

The Learning Prison

Case studies

A4E Working Start

A4E Working Start is a two-week gateway programme for ex-offenders in Newport, Wales, designed to move ex-offenders into employment or prepare them to join mainstream provision through the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) New Deal. A4E, the DWP and the probation service work in partnership with each other, and the client (the ex-offender), to decide if an individual is right for the course. The course is geared towards ex-offender needs, but receives mainstream DWP funding in the form of Deprived Area Funding (DAF). More than 80 per cent of clients moved into employment after taking the course, a strong success rate.

Source: www.mya4e.com/4-Governments/What-we-do/Reducing-Reoffending.aspx

Allegheny County Jail Collaborative, United States

This programme is set up as a partnership between several local institutions, with the purpose of reducing duplication of government services. It offers a multi-modal approach to reintegration, focusing on various issues including family reunification and community engagement to support the provision of logistical items post-release. Peer support and a close relationship between prisoner and case manager are essential parts of the programme (the case manager follows ex-prisoners for up to one year after their release to assist with reintegration and support continuity in learning). Re-entry planning starts immediately after incarceration and a service plan is developed 60–120 days prior to release. Evaluations show an overall 15 per cent reduction in re-incarceration compared with the rate before the Collaborative began.

Source: www.alleghenycounty.us/jail/

Business Link

Business Link start-up provides a service which delivers a variety of seminars and workshops on starting up businesses. The vast majority of offenders obviously cannot start up a business while in prison. However, they still benefit from information which enables them to begin developing a business plan, and which can be linked to a qualification. On release, they can communicate with their local Business Link. Unfortunately, this service is not available everywhere; there are some grant schemes for starting up a business but no universal scheme that covers the whole country.

Source:

www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/home?domain=www.businesslink.gov.uk&target=http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/

Citizens Advice Bureau

The CAB has been pioneering the use of prisoner-delivered advice. An analysis of one pilot partnership between Springhill Prison and CAB Oxford concluded that the involvement of prisoners benefited staff, those being advised and prisoner-advisers. The CAB was aware of some concerns about, for example, the access of advisers to personal information, and it reacted by putting in place rigorous risk assessment, selection and monitoring. Prisoners give advice to their peers on a range of issues having undergone CAB training. The CAB now offers advice in a range of prisons and runs a helpline. The aim is to provide practical factual advice to prisoners in preparation for their release. In some open prisons peers can undertake community work on a day-release basis.

Source: www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk/docs/OxCABsummary.pdf

The Clink, HMP High Down

In spring 2009 a new restaurant opened at HMP High Down. Its customers can expect dishes like pan-fried John Dory, paupiette of chicken with spinach mousseline, roast turbot with broad beans and pancetta, and lavender mascarpone with spun sugar. Organic ingredients are supplied directly from the restaurant garden, with the aim of making the business self-sustaining. The restaurant has attracted food critics to share their hard-headed assessments and invited members of the public to part with their cash. Many new businesses are currently facing tough times; this venture has additional challenges: diners have to hand over their valuables, undergo a body search and pass through several reinforced steel doors before they are seated. Unlike other restaurants, this one is inside a prison and will be staffed by prisoners, who will continue to eat standard prison fare, serving up food to prison staff and invited members of the public. It offers prisoners an opportunity to gain catering qualifications, work experience within an exciting and operational business, and guidance to a full-time job upon release. The venture aims to encourage employers – through the high media profile of the restaurant and direct visits – to be more open to offering jobs to ex-offenders.

Source: www.theclinkonline.com

Community Justice Centre, North Liverpool

The Community Justice Centre is a unique initiative that brings justice into the heart of the community, tackling crimes and anti-social behaviour that affect the quality of life for people living in the local authority wards of Anfield, County, Everton and Kirkdale, in North Liverpool.

The first of its kind in England and Wales, the centre aims to work closely with local people to understand and tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour and crime. It combines the powers of a courtroom, run by Judge David Fletcher, with a range of community resources, available to residents, victims and witnesses, as well as offenders. It also organises and supports activities involving local residents and, in particular, young people.

One of the key successes of the Community Justice Centre was how it positively related to the local media in Liverpool. The media were involved at a very early stage with significant efforts made to engage journalists in the restorative justice approach. However, as well as this media support, success also depended on the centre involving a number of key people and organisations within the community who were prepared to take risks.

