

3 | Communication

Examples

- An example of good listening is the PIPE service at HMP Gartree. The staff in trying to be helpful and keep residents updated, posted information under the cell door in paper form. However, they noticed that everyone was doing the same and the papers were becoming overwhelming. A suggestion was made to arrange the various pieces of information on a central table so residents could choose what information was relevant and helpful to them. This gave them a choice about how they were communicated with, which was better for everyone.
- A personal example I recall involved the first women's PD service to be developed within a prison at HMP/YOI Low Newton (Primrose). Despite regular presentations and information there remained much suspicion amongst staff and residents that we were going to bring in very dangerous problematic people. We took the decision to launch a charm offensive; we delivered PD awareness sessions to all staff at all levels and grades. We also delivered the same to groups of residents so everyone was fully informed at the same time. It was not all plain sailing, but it did make life easier for everyone involved and communication won the day.
- Communications can be a dry subject to work with - but I saw an excellent exercise at Adelaide House Approved Premises which brought it alive. A facilitator in a creative session invited residents to come up with a poster to demonstrate how communications work in Adelaide House. Members of staff did the same exercise on a development session. Most came up with very similar ideas. A small prize encouraged healthy competition, with all efforts posted throughout the building. They went on to make displays for all the EE standards using this method.
- Another way of encouraging good effective communications is by the use of a suggestion box on how we can improve communications where we live and work with a promise to introduce the best suggestions, allowing for expense and facility.
- Consider how information is being communicated around your building. Ask staff and residents to look at all the posters, notice boards, signage and see if it is good communication. Are most people who live and work in your place able to understand it? Is it a positive motivational message? Consider the impact of the words 'no ball games' versus 'responsible play welcomed here, please be careful'. Can messages be relayed in images rather than words? Can noticeboards be kept up to date and changed frequently?
- When changes come in people crave more communication to help manage uncertainty. Managers, how can you keep in contact with your staff? Peers, how do we keep in contact with each other? Consider exercises to do as an individual and or group. Having fun together is important too, especially when things are difficult. Make sure you capture all your work for future evidence. Small simple things can have a big impact. Keep a note and include in your portfolio.