



**Prisoner Learning Alliance
Minutes of sixth meeting
HMP Brixton
31st January 2014**

1. PLA membership

The PLA welcomed new members from Niace, Association of Colleges and the Youth Justice Board to the PLA.

A proposal paper on reviewing membership was presented which was approved by all PLA members. **ACTION**

2. Smart Rehabilitation debrief and next steps regarding policy and media (see paper 2)

There was agreement that the launch event for Smart Rehabilitation was a success with compelling presentations in particular from Nick Hardwick and PET funded prisoner learners family member.

2.1 How the report has been used since the event

- The Chair, Nina Champion and Rod Clarke had a 30 minute meeting with Jeremy Wright, Prisons Minister about the report, which was extremely useful. Our position is that learning is as important in the adult estate as it is in the youth estate, particularly as many adults in prison missed out on mainstream education. This is supported by the positive findings from the Justice Data Lab which found a link between being funded for a distance learning course by Prisoners Education Trust and reduced reoffending. Therefore we need to continue to make the case for a focus on learning across the whole of the prison estate. The PLA will also seek to engage with the potential Transforming Rehabilitation tier 1 and 2 providers.
- The report has been used to respond to a number of Select Committee inquiries and consultations.
- Nina Champion also used the report's findings and recommendations in a workshop at the No Offence conference on 19th March on the theme of employability.

2.2 Next step actions for dissemination of Smart Rehabilitation

- All PLA members to set up links to the report on their websites and promote widely at meetings, media interviews, e-news and other communications and newsletters Contact BIS Select Committee with copies.

- Engage with the potential Tier 1 and 2 organisations at an early stage to make the case for education as part of TR. Suggestion to contact Clinks who have contacts with all those bidding.
- Contact the 'All Party Skills Commission' Chair Barry Sheerman MP as they are creating a cross - party manifesto for skills, would be good to get reference to prison education in there.
- Produce a pdf of the Exec Summary making it more accessible for people to read.
- ICPS to send references from the chapter 'Human Rights approach to education'.

PLA Secretariat will contact each member individually over next few months to meet and discuss how best to promote SR.

3. Smart Rehabilitation: Next steps regarding sharing good practice (see paper 3)

PLA members had a chance to comment on a proposal paper for a conference to be held at the end of April and a sub-committee group was formed to take this work forward.

4. Prison Voices

Bad Boys Bakery

The PLA heard from two prisoner learners who are currently working in the Bad Boys Bakery (BBB). Also in attendance was a project worker from Working Links who runs the bakery project, the Governor and Education Manager.

The learners spoke positively of their experiences of BBB. They told us that there have already been success stories of men leaving prison and finding employment. They told us that the equipment was first class and the teaching and training was to a high standard.

The BBB offer NVQ levels 1 and 2. One of the learners had worked as a builder previously, so was enjoying this experience and felt it would give him something else to fall back on after release. He was also looking forward to re-connecting with his wife and children through baking. One of the learners had worked as a chef prior to coming to prison and was excited about an opportunity to go on ROTL to work in one of Gordon Ramsey's restaurants.

The Bakery is gaining a profile - the runner up from the British Bake Off tweeted about them recently - the project is keen to get celebrity support. Prisoners often come up with ideas to improve products themselves. The bakery has a vacancy noticeboard to give the men an idea of the job opportunities out there. There is also a Case Manager who works through the gate with the men on resettlement issues. In the long term they want to open a social enterprise bakery outside the gate for the men to transfer to on release for up to a year until they get settled and get other employment. Some of the bakers are keen to work in The Clink.

The learners explained that they spend their whole day 8.15 - 4.30 (including lunch time) working in the bakery, five days a week, so it resembles a working day outside of prison.

The Education Manager said that the work available does make a big difference - prisoners can do Health and Safety qualifications and food hygiene. The bakery for example is a working environment where they are selling a product to the public so consistency is important - if they are not good enough they get sent back and the prisoners are aware of that.

