

RADAR AND BE SEEN LOOKING

Introduction

If you've taken driving lessons, think back to what you were told about using your mirrors. You may recall being told to check them every few seconds, and whenever you make a manoeuvre. Missing a mirror check risks missing a hazard and putting yourself and others in danger. You may also recall being prepared for the test, and told, don't just check your mirrors; *show* that you're checking your mirrors. You *can* check your mirror with a subtle glance – but your job is not just to look, but to *show others* you're looking. What keeps us safe on the road, keeps us safe on the wing. The principles are identical when we're on duty: keep looking and be seen looking.

First, just as we need to be alert to hazards while driving, we need to watch out for hazards, problems, or hints of problems while on duty. The small thing we notice today may make a big difference to the safety of officers and prisoners in a few days' time. For example, spotting:

- Uneaten bread disappearing, could avoid us facing drunk prisoners next week.
- A prisoner who has stopped showering, could allow us to identify and address welfare problems early.
- Angry looks and whispered threats could alert us to potential violence.

It may seem obvious: keep your eyes open. But there are specific strategies we can use to make this easier, like careful positioning, and habits of observation. Second, we need not only to look, but to be seen looking. When people know they're being observed, they act differently. Showing that we're aware of what's going on encourages prisoners to do what they should be doing. Just as we exaggerate the act of checking the mirror, we can use exaggerated movements, like tilting our head, or moving our whole body to look. Showing prisoners that we're alert encourages them to do things they're happy to be seen doing.

These actions are simple. They allow us to keep colleagues and prisoners a little safer, in return for minimal additional effort. In effect, they're free: we're on duty, and we're meant to be monitoring what's going on anyway. Doing this effectively, and showing we're doing it, allows us to maintain awareness of potential problems – or opportunities – and encourage prisoners to behave well.

How can you pursue this strategy?

- A. Position yourself appropriately:** Wherever you are on the wing, there are almost always better and worse ways to position yourself. You want to position yourself where you can be seen by prisoners and easily see

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everywhere for maximum awareness. For example, if you are pausing to observe, it may be better to do this at the end of the landing, where you can see the length of the landing without turning your head – rather than the middle, where you have to turn your head through 180 degrees to see everyone.

- B. **Scan:** Scanning involves looking around regularly, so you are always aware of what is happening. As a rule of thumb, aim to do this every ten seconds. Think about blind spots too: doorways and alcoves you can't immediately see. We can't check all of them every ten seconds. But we can move position frequently, so nowhere goes unobserved for long.
- C. **Exaggerate:** Exaggerate every movement. You could flick your eyes left to right and see everything but remember we want prisoners to be aware that we are observing what they are doing. Instead turn your whole head. Move your whole body. If you're looking down from one landing to the next, peer down on tip toes. If you're scanning to the left, take a step forward and peer round. If your actions don't feel slightly over the top, you're probably not exaggerating it enough. We need to make what we're doing unambiguous. A prisoner at the far end of the landing can't see where you're looking. They can see you leaning around to peer the length of the landing.
- D. **Explain:** If someone is talking to you when you are using this technique then you shouldn't simply stop. Keep scanning, and show you're doing it, even while you're talking. However, you should explain to the person that you are listening but that you also need to keep an eye on what is happening on the landings. If you are facing away from the rest of the landing, you could ask them to swap places with you, ensuring you can talk to them and still see everything else. Alternatively, if the conversation needs more time and attention, you might ask the prisoner to wait, and – if possible – come back to them when the rest of the landing are locked up, and you can give them more attention.

Potential Pitfalls

- **Getting caught up in conversations and tasks:** What's in front of us can absorb us. This might be an incident, but it could be something as simple as a conversation. You may want to show you're listening, but you are still responsible for everyone under your charge. Remember also that the prisoner you're speaking to could have been told to distract you, so something else can happen unobserved. Try to recall the steps mentioned above, even when you have another task. Choose an appropriate position before allowing the conversation to begin. For example, if a prisoner wants

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your attention, you might ask them to move so they're facing the wall and you're facing the rest of the wing. Keep scanning, and show you're doing it, even while you're talking. Alternatively, if the conversation needs more time and attention, you might ask the prisoner to wait, and – if possible – come back to them when the rest of the landing are locked up, and you can give them more attention.

- **Seeming inattentive or uninterested:** It's hard to maintain eye contact during a conversation while also keeping an eye on the wing. We will be looking away from them some of the time, and this may make us seem uninterested and inattentive. This undermines our attempts to **listen actively (Strategy 17)**. If we are to keep ourselves and the wing safe, there isn't really an option: we cannot allow ourselves to focus entirely on one prisoner, to the exclusion of everyone else. But we can mitigate this. One way to do this is to explain what we're doing. People often stop talking if we look away – if the prisoner does this, we might say something like "Keep going, I'm still listening, I just need to keep an eye on the rest of the wing too." Alternatively, if we need to give a prisoner all our attention, we could come back to speak to them later, when the rest of the wing are in their cells.
- **Scanning too subtly:** This has been stressed, but it's worth revisiting. Exaggerating our movements may seem... exaggerated, and over the top. But it's essential if we want prisoners at the far end of the wing to know that we're watching. Once we get used to it, it should come to feel natural.

Case Study 1

It is nearly the end of association, and the landing is bustling with prisoners. Earlier into their shift, Officer Matthews sensed that something felt a little "off" so decided to concentrate on using their radar/be seen looking technique for the rest of association. During this time, a couple of prisoners approach Officer Matthews to ask him about how they can apply to become a wing rep. Officer Matthews then explains the wing rep application process to both prisoners and sees a chance to talk about other opportunities available in the prison. Officer Matthews gets absorbed in the conversation and consequently can no longer see what is happening on most of the landing.

This is a **non-example** of radar/be seen looking because the officer has got caught up in a conversation with a couple of prisoners. What's in front of us can absorb us. This might be an incident, but it could be something as simple as a conversation. You may want to show you're listening, but you are still responsible for everyone in your care. Remember also that the prisoner you are speaking to could have been told to distract you, so something else can happen unobserved.

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An example would be for the officer to be conscious of the position they are in before they start a conversation with a prisoner ensuring that they can be seen easily and can also easily see what is happening in their view. Alternatively, if the conversation needed more time and attention then the officer could ask the prisoners to wait, and – if possible – come back to them when the rest of the landing are locked up so that they could give them their full attention.

Case Study 2

Officer Smith is trying to utilise their radar/be seen looking technique while observing prisoners out on the exercise yard. A prisoner approaches Officer Smith to have a chat. The officer thinks they are trying to distract her from observing what is happening on the yard. At this point Officer Smith says that they can't speak right now and asks the prisoner to move along. Officer Smith can now clearly see what is happening on the yard but tries to be subtle in their scanning so that prisoners aren't aware that she is watching them.

Consider why this example is a non-example? What could the officer have done differently to execute the radar/be seen looking technique effectively?

Mitigations to using this technique

Consider the following questions to think about the circumstances when you would and wouldn't choose to use this technique:

- Are there any situations where you wouldn't use this technique. If so why?
- What about if you know that another officer is scanning? Does this mean you need to utilise the technique too?

Final Reflection Questions

Answer these final questions to help to consolidate your learning and consider how you will use this technique in your day-to-day practice in your current working context.

- What is the goal? What are prison officers looking to achieve by using this technique?
- Why should this technique work? How should prisoners behave differently?
- What do you need to do? Outline the key success checks you need to meet to apply this technique?
- What are the pitfalls? When shouldn't we use this technique? What barriers do you foresee to using this technique? How could you overcome them?