



Research publication

Five Minute Interventions (FMI):
Custodial staff views and
experiences of implementing FMI

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Background and methods

In 2020 Corrective Services New South Wales (CSNSW) commenced the roll-out of a new training initiative for all custodial staff across the 34 correctional centres in NSW. The Five Minute Interventions (FMI) initiative was introduced under the NSW Premier's Priority to reduce reoffending by 5% by 2023 and focuses on delivering a prison environment that enables rehabilitation.

FMI is undergoing a state-wide rollout, with training sessions attended by a mix of uniformed and non-uniformed custodial staff including custodial officers (COs), Corrective Services Industries (CSI) overseers and offender services and programs (OSP) staff. FMI training equips staff with a set of 10 skills including Socratic questioning, giving hope, active listening and rolling with resistance that they can apply to turn everyday conversations with inmates into rehabilitative opportunities.

The current study involved 36 semi-structured interviews with custodial staff in varying roles across four NSW correctional centres. Participating staff had completed FMI training on average 12 months prior to being interviewed. The study is the first qualitative evaluation of FMI in the NSW correctional context and examines staff perceptions about the training they received, the usefulness of the initiative, their experiences with using FMI, the facilitators and barriers they encounter with implementing FMI, and how these perceptions, views and experiences vary across different staff groups.

1.2 Key findings

1.2.1 Five Minute Interventions (FMI) training

Overall, most staff identified the FMI training as one of the best courses they had completed during their time with CSNSW. The mixed and diverse nature of the group participating in the training, as well as the experienced and professional trainers delivering the training, were identified as the primary factors contributing to the positive views and experiences of the training.

Some staff felt the training was not geared towards them because it covered much of what they believed they already did. The few staff who had negative perceptions of the training attributed this to the course being mandatory or to feeling the course was either too lengthy or that they were required to participate in activities they felt were irrelevant.

Several suggestions were provided regarding the ongoing rollout of the initial two-day FMI training, including: having a combination of COs and OSP staff working together to deliver the training; inviting previously trained staff who have been using FMI in real-world scenarios to attend training and share their experiences; providing more intensive training of the same nature to new staff; and incorporating more opportunities for role-playing to help boost confidence and understanding of the type of situations where FMI could be used with inmates.

1.2.2 Five Minute Interventions (FMI) in practice

Views about the overall purpose and benefits of FMI varied across roles, which were largely attributed to the type of interactions staff had with inmates. COs indicated FMI was a negotiation and de-escalation technique and communicated care and understanding to inmates. CSI overseers identified using FMI to teach and develop inmates, while OSP staff associated FMI with taking quality time to check in on inmates, humanising and connecting with inmates, and planting seeds for creating hope.

Two skills mentioned by almost all staff, 'building trust, confidence and rapport' and 'active listening', were identified as the foundation upon which all other skills could be used successfully. Other important skills identified varied by staff group and aligned with the overall purpose and benefits each group associated with FMI. 'Giving hope' was most likely to be used by COs, 'giving and receiving feedback' was important for CSI overseers, and both 'rolling with resistance' and 'Socratic questioning' were most often discussed by OSP staff.

The remaining FMI skills were discussed to varying degrees by staff. For some of these skills few examples were provided of how they had been correctly and successfully applied. Other skills were rarely discussed and indicated staff were not entirely confident with when or how they could apply those skills.

1.2.3 Facilitators and barriers to using Five Minute Interventions (FMI)

The prevailing attitudes of staff were among the most prominent factors that facilitated or hindered staff using FMI. Staff noted concerns over how they would be perceived by both other staff and inmates. The situation itself was also a significant factor that determined whether staff felt it was appropriate to use FMI. How receptive inmates were during an interaction was crucial, with staff safety and an inmate's frame of mind both important considerations.

Length of service or level of experience among staff was also noted, although findings were mixed regarding whether newer or less experienced officers would be more open and willing to implement FMI compared to those who had more experience working with inmates. Several additional factors that contributed to whether staff used FMI included manager support for FMI, understanding different ways other staff interact with inmates, staffing and time constraints, and limited opportunities to use FMI.

Staff strongly supported the implementation of refresher training to facilitate ongoing use of FMI. They also suggested strategically placed FMI posters and merchandise and sharing success stories or reminders about key skills during meetings or via email communication would encourage staff to continue using FMI. Others also felt having managers, senior staff or mentors that work with staff to develop key skills would also help boost the use of those skills.

1.3 Conclusions

Findings from the current study present primarily positive staff views regarding the implementation of FMI in NSW correctional centres. While both perceptions and experiences of FMI differed across staff groups, this was largely based on the types of inmate interactions staff regularly experience. Results highlighted several factors that staff felt both facilitated and hindered their use of FMI. The barriers were particularly centred around how staff felt they were perceived by other staff and by inmates and whether the situation was both appropriate and safe to engage inmates in challenging conversations. Such barriers may be overcome with continued support from managers and senior staff, and as FMI becomes business-as-usual.

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2 Background

A primary objective of Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) has been to address the Premier's Priority to reduce reoffending by 5% by 2023. Under this priority, CSNSW has implemented a range of initiatives designed to deliver a prison environment that enables rehabilitation. The Five Minute Interventions (FMI) initiative was introduced in NSW in 2020 to train custodial staff to turn their everyday contact with inmates into positive and motivational interactions that support offender self-efficacy, contribute to rehabilitative prison environments, and reduce reoffending.

The primary responsibility for offender rehabilitation in prison has traditionally resided with staff who have specialised knowledge of behavioural change programs and service delivery that targets criminogenic risk factors of reoffending (Bonta & Andrew, 2016). While the delivery of such programs and services contribute to positive rehabilitative outcomes, their impact is "maximised when all other aspects of the culture promote pro-social thinking and identity" (Mann, 2019, p.7). As such, a rehabilitative prison environment requires a 'whole prison' approach with staff at all levels having the potential to support or undermine rehabilitative outcomes (Craig, 2004; Mann et al., 2018). Relatedly, effective rehabilitation requires a top-down approach whereby the prison's senior management lead, support and actively encourage rehabilitative interactions between staff and inmates (Mann, 2019).

Staff-inmate interactions are most effective when they promote mutual trust, respect, and a shared sense of hope in the possibility of rehabilitation (Auty & Liebling, 2020; Blagden et al., 2016; Mann, 2019; Ricciardelli & Perry, 2016). Staff have a primary role in these interactions by teaching pro-social skills such as goal setting, problem solving, decision making, managing emotions and perspective taking (Mann, 2019). Previous research has found that staff who communicate in a 'relational but secure' manner can effectively build rapport, trust, and respect with inmates because they are seen as honest, consistent, patient, active listeners and non-judgmental. The rapport that is built through this communication approach supports the de-escalation of problem situations through negotiation and collaboration among staff and inmates (Ricciardelli & Perry, 2016).

2.1 Five Minute Interventions (FMI)

First developed in the United Kingdom (UK), FMI encourages staff to turn everyday interactions with inmates into rehabilitative opportunities (Kenny & Webster, 2015; Tate, et al., 2017; Vickers-Pinchbeck, 2019). It differs from traditional interventions that generally have a discrete start and end in that it is a relational approach that is expected to become an integral part of the interaction dynamic between staff and inmates (Vickers-Pinchbeck, 2019). To that end, correctional officers in the UK received training in the use of 10 specific FMI skills such as building trust, confidence and rapport, giving people hope, Socratic questioning and active listening that target six behavioural risks to reoffending such as impulsivity, poor problem-solving skills and unrealistic goal setting (Kenny & Webster, 2015; Tate, et al., 2017; Vickers-Pinchbeck., 2019).

Highly experienced CSNSW custodial staff collaborated with UK trainers to adapt FMI materials and training techniques for the NSW context. The similarity in the custodial environment in the UK streamlined the adaptation of FMI in NSW, with minor changes to language and the development of relevant group activities.