Source: www.communityjustice.gov.uk/northliverpool/about.htm

Community Restorative Justice, New Cross Gate, London

New Cross Gate in the South London Borough of Lewisham has piloted a restorative justice community project that aims to use practices such as bringing together offenders and victims to resolve grievances and prevent further offending. While restorative justice has previously been used in schools and with young offenders, this is the first time it has taken place across a whole community. Ten local agencies including housing, policing and schools were involved, incorporating restorative justice into their processes. The project aims to involve local people and New Cross Gate offered free training in restorative justice to any residents who wanted it.

Restorative approaches aim to get everyone who has been directly affected by an incident together to talk about what has happened; this might be as a result of anti-social behaviour, a crime, a problem with a neighbour or another situation that has caused harm. At a restorative meeting everyone has his or her say. They are asked to listen to all the other people involved and agree a way forward together. If it's not possible for people to meet together, other ways of sharing everyone's views and finding ways forward are sought. Normally people in a meeting make a spoken or written agreement which spells out what everyone is going to do to put things right and help make the future better. Everyone has to agree to these actions and usually someone is asked to monitor the agreement in the future.

Source: www.restorativejustice.org.uk/?Resources:Publications:Books_3

Davidson County Sheriff's Office, United States

This programme offers various services including life skills training (with training in finances, stress management, establishing social identity and so on), mentoring, and referrals to community resources. Mentors work with participants to re-establish their relations with the community while they are still incarcerated. They also pick up inmates from the prison when they are released and there is a partnership with the Metropolitan Transit Authority and a private taxi service to help released inmates reach various service providers in the community. According to evaluations, there has been a significant reduction in recidivism rates. Depending on the specific programme evaluated, it was found that 57 to 78 per cent of former inmates were still out of prison two years after release.

Source: www.urbaninstitute.org/UploadedPDF/411660_life_after_lockup.pdf

Department of Women's Justice Services, Cook County Sheriff's Office, United States

One of the particularities of this programme is the peer mentoring of the Women of Power Alumni Association, a group of formerly incarcerated women who have successfully transitioned out of the Department of Women's Justice Services. Peer mentors work with women for an unlimited amount of time until they are engaged in the alumni association. Overall, the DWJS reports a 17 per cent recidivism rate for its participants.

Source: www.cookcountysheriff.org/womens_justice_services/wjs_main.html

Dutchess County Jail Transition Programme, Dutchess County Sheriff's Office, United States

The Transition Programme at Dutchess County Jail offers an interesting approach towards short-sentence inmates. Because of the short length of stays, no specific cognitive curricula are followed. Rather, within a social learning atmosphere, programme officers and social workers use a variety of methods based on their relationships with each participant to address criminogenic risk and criminal thinking. A key part of the transition plan is providing participants with contacts in the community while they are still incarcerated. Also, correctional programme officers make contact with graduates of the scheme and family members at least once a month for a year after release from jail. Many graduates voluntarily return to the jail to meet with their transition counsellor for counselling and guidance. According to preliminary evaluations, the strategy realised a 33 per cent reduction in recidivism.

Source: www.urbaninstitute.org/UploadedPDF/411660_life_after_lockup.pdf

East of England Test Bed

The East of England test bed is a partnership involving the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), prison and probation services, the Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus and providers and partners. The success of the test bed hinges very much on the support of employers. A regional employer leadership group, chaired by Stephen Bourne, chief executive of Cambridge University Press, has been established as part of the test bed. This group of employers acts as a sounding board for the activities, as well as helping to promote the work. The Blue Arrow recruitment agency has been looking at the training delivered within the region's prisons to see how it matches with the skills required for the vacancies it recruits for. To this end the test bed prison lead has provided the agency with prisoners' CVs from across the region so they can be matched with suitable employment opportunities.

Source: www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/index.php?id=284

Electric Radio

Broadcasting since 2007 in a prison that had a high level of self-harm and suicide, this radio station won a prestigious national broadcasting award in 2009, even though its audience is limited to 800 prisoners. All programmes are pre-recorded and edited by civilians who run the station. Shows cover religion, poetry and music but programmes are punctuated with information and public service announcements rather than with advertisements. In the evening the station broadcasts interviews between inmates and a regular slot where the governor responds to prisoners' questions. The aim is to improve communication and build skills in broadcasting and in information and communication technology among inmates. Volunteers undertake full-time production courses, learn how to use editing software as well as the broadcast deck and are taught to work as if they were in a normal job.

