

CHECKPOINTS FOR VIOLENCE REDUCTION

Introduction

Checkpoints for prisons aim to raise awareness of non-violence, to enable prisons to add a specific violence-prevention perspective to all aspects of their work, and to evaluate their progress. The process will support the overall aims of prisons in raising standards of work and behaviour. Checkpoints focus on a prison as a community within a wider community, working with appropriate partners towards the common goal of a non-violent society.

Throughout this document, violence is defined as behaviour which causes physical or psychological harm. This work is adapted from questions pioneered in school but can be translated into the prison setting.

Why people become violent

Violence is a learnt behaviour. Its roots lie in childhood. The best predictor of violence in adulthood is violent behaviour in childhood. But it is never inevitable that an individual child will become violent. Even high risk children, given support, can be prevented from becoming violent.

Recent findings show:

- 40 to 60 per cent of children are bullied at some stage in their school life;
- most children are physically punished at home; one-fifth have been hit with implements;
- one in four women have experienced an act of violence at the hands of a partner at some time in their lives. Children are in the same or next room in 90 per cent of incidents;
- young men are particularly vulnerable to violence. Thirty-four per cent of young men know someone who has been the victim of an assault in the past year.

What can prisons do?

People have a right to be held in a safe environment and every member of the prison community is equally entitled to that right. Prisons are well placed to promote non-violence and encourage everyone to deal with conflict peaceably. Strong partnerships between a prison, homes, independent monitoring boards and others prevent the prison from

becoming isolated in its aims and its efforts. All members of the prison community can benefit from such partnerships.

Violence-prevention is a central feature of a prison's ethos; it can permeate the whole regime and serve as a basis for the promotion of self-esteem and personal development. For some people, the prison represents a sense of security and close contact with authority figures in a rapidly changing and often hostile world. There is an urgent need for sustained action to counteract violence and its effects. Although most people are subject to powerful influences outside prison, an awareness of the dangers of aggression and threatening behaviour can equip people with the skills to avoid violence, and face conflict with confidence but without violence.

How checkpoints can help

Checkpoints will help prisons adopt and develop the following aims:

- to raise awareness of the need for a strategy for violence-prevention;
- to show that violence-prevention is everyone's responsibility;
- to gain a commitment to non-violence from all members of the prison community;
- to establish non-violence as an on-going high priority for the whole prison;
- to audit violence-prevention practices in the prison regularly.

Organisation of Checkpoints

Part 1 looks at how your prison is addressing violence and gives guidance for further action. It is divided into Checkpoint lists, each focusing on a different aspect of prison life. Each Checkpoint list consists of ten statements – tick either: in place; proposed; or not in place. Analysing these lists will give you a good indication of where action is required.

Part 2 provides explanatory notes for each statement within the Checkpoint lists.

Putting checkpoints in place

In order to establish the position, the prison might consider adopting the following statement of commitment together with the process for applying Checkpoints:

We aim to be a violence-free prison and work with others towards a non-violent society.

Process for applying Checkpoints

1. A strategy for establishing Checkpoints will be formulated.
2. The commitment will be adopted and endorsed by prisoners, staff, parents and Independent Management Board and shown prominently in the establishment's statements of aims and policies.
3. The establishment will make known its commitment and seek to form links with local and other agencies making a contribution to violence-prevention.
4. Checkpoints will be related to other prison policies and practices.
5. The Checkpoints web will be completed for audit purposes.
6. Items not 'in place' or 'proposed' will be addressed systematically.
7. Checkpoints will be established as an on-going process, with built-in monitoring and evaluation.

Checkpoints 1. Home, prison and community

A prison is a community within a wider community. Like every person within it, a prison as a whole deserves to be protected, supported and nurtured. But however it is safeguarded, it cannot be isolated from the outside world.

Staff, prisoners and the local community play an essential part in the formation of a positive prison ethos. Policies promoting non-violence are more effective if parents and the local community are involved in their development and, just as a prisoner's home circumstances may influence their behaviour in prison, so the prison can influence their behaviour outside. Prisons could be well-placed to support those who are experiencing emotional and other difficulties.