FMI training commenced in May 2020 and is in the process of being delivered to all staff across the 34 correctional centres in NSW. Each training session is attended by a mix of approximately 15 staff with varying roles within each centre. These staff include custodial officers (COs), Corrective Services Industries (CSI) overseers and offender services and programs (OSP) staff.¹ Custodial officers comprise the majority of prison

¹ In NSW, COs and CSI overseers are uniformed staff; OSP staff are non-uniformed.

staff and have the most contact with inmates through their dual role in providing care and supervision while also maintaining order and safety. CSI staff provide a unique perspective as they perform the safety and security role of custodial officers while also providing employment and vocational training to inmates. OSP staff, on the other hand, are primarily responsible for the routine delivery of behavioural change programs and connecting inmates with relevant services.²

FMI training in NSW was specifically designed to include a diverse mix of staff roles to provide attendees with insights into the differences in how staff in these roles interact with inmates. The training sessions were also intended to promote respect and inclusivity by removing some of the traditional views held about certain roles, specifically where COs are seen to purely provide a security role while OSP staff are held responsible for rehabilitating offenders. As such, the purpose of FMI is to encourage and support a collaborative approach among all custodial staff to work towards a common objective, that being to achieve rehabilitative outcomes for inmates.

2.2 Evaluation of the Five Minute Interventions (FMI) initiative

The effects of FMI have been evaluated in both the UK and NSW. The first UK evaluation involved interviews with eight FMI-trained officers and eight comparison officers (Kenny & Webster, 2015). Interviews were completed across three time points: pre-training, 6 weeks post-training and 3 months post-training. The study found a gradual improvement in rehabilitative perceptions over time among officers who completed FMI training. Training provided officers with the skills needed to help build better rapport and improve relationships with prisoners. Trained officers felt capable of identifying opportunities where FMI skills could be applied and were therefore able to better recognise criminogenic needs and effectively manage challenging conversations with inmates.

A second evaluation from the UK included nine interviews with FMI-trained officers about their perceptions of the impact of FMI training on staff rehabilitative attitudes and practices, and the challenges and barriers associated with FMI implementation (Vickers-Pinchbeck, 2019). For some staff, FMI training served as a refresher course that reinforced existing rehabilitative attitudes. Other staff reported improved hope in the ability of inmates to change following training and advocated for the use of interpersonal skills such as Socratic questioning to support inmate self-efficacy. Staff reported several barriers to using FMI, including a lack of adequate staffing and resources, concerns about personal safety and staff inexperience.

Following the initial rollout of FMI training in NSW, several evaluations have been completed by the Corrections Research, Evaluation and Statistics (CRES) division of CSNSW. Two of these evaluations examined the short- and long-term effects of training on rehabilitative attitudes and job experiences among custodial staff (Barkworth et al., 2021; Lobo, Chong, et al., 2022). FMI-trained staff reported improved attitudes towards prisoners and increased motivation and ability to support offender rehabilitation 6 weeks post-training compared to before training. The improvement in perceptions about rehabilitative ability was directly attributable to FMI training when compared to survey responses among staff who had not completed training. The effects on staff attitudes and ability to support rehabilitation were maintained 12 months post-training, while staff motivation to support offenders' rehabilitation continued to improve over the same period.

A third study drew on the same sample of data to compare rehabilitative attitudes and job experiences across different staff groups, including COs, CSI overseers and OSP staff (Howard et al., 2021). This study noted benefits of FMI training for specific groups of staff. For instance, COs showed significant increases in attitudes towards prisoners, and both motivation and ability to support offenders' rehabilitation after FMI training. However, the

² For the purposes of the current study, OSP staff include both the traditional Services and Programs Officers (SAPOs) who deliver services and programs to offenders, as well as Case Management Officers (CMOs) who also deliver services and work with inmates to develop case management plans.

magnitude of change in the ability measure following FMI training was larger for CSI overseers than any other staff group. OSP staff consistently reported positive attitudes and high motivation and ability to support rehabilitation at both pre- and post-training and therefore demonstrated the least amount of change in ability after training.

A final study evaluated the short-term effects of Words @ Work (W@W) training designed to complement FMI training specifically for CSI overseers (Lobo, Barkworth, et al., 2022). Significant improvements in staff attitudes towards prisoners and their perceived ability to support offenders' rehabilitation were identified among CSI overseers who completed both FMI and W@W training. There was also some support for a positive change in motivation to support offenders' rehabilitation for this group of CSI overseers. While not definitively attributable to W@W training, there was some evidence to suggest differences in motivation and ability to support offenders' rehabilitation were greater among overseers who had completed both FMI and W@W training, compared to those who had completed FMI training alone.

2.3 The current study

The current study presents the first qualitative evaluation of FMI in NSW. The primary aim of the study is to develop a nuanced understanding of the implementation of FMI in the NSW custodial context, with a focus on the implementation of FMI training and the longer-term ongoing use of FMI in NSW correctional centres.

We draw on interviews with FMI-trained custodial staff across a variety of roles, including those in both operational or uniformed roles (COs, CSI overseers) and those in non-operational or non-uniformed roles (OSP staff). The study aims to understand the perspectives and experiences of these different groups of FMI-trained staff. In doing so, four key research questions are addressed:

1. How do custodial staff view FMI (e.g., credibility of the intervention, perception of the usefulness of intervention techniques, satisfaction with the training received and with using FMI)?
2. How has FMI been implemented in daily interactions between staff and inmates?
3. What are the facilitators and barriers to the implementation of FMI?
4. Are there differences in how FMI is viewed and/or applied across different staff groups (e.g., COs, CSI overseers, OSP staff)?

3 Methods

3.1 Sample and research design

A qualitative research design was used in the current study and consisted of 36 semi-structured interviews with custodial staff 12 months after they had completed FMI training. Staff from four of the 13 NSW correctional centres that participated in the initial roll-out of FMI training in 2020 were invited to participate. The four centres included Wellington, Mid North Coast, Hunter and Cessnock Correctional Centres.

A stratified sampling method was utilised to ensure that the distribution of COs, CSI overseers, and OSP staff invited to participate in interviews was representative of the FMI-trained population at each centre. While staff experience was not included as part of the sample stratification process, the average experience of staff ranged between 3.4 years and 18 years. On average, both COs and CSI overseers tended to have more experience in their roles than OSP staff. Table 1 provides a breakdown of interviews conducted by centre and staff role.

Table 1. Custodial staff participants by staff role and centre

Centre	Staff role			Total
	CO	OSP	CSI	
Wellington	5	4	1	10
Mid North Coast	2	3	2	7
Hunter	5	3	1	9
Cessnock	4	3	3	10
Total	16	13	7	36

3.2 Data collection

A local contact person selected by the Governor at each centre was provided with an oversampled list of staff who were randomly selected in accordance with the sample quotas for their centre. The local contact was advised of how many staff from each group should be selected for interviews and managed both the recruitment of staff and the scheduling of interviews at each centre. The oversampled list was provided to minimise the risk to the final sample quotas due to staff either declining to participate or otherwise being unavailable at the time the interviews were conducted.

All interviews were conducted by two CRES researchers during the last quarter of 2021. Most of these interviews were conducted in person at each correctional centre. However, the second COVID lockdown in NSW meant that a small number of these interviews were required to be conducted on Microsoft (MS) Teams.

All in-person interviews were conducted in separate and secure rooms inside each centre. Written consent to participate in interviews was sought from staff prior to their participation. We also sought verbal consent from these staff to record interviews, which were later transcribed for the purpose of analysis.

All staff invited to participate in the study were offered a \$10 Coles-Myer gift card as an incentive. They were initially informed about the incentive by the local contact person during the recruitment process and were provided with the gift card at the end of the interview.