Source: www.prisonradioassociation.org/

The Family Man

The Family Man course is one example of a successful project, operating across 22 prisons in the UK, providing male offenders – alongside their partners – with a programme of rating themselves against the seven resettlement pathways developed by NOMS [see Table 4, Chapter 3]. The course offers support to male prisoners by helping them prepare and write individual action plans based on the seven pathways, in particular No. 2: skills and employment. In addition to this, careers fairs are held within the prisons, along with specific workshops delivered by external employers who provide particular components. The main outcome of the programme is the production and development of a more concise action plan.

Source: www.safeground.org.uk/courses_familyman.php

For A Change Resettlement Pathfinder

This programme sought to reduce offending by helping prisoners to develop ‘more socially acceptable attitudes and behaviour’ and by ‘tackling and reducing practical problems associated with offending and resettlement’. The main message from the Pathfinder research is that a reduction in reoffending may depend to a large extent on whether the new arrangements result in: (a) skilled and systematic work with offenders in relation to thinking, attitudes and motivation as well as their practical problems; and (b) genuine ‘continuity’ in work ‘through the prison gate’. Both require the development of personal relationships with offenders, skilled and motivated staff, and a holistic approach to working with individuals.

While voluntary participants in this programme did not show lower reconviction rates than matched control groups, or than would be expected given their risk assessments, ‘those participants who had post-release contact with any project staff or community links had significantly lower reconviction rates (relative to risk) than those who had no contact’. Also, those in prisons where programme participants reported the greatest attitude change showed lowest reconviction rates at one year, and those participating in the voluntary sector-led programmes at two of the prisons ‘who had post-release contact with mentors did significantly better than any other group of prisoners analysed’.

Source: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/r200.pdf

The Griffins Society Women’s Information Network

The Women’s Information Network (WIN) runs an online information database set up by the Griffins Society, a voluntary organisation working for the care and resettlement of female offenders in prison and in the community. The WIN database empowers women affected by the criminal justice system to improve their circumstances and opportunities by providing easily accessible information about resources and projects in the UK that are there to support them. In particular it provides information about prison- and community-based education programmes. WIN also provides a specialist forum for individuals and organisations wanting to research, discuss and share knowledge about what works for women caught up in the justice system. This example of innovative and wide reaching good practice is unique in that it can be accessed by both offenders and practitioners.

The Griffins Society also has a Stepping Stones programme, which supports female offenders by allowing them to attend the Society’s offices for a few weeks and providing them with offender-specific training for the first four weeks in the job. Thereafter, they are placed on a 12-week community volunteering programme with an employer. The Griffins Society provides support to the employer during the same 12

weeks. During the programme, additional training components, confidence building, job search training, and so on are provided to ensure the continual development of female offenders' self efficacy and confidence. This is vital given that many have never worked before; they don't just need support into employment but also require intensive support to prepare them for their working life. Some of them have spent their entire adult life in prison, and a few have never had any kind of 'paternal' support.

Source: www.thegriffinssociety.org

HMYOI Portland, Dorset

The aim of this project based at HM Portland Young Offenders Institute and supported by the European Social Fund, was to run training courses for offenders to give them skills that will be immediately useful to employers. The chosen vocation was railway renewal. The object has been for the offenders to gain an NVQ 2 qualification along with supporting qualifications. The course has been provided by a commercial rail training company. A training track was built within the prison walls and, during a 10-week course, offenders learned skills that will enable them to compete for jobs on more than equal terms. They were able to develop generic skills including team working and problem solving.

The course has been evaluated and its success has led to it being 'mainstreamed', with A4e staff facilitating the programme now funded from the OLASS budget. Just under a third of those released progressed to registration with a rail agency or work with Network Rail. Many others have expressed a desire to work in the industry. All those involved were positive and saw the part played by external trainers as critical in providing role models as well as practical skills. Feedback from trainees made it clear that they valued the focus and pragmatism of the course but that more needed to be done to ensure realistic expectations and continued support for securing related work on release.

Source: supplied by A4E.

In-cell TV for learning

HMP Littlehey used in-cell television to allow learners to take part in accredited learning. It took a blended approach combining television programmes, specially designed learning materials and face-to-face sessions. Programmes were broadcast and repeated at set times for learners to watch in-cell. The areas of learning selected were parenting, preparation for employment, healthy living and financial literacy, all chosen because of their impact on resettlement. The ability to learn through television allows for flexibility of access.

