenders' needs
- informed Werrington's preparation for inspection.

### Lessons learnt

#### About PRD

- It isn't a bureaucratic process
- You are able to choose your agenda and make the process flexible to the group needs
- It is a practical platform for problem solving
- You can focus on the practicalities of an issue not just the theory
- It is a very inclusive process

"PRD will be so supportive when we move to Local Authority control."

#### About data transfer

- Connexions now have a greater understanding of the information systems used and how to transfer data from one system to another. They are in a better position and more prepared to take over the IAG provision at Werrington YOI
- As practitioners we may not think that we have the solutions to problems but through PRD and taking the time to focus on an issue we found that we did have the answers

### **Advice for those new to PRD**

- Just get on with it! It is not as complicated as you think
- Keep it simple and stay focussed
- Make sure everyone understands the action plan and are able to ask questions
- Be clear about role and responsibilities, including having a strong lead
- Be honest and open

### **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>