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Your reference

Our reference

Date

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## Explore Behind Bars

We have been working with Explore (formerly SEM) at Warren Hill Young Offender Institution for four years, pioneering the partnership within the juvenile (under 18) secure estate. Our trainees, most serving relatively short custodial sentences, have missed out on education and social development to the extent that engaging them in learning opportunities voluntarily is an uphill task. Explore took on the challenge aided by a Warren Hill Officer sympathetic to the scheme, plus drinks and biscuits!

The standard pattern of delivery had to be customised to the peculiar institutional circumstances and over time the marketing of the service was modified to suit and attract the clientele, bearing in mind it was competing with free association and games time. Special couples also had to be found who were willing and able to operate naturally in this environment.

It has been a success. Sometimes numbers have not been sustained on courses and there have been organisational glitches. But a high level of commitment has been gained from the lads to the aims and processes of each course. The strength of the Explore course (where incidentally we have struggled for a more relevant title) is that it required young men to lead an exploration of the relationship and family issues that are on their minds – and the range is huge:- in one 12 session Workshop the trainees covered money, work, elderly in-laws, trust, sex, contraception, children/drink/drugs, bad habits, violence, health problems, conflict resolution and other subjects.

Every course has its own life and emphasis so outcomes vary accordingly. But I am convinced that the testing of their thinking, the requirement for responsible approach and behaviour and the new information/perspectives gained enable the young men to make wiser choices for their future.



S R Robinson  
Governor

16<sup>th</sup> November 2006