Interviewees were asked about key aspects regarding FMI implementation in line with the proposed research questions. For example, they were asked about their perceptions of the purpose and benefits of FMI, how it has been implemented at their centre, factors that facilitated or created obstacles in the application of FMI skills, as well as their satisfaction with the training they received and their perception of additional support and training

that could be provided. Furthermore, interviewers also encouraged staff to provide examples of FMI application in daily interaction with inmates and the outcomes from those interactions.

3.3 Data processing and analysis

Qualitative interviews conducted using MS Teams were automatically transcribed as part of its conferencing function. The remaining in-person interviews were transcribed by an external transcription service. The completed transcriptions were then imported into NVivo for the purposes of qualitative data analysis. The interview questions were used to develop a coding framework in NVivo. The coding framework consisted of a 'parent node' derived directly from the interview question and a series of 'child nodes' based on the individual responses to those questions.

The coding process was conducted by two researchers and inter-coder reliability (ICR) between the two researchers was assessed to develop a common understanding of the verbatim to be included in each code and to develop a consistent coding approach. ICR is an iterative process that involved both researchers coding a small number of the same interviews and comparing the consistency in the use of codes through the calculation of a Kappa score. A Kappa score can range between -1 and 1 with scores closer to 1 indicating stronger agreement. According to Landis and Koch (1977, p.165) a Kappa score greater than .61 indicated substantial agreement, while a score greater than .81 indicated perfect agreement. The Kappa score in this study was .68 and therefore supported the continued coding of all interviews.

Simple frequencies were conducted of all child nodes at the completion of the coding process. Codes with higher responses provided an indication of potentially dominant themes within each parent node and were examined in greater detail. A cross-comparison of the high scoring child codes provided the basis for the development of high-level themes, which in some instances were also supported by verbatim from the lower scoring codes.

4 Five Minute Interventions (FMI) training

The first section of results covers staff views and experiences about the initial two-day FMI training, with a focus on their initial impressions, moving past resistance, and the benefits provided by working with a diverse group of staff and experienced trainers.

4.1 Initial impressions and overcoming resistance

When asked about their initial impressions of FMI, almost two thirds of staff held positive views about the training they received, around one third did not have strong views one way or the other, and very few expressed negative views. Overall, staff agreed that FMI training was one of the best courses they had done among the variety of mandatory training offered by CSNSW. COs, more than other staff, felt the compulsory nature of the course created some initial resistance that generally subsided once they commenced training. It was reported that even some of the most resistant staff became willing participants and found the training both worthwhile and enjoyable. Staff seemed to like the light-hearted and relaxed nature of the training, the ability to contribute to the discussion, and the opportunity to develop new skills or hone existing ones.

Some staff, however, felt the training was not necessarily geared towards them. For example, some COs felt the training would be good for less experienced officers, while some OSP staff felt the training was directed more towards COs in general. Moreso for OSP staff this view stemmed from the idea that FMI was '*what we already do*', although this was not unique to staff in these roles; in fact, most staff felt they were already using FMI skills, at least to some extent.

COs were most likely to refer to how they were speaking to or communicating with inmates, again specifically referring to skills like 'building trust, confidence and rapport' and 'active listening'. They also identified being exposed to new skills, such as 'giving hope', 'Socratic questioning' and 'moving from negative to positive' and aimed to use those skills following training. CSI overseers felt the training covered everything they do when working with inmates in Industries in terms of encouraging and guiding inmates to get the best out of them. OSP staff largely saw FMI as what they do every day when supporting inmates, specifically mentioning 'Socratic questioning', and addressing negative self-talk, referring to similarities with what they already do with Service Interventions.³

To whatever extent staff discussed FMI as being something they already did, there was a consensus that the training was valuable because it reinforced what they were doing and provided some context and theoretical understanding to why they were doing what they were doing. At the same time, they felt the training also acted as a refresher for some of the skills they were already using, while also introducing or reminding them of other skills they either have not previously used or were less likely to use.

The few staff who shared negative perceptions of the training generally referred to the compulsory nature of the course. They also felt the training went on for too long and there were several irrelevant games they were required to participate in. For the most part, staff spoke on behalf of those not participating in an interview when referring to negative aspects of the course. They felt there were some officers who thought inmates should be treated in a certain (negative) way and they are constantly provided with benefits and assistance, while staff receive little support. These staff were less likely to see their role as rehabilitative, were generally negative

³ Service Interventions include 'Conversation Guides' based on language and skills aiming to help OSP staff enhance Motivational Interviewing techniques and improve outcomes for inmates during their everyday interactions.

towards most things, and were more likely to be 'older heads' (i.e., having been in the role for many years and during a time where it was less accepted for staff to positively interact with inmates).

4.2 Participants and trainers: Working as 'one team'

One of the most positive aspects of the training identified across each of the staff groups was a change in attitudes and centre culture, with the training bringing together staff that otherwise do not often work together. The team-building exercises largely facilitated this, where staff felt they were able to see a different side to people they had worked in the same centre with for some time. Staff developed a newfound understanding of each other's roles, with some reporting the opportunity to interact with different people was 'like a new flame inside' and reinforced the idea they were 'one team'.

"I think that all the correctional officers were a positive input to that course. I don't think we volunteered. I think it was compulsory. We had to do it. So, you know, straight away you can get a bit of resistance. And vice-versa, you know, once again, part of that team building within these walls with all that, and just get away from this them and us [non-uniformed and uniformed staff]. We're all part of the one team." – CO

Staff identified that having a diverse group, where there were COs, CSI overseers, and OSP staff all experiencing the same training, provided an opportunity where staff were able to share different experiences of working with inmates. COs felt that less experienced officers would learn more about how experienced officers handled different situations. OSP staff found the training helped break down barriers between themselves and COs. They were able to get a better understanding of the struggles and challenges COs faced, while sharing with them more about how they work and interact with inmates. They felt FMI helped bridge a gap between different staff groups and provided them with a shared language and awareness of how each other worked.

Almost all participants identified that the trainers were crucial for the success of training. Trainers were viewed as polite, respectful, and highly experienced and knowledgeable, with participants noting the importance of their background working on the frontline. They felt it was important to be trained by those who understood the job and the environment in which they worked. They highlighted how trainers helped humanise what they were learning by sharing their personal failures and triumphs, essentially putting themselves on the line in front of those they were training. It was also recognised how some trainers had experienced a significant and positive change in their own views to take on board FMI. When participants saw the change in those trainers, and the passion they had for teaching the course, that alone encouraged people to open themselves to what they were being taught.

4.3 Staff suggestions for improving training

When staff were asked about improving or changing training, many reiterated the training they had received was one of the best CSNSW courses they had participated in, with only minimal suggestions provided for consideration of future FMI training. The following provides a summary of those suggestions:

- Trainers could consist of one CO and one OSP staff member so the session is not heavily dominated with custodial examples and the trainers can feed off each other to provide a balanced perspective.
- Initial training sessions for staff who have not previously completed FMI training should now include someone who has completed the training and has been implementing FMI skills in practice so they can share their experiences, especially success stories.
- More enhanced or in-depth training for OSP staff separate to COs given the skills taught during initial training are what they feel they already use.
- Justice Health could also receive the training so they can also share their perspectives and experiences and be involved in the shared language used across the centre.

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- More intensive training for newer staff beyond just the two days, potentially to be delivered at Brush Farm.
 - More role-playing situations in the initial training to boost confidence and understanding when using the skills with inmates.
 - Breaking up sessions so they are not too content-heavy or two separate days covered weeks or months apart that focus on certain skills.
 - Clarification around whether case notes or other paperwork needs to be completed when FMI has been used (some staff associated FMI with the need to case note every interaction).
 - More research evidence or statistics to demonstrate why or how FMI should be used.

5 Five Minute Interventions (FMI) in practice

The following section covers staff views about the purpose and benefits of FMI, the skills they identified as most important or most useful when interacting and engaging with inmates, and examples of how they have implemented those skills in everyday interactions with inmates.

