

The Education & Training Foundation

Supporting the workforce

Offender Learning Newsletter

January 2015

News

Happy New Year and welcome to the Education and Training Foundation's first offender learning newsletter.

"I'm delighted that the Foundation is now offering support to teachers and trainers in prisons and other offender settings. The Education and Training Foundation is here to support ALL staff across the whole education and training system. Working with offenders can be tough; but I know from my own visits to prisons how rewarding it can be too for staff."

Practitioners in offender learning services are often under-supported; the last in the queue when professional development is being offered. The Foundation is determined to change that. I hope you enjoy this, the first of many newsletters. We are very keen to hear from you what sort of things you would find it most to read about. Do get in touch and give us your feedback, so we can make it better and better!"

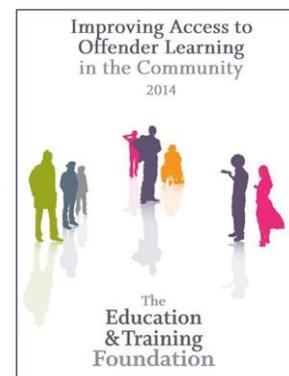
David Russell, CEO

Our new programme

The new programme of activity includes:

- A new **Offender Learning Exhibition Site**
- A refreshed **Offender Learning Leadership and Management toolkit**.
- Creation of an **Offender Learning Teaching and Learning toolkit**.
- **Master classes** for HOLSE / OLASS managers on hot topics
- **Regional workshops** for curriculum managers and practitioners related to delivering within the secure estate
- Testing **collaborative organisational learning**
- Piloting of **coaching and mentoring** for teachers and instructors
- Publication of a regular **newsletter for offender learning**.

New resource



[Download our guidance](#)

(PDF – 3.2MB) and best practice examples relating to access to offender learning in the community.

Events

For information about our professional development events planned for February and March see [page 5](#).

Leading the way

Saj Mahmood is part of a revolution in education. He is part of a dedicated team of highly skilled professionals from The Manchester College's Justice Sector aiming to redefine education services offered in prisons and secure establishments.

Saj, ICT Team Lead at HMPYOI Wetherby, is in no doubt that training and development (T&D) is the key to unlocking learners' potential. Faced with the inherent problem of learner engagement, but with the added complications of restricted access to IT and the rigours of security regimes, the team have to be creative to find solutions to deliver engaging lessons and produce life-changing results for this vulnerable sector of society, which, in consequence has a direct effect in the fight to lower reoffending rates.

"In a mainstream learning environment you would have all the latest software, iPads and laptops, but in many of our establishments our tutors can't always access online resources. That means we have to be more creative and think outside the box. Training and development gives us the tools to support our staff to be creative and offer innovative solutions to our very particular set of problems," says Saj.

Saj, who specialises in interactive whiteboard training, has used his IT expertise to migrate The Manchester College's 2,300 Justice Sector staff to a new Moodle online learning platform, which offers a wealth of T&D opportunities for his colleagues. *"Moodle gives our staff the opportunity to talk to other tutors*



and share best practice. That feeds directly down to our learners who benefit from this sharing of ideas."

Introducing cutting edge IT into secure environments carries huge challenges, but the results can be a revelation. Saj, 27, has also been part of the team supporting the introduction of the DigiLit (digital literacy) and assistive technologies project, which nurtures the inventive use of existing open source software, such as Excel, PowerPoint and Word. *"Training and development means our tutors are able to devise different ways of using IT both in the classroom and in the staffroom, which means our learners get a tailor-made experience,"* says Saj, adding: *"A lot of the IT tutors in our establishments base some of the units around the interactive whiteboard, which is proving to be extremely useful in engaging our learners; it's about getting them out of their chairs and building their confidence."*

The Manchester College's T&D initiative is blazing a trail in Justice Sector education. *"What we're doing is new. The College's Justice Sector has its own training team, and we are dedicated to pushing training and*

development to the top of the agenda," explains Saj. *"By improving our skills and sharing best practice, we become better at our jobs. Confident educators inspire confidence in our learners, and that has to be good news."*

The proof of The Manchester College's T&D initiative lies in its results, and it seems to be working. *"We've succeeded in delivering an AS level IT course in prison, which is an amazing achievement, and our success rates are industry leading. We're not really raising the bar; we're reinventing it,"* says Saj.

The restrictive environment in which The Manchester College's Justice Sector works necessitates a fluid process where creative thinking is embedded at every level, which results in the best ideas ending up in the collective toolkit for tutors.

Saj concludes: *"Our training and development programme is vital to what we do in the Justice Sector. It gives us creativity in finding solutions to the problems we face, which means our learners get the best education available."*

For further information contact [The Manchester College](#).



Community Chaplaincy Association

Making a fresh start

Community Chaplaincies work alongside prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families, offering mentoring and holistic support within prison, through the gates and out in the community. The Community Chaplaincies are multi-faith and work with offenders of all faiths and none.

