**HIDDEN HEROES**

Below is a transcript of the feedback from the breakout session following Helen Arnold’s talk entitled “Hidden Heroes”. Delegates were asked to reflect on the job of the prison officer, the demands they face, and the knowledge and skills required to perform their roles effectively; and to feed back: three things you need to be a good prison officer; one thing that gets you up in the morning; and two things that make prison officers special.

**Group A**

Three things you need to be a good prison officer

* Team spirit & camaraderie
* Adaptable to change
* Communication

One thing that gets you up in the morning

* Enjoyment and pride; making a positive out of a negative; there were so many reasons that our group all had their own personal reasons as well

Two things that make prison officers special

* Resilience
* Bravery

**Group B**

Three things you need to be a good prison officer

* You need to be their Mum, their Nan
* A really good listener
* Empathetic (not sympathetic)

One thing that gets you up in the morning

* Enjoyment of the job

Two things that make prison officers special

* Teamwork
* Camaraderie

**Group C**

Three things you need to be a good prison officer

* Basic training and basic awareness
* Banter and communication
* Resilience

One thing that gets you up in the morning

* Our colleagues, and working together

Two things that make prison officers special

* A sense of humour
* Adaptability

**Group D**

Three things you need to be a good prison officer

* Integrity
* Good interpersonal skills
* Make your own boundaries and be brave

One thing that gets you up in the morning

* Stability, camaraderie and variety: no day is the same

Two things that make prison officers special

* We don’t want to let our colleagues, or prisoners, down
* Resilience and ability to bounce back

**Group E**

Three things you need to be a good prison officer

* Adaptability: we take one hat off and put another hat on
* Resilience: we are emotionally resilient in very trying circumstances
* A dark sense of humour

One thing that gets you up in the morning

* Job satisfaction: taking pride in the fact that we do make a difference and we help people in crisis

Two things that make prison officers special

* Motivated, proactive and emotionally intelligent: we can read situations
* We don’t recognise ourselves as anything special: we just do it because it’s what’s we do

**Group F**

Three things you need to be a good prison officer

* Good interpersonal skills
* Integrity: enforcing the rules but being fair and transparent about why you’re doing things
* Flexibility: being able to pick when you enforce certain rules and how stringent you are with those in order to maintain respect and rapport with prisoners

One thing that gets you up in the morning

* The human interactions with the people we work with, both colleagues and prisoners

Two things that make prison officers special

* Consistency: turning up to work every day and being able to carry on and keep going through the tough times
* Compassion: you can’t be a prison officer if you don’t see people on a human level and you can’t relate to people

**Group G**

Three things you need to be a good prison officer

* Resilience: we face things every day, it’s not just the person standing in front of you shouting and screaming, it’s the person that you need to care for day in day out, and we’re very resolute when it comes to that
* Interpersonal skills
* Sense of humour

One thing that gets you up in the morning

* Job satisfaction: we’re all satisfied with the job we’re doing, and we’re happy to get out of bed to come and do it

Two things that make prison officers special

* Ability to learn and adapt to new things: constantl regime changes etc – we all just get on with it
* Caring

**Group H**

Three things you need to be a good prison officer

* Consistency
* Resilience
* Confidence

One thing that gets you up in the morning

* Colleagues: working with a decent bunch of people all doing a difficult job

Two things that make prison officers special

* We’ve got a unique job
* We’ve got a good sense of humour, which we need

**Group I**

Three things you need to be a good prison officer

* Resilience
* Positive attitude
* Communication, but being adaptable in the way you communicate – everyone does it in different ways, and the way you communicate with one person doesn’t necessarily work with someone else

One thing that gets you up in the morning

* Colleagues, and the rewarding aspect of the job: it only takes one person who makes some positive progress to boost your self-confidence and realise that what you’re doing works

Two things that make prison officers special

* Dedication: wanting to do the job – no one makes us do it and we all choose to go to work
* Rewarding feedback: it’s very motivating when someone thanks you for all the work you have done. When you have a good day, there is no job that comes close to it

**Group J**

Three things you need to be a good prison officer

* Communication: with staff and prisoners
* Commitment: to yourself, to colleagues and to the job
* Problem solving

One thing that gets you up in the morning

* Colleagues – your teammates – the support you give one another and that dedication to the job

Two things that make prison officers special

* Resilience
* Flexibility in your approach, because you wear a lot of different hats working in a prison

**Group K**

Three things you need to be a good prison officer

* Empathy
* Consistency
* Honesty and integrity

One thing that gets you up in the morning

* Camaraderie, banter with colleagues and prisoners, and being part of a team: knowing that if you don’t go to work, you’re letting people down that you care about

Two things that make prison officers special

* The variety of life skills and knowledge that we have, whether we realise it or not
* The resilience that we need to carry out our day to day work

**Group L**

Three things you need to be a good prison officer

* Being a team player
* Non-judgemental: we have to deal with a wide variety of people and cases, but we treat everyone fairly and equally every day
* Good communicator and listener: we have to talk to prisoners, think on our feet, carry out dynamic risk assessments, and listen to them when they’re having a bad day

One thing that gets you up in the morning

* The bond between us as officers: only fellow officers know what we go through; someone who’s not an officer doesn’t know or understand what we go through on a daily basis

Two things that make prison officers special

* Camaraderie between officers
* Ability to change our way of thinking quickly and on our feet