5.1 Purpose and benefits of FMI

Staff were first asked to reflect on what they felt the main purpose of FMI was, and how it may play a part in their role. The majority saw the main purpose being centred around interactions and communication; improving both the way staff interact and communicate with inmates and how inmates react or respond to staff. When breaking down staff views about the purpose of FMI based on their role, there were more specific nuances.

5.1.1 Custodial officers (COs)

COs felt FMI was not only about how they communicated, interacted, and engaged with inmates, but it was a way to demonstrate that they are there to help and provide assistance, that they care and that they want to gain a better understanding of the inmate and their circumstances. They saw FMI as a *negotiation and de-escalation* technique that allows them to approach a situation in a non-confrontational way, and in doing so, encourage inmates to talk to staff and aid in bringing a heightened situation down. COs also felt FMI was designed to address inmates' attitudes and behaviour, through changing how they viewed and approached staff and encouraging them to think about the consequences of their behaviour. They identified benefits associated with engaging inmates through FMI, including reducing inmate issues and anxiety, and creating a safer environment through a reduction in serious incidents and use of force. Importantly, they also felt officers needed to recognise the role they play in inmates' rehabilitation and that engaging with inmates in this way was not in conflict with their role of providing security within the centre.

"...it's about getting individuals to understand that having those conversations with inmates does not break any taboos... It's not overstepping the mark. It's not becoming too friendly with the offenders... What the department is asking us to do is not about sharing all of your private things with inmates. It's not about them necessarily doing that with you. It's just giving them the option of knowing that they can have that conversation with you so that if in the future they're struggling, or if they need assistance, they know that officer will actually listen... the inmate has to know they can come to us for assistance. So, we're not just there to be the ones that are there to enforce the rules and to rouse on them and to punish them when they're doing the wrong thing and charge them and lock them up and all of that... We have to wear a lot of different hats." – CO

5.1.2 Corrective Services Industries (CSI) overseers

CSI overseers viewed FMI as an opportunity to *teach inmates*, to get them to think for themselves and to take responsibility for their actions and the decisions they make. They felt they were able to help inmates learn how to trust people and fit into an environment they may not be used to fitting into, using FMI as a form of negotiation to get them to do what they are being asked to do. From an Industries perspective, staff were more likely to view inmates as employees, and saw FMI as a way to develop their confidence and skills and encourage them to make decisions to help achieve the goals of the business unit. They highlighted the importance of developing a good rapport with inmates, so they were able to better develop them and get a good result (e.g., producing a quality product and meeting the goals of the business unit). CSI overseers placed strong emphasis on rewarding positive behaviour and using positive reinforcement to achieve these goals; in turn they felt it creates a calmer and more pleasant work environment.

“We need the people to be able to produce us a quality product to approved standards. And by ranting and raving and yelling, generally doesn’t achieve that. So, some good positive reinforcement and acknowledgement of the small skills or achievements that the people have done goes a long way to giving them confidence and motivation to inspire them to go further on the next day, or the next week.” – CSI overseer

5.1.3 Offender services and programs (OSP) staff

OSP staff generally saw FMI as an opportunity to take quality time to check in on inmates; to make inmates feel more humanised; to connect with the person and separate the person from the inmate. For them, FMI is about *changing the conversation* and how staff approach each situation to be present within it. They felt it was a way of seeing every interaction as different and not just another transaction, that it was an opportunity to make those interactions more meaningful, getting to know the inmates, and recognising that those interactions could prevent a bad day. This staff group felt that changing the way inmates are spoken to, making them feel more important and like someone will give them the time to listen to them, would in turn mean inmates were more likely to be open and honest, and less likely to be aggressive and act up. They also saw FMI as a tool to encourage inmates to find their own solutions and use their own thoughts, essentially planting seeds for creating hope and providing them with opportunities to make decisions for themselves.

5.2 Top identified FMI skills

We asked staff to identify the top three FMI skills they felt were crucial for how they engaged and interacted with inmates. ‘Building trust, confidence and rapport’ and ‘active listening’ were the top two skills identified by the majority of staff (see Figure 1). Other top three crucial skills that were identified varied by staff group. COs identified ‘giving hope’ as an important skill. CSI overseers felt ‘giving and receiving feedback’ was critical, especially within the context of the work inmates were doing in Industries. OSP staff equally reported ‘rolling with resistance’ and ‘Socratic questioning’ as additional skills they were likely to use when working with inmates.

We also asked staff to identify whether there were any skills they were less likely or unlikely to use. Those that were least likely to be used or even mentioned, especially across all staff groups, were ‘building commitment to change’, ‘teaching people to seek reliable information’ and ‘moving from negative to positive’.

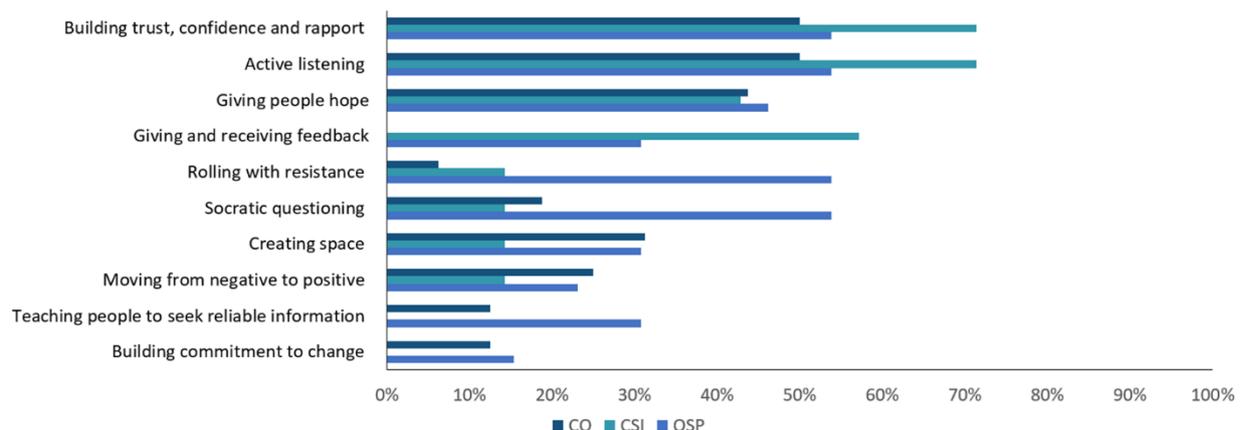


Figure 1. Most used FMI skills by staff group

5.3 Applying FMI in everyday interactions

Staff were asked to provide examples of how they used the skills they identified as most critical for engaging and interacting with inmates. The following examines how each of the FMI skills have been applied by different staff.

5.3.1 Building trust, confidence and rapport, and active listening

As previously noted, most staff identified ‘building trust, confidence and rapport’ and ‘active listening’ as the most important skills to use when interacting with inmates. These two skills were seen as going together, whereby trust is established by taking the time to listen. That trust, in turn, was seen as necessary for inmates’ willingness to listen to staff, as well as approach and seek help from staff. It was recognised that it takes time to build these relationships, and often the credibility of a staff member is spread by word-of-mouth among inmates.

“You have to hear what people have to say, and by doing that, try to establish some trust with your listener. So, they may listen but if they don’t trust you and don’t believe you... you have to have credibility, and you can’t buy credibility in the shop. Credibility is earned over the period of time. And sometimes not by first-hand, inmates get to believe me, but because other inmates tell them, you know, he is fair. You can speak to him. He will help you. And the word gets around. So, it depends on our integrity and our professionalism.” – CO

Staff described a range of different approaches they used for building trust, confidence and rapport, but they generally recognised the importance of getting to know the individual, taking the time to have a conversation, and treating them with respect. There was again a recognition that ‘active listening’ was an important component of ‘building trust, confidence and rapport’.

