



Martin Narey

Chief Executive of Barnados and Former Director General of the Prison Service.

Themes

Leadership in Adversity

Culture change in the toughest of sectors!

How organisations change:

The absurdity of business & strategic plans to motivate, and the power of a simple, compelling vision to do so!

The capacity of incremental change to change an organisation

Simply doing things a little bit better every day

Overcoming the feeling of loneliness at the top

Martin Narey is the Chief Executive of Barnardo's. Previously he was Director General of the Prison Service and then the Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service and a Permanent Secretary at the Home Office. When running prisons he was widely recognised for his commitment to transforming and motivating prison staff, and for his clarity of vision and determination to drive through improvements in the way in which prisoners were treated. He established the Decency Agenda in prisons, which led to significant improvements in prison conditions.

He graduated in 1977 from what was then Sheffield Polytechnic, where he is now a Visiting Professor, and began a career in the Health Service. But in 1982, to the astonishment of colleagues and friends, he resigned to train as a prison governor. He worked in a local prison, a borstal and a top security prison before taking a number of posts in Whitehall. He was appointed as the youngest ever Director General of the Prison Service in 1998.

Martin paints a portrait of the challenges of the Prison Service, outlines why no one wanted the job, why he did want it, and then, how very difficult it was to do. He honestly talks about the many challenges, including things he got badly wrong. From that, but also reflecting on his wider managerial experience, he draws up a list of ten simple leadership rules which, he argues, apply in good times and bad.

Prior to Martin taking on the role of Director General of Prison Service in '99 it had been 1975 since anyone had left the role happily or voluntarily! By 2004 Martin had achieved such substantial improvements that The Chartered Institute of Management made him their leader of the year. Martin was the first public sector recipient of the medal for ten years.

Martin has a deep and passionate concern for disadvantaged young people. It is this thread (in addition to a growing frustration with the political process), which brought him to Barnardo's, working with 111,000 disadvantaged children and young people with a staff of six and a half thousand and eleven thousand volunteers.