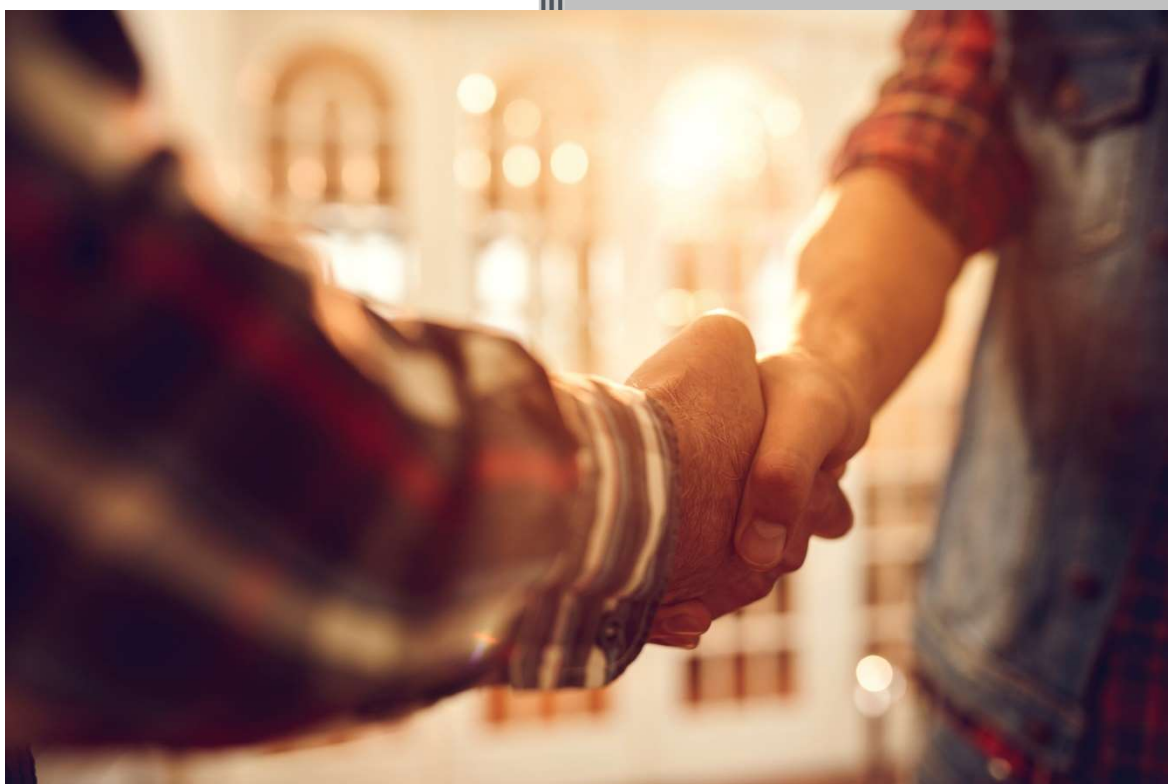




Prisons Awareness Course



The Welcome Directory has a simple yet powerful vision:

To help faith communities become places where people who leave prison find acceptance. A place to belong that not only nurtures faith but also offers appropriate practical support.

People are at the very heart of this work; people who have found the benefits of being part of a faith community whether inside or outside the prison gates. Those leaving prison have a name, a story as well as hopes and dreams for their lives beyond the prison gate.

Participant Workbook

The Welcome Directory



Session 1: Taster- Beyond the Prison Gates

Session Aim: For faith communities to explore the themes, ideas and information surrounding prison, imprisonment and release, leading to a greater understanding of the issues, such as the consequences of a prison sentence and the difference that support can make.

Starting Place Survey

Spend a few minutes filling out The Welcome Directory Attitudinal Awareness Survey. Your responses are anonymous and will help us work towards a rehabilitative society.