“Yeah, building trust and confidence... we deal with the segregation inmates. I don’t talk to them behind the door, which a lot of the guys do, so I actually get, I will open the door and go in there and I sit them down. I don’t believe I can build any sort of trust or rapport or confidence talking through a Perspex door. So, I’ll sit down and talk to them to say ‘Listen, I’m not here to... Okay, let’s go. Let’s go have a discussion’ and talk that way... I give them a chance to let them think and I make it known that I’m hearing what they’re saying or listening so I jot down notes.” – CO

“I think it’s the way you say it, taking your time to say it. If your body language is already out the door and you’re yelling that out, which happens a lot, ‘cos you’ve got the key in the door... I think it’s taking time to breathe, and explain to them clearly ‘I’ll be back’... and following through on that, because if you don’t, that’s when you’ve got to build that trust there again... it just all comes down to communication... explaining more the reasons behind how the world works.” – OSP staff

5.3.2 Giving hope

After ‘building trust, confidence and rapport’ and ‘active listening’, COs were most likely to identify ‘giving hope’ as one of the most important skills. They felt hope was linked with survivability while in gaol, it was the cornerstone for encouraging inmates to engage with education, gain employment in Industries, and move toward securing a job after release.

“You can give them the seed to want to even do educational stuff in here, or whatever, and move on outside, and get some jobs.” – CO

“I think that giving people hope, the way that they can change, and seeing what’s out there and are valuable if they put their mind to it, whether that comes back to having that sense of accomplishment and all that.” – CO

While ‘giving hope’ was identified by COs and other staff as an important skill to use when interacting with inmates, few were able to provide clear examples of putting this skill into practice. Those who did, generally discussed sensitive situations regarding troubles experienced by inmates in their personal lives. They recognised how being cut off from family and friends, particularly during difficult times, can lead to feelings of hopelessness and despair, and the need for additional support during these times. They often spoke of guiding inmates to reflect on the people and things that matter most to them, what motivates them to change, and looking toward positive outcomes in the future, sometimes looking for ways to relate to the inmate to let them know they are not alone.

“...there’s nothing sadder than seeing someone that has given up hope...that can be difficult... we’ve got to understand some of the backgrounds of these people and what they may be going back to.” – CO

“...even interacting in a small way, that what they’re going through obviously maybe in some form or whatever is not alien to what happens to people outside as well. Or even yourself, you know. You don’t tell them exactly what’s going on. But even if you’re just relating to something can make them ‘hey, I’m not the only one going through this’. Maybe you know, relating to family and friends or whatever, you know.” – CO

5.3.3 Giving and receiving feedback

CSI overseers were most likely to identify ‘giving and receiving feedback’ as the next most critical skill after ‘building trust, confidence and rapport’ and ‘active listening’. They felt providing feedback was important for developing inmates and correcting work techniques to produce a quality product. They also felt it was important to acknowledge when inmates were doing a good job, recognising the importance of positive reinforcement and not solely focusing on the negative.

“I’m a big one on positive feedback, so I’ll always tell staff don’t just put negative case notes on people. If they are doing something good, we put positive ones as well so we can make sure we are balancing it out.” – CSI overseer

In their examples of how they used this skill when working with inmates, not only were they likely to acknowledge when inmates had done a good job at work, they also acknowledged and thanked inmates for going out of their way to help others.

“...giving and receiving feedback, I do that all the time... at the end of the day, when we’re leaving, I’m like ‘Great job today. Good quality, good this’, whatever it might be.” – CSI overseer

“[inmate had stepped in to help another inmate] I gave that inmate positive feedback. After that interaction I said, ‘Look mate, thank you very much for helping me out with that. I really appreciate you helping him’... and I gave him a good case note. I said ‘that shows really good, on your behalf, that you’re willing to step in and help’... and I said ‘you’re not just helping me out, but you’re helping him out by doing that’... So, I gave him the positive feedback and everything for what he did.” – CSI overseer

5.3.4 Rolling with resistance

OSP staff noted the importance of ‘rolling with resistance’ when working alongside inmates. They discussed often being met with resistance that could come from a reluctance to participate or engage with a service or program, or because they previously had a bad experience with someone who either provided them with incorrect or inconsistent information, or who dismissed them completely. They recognised that forcing the issue would only make matters worse, and they had to build a rapport with that person and listen to them to understand the situation.

“Rolling with resistance because sometimes they’ve had a bad experience with someone else, and you can come in, talk to them, and change that... if you listen to them, you can understand where they’re coming from.” – OSP staff

“And rolling with resistance, we all have good days and bad days. There’s no point in arguing with someone... If you try to force someone you are never, ever, ever going to get them to do it. But asking them why? What is so scary about it? Tell me how you feel... and that’s, yep, by building that trust and confidence and listening to them.” – OSP staff

When staff discussed ‘rolling with resistance’ they generally described situations where they felt inmates needed to vent or let off steam before then calming down. They also described situations where inmates appeared to just want a reaction from the staff member and so they rolled with it by not reacting, and the inmate would then calm down after realising they were not going to get the reaction they wanted. In working through situations where inmates would outright refuse to participate in an activity or program, staff also noted the importance of having previously built rapport with that inmate and taking the time to listen to them:

“I’ll go and see them personally, and sometimes that gets them coming... I’ve got rapport with them. You make that eye contact... Your goals were to work off your debt, and we’ve only got a couple of weeks to go. Today we’re only learning, we’re going to be learning this, this, this, that and that. Your cup of tea is up there ready for you, you’re good to go. ‘Cos oftentimes they just want to go and have their breakfast, then come, instead of coming straight to programs... I think often just going to see them and calling them on their resistance. Like, just, oh, you don’t want to come, why not? You can’t push them too much, ‘cos you can tell if they’re in that resistive mode, they’re not going to come, and you just remind them of the big picture.” – OSP staff

5.3.5 Socratic questioning

OSP staff were also likely to see ‘Socratic questioning’ as crucial for their role. They identified the importance of drawing on questions to gather information, to understand how inmates ‘tick’, to push them out of their comfort zone, and to think for themselves and identify their own solutions to issues that arise. They also recognised that the use of such a skill comes with practice and experience, as well as a genuine interest in understanding and helping the person they are working with.

“...basically encouraging the inmates to find their own solutions through clever questioning, and yeah, encouraging them to use their own thoughts, essentially, and planting seeds.” – OSP staff

While many staff recognised the benefit of using Socratic questioning and were able to describe situations where they would draw on that skill, such as getting inmates to think for themselves and take responsibility for their actions, few were able to provide a clear example of how they have asked a Socratic question. One example was provided by an OSP staff member who had witnessed an officer have a conversation with an inmate who had been having negative thoughts:

“... she’s gentle in the way she talks to the inmate... she’s warm, as such, which is really helpful... it was in relation to a guy who had some bad news... and was in an absolute flap... and she was trying to help him create some real thoughts, and come back and see what the impact would be... it was interesting to watch her do that, just simple questions, if you do those things, what do you think the impact for your children would be?” – OSP staff

Some staff discussed attempts at using Socratic questioning that were not always well received by inmates:

“You quite often get the boys going ‘I’m stressed-out chief, I need to go back to the wing.’ Well, I can’t send them back in the middle of the thing. Then they start carrying on. ‘Well, if you don’t send me back, I’m going to play up. What do I need to do? Do I have to bash somebody, do I have to break something to get sent back?’ And that’s when I start using Socratic questions. ‘Well, what do you think is going to happen to you if you do have a fight or you do start misbehaving? Do you think that’s going to be helpful?’ And try and turn it back on them to start thinking about why they’re doing that. And then get to the reason why they’re stressed out and why they need to be sent back... so that has worked once or twice. And then a couple of times it hasn’t worked for me. So, they’ve still refused to behave, and I’ve had to get permission to send them back so they can have a bit of time out down in the cell... He wouldn’t listen to any of my reasoning or my questioning or anything like that. He had it in his mind that that’s what he wanted to do, and that’s what he was going to stick with.” – CSI overseer

Others described situations of using Socratic questioning that did not quite adhere to the principles of Socratic questioning.⁴ While staff approached these situations with the best of intentions, seeking only to help inmates during a difficult time or in preparation for release, the examples of questions asked may not be considered ‘Socratic’ in nature. They were either closed questions phrased in a way that gave inmates ideas or suggested what they should do (e.g., ‘do you want to do X?’), or were open questions designed to find out what information inmates already knew about something (e.g., ‘what do you know about X?’). Such examples indicated some staff are taking steps to assist inmates but in doing so may not be encouraging inmates to think for themselves and come up with their own solution to a situation.

