

Mediation within a Prison setting

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Introduction

- The Red Cross programme was established in Castlerea Prison in 2013
- The conflict awareness and resolution workshops were established in 2015, in response to a perceived need within the community.
- There was a series of pilot workshops before it was decided to roll them out to the general population.
- There was a significant reduction in prison violence.
- In 2017 Castlerea Prison received the prestigious Special Status Award in Croke Park for this programme from the Red Cross.
- After its subsequent roll out and success the resolution aspect of the workshop became significant.
- It was discovered that participants were in effect attempting to mediate without the skills, knowledge or boundaries in place.
- The Midlands Traveller Community Mediation Initiative (MTCMI) were invited into Castlerea Prison to discuss the prospect of a collaborative training initiative within a custodial setting.

Peer Mediation in Castlerea Prison – Dr Ian Marder

- *The first peer mediation programme ran in autumn 2016 and involved 21 persons, 11 of whom identified as members of the Traveller Community, reflecting the demographics of the prison. The Midlands Traveller Community Mediation Initiative were partners in developing this programme.*
- *The first programme met or exceeded their expectations, that confidence levels were raised, and that additional time for learning was desired*
- *After this, a second programme was delivered to the same group, focusing on practical mediation and conflict coaching skills. Both parts of the programme lasted six weeks and aimed to develop a pool of people who could provide conflict resolution interventions among their peers. At the end of the second part, a Mediators' Institute of Ireland (MII) accredited mediator assessed the participants on their mediation skills. This led participants to request an opportunity to gain full MII accreditation, and to the development of a bespoke 12-week programme to enable this.*

Peer Mediation in Castlerea Prison – Dr Ian Marder

- *The most recent programme, which aimed for students to qualify for MII accreditation, was developed in collaboration between the Maynooth University Edward Kennedy Institute for Conflict Intervention, the Traveller Mediation Service and staff from the Education and Training Board (ETB) within the prison. It ran for two half-days weekly over twelve weeks in late 2019.*

Observation by Prison Management

- *For Operational management of the Prison, a cultural see change has evolved over these short years, whereby violence has reduced, whereby a solution to conflict exists and is referred to by operational managers and by prisoners. Trust has been established by prison managers in the peer mediation process and the prison population display their trust and faith in the process by engaging with mediation. At each juncture, since conflict awareness, a collaborative partnership have had to discover the roadmap to the next stage (conflict resolution, peer mediation, accredited mediation) to maintain the energy available from the prison population in best managing conflict in their community.*

Custodial Setting

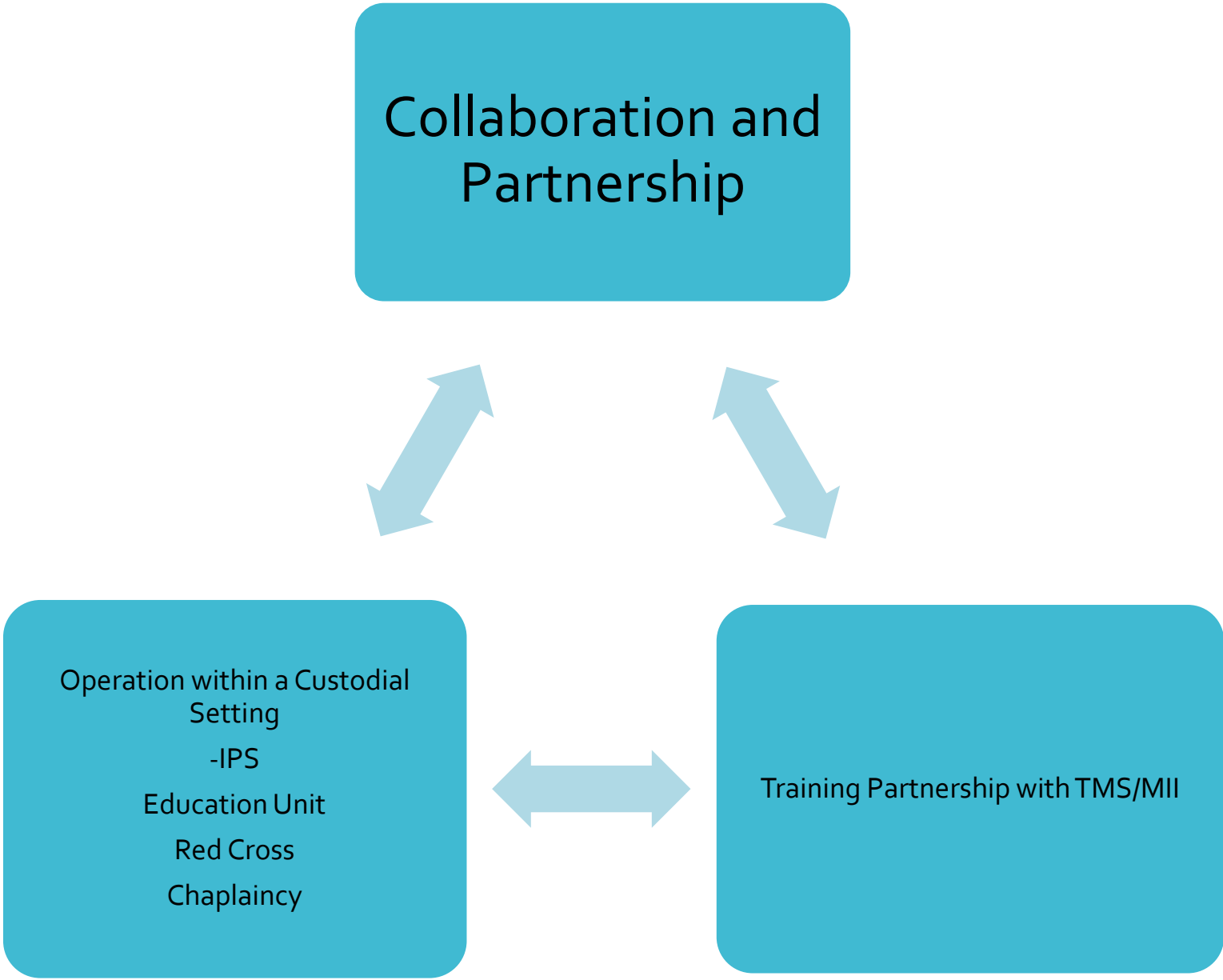
In this setting, the lived and shared experience and understanding of this culture is integral to the success of this training.

The initial collaboration with IPS, particularly management who had already had been trained as mediators, gave this programme its strong foundation

It was also accepted and encouraged by the IPS and ETB management that the teachers should also be trained as mediators.

Throughout Covid mediation has continued. The strength of this programme in Castlerea is down to the dedication of the trained mediators and the full support of IPS/ETB management and teachers.

The trained mediators within the custodial setting should be encouraged to develop a prison specific training programme. In partnership with the IPS, ETB and TMS.



Workshop Participants



A Final Thought...

- *"It has completely changed the way I think"*
(Participant from the course)