

# Putting Vision and Values to Work

by Tim Newell, Governor, HMP Grendon.

With the Prison Service's 'Purpose, Vision, Goals and Values' we have the basis on which we hope to work. Converting the concepts of Vision and Values to effect our daily actions can be difficult for us working in prison establishments when faced with the conflicts and uncertainties of change. Unless, however, we use opportunities to demonstrate our commitment to sustain fundamental beliefs in the nature of our work, we will lose the chance to work together in a common purpose.

There are many challenges to our values as we seek to counter the negative influences of overcrowding, the challenges of those in our charge and the changing environment of our relationships with each other. The way we perceive ourselves can challenge our values. If we continually feel negative about ourselves and our potential we will not be able to use our values to good effect.

Some of these ideas were explored in a seminar with prison staff enabled by the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, which carries out a wide range of educational programmes to help improve the quality of life of the individual and the community, and promote the development of human and spiritual values. The emphasis of the seminar on personal growth and awareness was reflected in subsequent discussions with some governors as being the greatest challenge for the Prison Service as we seek to consolidate changes of style in management systems, encouraging greater acceptance of responsibility within a flatter structure. Leadership will be called for at all levels to implement this revolution in our thinking and working. The value of individual commitment and growth of all staff, our most precious but diminishing resource, has never been more clearly identified as the key issue for a Service suffering from low morale collectively and poor self-esteem amongst many individuals.

## **Individual Development**

The focus on the individual as a human and a being runs counter to some perceived forces which dominate our emphasis on the delivery of outcomes. The costs of ignoring the full needs of individuals are dear in the levels of sickness, unfulfilled performance and low morale present at times. The need to emphasise the worth of each individual and to build the strengths in each of us was clear from the seminar.

## **Countering the Negative**

By focusing our vision of ourselves when circumstances are challenging we can see the task and the individual as quite distinct. We can learn from this situation by some detachment. The behaviour of others can be counter to our own expectations. Although we cannot always change how others behave we can alter our responses to their behaviour. However the way we perceive ourselves can challenge our values. If we continually feel negative about ourselves and our potential then we will not be able to use values to good effect. When faced with others' negative behaviour if we seek to do something constructive we have to look for the positive in others. In order to counter our own poor self-esteem we can learn what is of value in ourselves and how we have learnt from past mistakes. We can focus on what is powerful and positive in us and then behave positively to others and to the circumstances in which we work.

## **Stability Within**

The search for inner identity which acts as an anchor to provide us with stability is the foundation for change and growth. We all need help with this search and although there

are sources within prisons for this support the involvement of all staff in the process of change can make it difficult to maintain objectivity in this learning. The perception of an individual as a human and a being can assist in seeing the contrast between human emotions and the vision of the inner being driven by positive thinking and creativity. This is important in understanding how the potential in each of us can be developed and how we can alter the way we perceive challenging and pressured situations and how we behave subsequent to this analysis.

There is support available to those who wish to develop their awareness along the lines described. Those staff who attended the seminar know they tap into the learning of the Brahma Kumaris in understanding our nature and potential. It is available to all who seek it as we search for ways to live the Values of the Prison Service in our daily work.

- 1* The Brahma Kumaris can be contacted through Doug Stephenson, Global Retreat Centre, Nuneham Courtenay, Oxon, OX44 9PG, Tel:01865 343551, e-mail:[pris@uk.bkwsu.org](mailto:pris@uk.bkwsu.org)

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