5.3.6 Creating space (or unintended use of creating space)

While most staff were able to identify situations and examples of the skills they identified as most important and hence most used, in a number of examples provided, they also described unintentional use of other FMI skills. The most common case where this happened was with ‘creating space’. It was identified as a skill they were less likely to use, but it became apparent they were largely using the skill unintentionally, generally referring to leaving an inmate alone or giving them time to think when they otherwise felt FMI skills they were using (such as Socratic questioning) were not working. For example, one officer raised the issue that not all

⁴ ‘Socratic questioning’ encourages people to think before they answer and identify their own solutions to an issue (HMPPS, 2020).

inmates may be receptive to FMI and that you may need to leave them alone and come back another time, essentially 'creating space' for that inmate:

"... not all inmates or recipients of that principle may be in a frame of mind where they can assimilate what you are trying to tell them. If a person is totally upset, they may not even listen to what you are trying to tell them. To go for a walk and think about it. They may not be receptive... I just feel to be aware and determine whether that technique is going to work or not. You might say 'well, look, I will talk to you later on...'" – CO

5.3.7 Seeking reliable information, moving from negative to positive, and building commitment to change

The three skills that were identified as least likely to be used included 'teaching people to seek reliable information', 'turning negatives into positives', and 'building commitment to change'. It was generally either COs or CSI overseers who identified these as skills they were least likely to use. Very few examples were provided where these skills had been applied, and where examples were provided there was again, at times, some misunderstanding about how to do so. For instance, when providing examples of 'teaching people to seek reliable information' staff simply described telling the inmate the information was incorrect.⁵ In other cases staff described situations where inmates would 'officer shop' to resolve an issue quickly and in doing so withhold information from staff that someone else was already following up on their behalf, while others described trying to get reliable information *from* the inmates.

While some of these skills were not often referred to by many staff, it was recognised where some skills work best when applied together. For example, 'moving from negative to positive' is about encouraging people to see themselves or the situation in a more positive way, and one staff member recognised how Socratic questioning can help with this:

"... if they are having a shit day and they are really negative, I don't like to spin it into a positive, but I want to use the Socratic questioning to be like well, 'can you think of that positive?' I find that sometimes if you swap the positive for negative, it doesn't have a lot of merit. So, using those two together is super important." – OSP staff

Finally, 'building commitment to change' received the fewest mentions. It was described by two OSP staff as being important for inmates committing to programs. Two COs also mentioned it and referred to moving forward in a positive way, although there were no specific examples of how staff had worked with inmates to build a commitment to change.

"...commitment to change, that's hard, but yeah, that's the biggest part of our role, motivating them into their program pathway." – OSP staff

"...building commitment to change, so try to get the sort of positive on how we're going to proceed in the future and what they need to do to address that stuff to move on." – OSP staff

⁵ 'Teaching people to seek reliable information' encourages people to evaluate the information they have and determine the difference between reliable and unreliable sources of information (HMPPS, 2020).

6 Facilitators and barriers to using Five Minute Interventions (FMI)

Staff identified a number of factors that acted as both facilitators and barriers to using FMI skills in their day-to-day duties. Each of these factors are discussed in terms of the role they play in either facilitating or hindering the use of FMI. Additional factors that were identified as either a facilitator or barrier alone are also covered, followed by other factors staff felt may further facilitate the use of FMI.

6.1 Factors most likely to facilitate or deter staff use of FMI

6.1.1 Staff roles and prevailing attitudes: 'Us and them' and being a 'Care Bear'

Two related factors most often identified by staff as both facilitators and barriers to using FMI were the *views and attitudes* tied to *staff roles*. CSI overseers and OSP staff identified their roles as facilitating the use of FMI skills. For example, CSI overseers felt, through spending 6 hours a day with inmates in a work environment, that their role provided them with a greater opportunity (compared to COs) to listen to, challenge and help inmates when needed. Central to this was their ability to build more trust with inmates by way of teaching, developing, and working together as a team. OSP staff similarly saw their roles as more conducive to utilising FMI skills when interacting with inmates and generally thought if they were not using such an approach, it would make their job much harder. They felt inmates usually wanted to go and see them and it was part of their job to be empathetic, give hope and “go down that rabbit hole” of challenging inmates on their thoughts and behaviour.

Staff across all roles though identified that having the right attitude was key for adopting and using FMI skills. Some also felt it was an inherent part of their personality, while others recognised there was a good ‘team feel’ within the gaol compared to many years ago that helped to facilitate a better understanding among staff about how beneficial it was to engage with inmates. That also flowed down to new staff who saw other officers interacting with inmates and approaching situations with more patience and less aggression.

“It’s just a matter of having the right attitude, the right belief systems, and persevering with it so that it becomes just part of your toolbox, becomes a part of your nature.” – CO

COs, however, were more likely to identify their role as a barrier to using FMI skills, and this was supported in how CSI overseers and OSP staff viewed the CO role. COs generally expressed concern about separating a caring or rehabilitative role from their security role. While at least one officer outright felt it was not the role of a CO to take the time to sit down and talk to inmates, most who discussed the CO role as a barrier attributed it to a distinction between uniformed and non-uniformed staff and a related sense of ‘*us and them*’ (i.e., staff and inmates). COs felt inmates were more likely to treat uniformed staff differently to non-uniformed staff, which can make it more challenging for them to implement FMI. They, therefore, rely on non-uniformed staff to help as they are less likely to have the same boundaries with inmates and inmates are likely to be more open with them.

The prevailing views and attitudes often associated with the CO role were also identified as a barrier to using FMI, particularly when staff felt they or others were considered ‘soft’ when interacting or engaging with inmates in a way that was not otherwise seen as demonstrating bravado and an authoritative role. COs in particular were worried about being labelled a ‘*Care Bear*’, a term often used to describe OSP staff who by nature of their roles work closely and one-on-one with inmates. They felt that spending too much time talking to an inmate may be construed as them being too friendly and would raise suspicion that they were arranging to bring drugs into the centre on behalf of the inmate, and so felt they had to be careful about how they interacted with inmates.

“...you can be labelled, ‘oh, you’re a Care Bear’...and then you get the suspicion...some people in the job focus on ‘let’s minimise drugs coming in, so jeez, he’s a bit too friendly’ so you’ve got to be very careful.” – CO

Some staff also identified they either did not want to become too emotionally invested or were worried about giving inmates the wrong impression of becoming their friend and opening potential risks of grooming and inappropriate relationships (more so the case for female officers in male gaols). Others felt it was simply either not inherent within their personality to want to help inmates or that it was not part of their role to interact with them beyond what was necessary to perform the primary function of providing security. Those views and attitudes were also seen to flow down to new staff who pick up the old habits of staff who only view inmates in a negative light.

