

## Site

HMP Swaleside

## Name of project / initiative

Reverse Mentoring

## Overview

The Reverse Mentoring programme at Swaleside is the brainchild of Lord Michael Hastings of Scarisbrick and is intended to break down barriers, change perceptions, and build relationships between prisoners and staff.

Under the scheme, prisoners and staff are brought together in forums of up to 25 people, facilitated by Lord Hastings, his son Kenny Imafidon, and the Governor. They are asked to leave their identities at the door, and then to break into (where possible, cross-cultural) prisoner-staff pairs, to get to know one another. They are encouraged to share information about themselves with one another, including significant life experiences, hobbies and interests, for around 30 minutes – and then come back together to feedback about one another to the group as a whole – and each “pair” is encouraged to maintain regular contact with one another after the session.

## Longevity

The scheme has been operational since 2020.

## Benefits

As intended, the scheme has helped to improve understanding, and improve relationships, between prisoners and staff, and across cultures, as well as helping to build the self confidence and esteem of prisoners in particular. In many cases, it has led to lasting and mutually supportive relationships between pairs formed at the forums – and to the Governor, who meets every week with his “reverse mentor” Anton, a lifer in the jail, the impact has been transformative for both parties.

## Uniqueness

Swaleside is the only prison at the time of writing (July 2022) to run the scheme, but plans are in place to extend it to other establishments, starting with Woodhill.

## Applicability

This sort of initiative could be run anywhere across the estate, including (as in Swaleside’s case) in Long Term and High Security establishments.

## Requirements

It costs nothing and could easily be replicated elsewhere.

## For more information:

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See also: <https://bit.ly/BaronHastings> [about Lord Hastings]

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