Source: e-learning in the Secure Estate,
http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/f/i/file_1_47.pdf

Integrated Digital TV in prisons

iDTV offers a new, alternative route for e-learning, which is particularly suitable for prisons due to concern about Internet security. The ways in which learners can interact with the service are strictly limited and do not allow open access to the Internet. The key difference between e-learning via the Internet and e-learning via iDTV is that the Internet allows access to other sites, while iDTV does not. All navigation is via on-screen menus using a standard digital TV remote control unit and users are unable to access any other services or to send messages.

Source: e-learning in the Secure Estate,
http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/f/i/file_1_47.pdf

Kensington and Chelsea College

A number of providers offer courses for former offenders to fill industry gaps in London and other parts of the country. Kensington and Chelsea College is the OLASS provider for all eight (soon to be nine) London prisons and supports youth and adult learners in developing construction skills, for which there is high demand. The 150–200 full-time students expected to be trained in the KCC Transition Centre in the span of one year are guided by appointed mentors to find local long-term job opportunities. Those mentors are often ex-offenders, deliberately recruited for their relevant skills and experience. The college aims not only to enhance learners' employment chances, but also to improve their lives more generally.

Kent Employers Forum

The Kent Employers Forum invites a willing offender and ex-offender to act as champions, to present case studies (with support) to employers, which strengthens the debate and makes the case for employing ex-offenders on a more personal level. The Employers Forum is well established and involves Jobcentre Plus and the probation service. Clients need to be sufficiently work-ready – to be able to turn up on time and be trustworthy – along with having the requisite soft skills. The Forum produces a handout outlining the business benefits clearly to employers, and includes responses to address employers' questions around risk management, with case study examples of good practice.

Source: www.southkent.ac.uk/Training4Care/documents/ForumMinutes-30-04-09.pdf

Kormo Shadin/Freedom to work, East London

In June 2007, Working Links, a leading organisation that has helped 100,000 long-term unemployed people to find work, launched the Kormo Shadin – or 'freedom to work' – programme, which aims to guide and support jobseekers through a range of activities, enabling them to become socially and financially better off. Funded by the London Development Agency, it has been designed specifically to help Bangladeshi ex-offenders and is focused on those living in the East London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham and Hackney. The programme has already had a massive impact in the communities where it runs: more than 261 people have registered to take part and over 79 people have now been helped into a job. Earlier last year Kormo Shadin helped the Borough of Tower Hamlets to gain a Beacon award for reducing reoffending.

Source: http://www.workinglinks.co.uk/working_links/news_stories/kormo_shadin.aspx

London Diamond Initiative

The £5.5 million London Diamond Initiative has been piloted across three London boroughs since autumn 2008. It is designed to break the cycle of reoffending of convicted criminals and build on the success of the Safer Neighbourhoods Programme. The concept is based on work from the US on justice re-investment that has demonstrated the potential to move money from the penal system into early intervention community initiatives. In particular the proposal draws from the 'Million Dollar Blocks' concept, which has demonstrated the significant potential of targeting resources on areas with high resident offender populations. A team of police officers and a probation officer in each borough is working with offenders when they leave prison to provide active help and support to stop them reoffending. The scheme is being funded jointly by the Metropolitan Police Service, the Government and local councils.

Source: <http://lcjb.cjsonline.gov.uk/area23/library/diamondbulletin.html>

Making the Change, Bristol

Making the Change, a Bristol based charity, is behind plans for a new halfway house for teenagers leaving Ashfield Young Offenders Institution. The aim is to help young people to avoid sinking back into crime and support them in becoming students, apprentices and employees. About eight boys will be at the house at any one time, with round-the-clock supervision. During the day they will be studying or working and in the evening will be kept busy with work such as gardening, painting and decorating. Drugs and alcohol will be banned, a curfew will be in place and there will be the threat of a recall from their release license if they fail to comply with the rules. The project aims to open in Spring 2010 but is facing some local resistance.