Checkpoint	in place	proposed	not in place
1. The prison works closely with parents and community providing information and opportunities for discussion and encouraging involvement in the development of non-violence policies.			
2. The 'contract' or agreement between home and prison includes a specific commitment to non-violence, and gives guidance on how parents can help implement policy both at home and at the establishment.			
3. Links are made with local community groups and external agencies in respect of violence-prevention.			
4. The prison publicises its commitment to violence-prevention through its newsletter and by other means.			
5. Agreed standards of behaviour apply to all members of the prison community and to visitors.			
6. The prison makes clear that non-violent behaviour is also expected outside, at home and in the family.			
7. Examples of strategies for violence-avoidance are presented throughout the regime curriculum and promoted in all prison policies.			
8. The prison is clear and consistent in dealing with violent incidents that may amount to criminal behaviour.			
9. The prison takes careful note of violence in the local community that might affect any of its trainees.			
10. The local press supports the prison in helping to build a good reputation as a safe, non-violent community.			

Checkpoints 2. Values

Every prison decides what its values are. Values apply to self, relationships, society and the environment. These values support the general principles of equality. It is made clear that disrespect based, for example, on gender, ethnic origin, religion, culture, disability, sexual orientation or other attribute is unacceptable and will be challenged. Formulating values is important to the personal development of each individual and to the health of the establishment as a community.

All violence is unacceptable. The right of all members of the establishment to a safe, violence-free experience is acknowledged as fundamental to the establishment's ethos.

Checkpoint	in place	proposed	not in place
1. Creating a settled, non-violent, positive atmosphere is accepted by all as an important aim.			
2. All members of the prison community participate in the development of a Code of Conduct which specifies non-violence and is prominently displayed throughout the prison.			
3. It is understood that the prison's values apply both inside and outside.			
4. The prison ensures that its rules do not contradict external regulations or laws relating to violence-prevention.			
5. Good relationships are consistently fostered, and all staff model non-violent behaviour.			
6. Mutual respect is consistently promoted and expected of everyone.			
7. The prison helps everyone to adopt a sense of responsibility for one another and for the prison community.			
8. Violent language, the violent use of language and name-calling are consistently discouraged.			
9. All disciplinary measures are non-violent and appropriate to the individual's stage of development.			
10. Positive non-violent behaviour is noted and commended and all opportunities are taken to promote the values of the prison community to all its members.			

Checkpoints 3. Organisation

In establishing non-violence as a requirement of a healthy community, it is important for existing policy documents to be revised and, where necessary, amended. The strategies to prevent and reduce violence have been agreed through consensus-building and are consistently applied.

Checkpoint	in place	proposed	not in place
1. There is a budget for the implementation of non-violence policies.			
2. The induction of new trainees, staff, support staff and Independent Monitoring Board members covers non-violence policies and procedures.			
3. The regime timetable and daily routines are scrutinised to ensure they do not contribute to aggressive or violent behaviour.			
4. The prison ensures that its rules do not become a cause of conflict and lead to aggressive or violent behaviour.			
5. Trainees/prisoners regularly discuss violence-prevention, at group meetings or in prisoner consultation groups, preferably supported with a budget.			
6. There are prisoner and staff mediators and all members of the prison community are encouraged to seek help and advice if needed.			
7. Vulnerable and aggressive prisoners are identified early and supportive strategies devised to pre-empt difficulty. Prisoners themselves and, as appropriate, parents are involved.			
8. A record is kept of violent incidents and a regular, confidential survey of bullying and victimisation is carried out.			
9. All members of the prison are familiar with emergency procedures including those relating to visitors and strangers.			
10. All staff know who the designated person for child protection matters is and are familiar with procedures on disclosure, and guidance on child protection.			

Checkpoints 4. Environment

The quality, visual appearance and security of the premises greatly influence the way people work, associate and relate to one another. Effective development and learning need an environment that matches the establishment's aims. Everyone benefits from being comfortable, safe and unhindered.

Checkpoint	in place	proposed	not in place
1. Prisoners share in the management of the prison environment, to reduce opportunities for violent and aggressive behaviour.			
2. The premises are visually attractive with high quality display that is relevant, well-positioned and regularly updated.			
3. Movement is free-flowing; overcrowding is avoided.			
4. Suitable furniture and carpeted areas are provided, to allow for co-operative, non-violent interaction.			
5. Buildings, facilities and equipment are treated with respect and litter or vandalism dealt with promptly, to prevent escalation.			
6. Indoor temperature, lighting and ventilation are of an appropriate standard and regularly checked, creating an environment conducive to non-violent behaviour.			
7. Outdoor spaces have designated social areas, shelter and safe places.			
8. A health and safety risk assessment is carried out with maintenance completed regularly.			
9. Expert advice on security is available and security measures are installed.			
10. There is safe-keeping for prisoners' belongings and arrangements for lost property.			

