What research says about how a focus on building healthy relationships contributes to EE making an impact, particularly around wellbeing

1. Maria Kordowicz, March 2019 - What perceived and observed impact has EE had on its HMPPS member settings?

With its value-driven standards, EE aims to promote and entrench improved human relationships both within the staff and service recipient groups, and between them, within the service setting. There is a wealth of literature supporting the nurturing of relationships organisationally for improved morale and performance[1], not least in prison settings.[2]

In the course of the research, staff reflected on how EE provided them with a toolkit which legitimised the more person-centred approaches they wanted to take with the residents, but may have been prevented from doing so due to the pre-existing culture within their setting:
"Doing EE genuinely made a massive difference to my life. In a prison environment where it's us and them merging that line where we are all looking after each other, made my life so much easier. I am the kind of person who likes to make connections with the residents, I feel it benefits their progress, but that can be looked down upon by the others. Having EE, and having management support it, gave me that extra confidence or protection if you like to be able to work in that way." (Staff Pp. 19).
Overwhelmingly, participants underlined the unprecedented improvement in the quality of relationships, within the staff team and between staff and service users. Participants also conveyed the role EE played in improved morale in the service setting. Overall, it was felt that change relating to relationships and morale was harder to evidence yet was a phenomenon that was implicitly felt and collectively experienced, leading to a much-improved working and service environment.

"Prisoners behave differently as a result they are more able to resolve to their issues in a polite and understanding way more and to talk about their problems. These get resolved more easily and staff are more open. This is harder to measure, but I believe we have had fewer incidents." (Staff Pp. 3)
"EE is a fantastic concept; it gets the staff and prisoners working together totally with the same aims and objectives – prisoners think it's a nice environment to live in." (RCPsych Pp. 1)
"The staff are really lovely, and it's been nice sitting down together writing the testimonies for the EE folder. We all got together round the kitchen table, it made me feel like others were interested in me and what I had to say, we all shared stories, I kind of felt like I belonged." (Resident Pp. 24)
"(EE) really helps with staff prisoner relationships. Gives a joint focus around the 10 standards. Joint training could not have gone any better." (RCPsych Pp.1)
"User Voice have come in to speak to the prisoners. Men have said that they have more of a voice and are able to express themselves. Time, group programmes, structure to the day and they value what they are doing. Staff training and expertise of staff – better able to de-escalate than react.

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1. Baumeister, R. & Leary, M. (1995). The need to belong: desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. Psychological Bulletin, 117(3), pp. 497-529.

2. Crewe, B. (2011). Soft power in prison: implications for staff–prisoner relationships, liberty and legitimacy. European Journal of Criminology, 8(6): pp. 455 – 468.

3. Liebling, A. and Crewe, B. (2014). 'Staff-prisoner relationships, moral performance, and privatisation', in Durnescu, I. and McNeill, F. Understanding Penal Practice. New York: Routledge, pp. 153-166.

There is an understanding that all behaviour has meaning rather than reacting to the behaviour, which has helped our men to feel understood." (Staff Pp. 7)

… "Because EE has created bit more of a relaxed environment the residents can speak to each other more because they know it's a safe environment to speak to others. It helps them go through their experiences with like-minded people and people who are genuinely there for them. This is where EE has made a difference. You see so many people go in and out for the same things and five minutes could have done so much more to help them change. All they need is a bit of support, hope and trust between the staff and residents to make them feel safe." (Staff Pp. 19)

"EE has made definitely made a difference – it helps us to work with individuals and overcome a sense of 'one size fits all'. So, for example we withdrew the warning system, which was punitive and tended to escalate situations and stress everyone out and also increased our rate of recalls, which was actually unfair. Instead, we opened up dialogue and involved residents in the decision-making and now we resolve things less formally and positively, without confrontation or fear of aggression. I think not only our staff, but also the residents feel safer here as a result." (Staff Pp. 16)

However, it was felt that at times of serious incidents within the prison settings, the 'command and control' culture would have a resurgence and here the values of EE have a role as a long-term strategy for debrief and relational support at times of organisational crisis:

"Having the space to stop and think will pay dividends vs. responding and thinking later, but prisons do not think in this way as you still have to keep the prison" (Staff Pp. 4)

The research drew out a number of themes, one being **Building a Culture of Trust**

There was a strong sense of EE helping to foster a culture of trust within the settings. This was achieved through the time taken to nurture relationships amongst and between staff and residents as a result of taking part in the programme. Trust was mentioned by numerous participants, either directly or indirectly, as underpinning better organisational culture, wellbeing and resident outcomes:

"I can always approach the staff, we get old residents coming to visit too and it feel like a family, like a community, this isn't something that I was used to, but seeing the signs up I think this EE thing is probably related to that, because there are all these quotes up on the walls to get us to get on with one another." (Resident Pp. 27)

"The staff are very good here, 'cause this is the vulnerable wing, so we get extra things to help us all get on, like those board games and we do crafts and things. The staff speak to us more, ask how we're feeling, make us feel more like a person you know? I'm much happier here." (Resident Pp. 23)