“I don’t know about other people...but that is not going to change who I am. No. I am who I am...I’m not going to get it in FMI...I mean, people obviously are capable of change... I don’t feel that’s my job.” – CO

“So, sometimes, the officers, some are really good because they want the job, they want to help, and some of them realise they’re getting paid really well to do what they’re doing. And others just... they get in the job and they’ve been here for such a long time or they don’t have the personality, and they just do not care.” – OSP staff

“I’ve also noticed that some of the younger officers are getting shown by the older officers ‘I just give it to SAPOs [Services and Programs Officers], I just call them.’ – OSP staff

6.1.2 Assessing the situation: Considering safety and an inmate’s frame of mind

Many staff also identified specific *situations* that were more conducive to using FMI than others, while also noting that the success of FMI, particularly in terms of building rapport and using Socratic questioning, was dependent on the inmate. Staff who worked more closely with inmates, mainly CSI overseers and OSP staff, as well as the few COs who stated they worked with segregated inmates, recognised they were in a position that facilitated building rapport with inmates. They could then use that rapport to have challenging one-on-one interactions with those inmates because they were not having to deal with large groups of inmates that COs in the units often dealt with.

“...the job that I’m doing, so it’s very specific to these guys that are segregated for reasons, so I believe that’s good, it gives me that chance to one-on-one. I haven’t got to deal with 40 other guys so I can get a bit of a better knowledge, and once you break down these barriers, like that trust and confidence... you tend to find out more a little bit about why they’re here, and their triggers.” – CO

Some staff noted that older inmates, especially those who were getting sick of being in gaol and being away from their children, those who were in gaol for the first time, as well as inmates who were seen as more intelligent and more confident, were easier to interact with and were more receptive to accepting responsibility. Those inmates were also more likely to come around to their own thinking when asked to consider how their circumstances or situation affected themselves and their family.

Staff, however, were more likely to identify types of situations that served as barriers to using FMI, and these often came back to staff *safety* and the *inmate’s frame of mind*. OSP staff were most likely to identify safety as a barrier for COs using FMI, although this was not an issue raised by COs themselves. OSP staff recognised COs needed to focus on the security of the centre and were often placed in situations of high risk. As a result, they

may be less able to use skills like ‘rolling with resistance’ in those situations, nor could they use other FMI skills when inmates are ‘kicking off’ and placing officers’ physical safety at risk.

“I think sometimes in the custodial setting rolling with resistance can’t happen because the risk is too high... I absolutely understand, like, if an inmate’s kicking off... well, you can’t use, like ‘calm down’, but if you have to use reasonable force, you use reasonable force... If they feel unsafe, then they need to do what they need to do, and I can’t question that because I’ve never really been in that position.” – OSP staff

COs were more likely to feel the inmate’s frame of mind needed to be considered when using FMI. They noted that attempting to use skills like ‘Socratic questioning’ when the inmate was particularly upset, angry or frustrated was unlikely to be successful.

“...not all inmates or recipients of that principle may be in a frame of mind where they can assimilate what you are trying to tell them...if a person is totally upset, they may not even listen to what you are trying to tell them...to go for a walk and think about it, they may not be receptive...I just feel to be aware and determine whether that technique is going to work or not. You might say ‘well, look, I will talk to you later on and then apply the five minute principle.” – CO

Most notably, staff felt they would not be able to successfully use FMI with an inmate who was experiencing issues related to their *mental health*. In most cases staff felt these were inmates that should have been in another facility rather than gaol. They noted that when inmates suffered from serious behavioural issues, auditory or visual hallucinations, were heavily medicated or were otherwise impacted by substance abuse, then it was unlikely FMI would help in any way.

“Maybe with mental health inmates...that’s a whole different kettle of fish. If they have behavioural issues or obvious issues within that area, none of this, I don’t think, is going to do any good... and unfortunately, we’ve quite a lot of inmates that maybe should be in different facilities, but those ones I find it’s not going to do a lot of good. I don’t think you’re going to say the right thing or behave in the right way.” – CO

On the other hand, staff also noted that inmates who had repeatedly been in the system, younger inmates, those with lower levels of education, ‘fresh custody’ inmates, and those under the influence of or coming off substances, are less receptive to FMI techniques. Many of the examples provided regarding such barriers related to difficulties with communication, a lack of understanding about what staff were asking the inmate to do, inmates not being ready or willing to embrace change or inmates testing how far they can push boundaries with staff.

6.1.3 Length of service: ‘Newer generations’ and the ‘old school’

Another factor identified as both a facilitator and a barrier to using FMI skills was the *length of service* staff had with CSNSW, although staff views were split on whether more or less time with the department facilitated use of FMI. Several staff felt that gaols largely consisted of ‘*newer generations*’ of officers and felt these ‘younger officers’ were more likely to take it on board and initiate it. Others felt that more time on the job and having a better understanding of inmates was crucial.

“...you cannot improvise experience. You cannot improvise trust. It has to be over repeated time because as much as we observe inmates or clients, they observe us as well.” – CO

On the other hand, some staff felt the more 'junior officers', due to their inexperience, think they need to prove themselves to more experienced staff by showing inmates they are in control, while others felt the younger officers were being shown the wrong thing by officers who had been on the job longer and were therefore picking up bad habits. Some staff also felt that while 'older officers' (i.e., those who had been on the job for 25+ years) might have FMI in the back of their mind, they were simply too 'old school' and too 'stuck in their ways' to take anything new on board or draw on newly learnt skills.

"...some of the officers have been in for 30 years and 25 years and remind us of that, quite often. You know, blue and green never talk and that sort of thing... they're quite 'this is how it should be done'." – OSP staff

6.1.4 The importance of manager buy-in

A few staff identified that *managers* played an important role in encouraging use of FMI. Staff were more likely to draw on their FMI training when they felt they were learning from or being guided by senior officers and other managers. Some managers were identified as often talking about and encouraging FMI and this was more evident in those that genuinely seemed excited about it.

"...our functional managers really do push it a lot... And they talk about it a lot... I think some of them are really excited about it..." – OSP staff

However, some staff also felt that while some managers continued to encourage FMI they did not appear genuine about it and seemed to want to just note it as part of a risk assessment or to simply 'tick a box'. Some staff have also found it discouraging when they have seen or made efforts themselves to implement FMI and then witness a senior officer come in and undermine their efforts by yelling and using threatening behaviour. These staff also acknowledged that senior officers or managers should be receiving ongoing support to make sure FMI continues to be reinforced so it does not become another change that gets lost or forgotten.

"So, I think a lot of it gets lost in that, in those goals, KPIs that need to be ticked off, and they come first, so the quality of FMI is not really at the forefront... So I think some of this gets lost, and definitely, FMI hasn't been brought up once after we've learned it... Instead of just doing it once and giving up on it, I think the more that you reinforce something it becomes a second language." – OSP staff

6.1.5 New perspectives and learning from others

An additional facilitator that staff identified as supporting their use of FMI was developing *new perspectives and learning from others*. COs spoke of gaining more perspective from other areas, such as OSP staff, and how they communicate and deal with offenders. OSP staff, in turn, spoke of learning more from each other and from COs in terms of what did and did not work for them when interacting with inmates. Several noted that learning from others, particularly during the training, contributed to their willingness and confidence to use FMI.

"...when I first started there wasn't opportunities like this for everyone to come together as like non-custodial, custodial... and do the course and learn how different areas communicate differently with offenders, and I think that's kind of a big influence on how I've taken it on board, 'cos you don't always have to have that officer kind of set role... more perspective from other areas on how they communicate and how they deal with offenders" – CO

"...learning from them, what they did that didn't work, that's probably the biggest thing I've picked up, whether it be from custodial officers, anything... just because they do it one way doesn't mean it's wrong, it's what works for them. You could tweak it to make it your own." – OSP staff

6.1.6 Staffing and time constraints

Factors identified by staff as barriers only revolved around staff availability and time. At least a third of the staff interviewed thought they were *short-staffed* at their centre, and this was particularly felt by COs and OSP staff. As a result, staff felt they were greatly limited in terms of the amount of *time*, especially quality time, that they could spend with an inmate. Some COs felt they were doing what they could with inmates but were reluctant to spend too much time with them or make promises they would be unable to deliver on because they were ‘under the pump’ or ‘just flat out all day’. Others indicated they were resentful towards officers who took the time to ‘stand around and talk’ to inmates because they did not feel they had the time to do that.

