

# The Education & Training Foundation

## **Observations on a whole organisation approach pilot**

I first came into contact with the Education and Training Foundation when I received a phone call from Punam Khosla who wanted my views regarding education and training provision within our prison. The call lasted well over an hour and I remember commenting to the Weston College Manager at Dartmoor on how in depth the conversation was and how positive it was.

At a National Quality Improvement Group meeting at Petty France the ETF gave an overview of their current provision and how they would like to assist NOMs in raising the effectiveness of the current OLASS provision. I was extremely impressed by their enthusiasm and passion for teaching and improving provision throughout the service. I was particularly impressed with the approach of using sector experts to work with them and use their knowledge to deliver elements of best practise.

I was very keen to be part of this process as it gave me a chance to showcase the excellent work we do at Dartmoor especially around the activity induction and allocation process.

I only became a Head of Learning and Skills three years prior after twenty four years as a unified grade and relied heavily on other Heads of learning within the area especially Ian Napper at HMP Exeter and Barry Rees the area HOL's. I have had to learn everything from scratch including terminology and I found the whole process extremely confusing and realised very early that we need to make the whole process a lot easier to understand for all staff especially wing staff this would enable staff to buy into the process of getting prisoners into work and education. More recently I have used the ETF website which is very easy to use and can help with all aspects of education including preparation for OFSTED inspections, I am not particularly proficient with IT and I found it very easy to work through.

The key to all our processes is communication, every decision we make as a team is discussed at our weekly Quality Review Meetings (QRM) which I introduced early into my new role where we sit down and discuss the prior week's performance and issues for the coming week. This enabled me to understand each provider's processes and also give me the confidence to brief the senior management team and wing based staff. The QRM is chaired by myself and members include, Weston College managers, NCS practitioners, library team, industries and activities team. We meet as a team at least weekly which has led to a formidable activities team which promote the importance of both education and a good work ethic.

The first part of our improvement process from a very poor OFSTED in Dec 2011 was to look at the induction and allocation board. After a lot of development of the process we now have a very thorough induction allocation process which includes the following: on reception all prisoners receive an invitation to attend induction the following Monday or Tuesday. At this induction they are interviewed by NCS/Prospects who complete a comprehensive skills action plan which is typed up and placed on Quantum for all staff to access. Weston College also interview at this point to introduce current course available and invite all to complete BKSB assessments. OMU staff also carry out interviews with Section Four of the sentence plan when available to review progress against targets.

Following these assessments prisoners are also given an overview of services by Shannon Trust Mentors and Education Mentors as well as representatives from the safer custody team. All this information is then collated and taken forward to the allocation board which will take place within 48 hours. The same team sit on the board alongside wing staff when available and at this point we sequence the learner journey through their stay at Dartmoor we use all the current information gathered. The learner is then sent a copy of his planned journey and the OMU team are given all the paperwork and decisions making process to be stored in section four of the sentence plan. We would also make referrals to any other intervention such as offending behaviour teams or substance misuse.

The team ensure that prisoners who refuse to engage with the process or who refuse to work are dealt with by the IEP scheme, the key is to get the message out at reception and induction that all prisoners are required to work or take part in education unless they are exempt through a medical issue or age.

Our team ethos is the key to our progress and we have built this up by all working together and respecting each other's value in the process of reducing risk of re-offending and increasing employability opportunities.



I was asked by the ETF to look at the possibility of introducing a version of our induction and allocation board at Oakwood Prison as the process had been adopted by several prisons within our region. This would be introduced via a Collaborative Organisational Learning Pilot (COL) and the role was to get the team communicating and working together.

The first meeting took place at Oakwood on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015 and I was extremely apprehensive about going to another prison to try and get them to adopt some of their methods. On arrival at Oakwood with Punam from the ETF I was slightly overwhelmed by the sheer size and cleanliness of the prison. We were met by Dr Keith Hughes (cluster Head of Learning) at the gate and I thought this chap is more experienced than me and more knowledgeable and a Doctor of something. Punam put me at ease as we walked to education to meet Chris Harrison the Head of Activities for G4S at Oakwood. I feel it is fair to say that the first meeting was a little edgy as we did not know each other and they were probably a little suspicious of us. The purpose of the meeting was to look at the issues identified by the recent OFSTED, build up a team to implement any change as well as give an overview of the COL offer from the ETF.

One of the main issues that came apparent very quickly was the scale of Oakwood it held over 1500 prisoners on our first visit and may have 100 receptions per week. Due to the high numbers there was no allocation board as such as prisoners were not being sequenced through there sentence as effectively as they could be. Both Chris and Keith were very keen to work with us and the dates for the next three meetings were set and we all agreed on who should attend.

At the second meeting we met with Keith, Chris and representatives from NCS Milton Keynes College and a member of staff from the OMU department. It was clear that this group had never sat down in the forum to discuss each other's issues as some quick wins were identified very quickly such as Milton Keynes staff did not have release dates for prisoners and some left vocational courses early as they were released, OMU staff would supply release dates.

At the first meeting we had started to develop an action plan and we looked at populating this with persons responsible and timings. I gave an overview of the Dartmoor model and there were some issues around implementing it at Oakwood mainly due to footfall through reception and areas such as NCS and Weston College not being able to see some of the potential learners this led to some being placed on either the wrong course or dropping out. The third and fourth meeting came very quickly as Punam and I were on a very tight schedule and we had to get the pilot running within Oakwood by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

The third meeting I was not looking forward to particularly as I thought the process had stalled slightly but was pleasantly surprised by the amount of work that had taken place especially by the Milton Keynes team who had changed some of their promotional material for inductions. Punam could see that I was a little reserved at the beginning of the meeting due to my perceived lack of progress but we worked through the issues, this has helped my own development which was mainly down to Punam. The fourth meeting followed quickly and we agreed on several outcomes such as extending the induction process slightly to allow good quality assessments, greater use of Learner Mentors with inductions (Oakwood mentors are called OLIP's) and the introduction of bi weekly Quality Review Meetings including staff from all providers. The new induction process would be focused in one area on a trial basis.

We now have weekly telephone conferences to assess progress against the action plan.

On a personal note I have really enjoyed working with the ETF and staff from Oakwood and found the whole process very valuable for my own development. I have learnt that I need to develop patience when attempting to implement change and perhaps take a step back before trying to move forward.

We have a very good model at Dartmoor for inductions and allocation which can be adapted and used in most prisons. Our processes are not perfect but have been developed over the last three years through good communication which is the key in the whole process. It is very important to include all staff in the process especially the wing staff as they unlock the prisoners on the wings and get them to work.

Danny Branley, Head of Learning and Skills HMP Dartmoor

If you would like to receive support from the Education and Training Foundation to develop a whole organisation approach and then please email:

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