Checkpoints 5. Regime

Since violence in society is seen to be common, violence-prevention must be a high priority in the establishment regime. The regime provides opportunities for young people to gain self-confidence and self-esteem, building relationships, and learning to respect, value and care for others without prejudice or discrimination. All unified and specialist staff can individually develop their own work to include and promote non-violence. Violence-prevention programs are most effective when developed in collaboration with prisoners, families, Independent Monitoring Board members and the wider community.

Checkpoint	in place	proposed	not in place
1. Non-violence is prominent in the planning and delivery of the regime and the prison's development.			
2. Prisoners are taught about violence, its types and consequences, and non-violent alternatives.			
3. Non-violence is presented in interactive ways and prisoners with varying needs and interests are accommodated.			
4. Non-violence is demonstrated, for example in physical education, where emphasis is placed on co-operation, team-spirit and accepting arbitration.			
5. A Sentence Plan focuses on the whole person and the importance of non-violent behaviour, defining both duties and responsibilities.			
6. Opportunities are provided for prisoners to acquire relationship skills – such as parenting – with an emphasis on non-violence.			
7. Extra activities which encourage co-operation and non-violent interaction during weekends and breaks are provided to involve prisoners at otherwise unfocused times.			
8. Media influence relating to violence is studied and the development of critical viewing skills is encouraged.			
9. Representatives of outside agencies concerned with preventing violence and providing information about help-lines and other support contribute to the regime.			
10. Specific advice is given on personal safety.			

Checkpoints 6. Training

To reinforce non-violence in the regime in policies and in setting examples, regular training for all staff is provided. Discussion between staff, prisoners, parents and Independent Monitoring Board members on violence, its causes and effects and why non-violence is a priority for the prison, is invaluable. Induction and in-service training in specific aspects of non-violence may be provided for designated persons and links formed with other prisons and agencies. The following is a list of some of the areas a non-violence training program might include.

Checkpoint	in place	proposed	not in place
1. The different types of violence – physical and non-physical, their causes and consequences.			
2. Anatomy of a violent incident: danger signals; involvement or witnessing; the aftermath.			
3. The roots of violence in conflicts and disputes are widely understood.			
4. The relationship between violence and power, feelings and behaviour, and the value of positive discipline.			
5. How changes in a person's personal life can result in changed behaviour.			
6. Breaking the 'cycles of violence'.			
7. Halting the progression from disagreement, anger, aggression to violence.			
8. Problem-solving techniques used to prevent conflict escalating into violence.			
9. Being a good listener and a reliable witness.			
10. Violence, prisoners, staff and the law.			

Checkpoint 7. Other establishment initiatives

Every prison community is unique. Its particular, local circumstances will determine the way it operates. Non-violence will have been addressed in various ways. This section invites prisons to add any successful practice not covered elsewhere in Checkpoints.

Checkpoint	in place	proposed
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Explanatory notes for Checkpoints 1-6

Checkpoints 1. Home, prison and community

1 A structured arrangement is made, which includes prison Independent Monitoring Board, to ensure that regular communication between the prison and family takes place. Formal meetings, educational and social events form a home/establishment program that strengthens liaison for the benefit of individual prisoner and the prison as a community.
2 Non-violence is included in the agenda of meetings with new families, and general meetings in the establishment meetings with staff.
3 Links are made with all bodies perceived to be working effectively on violence-prevention, including, for example, the local community safety team, area child protection committee, health authority, social services, neighbourhood watch, young offenders unit, police and the Youth Justice Board.
4 Publicise the prison as 'purposeful, orderly, positive, collaborative' using regular communication through newsletters, notice-boards and prisoners' diaries.
5 Standards are agreed by all staff, regularly reviewed, disseminated widely and made visible to all staff and visitors. Mutual respect and tolerance are promoted.
6 Consistent emphasis is placed on self-control, personal responsibility and self-esteem. In order to help the development of these personal qualities, all forms of violent discipline and other humiliating punishments are discouraged. Positive discipline is consistently promoted.
7 Prisoners study a variety of contemporary conflict situations, in both personal and social contexts, and the attempts made to resolve them (one example could be sporting referees). They are shown everyday examples of conflict resolution. Wing Meetings and prisoner councils play a central part in this learning process.
8 A clear understanding is established by everyone of what the prison deals with and what it does not. The prison calls on appropriate external agencies as necessary. The whole prison community is made aware of the circumstances in which serious incidents – involving either criminal or potentially dangerous activity – will involve the police.
9 Community liaison and information channels are established, for example, through youth clubs, church groups and residents' associations.
10 The prison is pro-active towards the press, particularly local, providing news, pictures and reports on successes. Working relationships with local social services journalists are cultivated.