Leaving prison can be a daunting prospect, which is why Community Chaplaincies offer a mentoring support service to enable those leaving prison to build a more positive future away from crime with better things to do with their time and a new sense of identity.

Staff from Community Chaplaincies work closely with Prison Chaplaincies and work in the prisons by listening to find out what the prisoners' priorities are and matching them up with an appropriate mentor that will walk with them through the journey of being released from prison as the first few days can be particularly challenging. They then meet up with them on a weekly basis to look at what it is they want to achieve and where they want to be. The mentor, through having a belief in the person, encourages and supports them to bring an extra sense of motivation and attempt to bring out their true potential.

For a lot of people education and training is a key component helping people to be the best they can be. As they move out into the wide world after leaving prison they often need new skills in order to get work which is on the priority list for a lot of people.

The majority of mentors are volunteers from Community Chaplaincies based in each region around the country. They work in partnership with a lot of agencies to link people up with opportunities to help them build a new life. The mentors use the National Offender Management Service's reducing re-offending pathways to help people move away from crime and are keen to link up with more providers of opportunities for education and training. Matt Wall, National Secretary, Community Chaplaincy Association said that *"If we are asking people to give up a certain way of life that has its own appeals such as a group of friends, drugs that occupy your mind and the exhilaration of crime then you need to offer a better alternative to boredom by stimulating their mind through learning new things and gaining skills then you are providing an essential part of the new pathway."*

Last year they mentored over 1,400 people and hope this year to have reached a lot more. Eight new Community Chaplaincies are being set up to add to the existing twenty-one. The Community Chaplaincies would like to add to their libraries of education and training opportunities in each region so that they can help people find the appropriate. They would also like to work with providers to develop 'offender friendly' training courses by trying

to deal with the needs and concerns of providers to encourage a culture of acceptance of ex-offenders so that people are not made to feel awkward.

My mentor "gave me self-worth, helped with debt, came along to important appointments, supported me with good advice when I asked for it, came along to a flat view, spoke with me around my future training options. West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy project have helped and supported me in a way no-one else has, also lots of the right info."

To find your nearest Community Chaplaincy, visit the [Projects](#) page of their website. You can contact the projects directly or contact [Matt Wall](#), National Secretary, Community Chaplaincy Association, whose role is to develop partnerships.

Community Chaplaincy projects are approved by the [Mentoring and Befriending Foundation](#).



Developing self-confidence and motivation

We at Forest Bank prison believe that prison education can help prisoners not only gain qualifications in order to become more attractive to employers but also help with self-reflection and guidance, and show them that learning can be for the sheer enjoyment.

MTa Equipment

As a result of developing educational projects Forest Bank prison has become involved in using MTA equipment. Packs of MTA equipment provide opportunities for a wide range of team building and problem solving activities. The ease of use of the MTA equipment has meant it is becoming an integral part of the prison education programme. In developing educational projects within a prison setting it is necessary to understand both how physically and mentally demanding activities may act as a means of engaging prisoners. It is also necessary to identify ways in which they make a distinct and possible unique contribution to the education of prisoners.

Motivation

The MTA equipment promotes activities to develop self-confidence and motivation of prisoners who may lack one or both. It stimulates interest in learning, develops social and creative skills and gives learners a sense of achievement. Motivation is the key to engaging offenders in education and sustaining their interest and willingness to participate, achieve and progress in any programme.



MTa Activities

As with many programmes bringing them into a prison culture can be a new experience and it takes time and effort to make sure they are implemented to their best advantage. When the effort is put in by both staff and participants the contribution can be maximised.

Existing research claims that the use of intermediate projects, such as the MTA programmes currently being developed within Forest Bank, contributes to constructive relief of boredom, increased self-esteem and an increased self-identity established through social interaction and working as part of a team.

There are a large number of variations of activities provided via the MTA programme which can contribute to the development of physical and cognitive skills. The development of cognitive abilities include; an ability to understand other people, solve interpersonal problems, deal with social relationships, impulsivity, develop an ability to reason abstractly and improve on problem solving skills. Programmes such as this one need to be carefully matched to offenders' needs and learning styles and in order to be most effective they should incorporate training in social skills and use an active participatory style of working.

As identified by staff currently working with the MTA equipment there is a need for a wide variation in the delivery of the sessions and they differ according to the age of prisoner. The activity sessions vary in the way they are delivered, the length of the session and number of sessions offered.

In addition to the improved practical skills developed by the 'older' prisoners they have reported an increase in their confidence and self-esteem and a further development in their personal and social skills. This cohort tends to prefer a different style of delivery and different type of activity and have enjoyed the activities which include problem solving and thinking tasks. They tend not to enjoy mixing with younger prisoners when engaging in this type of programme.