Note your position between 1 and 7

1. If someone who has left prison came to your faith community would you...
(1 keep your distance/ 7 accept them)
2. If someone who had left prison told you their story would you...
(1 be sceptical/ 7 seek to understand)
3. In your heart of hearts how do you feel towards people with a criminal past...
(1 judgemental/ 7 impartial)
4. If someone who had left prison and sought your help would you...
(1 point them in the direction of others/ 7 offer care and support)
5. If someone who had left prison sought your friendship would you...
(1 keep them at arms length/ 7 be open to being a friend)
6. If someone told you that they had been to prison would you allow that information...
(1 influence the present/ 7 be left in the past)

Complete the sentence

7. Prison is
8. Someone who has left prison
9. If someone who has left prison wanted to become a member of your faith community they would



Everything Changes at the Prison Gates

Approximately 80,000 leave prison every year. 15% of the prison population attends chaplaincy activities = 12,000 per year. About 1000 people who have been practicing their faith leave prison each month. Only about 20% go on to join a faith community.

So why do prisoners walk through the gates upon release and not always join us?

What are some of the reasons why they might they struggle to join a faith community beyond prison?

Hopes Video

What did you notice that stood out or surprised you?

Why does it matter?

What does it mean for me?



PRISONER FACTSHEET

The following statistics are taken from *The Bromley Briefings 2014/15; 2017: Prison Reform Trust*, the HM Chief Inspector for Prisons *Annual Report 2016-2017* (where marked with *), from the Ministry of Justice *Transforming Rehabilitation Guidance 2014* (where marked with a +) and *The Lammy Review, 2017* (where marked with ^).



15% prisoners were homeless before entering custody.
44% of prisoners reported living in their accommodation prior to custody for less than a year and 28% had lived there for less than six months.



59% regularly played truant from school.
32% of women and 43% of men were expelled or permanently excluded from school.
57% have literary skills expected of an 11-year-old.
20-30% have learning disabilities or difficulties that interfere with their ability to cope with the criminal justice system.
47% have no qualifications.



13% have never had a job.
81% of women and 67% of men were unemployed in the four weeks before custody.



65% of women, compared with 42% of men, said they had mental health issues. *
25% of women and 15% of men have symptoms indicative of psychosis.
46% of women and 21% of men have attempted suicide at some point.
27% of male prisoners declared a disability, likely to be linked to an increasingly ageing prison population. *



64% have used Class A drugs.
22% drank alcohol every day in the four weeks before custody.
66% of women and 38% of men in prison report committing offences in order to get money to buy drugs.
70% of prisoners had been drinking when they committed the offence for which they were in prison.
Nearly half of women in prison report having committed offences to support someone else's drug use.



48% of people in prison have a history of debt.
40% of prisoners and 64% of former prisoners felt that their debts had worsened during their sentence.
64% of prisoners said that they had claimed benefits during the 12 months before they went into prison.



31% of women and 24% of men were taken into care as a child.
53% of women and 27% of men experienced abuse as a child.
50% of women and 40% of men observed violence in the home as a child.
57% of women in prison report having been victims of domestic violence as adults. +
54% of prisoners have children under the age of 18.
25% of prisoners are from the BAME community (despite representing 14% of the population), while over 40% of young people in custody are from BAME backgrounds. ^



Understanding Backgrounds

What stands out to you? What impacts you? What surprises you?

Try to put yourself in the shoes of a prisoner and explore some of the challenges that you might face in prison and upon release.

Have a conversation as a group about your insights.

What Does Your Faith or Beliefs Have to Say?

Have a conversation about your faith and beliefs and its response to those who are imprisoned.

Particularly consider those who have finished or are about to finish their time in prison.

What Can Faith Communities Do?

Spend some time studying the ten words individually



ROLLERCOASTER

Over time most people give up crime but leaving this life can be like a rollercoaster. It is important for those who support people leaving prison to acknowledge that all recovery has its ups and downs and they should therefore be prepared to be disappointed from time to time. Resettlement is messy. Life is messy. Isn't it for everybody?

INCLUSION

Stopping criminal activity is supported strongly by having access to what is considered to be a normal life by being included in the wider community. Three key dimensions of being involved in a community are the capacity to purchase goods and services, involvement in economic and socially valuable activities and social inclusion with family friends and the wider community. Inclusion helps to curb feelings of shame, isolation and a reluctance to get involved.

ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance emerged as the most commonly cited theme in choosing a faith community. Participants experienced repeated rejection and isolation in the transition out of prison. Probation was a stigmatising experience, looking for jobs was often disheartening and re-connecting with family and friends could be fraught with old hurts and rejections. After repeated humiliations one person was relieved when he went to church and found "they treat me just like a normal person." He remained in the same church throughout the study. Being 'welcomed with open arms' offered participants respite from the difficult realities of transition. It was important that this welcome was felt to be "authentic", "familial", extended by "people who really care" and not dependent on non-deviance.

EXAMPLE

Participants said that volunteers helped them to change through providing opportunity, inspiration and example: opportunity to respond to the gift of caring relationships. Inspiration through seeing that others can do it and believe they can too, and example through modelling how to deal with difficulties and struggles in a positive community. Communities who are proactive and responsive in showing ways of both being and becoming 'good' are shown to help people leave crime behind.

SOLIDARITY

Through working with prisoners, volunteers came to understand that prisoners were not so 'other'. It is through solidarity that we have the hope of empathy - to feel the pain of the other and so to be moved to compassion. Compassion is one of the central acts of individual and communal faith - the practical outworking of virtue. Solidarity also leads us to understand our own potential to fail. It was Simone Weil in *Waiting for God* who says "I have the germ of all possible crimes, or nearly all, within me." 1951:7

DIFFICULT

Most criminals want to stop committing crime but leaving a life of crime is a difficult, slow, faltering, precarious struggle, involving episodes of relapse and recovery. Giving up crime is unlikely when the difficulties faced upon release are too great to overcome.

DISEMPOWERING

For people leaving prison life is limited in many ways: they are expected to take responsibility for their past actions and future responses, for themselves and for others, yet their power to choose is limited, freedoms are curbed and restrictions are placed upon important aspects of their lives. This is a confusing message. Limiting someone excludes them from the mainstream; they are different, to be watched and kept at arm's length. However, by being empowered to make decisions for themselves - something prison does not allow - people leaving prison can grow in confidence and personal responsibility.

BEFRIENDING

Knowing another person and being known by them in return has been shown to be a powerful factor in helping people change for the better. It is this openness to the other that nourishes human life and makes neighbourliness possible. However, being kept at a distance alienates and can lead to social exclusion.

TRUST

Many people believe that trust has to be earned, particularly people leaving prison. However, research shows that it is important to move beyond the question of whether a person is trustworthy to recognising that they are a person. By treating them as worthy because of their personhood we extend trust. This powerful and subversive act is a profoundly humanising one. The findings of this research suggest that perhaps being trusted is an inherent part of being, or becoming, trustworthy. As such, bestowing trust relies less on perfection and more on connection. However, when a person leaving prison is treated as a risk to be managed it can actually lead to an increase in reoffending as it tends to segregate and therefore dehumanise the person involved.

BELONGING

Faith communities are social communities that offer people a sense of belonging. This is one of the main benefits gained by joining a faith community. Worshipping with like-minded people who shared their beliefs and accepted them despite their past as well as being a place where people speak to you boosted self-confidence. The most important thing faith communities provide is connection with other human beings, practical help is secondary. Being involved in a faith community also provides a routine that is an important part of leaving old patterns of behaviour behind. Involvement in a faith community is made easier if they had established contact before release.



Then discuss your thoughts in response to these questions:

What stands out for you?

What encourages you?

What surprises you?

What is your faith community already doing that is on that list?

What could it do better?



Connections Video

In advance of session, watch the video called 'Connections' which can be found on the home page of our website.

What did you notice that stood out or surprised you?

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Why does it matter?

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What does it mean for me?

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Session 2: Experience- Faith In Prison

Session Aim: For faith communities worshipping outside the prison gates to have the opportunity to meet faith community members who have experience of worshipping within the prison walls, to get to know one another and celebrate their respective faith communities.

This session includes a host team made up of prison chaplains, prison leavers, community chaplains as well as staff from The Welcome Directory

Celebrating our Faith Communities

Introduce yourselves to one another.