Checkpoint 2. Values

1 What most parents and communities want from a prison is an environment to which they can entrust their people. For many families this is important in that there will have been lost opportunities before.
2 Prisoners and staff are all subject to the requirements of the Code of Conduct. Their involvement in its construction strengthens its effectiveness and consistent application.
3 Good citizenship is underpinned by a universal understanding that violence is unacceptable in every circumstance. Prisoners cannot learn too early that conforming to a high standard of behaviour in the prison community is poor training if their behaviour when released falls below that standard.
4 Regulations apply to all prisons on most issues, although additional local guidelines may be in place. The stand the prison takes on deciding how to apply the regulations needs to be precise and understood by all.
5 Staff training in the use of conflict resolution strategies is vital. Examples set by adults are a powerful lesson to young people and serve to reinforce policy and good practice.
6 Disrespect shown by any member of the prison community or visitor is equally unacceptable and not overlooked.
7 Several prisons have successfully involved prisoners as 'buddies', 'peace-makers' or peer counsellors as part of a strategy encouraging mutual support and promoting a sense of mutual responsibility.
8 Many common words and phrases imply violence. Their use can condition our thinking and suggest an acceptance of violence. An opposing team, for example, is not 'the enemy' and dots on a page need not be 'bullet points'. 'Taking a stab at it' is particularly violent. It is also well-known, and confirmed by people, that name-calling is extremely hurtful.
9 It is helpful for staff to have information on normal child development and variations in development in order for them to match their expectations of the prisoners to their physical and emotional maturity. Disciplinary measures are always non-violent, avoiding both physical and psychological harm or humiliation. Segregation is seen as a form of rejection and is, therefore, only a last resort.
10 Examples of respect, empathy and other pro-social behaviour are acknowledged and recorded. Masculinity and toughness are not presented or accepted as synonymous; femininity is not associated with weakness.

Checkpoint 3. Organisation

1 Policies that carry a dedicated budget are more likely to stimulate action, regular review and updating.
2 All new prisoners and staff are briefed on non-violence policies and procedures. Note is taken of the scale of both prisoner and staff turnover to ensure that non-violence maintains a consistent high priority throughout the prison.
3 The structure of the day, like the environment or the architecture, can have an effect on trainee/prisoner behaviour. Close attention to the juxtaposition of activities, length of breaks, time allowed for movement, accessibility to equipment and belongings, for example, can help greatly to eliminate 'pressure points'.
4 Careful scrutiny of policies and rules is an effective means of eliminating anomalies that, in themselves, can create problems or circumstances that invite indiscipline. A precise definition of acceptable clothing, for example, is almost bound to cause dispute, firstly because peer influence is strong and, secondly, because a rule that aims to establish consistency may be inconsistently applied.
5 Where group meetings or a prisoner council is built into routines, prisoners are more likely to adopt readily the principles of empathy and respect. The positive and negative effects of peer pressure can be explored and the need to establish norms against violence emphasised.
6 Mediation between staff-prisoner and prisoner-prisoner, as well as staff-staff provides a framework for developing skills in anger-management, conflict resolution and resisting adverse peer pressure.
7 Early warnings of potential difficulty are acted upon, with the prompt involvement of families. Support is provided for prisoners with specific learning difficulties and those with a need for personal skills development. All staff are kept informed.
8 All staff note and report incidents of verbal or physical violence. Records will illustrate trends and suggest measures to be taken.
9 Regular checks are made to ensure that emergency procedures are in place, well-understood and practised routinely. Security measures – CCTV for example – are only effective with the appropriate arrangements for monitoring.
10 All staff are required to be alert to signs of abuse and know to whom they report any concerns or suspicions. A designated, trained member of staff is responsible for co-ordinating action within the institution and liaison with other agencies.

Checkpoint 4. Environment

1 Prisoners can be involved effectively at all stages: in consultation, monitoring and reporting problems, and as members of a 'safe establishment committee'.
2 Research shows that colour can affect mood. Clean, attractive premises are conducive to good learning and good behaviour.
3 Overcrowding can be alleviated by staggered breaks, or responsible prisoners guiding other trainees at strategic points, for example at staircases and landings. Routes through the establishment are sign-posted.
4 Noise reduction is an important objective. Carpeting, attractive visual decor, furnishing and plants enhance the working environment. Furniture appropriate to the age of prisoners is essential. Round dining tables create a more sociable atmosphere.
5 Any maintenance work is carried out promptly. Works staff are centrally involved in shaping policy for a non-violent environment. Sufficient litter bins are provided and prisoners take a positive interest in maintaining high standards.
6 Personal comfort has an important bearing on mood, helping to minimise potential aggression.
7 Safe places for prisoners to meet, with a variety of resources are provided. Outdoor spaces have clearly designated areas for sport and physical activities.
8 The establishment site is kept clear of potentially dangerous items that might be used for aggressive purposes, for example: broken bricks, glass, metal objects and tools. Health and safety considerations include basic human needs: clean toilets, showers, drinking water and nutritious food.
9 Security devices act as partial deterrent; the involvement of personnel in patrols and regular observation can help to give members of the prison community confidence in their safety.
10 An efficient system removes the source of friction and anxiety. Prisoners are restricted in having valuable or unnecessary possessions in the prison.