"The 'thank you' box is lovely 'cause we can tell the staff we appreciate what they do for us and we believe that they will keep fighting our corner." (Resident Pp. 28)

Furthermore, a sense of trust created in part by undergoing the EE process was seen as contributing to a reduction in incidents and an increased sense of safety amongst the staff and residents:

"There are less incidents here than elsewhere as the staff are really approachable. Respect is an earned thing and it's about building mutual respect. Like for instance when the staff understood that I need light duties due to my injury." (Resident Pp. 26)

"You get some bad ones, but generally we know the screws are here just to do their jobs and if we get treated with respect, we all get on, things are quiet, that's how I like them you know? You feel safer too because you know the screws are not out to get you." (Resident Pp. 29)

"Here things don't go 'tits up' as much, because if we see someone bringing in spice we tell the staff and we know it'll get dealt with because they trust us and we trust them, like I'll pat your back you pat mine sort of thing. We get listened to and taken seriously" (Resident Pp. 26)

"The (residents) will always tell me about drugs as they hate them on them. You still have the professionalism from our end, and you haven't broken that boundary but you're more a friend. That

way you get rid of cliques and we are all there as one. The (residents) have a sense of agency about their living environment. EE has really empowered the residents, because we all trust each other day to day, because at the end of the day we want to make things better and safer for one another."
(Staff Pp. 18)

Conclusion

The ten EE standards (belonging, boundaries, communication, development, involvement, safety, structure, empowerment, leadership and openness) are perceived to be 'common sense' by this study's participants help to create a trust infrastructure and challenge the traditional 'command and control' criminal justice culture. Instead, EE fosters a recognition of potential for change and human growth through collaborative and respectful interaction. This creates a sense of hope for residents, a concept which has been recognised as playing a key part in helping prisoner gain a sense of meaning from their imprisonment.

According to the evaluation participants, EE makes a difference to its members through a process of embedding relational working and person-centred 'common sense' values. EE helps to foster trust between staff and residents and within staff and resident groups. The focus on nurturing relationships which EE provides member settings with is seen to play a key role in improving organisational well-being and the resident experience. Better relationships resulting from EE are an enabler of a sense of safety within member settings. Crucially, EE gives staff and residents the tools need to challenge traditional authoritarian culture, shifting the focus to creating more compassionate prison and probation settings, ones where values lie at the core of rehabilitation. EE drives its members to achieve improved staff and service recipient morale and openness, and thus holds the potential to act as a springboard for the implementation of wider change policy within Her Majesty's prison and probation settings.

2. **Evidence-based reasons for embedding 'Enabling Environments' relational practice into the Criminal Justice System**

EE improves staff wellbeing

- Stress has been seen as the biggest impact on prison staff's health at work (Nurse, Woodcock & Ormsby, 2003), whilst emotional burnout has been reported to be linked to increased absenteeism (Gil-Monte et al., 2013; Harizanova & Tarnovska, 2013; Lambert et al., 2005)
- To reduce prison staff absenteeism, organisations should invest in improving employee job satisfaction and reducing job stress (Lambert et al., 2005)
- Implementing EE principles improved the quality of relationships in the staff team, improved staff morale, and led to fulfilling working lives (Kordowicz, 2018)
- Management, co-worker, supervisor, and community support lead to a higher sense of personal accomplishment at work (Gould et al., 2013; Lambert, 2007)
- Higher levels of job satisfaction are linked to lower levels of emotional burnout (Hockenberry, 2014; Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007; Lambert et al., 2012)
- EE was perceived to improve staff sickness absence in HMPPS settings (Kordowicz, 2018)

EE improves offender wellbeing

- Prison social climate has an influence on prisoner wellbeing (Wortley, 2002)
- Prisoners who rate their prison climate more negatively had more stress-related sick calls (Wright, 1993)
- EE creates a culture of trust, which impacts prisoner wellbeing (Kordowicz, 2018)
- Participation and involvement in prison improves prisoners' self-esteem and confidence, and increases their sense of responsibility (Brosens, 2018)
- Purposeful activity has been shown to be a protective factor against self-inflicted death in prisoners (Leese, Thomas & Snow, 2006)
- Perceptions of relationships with staff, safety, fairness, and care within a prison predicted health care satisfaction in prisoners (Ross, Liebling, & Tait, 2011)

EE improves safety of environment

- A positive social climate is associated with lower rates of violence (Friis & Helldin, 1994) and less aversive reactions to problematic situations (Eltink et al., 2015)
- Secure forensic settings with a more positive atmosphere were associated with lower levels of aggression (Robinson, Craig, & Tonkin, 2016), and higher ratings of group cohesion are also associated with less aggression (Tonkin et al., 2012)
- Increases in trust contribute to a reduction of incidents and an increased sense of safety amongst staff and residents (Kordowicz, 2018)
- Listening to prisoners' concerns leads to a more stable environment (Solomon & Edgar, 2004)
- Better understanding between prisoners and staff led to improved safety and security within a prison (Bishop, 2006)