Source: www.redlandpeople.co.uk/news/Residents-oppose-new-halfway-house-Bristol/article-1676703-detail/article.html

New York City Discharge Planning Collaboration, United States

The primary focus of this Collaboration is discharge planning and connection to aftercare services and resources. Services address pressing issues that arise immediately after release, such as access to benefits and services in the community. For example, a hotline has been established for inmates to call and be connected to a service provider for re-entry assistance. There is a single service provider that works with an inmate in jail, transports him or her to jail services on the day of release, and continues to work with that inmate in the community for 90 days after release, providing case management, crisis intervention and referrals.

Source: www.nyc.gov/html/doc/downloads/pdf/discharge_planning.pdf

Opening Minds

Opening Minds is a competence-based curriculum framework, which at the end of 2009 was being used in over 200 schools. The Opening Minds 'competencies' cover five main areas: citizenship, learning, managing information, relating to people and managing situations. The curriculum provides a broad framework in which the content of the national curriculum can be delivered in a creative and flexible way so that young people are prepared for the real world. In 2008 the RSA analysed available Ofsted data on how Opening Minds is being implemented in schools, and the impact it is having. It found that 93 per cent of comments made about Opening Minds in the reports were positive and that three quarters of the schools using it were rated as good or outstanding. Ofsted noted the positive impact of Opening Minds on results and attainment in some schools where Opening Minds students have taken Key Stage 3 tests or GCSEs.

A survey found that nearly a fifth of schools using Opening Minds felt that they had fully achieved the improvement in behaviour that they had sought and a further 50 per cent stated that good progress had been made. All respondent schools felt that Opening Minds had helped them to make at least some progress towards creating independent learners, which was also the most important aim for most schools.

Source: www.thersa.org/projects/education/opening-minds

Open University

More than 1,400 prisoners are currently taking Open University courses in prisons across the UK. The OU's latest prospectus gives details of nearly 200 courses available to prisoner students, with subjects ranging from the arts and social sciences to maths, science and law. Most OU prison students begin by taking an Openings course, which is designed to help students find out what it is like to study with the OU, get a taste of a subject area, develop learning skills and build confidence.

Source: 'Students in prison have options too', *The OU Community Online*, 2009: www.open.ac.uk/platform/news/society/students-prison-have-options-too

Pictora

Pictora is a social enterprise created by a partnership of staff from Kalyx, Koestler Trust, Leaf Systems and Cementaprise. Pictora brings the therapeutic value of offender art together with the practical creativity of entrepreneurship and business enterprise skills in order to support offenders in prison and back into society. Pictora uses the money raised from sales of art by offenders for a range of work including Victim Support, The Koester Trust and training in prisons aimed at supporting social enterprise. In prison, offenders receive support from Pictora, learning a range of business enterprise skill, developing practical entrepreneurship and working towards a range of accredited NCFE Enterprise qualifications at both a level 1 and 2.

Source: www.pictora.org.uk

Prince's Trust: working one-to-one with young offenders

Ex-offenders, who have been released for two years, support young offenders through their transition from custody to independent living. The idea for this project came directly from young people who had experience of the criminal justice sector. Mentors work as a team delivering a monthly motivational talk to a group of young adults in prison, sharing their life experiences. Once matched, mentors visit their clients monthly in prison and write letters to them. They meet their client at the gate (if required) on their release to ensure they reach their accommodation safely. The primary role of a mentor is to inspire and motivate their client. The secondary role is to support their client to access appropriate services for their resettlement needs.

Source: www.princes-trust.org.uk

Re-Entry Continuum, Hampden County Sheriff's Department, Massachusetts, United States

In 1996, the After Incarceration Support System (AISS) was established as part of the programme to provide prisoners at the Hampden County Correctional Center with a 'continuum of services starting in the jail, continuing in the community, and available as an option for as long as individuals wish'. Ninety-one days before release, prisoners begin meeting with community service providers, including an education reintegration counsellor, mentors (some of them ex-offenders), and caseworkers. Some prisoners spend the last 30 days of their sentence in a newly created community re-entry unit, where they continue to receive services from outside agencies and undertake staff accompanied visits to look for housing and employment, and attend family reunification sessions.

The sheriff's department has developed classification matrices for violent offenders, non-violent offenders, and those serving mandatory sentences that chart out their time at each security level by sentence length. For instance, a non-violent offender serving eighteen months who complies with his re-entry plan and demonstrates excellent institutional conduct will spend 10 days at medium security, one month at minimum security, two months at secure pre-release, and the balance (or less) on day reporting (living at home and reporting regularly to the day reporting centre). The department's matrices are adjusted regularly on the basis of population levels at the facility and prove to be an effective tool both to prevent overcrowding and to place individuals at security levels that will allow them to work and receive community-based treatment prior to release. Two other counties in Massachusetts employ similar matrices to place individuals appropriately and develop dynamic re-entry plans.