Checkpoint 5. Regime

1 Non-violence appears in the regime in its own right. Staff and specialists investigate how non-violence can be promoted in their area of activity taking into account the context in which violence occurs.
2 Prisoners are helped to understand what is meant by violence, both physical and non-physical. They learn about different forms of violence, such as bullying, family violence, racial violence, sexual abuse, violence in the media, and war.
3 Prisoners address violence, not only in an intellectual or academic way, but through role-play, drama and debate. Interactive learning methods are far more engaging than lectures. Programs which rely heavily on printed information are ineffective because they fail to establish and develop the necessary skills.
4 Opportunities arise across the regime for studying the consequences of violence in specific cases, for example in education - history or literature, and formulating alternative, non-violent outcomes.
5 A Personal Sentence Plan which focuses on each prisoner as an individual and which has a prominent place in the regime, provides the context in which to foster non-violence in respect of values, attitudes and behaviour.
6 In parenting programs, prisoners learn about the alternatives to smacking, for example, and the subsequent benefits for family life.
7 Gymnasium games, physical activities and sports are usually competitive and may involve controlled aggression. There must be rules. Being a good loser – without anger or resentment – is as important as not being a boastful winner. Key personal skills, such as problem-solving and empathy can be developed equally well in football as in chess.
8 All prisoners develop the skills to distinguish between factual and fictional violence, including choreographed violence, violence 'played up' for the camera, realistic fiction, comic violence and actual violence. Activities in the wing – other than watching television – are strongly encouraged.
9 Visiting speakers and practitioners from organisations which run telephone help lines ensure that prisoners are aware of the assistance available to them.
10 The prison considers the need for personal safety training for both staff and prisoners.

Checkpoint 6. Training

<p>1 Staff are made aware of the various manifestations of physical and non-physical violence. They understand that the roots of violent behaviour lie in childhood and recognise the risk factors associated with people developing violent attitudes.</p>
<p>2 Anatomy of a violent incident: analysing violent incidents and separating the constituent parts provide a good lesson in how to act effectively. A simple formula – anticipation, behaviour, consequence – is a useful guide to the process of analysis.</p>
<p>3 The risks of being victimised, for example by theft of property, verbal/racist abuse, fraud, as well as bullying, create the conditions in which prisoners might be tempted to use violence to defend their interests. Staff need to be aware that maintaining safety from all forms of victimisation can prevent disputes that result in violence.</p>
<p>4 Analysis of the causes of conflict often reveals a close relationship between the desire for or the possession of power and the use of violence. Disassociating these two factors helps promote understanding and can guide preventive action.</p>
<p>5 There is a need for information, understanding and sensitivity when dealing with aggressive or violent incidents. It is necessary to know what action can be taken to support a young person and change behaviour.</p>
<p>6 Staff understand that violence is a learnt behaviour, that violence generates violence, and that the influence of generation upon generation has to be challenged. A community that aspires to non-violence is prepared to challenge violence and intervene.</p>
<p>7 It is frequently the case that violence occurs as a result of an escalation from resolvable conflict. Role-play is a useful training method for demonstrating this and suggesting how acceptable solutions can be found.</p>
<p>8 Staff training in non-violence can be doubly effective when closely related to prisoners' own deliberations. A common agenda is a powerful tool. Training breaks also provide a valuable opportunity for staff to address their values and attitudes and define ways in which prisoners can be drawn into addressing difficult issues.</p>
<p>9 Accurate reporting of incidents is a pre-requisite of all follow-up action, particularly where official reports are required. Describing an assault, for example, requires particular skills of observation.</p>
<p>10 Changes in the law and regulations relevant to custodial staff, and the complex demands made of staff require them to review, update and add to their knowledge. Regulations on the restraint of prisoners, for example, are particularly important in the context of the establishment's work towards a non-violent society.</p>