From the young offenders perspective they have also reported an increase in confidence and self-esteem. They have reported development in their personal and social skills, an improvement in anger management, especially when working in groups, and have developed strategies in how to speak to one another, and other people, in a structured way. They have experienced developing new peer groups and have voluntarily participated in other sessions. This cohort of prisoner has enjoyed the more physical aspect of working with the MTA equipment and has enjoyed the more adventurous or risk taking tasks.

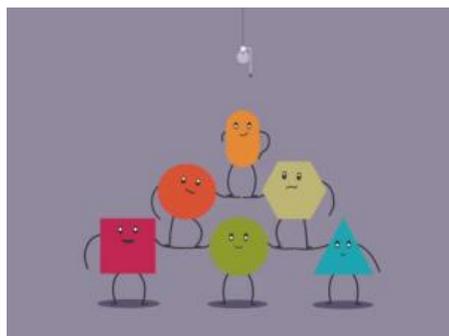
by [Patricia Robinson](#), HMP Forest Bank

Find out more about MTA equipment by visiting MTA Learning's [website](#).

Supporting each other

Leadership Register

The Education and Training Foundation's Leadership Register connects leaders in the education and skills sector to support each other in their personal, professional and organisational development through mentoring, work shadowing, learning visits, events and networks. Find out more in our [leaflet](#) and register at www.leadershipregister.org.uk.



Offender Learning Website

The Foundation are currently developing an Offender Learning Exhibition Site bringing together links to resources from the Foundation's mainstream offer; materials on the Excellence Gateway, including the [Special Education Needs \(SEND\) exhibition site](#); and other useful resources available on the Internet.

In the meantime visit: www.etf-foundation.co.uk/supporting/offender-learning/ to keep up-to-date and sign up to our mailing list for offender learning.

The National Quality Improvement Group

The Foundation are pleased to be members of the National Quality Improvement Group (NQIG) for Offender Learning. The group also includes representatives from offender learning providers, prisons and relevant Government departments. Meetings are held on a regular basis to share information and as a result an action plan has been produced to improve the quality of offender learning provision.

The following Practice Development Groups (PDGs) will take forward the action plan:

- Improving Regime Planning, Punctuality and Attendance
- Improving Teaching and Assessment Practice
- Improving Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Maths and English
- Level 3/OU/Distance Learning

To find out more about the NQIG and the PDGs contact: [Sharon Barrett](#), Head of Learning and Skills Co-commissioning, National Offender Management Service. Sharon says: *"We are delighted to be working with the Foundation to develop our workforce, enhance the quality of learning in our prisons and ultimately to improve outcomes for offenders. We have established an excellent working relationship with Theresa, Caryn and Punam and have benefitted enormously from their contributions. We look forward to the master classes in 2015.*

The inaugural meetings of the Practice Development Groups have been very fruitful and the networking has been particularly advantageous for members. We welcome additional representation.

In early 2015, we will establish an additional group to explore the improvement of practice in supporting prisoners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)." For further details, please contact [Roger Stevens](#).

Events

Master classes

A set of master classes will be arranged for **HOLSE / OLASS managers** on hot topics.

Roadshows

Sessions will be run at a series of roadshows for **leaders and managers** to introduce our updated Offender Learning Leadership and Management toolkit with accompanying training needs analysis tool.

Sharing Effective Practice Workshops

These workshops for **curriculum managers and practitioners** will be aimed at encouraging networking, sharing effective practice and showcasing resources from the new Foundation exhibition site for offender learning.

For further information about these events, run by sector experts in conjunction with Foundation Associates, visit Foundation's [offender learning webpage](#).

Making maths and English work for all

In November 2014, Nick Boles, Minister of State for Skills and Equalities, asked the Education and Training Foundation to lead a review of what employers and learners need from the maths and English qualifications taken by students who are not studying GCSEs. This could lead to improvements to ensure better outcomes for post 16 students, apprentices and adults.

We were tasked with leading on this, working with Ofqual, Ofsted, a wide range of experts, and employers.

Why undertake a review?

As you know working in offender learning, it is vitally important that learners who are not studying English and maths GCSEs study alternative qualifications that are high quality, consistent, understood by the learners and respected by employers. We will be working with a wide range of experts, including employers, to recommend how English and maths qualifications outside of GCSE, including Functional Skills, could be improved to ensure better outcomes for learners.

Why is it the Education and Training Foundation which is doing the review?

We are the independent sector-led body responsible for improving standards in further education and so are well placed to bring all parties with an interest together.

To take part in the consultation visit the 'Making maths and English work for all' consultation page on our [website](#).

Could you co-deliver a sharing effective practice session?

There is some really excellent teaching and training practice taking place across the offender learning sector and we want to share this. If you would like to co-deliver a sharing effective practice and help review resources for the offender learning sector please read the further information and get in touch **by 16th January**.

[More information here](#).

Please get in touch if you have any effective practice or news to share.

Offender Learning Newsletter

To join our mailing list and/or submit an article email:

leadership@etfoundation.co.uk

Deadline for copy for next newsletter: **20th February 2015**

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