Source: www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/sp_educ

Red Hook Community Justice Centre, New York City, United States

One example of a project that evolved out of the recession in the US was the Red Hook Community Justice Centre. Launched in June 2000, it is the nation's first multi-jurisdictional community court. It operates out of a refurbished Catholic school in the heart of a low-income Brooklyn neighbourhood, and seeks to solve neighbourhood problems like drugs, crime, domestic violence and landlord-tenant disputes.

At Red Hook, a single judge hears neighbourhood cases that under ordinary circumstances would go to three different courts – civil, family and criminal. The goal is to offer a coordinated rather than piecemeal approach to people's problems. The Red Hook judge has an array of sanctions and services at his disposal, including community restitution projects, on-site educational workshops and general educational development (GED) classes, drug treatment and mental health counselling – all rigorously monitored to ensure accountability and drive home notions of individual responsibility. But the Red Hook story goes far beyond what happens in the courtroom.

The courthouse is the hub for an array of unconventional programmes that engage local residents in 'doing justice'. These include mediation, community-service projects that put local volunteers to work, and a youth court where teenagers resolve actual cases involving their peers. The idea is to engage the community in aggressive crime prevention, solving local problems before they even come to court.

Source:

www.courtinnovation.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&page%20ID=572

Samaritans Listener Scheme

The Samaritans Listener Scheme offers prisoners peer support. Selected volunteer listeners are trained and supported by the Samaritans to listen to the problems and concerns of fellow prisoners.

Source: www.samaritans.org.uk

Schools Without Boundaries

Piloted with four schools in Manchester, the RSA's area-based curriculum aims to ensure that schools develop content with local agencies to meet local need and increase relevance. The aim is to include but go beyond local relevance – for example, history lessons based on the way in which history has impacted on the area – and to inculcate a sense of ownership of the curriculum among key players within the community. The area-based approach takes schools' role in their communities to another level and seeks to work in partnership with institutions and stakeholders outside the school to shape the curriculum in important ways. As well as increasing the likelihood of developing a curriculum informed by local issues and including demand for skills, the RSA's aim was wider and based on the idea that a school that is truly committed to providing a relevant, responsive experience of education for its students will take seriously the creation of a highly participative community of learning.

Source: www.thersa.org/projects/education/future-schools-network

Social Animals

In a report on engaging design students in the process of redesigning the prison visit, the RSA concluded that doing so could benefit inmates, their families and reduce reoffending. It argued that relatively simple and inexpensive changes to how family visits are designed should be considered by prison governors and government, and that the value and importance of design in shaping the new prison estate should not be ignored. The suggestions emerged from the RSA's Design Directions award competition in which students worked with prison staff, family support organisations and prisoners' families to develop new ideas for prison visits.

Prisoners' children and partners often find visits alienating and upsetting. One solution suggested was a journal, to be filled in by prisoners and their child, each taking turns between visits to document what they were up to. This would allow parents inside to play a more constant role in their child's life. Another suggestion was enabling the parent inside to recreate part of the normal parenting role by allowing the giving of a gift to their child. One designer proposed a system of visiting 'pods' that offered enhanced privacy without compromising security, and enabling families to interact in a more comfortable and 'home-like' environment. Another entry called for virtual visits via a secure internet connection. As well as the emotional benefits of being able to stay in touch more informally, the virtual visit eliminates the risk of items being passed between visitor and prisoner. It would also increase the chances of staying in touch where prisoners are – as is often the case – held long distances from home.

The use of prison gardens was seen as an important way of enabling prisoners and families to grow produce, learn to cook and then eat together. This would require changes in the layout, culture and routines of prison life but would again help strengthen relationships between prisoners and their families. The RSA's report highlights a wider debate about the value of design and use of design skills in designing public services. It concludes that design educators risk failing to equip

students to work in public services if the focus remains solely on product and industrial design. Since the publication of Social Animals, HMP Bronzefield has been looking at how it can begin to use the video technology already in place in local courts. The aim is to develop a cost effective, safe way of meeting both prisoner and staff needs.