Share with one another the various aspects of your own faith community that you are particularly thankful for. This might include time to share a story or to talk about aspects of your particular faith and the way it is practiced in your community that has helped you.

What do you love about it?

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Finding a New Faith Community upon Release

Spend some time together thinking about the process of leaving prison.

What might be the challenges?

What helps someone move from a faith community in prison to one in another neighbourhood?

What can faith communities on the outside do to better welcome and support people leaving prison?



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Giving Back

Spend time talking about what you hope to give back to your community.

What are you good at?

What have you got to give to others in an act of service?

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Session 3: Action- Who We Are

Session Aim: For faith communities to explore the connections between who faith communities are at their best and some of the themes that recent research has shown to help someone leaving prison make a new life that is free from crime.

Community Video

What did you notice that stood out or surprised you?

Why does it matter?

What does it mean for me?

Trusting the 'Untrustworthy'

What does safety for prison leavers with faith look like?

What does safety for faith communities look like?



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Can you think of a time when you were trusted or mistrusted? What were the consequences?

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“It’s hard to distinguish rumour from a report, fact from fiction, reliable source from dis-informant, truth teller, from deceiver. A crisis of trust can’t be overcome by a blind rush to play small trust. Our ambition is not to place trust blindly as small children do, but with good judgement.” Onora O’Neill, 2002.

Through your experience, how do you engage with this?

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What does our faith mean for how we do this well?

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Unlocking the Second Prison

How can we help to unlock the second prison?

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‘People transform themselves, we either facilitate it or hinder it.’

What do you think about this statement?

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How can faith communities help or hinder personal transformation?

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Our Faith Community has the Keys

A Community Made of **PEOPLE**

How might someone who has left prison in faith build new friendships in your community?

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What opportunities are there for this in your faith community?

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How might you help to sustain this?

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What issues might you encounter and how might you overcome them?

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A Community of People With **FAITH**

How might someone who has left prison in faith develop their faith in your community?

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What opportunities are there for this in your faith community?

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How might you help to sustain this?

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What issues might you encounter and how might you overcome them?

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A Community That Puts Their Faith Into **ACTION**

How might someone who has left prison in faith act on their faith in your community?

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What opportunities are there for this in your faith community?

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How might you help to sustain this?

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What issues might you encounter and how might you overcome them?

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Ending Place Survey

Spend a few minutes filling out The Welcome Directory Attitudinal Awareness Survey. Your responses are anonymous and will help us work towards a rehabilitative society.

Note your position between 1 and 7

2. If someone who has left prison came to your faith community would you...
(1 keep your distance/ 7 accept them)
3. If someone who had left prison told you their story would you...
(1 be sceptical/ 7 seek to understand)
4. In your heart of hearts how do you feel towards people with a criminal past...
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6. If someone who had left prison sought your friendship would you...



(1 keep them at arm's length/ 7 be open to being a friend)

7. If someone told you that they had been to prison would you allow that information...

(1 influence the present/ 7 be left in the past)

Complete the sentence

10. Prison is

11. Someone who has left prison

12. If someone who has left prison wanted to become a member of your faith community they would

What do you intend to do differently having completed the three sessions?

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Further Action

A Directory of Welcoming Communities

The directory enables individuals leaving prison, chaplaincy and resettlement teams to easily identify welcoming faith communities beyond the gates.

- **Searchable Online Map** - Our website includes a searchable map, displaying all registered faith communities
- **Physical Directory** - A physical copy of the registered faith communities

How Do I Register My Faith Community?

The form for registration can be found on the homepage of our website or via the QR code.

- **Permission** from Senior Faith Leader
- **Policy** for Safeguarding and named lead
- **Promoter** or 'Champion' who will advocate on issues relating to prisons within the faith community
- **Prison Link**, either through volunteering at a local prison, previous significant experience or completing the Prisons Awareness Course



How Can I Engage?

- **Stay Informed**
- **Pray**
- **Do-** Registering, Tell others who may be interested, Becoming an Ambassador, Meeting prison leavers at the gate
- **Give**

Other Sources of Information