OSP staff also felt impacted when inmates would have to be locked in their cells because there were not enough staff to let them out into the units, which in turn meant inmates were unable to attend scheduled programs. Some OSP staff also felt their workload meant they were often not able to spend the time they felt they needed to have a quality FMI interaction with an inmate. Others also expressed concern about ‘overservicing’ an inmate and them becoming too needy or reliant, expecting more than they can give. There was also a concern they could get in trouble for focusing too much time on one inmate.

6.1.7 Limited opportunities

Some staff also identified *limited opportunities* to use FMI because they worked in areas of the gaol that prevented them from having a lot of contact with inmates, which created barriers to building rapport or using other skills on a regular basis. Some also reported the noisy environment they worked in, and Covid-related impacts that had created additional barriers with having the opportunity to use FMI.

6.2 Staff suggestions for facilitating ongoing use of FMI

Setting aside the barriers to using FMI that staff identified, especially those they had limited or no control over, we asked staff to reflect on what they thought might help further encourage or remind them to draw on FMI skills when interacting with inmates.

6.2.1 Refresher training

Almost all staff thought refresher training would be beneficial. Most thought refresher training was necessary because they were unlikely to retain everything that had been covered during the initial training and without regular refreshers, they would lose those skills. Some felt they would likely pick up something new or different during refresher training or would be able to share experiences about what has and had not worked with other staff. In general, most staff did not feel FMI training was something that should just be done once and forgotten, and that having regular refresher sessions would help keep the skills fresh in their mind and reinforce what they were doing on the job.

When discussing the format of refresher training most staff felt it was important to keep the mixed staff groups as they found this a critical component of the training that allowed them to learn from other staff and build new networks. Several staff also felt it would be good to have sessions that were focused more specifically to their role and when or how they could use certain skills. With regard to trainers, COs were more likely to indicate the training needed to continue to be delivered by officers who had a lot of on-the-job experience because they had the best understanding of the environment and types of interactions they had with inmates. Many also thought those trainers should come from another centre, in part so it was not a current colleague in a way telling them how to do their job, but also to hear about different routines or centre environments and different ideas about how to deal with inmates. On the other hand, several OSP staff thought the training could be run ‘in-house’ utilising their own programs staff or other local staff within the centre who were specifically trained in delivering the training.

When referring to what should be covered during refresher training, most staff felt it was a good opportunity for more practical learning. Many referred to running role-plays where they could practice applying specific skills to different situations they might face during their day. Some acknowledged that role-playing could be embarrassing but could potentially be done in small groups, so people are not 'put on show'. Several staff also thought the training could draw further on the mixed staff groups and learning more about what other staff do in their role when working with inmates or how inmates might react differently to different staff and the implications that might have for ongoing contact with those inmates.

"I think having the different groups is good, because it does, it pulls people together, it creates a networking, but at the end of the day, it also lets us know what custodial does, especially someone who's never done custodial...it just let everybody know what they do and also the way people look at things 'cause that's a big thing. The way you look at certain situations is not the way that somebody else will." – OSP staff

Most staff felt refresher training should take place at least every 12 months and that either half a day or a full day would be sufficient rather than repeating the full two days covered in the initial training. A few also felt that every 6 months or even monthly would also be good if there was a more specific focus on a particular topic or just one or two skills that could be covered in an hour or two. Most also felt the in-person mode of delivery was the most engaging way to do the training and was needed to be able to practice skills, though some also noted that a short online module that took the form of a quiz would also be a good refresher.

6.2.2 Posters, merchandise, and training materials

Several staff noticed posters around the centre and thought they helped with reminding people about the FMI skills, though their usefulness was limited. At least one interviewee reported seeing posters around the gatehouse when first entering the gaol while several others had noticed them on the back of the bathroom stall doors. However, some staff noted that since the posters had been in the same place for more than 6 months, they rarely noticed them anymore or they had since been covered with other posters. Several staff also felt the posters may have acted as better reminders of FMI if they were more strategically placed in work areas where they might think to use those skills during their interactions with inmates.

A few staff noted there were FMI-related 'every contact counts' lanyards available but that most staff just put them in their desk drawers and so they did not really serve as a reminder. One interviewee mentioned coffee cups would be a useful item of merchandise and suggested different FMI skills could be printed on them to serve as reminders about the different skills people could use.

Many staff also indicated they still had their FMI training manual, but some were unsure of where it actually was and most indicated they did not go back and refer to that manual since completing training, mainly because they have not had time.

6.2.3 Additional staff suggestions to encourage use of FMI

Additional suggestions were also made by staff that they thought would be useful for reminding staff about FMI skills and encouraging them to use them. The most common suggestion was for *success stories* to be shared among staff that involved detailing the situation, how specific FMI skills were used and what the successful outcome was. It was suggested these stories could be shared during *staff meetings* or via *email communication*, which could also be used to provide staff with mini snapshot reminders about one or two skills each week or month. Several staff also thought having *managers, senior staff or mentors* working with staff or providing reminders to staff about FMI might help boost use of the skills. They felt they could use a 'buddy system' to share experiences of using FMI and the different interactions where they have applied different skills.

7 Conclusions

This study provides the first qualitative evaluation of the implementation of FMI in NSW correctional centres. Drawing on interviews with custodial staff, we sought to gain a nuanced understanding of frontline staff perceptions of FMI, the training they received and their subsequent experiences of applying FMI skills during their everyday interactions with inmates. These perceptions and experiences were considered across the various groups of staff who participated in the study.

Staff perceptions about the purpose and benefits of FMI were associated with staff roles and the types of interactions staff have with inmates. In turn, the skills staff were most likely to use related to these perceptions and interactions. Two skills in particular, 'building trust, confidence and rapport' and 'active listening', were seen by staff as the foundation for the successful application of all other skills as part of their ongoing use of FMI in their roles. COs also relied on 'giving hope' to communicate care and understanding; CSI overseers used 'giving and receiving feedback' to teach, develop and guide inmates; and OSP staff utilised both 'rolling with resistance' and 'Socratic questioning' when inmates pushed back against staff attempts to encourage prosocial change.

A number of factors were identified as both facilitating and hindering the use of FMI. These factors included staff attitudes associated with different staff roles, the specific situation staff were faced with, how supportive managers or senior staff were towards FMI, and issues related to staffing resources and perceptions of current workload. Many of the barriers identified by staff have the potential to be addressed through further training and support for initiatives that contribute to developing a rehabilitative culture.

There is strong support from staff to pursue future and ongoing refresher training that is designed to enhance their ability to successfully engage with inmates by drawing on FMI skills. While staff valued learning from those who work in different roles, they also recognised that refresher training designed specifically for their role could focus on how they might apply FMI skills in situations they were likely to encounter. Role-specific Words @ Work training for CSI overseers provides a relevant and related example of how FMI content may be adapted for other staff groups moving forward (see Lobo, Barkworth et al., 2022).

We acknowledge that this study may be limited through its reliance on self-report data of a sample drawn from a small number of the correctional centres where FMI training has been completed. While every effort was made to select a representative sample of centres based on location, security classification and inmate population, as well as a representative sample of staff from various roles, the views and experiences described may not generalise across all centres and equivalent staff groups. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study achieved objectives of drawing on staff from a diverse range of custodial roles to develop a qualitatively rich account of their views and experiences regarding implementation of FMI.

Overall, the study presents promising findings for the continued use of FMI among staff who work with inmates in various capacities. The results also give positive indications that with continued support from managers and senior staff, FMI will become embedded as a business-as-usual practice that encourages a rehabilitative culture in NSW correctional centres.

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