Source: www.thersa.org/about-us/media/press-releases/design-students-redesign-prison-visits

St Giles Trust Peer Advice Project

The St Giles Trust Peer Advice Project in Camberwell, South London, aims to advance the skills and employability of prisoners by offering an NVQ in conjunction with work experience. Of note is the potential for those offenders involved in the project to be given employment experience by the St Giles Trust on their release from custody, whereupon they become mentors in a through-the-gate scheme to prisoners pending and upon release.

Source: www.stgilestrust.org.uk

Storybook Dads

Storybook Dads started with an enterprising and determined single mother and a humble CD. Six years and 3,400 CDs later the same simple idea – that parents in prison should be able to read to their children – is utilising advances in technologies. The imprisoned parent records a story and a message which are then downloaded onto a computer. Using digital audio software, trained prisoners then edit out mistakes and background noises and add sound effects and music. The editing process is such that it means that poor readers or non-readers can still participate. A mentor simply reads each line for them to repeat and then the mentor's voice is edited out.

Finally, the CD or DVD is burned, a personalised cover created and the finished disc is sent to the child. The prisoners do not have to pay for the CD, but many choose to make a donation. At HMP Dartmoor, Storybook Dads also produces DVDs so that the child can see their father's face and watch him reading. Pages from the book are filmed so that the child can see the pictures.

Source: www.storybookdads.org.uk

Toe by Toe

Adults who cannot read or write tend to try to hide the fact. A high percentage of offenders face this obstacle: for some, prison may be the first time they have tried to learn the basic skills most of us enjoy and rely upon to make progress in the world. In 2000 an initiative that enables external mentors and prisoners with literacy skills to work with those who do not have them was started in a single prison; there are now 128 prisons supporting it. The scheme is adjusted to each prison and prisoner. It relies on the goodwill, enthusiasm and commitment of the people working in prisons and the fact that neither mentors nor mentored see the scheme as a part of 'formal' education. An evaluation published in 2005 concluded that it was a highly effective initiative that had a positive impact on offenders, particularly where mentors were peers – former or serving prisoners.

Source: www.toe-by-toe.co.uk

User-Centred Drug Services Project

This project builds on the work of the RSA Commission on Illegal Drugs, Communities and Public Policy (2007), which argued for a more tailored and expansive approach to drug services. It concluded that drug users should be treated like any other recipients of public services: they have not forfeited their rights to effective public services and may need these more than the average person if they are to achieve their full potential. User involvement in drug service design and delivery is key and associated with higher levels of treatment satisfaction and retention, positive lifestyle outcomes such as improved family relationships, and increased user confidence, motivation and independence. It is a method to increase service uptake and engagement among traditionally 'hard to reach' groups.

The heterogeneity of drug users is problematic: current users, ex-users, different ethnicities, ages, and care responsibilities all pose different questions and make it hard to develop structures to reflect this diversity and ensure representation. A vicious circle forms with no user involvement developing for certain populations, meaning no specific services to cater to their needs and relatively few users from certain groups accessing services.

Working with West Sussex Drug and Alcohol Action Team and Addaction, former and current users (many of whom are 'service naïve') and a range of local partners, the RSA is designing a model of delivering personalised services. We have recruited and trained a team of current and former users in research techniques and involved some 200 local users in carrying out and participating in a large-scale survey and qualitative case studies. This research forms the basis of our new model and ideas for personalised services, all co-designed with our user team. We will test our new services in 2010 and place them in a wider 'recovery community', built and supported by a range of local partners and RSA Fellows in the region.

Source: www.thersa.org/projects/past-projects/drugs-commission

User Voice

User Voice's prison council model is based around four main 'party' groups that focus on key issues: housing and education; employment and training; resettlement; and community and environment. Candidates represent their chosen party so that it does not become about individual personalities. Prior to elections to the prison council, User Voice delivers a number of training sessions, which build up representatives' skills, such as public speaking, negotiation, conflict resolution and campaigning. These are delivered by trained professionals who have experience of being in prison.

On election day staff and prisoners vote for an issue-based party that they wish to represent them. The system works on a proportional representation list system. As a result if a council member is moved to another prison then the party has backups who can slot in – they have all the relevant knowledge and training. Once elected, members meet regularly with a senior member of staff, preferably the governor. Each party brings one proposal for change to the council. The council then votes on one issue to be taken forward to the senior management team. So far elections have been held in the three prisons on the Isle of Wight – Albany, Parkhurst and Camp Hill – with nearly 60 per cent of staff and prisoners voting.