The 'learn and work model'

The 'learn and work' model is being extended to other types of work, e.g. painting and decorating with Bounceback, gardening and textile workshops. They will also be linking in the textile workshop with the London School of Fashion to create tailoring qualifications. They are looking into getting vocational courses for people working as library orderlies.

Soft skills: building resilience and determination

The Governor commented that it is not just about getting an education or having a job to go out to on release, it is about building 'internal resilience and determination'. Sometimes it is two steps forward and two back. There are 700 prisoners in Brixton Prison and every person needs support. It is his vision to have every prisoner engaged in one of the 'work and learn' programmes in the prison eventually.

Level 3

When asked about opportunities of the bakers to do level 3 qualifications, the response was that this was difficult as not offered under OLASS. One baker is hoping to go out on ROTL to college to do level 3 but other men capable of studying at this level too, so they are looking into options to enable them to access this.

'Carousel' Model

The Education Manager said that they are moving to a 'Carousel model' of teaching where prisoners can engage in a range of learning and work. Prisoners can do qualifications alongside their work and can be released one or two mornings a week to attend courses, for example to do Business Administration. The prison are trying to encourage prisoners to organise their own weeks and fill up the spaces they have in their timetables with a 'mosaic of activities'.

Culture of learning: engaging, diverse and rewarded

They have a very diverse population at Brixton and they need to cater for a range of different needs such as; Cat D who can go out on ROTL and elderly prisoners. Previously education was all about maths classes whereas they now provide a greater diversity of courses.

The pay structure has also been revised so that anything with a vocation basis / qualification is the highest paid.

There are good links between education and the wings, getting prisoners who are getting into trouble (with nothing to do) into the classes.

The Education Manager also said that the NCS has good links with colleges and getting people out on ROTL.

ICT

The OU goes through the VC now. They have 48 terminals on the top floor which are shared between education and Job Centre Plus. They are looking with A4E into the possibility of getting laptops that can be used on the wings.

5. Update from BIS (Richard Ward)

Virtual Campus / ICT

Part of the OU budget is to develop a 'walled garden' - however no update available on the pilot 'walled garden' as yet.

One member reported that HMP Highdown is using VC well, all staff have been trained and Meganexus has been in to help. They are reporting to NOMS on the usage. This member would find it useful if reports from VC could be pulled off rather than having to input same data (such as release addresses) into P-Nomis.

NIACE reported that they are working on a VC interactive content development project.

Learning difficulties and disabilities

The level of LLDD requirements was underestimated in the original budget distribution meaning that OLASS providers have spent double the amount set aside. 2013/14 is giving providers more flexibility about amount that can be spent on LLDD support.

Jeremy Wright answered an oral party question on 17th December about a full maths and English assessment for all prisoners on reception to prison. This assessment will pick up LLDD. Skills Funding Agency is working with NOMS to roll this out in two regions; more news to come.

Distance Learning

The positive results from the Justice Data Lab with Prisoners Education Trust were highlighted. Results have meant the split of BIS funding for PET between accredited and unaccredited has now been made more flexible.

Arts / informal learning

The positive results from the Justice Data Lab with PET for arts materials grants were highlighted.

There was a recent meeting held with Arts Alliance and OLASS providers, which was positive.

Self employment support

Business Link material on VC but feedback from prisoners is that it can be hard to navigate and find what they need. There will soon be an announcement about the launch of new

initiative around enterprise including loans, mentor support and better links to OLASS provision.

Currently, there is an enormous amount of self-employment and mentoring support available in prisons but is not evenly spread throughout the estate and more through the gate support is needed.

NIACE is doing an evaluation of the Virtual Campus.

OLASS 4 year one results and evaluation

There are almost the same numbers of learners in first year of OLASS 4 (90,000) as under OLASS 3. In the first quarter of this year there were 32,000 learners enrolled. However, the numbers of learners achieving qualifications has dropped by 4.9%; the reasons why are being investigated. A scoping study is being carried out for a full evaluation into OLASS 4.

The National Careers Service (NCS) re-procurement is underway. Prison now comes under the specification for NCS, rather than a bolt on. Four information sessions will now be available to prisoners per year, rather than three.