Source: www.uservice.org

Virtual Campus

The Virtual Campus provides prisoners with secure access to a range of content that supplements other teaching. It offers the opportunity for offenders and staff to undertake qualifications that have been made available through a national online learning platform. This includes basic ICT qualifications and support with literacy and numeracy. Using intuitive software it can be used to develop prisoners' CVs prior to release. Each student is risk assessed and then given a unique login that is specific to the content that they are allowed to use and view. There are a restricted number of websites that offenders and staff can access and all activity is heavily monitored. The system is connected to a broadband connection that acts as a virtual private network. Additional websites requested are risk assessed and where possible content providers work to ensure sites are suitable. Prisoners can contact their tutor or submit work online, search and apply for jobs and access information and advice on resettlement services including mentoring in the community.

Source: www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/index.php?id=190

Vision Team peer support

At HMP East Sutton Park, the Vision Team within the women's estate is run by female prisoners who offer peer support to female offenders. Vision helps ex-offenders in accessing housing (offering administrative support and landlord liaison) and provides opportunities for voluntary work for ex-offenders. Training needs are identified in volunteers.

Source: www.imb.gov.uk/annual-reports/08-annual-reports/East_Sutton_Park_2007_-_2008.pdf?view=Binary

Way to Go

The 'Way to Go' project will be co-funded by the European Social Fund and NOMS and will progress offenders towards and into employment by mapping individual needs to existing provision and coordinating a coherent approach. This will be achieved through Enhanced IAG (information, advice and guidance), developing an action plan, mentoring individuals, developing realistic training based on need created by shortages in the local workforce, achieving appropriate qualifications, and accessing work placements, culminating in a job offer and sustained employment.

Source: <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/EastofEngland/Contracts200713EoE.pdf>

West Nottinghamshire College

West Nottinghamshire College provides learners with skills and certificates for entering the utilities sector. The college works in partnership with HMP Ranby and the East Midlands LSC and supports 14–19 year olds and adult offenders. The college has a policy of establishing a relationship with offenders' families, who are usually invited to the award-handing ceremonies. The programme enjoys a 95 per cent success rate. A regular newsletter ('In Touch with Prisons') is circulated to prisoners and prison staff, which shares information and acts to encourage motivation by underlining successful initiatives.

Sources: www.readingroom.lsc.gov.uk

Whole Education Campaign

The RSA set out to create a coalition of individuals and organisations, hoping to bring together those who wanted to focus on the content of 21st century school education. The Education Charter was drafted in 2008 by a range of organisations that felt they shared many values and ideas about education, but lacked a platform for common action. The Charter now has more than 1500 signatories. Many organisations have also signed up, including voluntary sector organisations, schools, teachers unions, student organisations and many others.

The campaign is now seeking to involve a wider group of stakeholders (including parents, young people, business, local authorities and the wider public). The RSA and its partner organisations began conducting a national campaign around Whole Education in late 2009 to early 2010, based on the initial values set out in the Charter. The campaign will promote Whole Education – that which focuses on life skills as well as knowledge – and encourage all different types of stakeholders to engage with what this might mean to them. The campaign is gathering examples of practices relating to Whole Education, alongside stories of young people benefiting – or not – and evidence of the impact. The aim is to engage practitioners, parents, young people and communities across the country with their views, ultimately to help practitioners to identify and spread effective practices that embody the values and ideas around Whole Education.

Source: www.thersa.org/projects/education/education-campaign

Working Ventures UK (WVUK)

Working Ventures is a not-for-profit company and an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by DWP. It sits part way between the public sector and the world of business. Its primary resource is a network of 1,400 employers – particularly the employer coalitions, whose members' organisations employ one in ten of the UK workforce.

In 2005–6 WVUK carried out research in the UK and US to identify areas of best practice and lessons for improving the offer to employers who engage offenders. Based on these lessons, in collaboration with three UK government departments (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and DWP), WVUK is delivering 'exit to work' – an action research project trialing new ways of engaging and supporting employers who are willing to work with or employ ex-offenders, so that they can get a job at the end of their custodial or community sentence.

Source: www.employercoalitions.co.uk