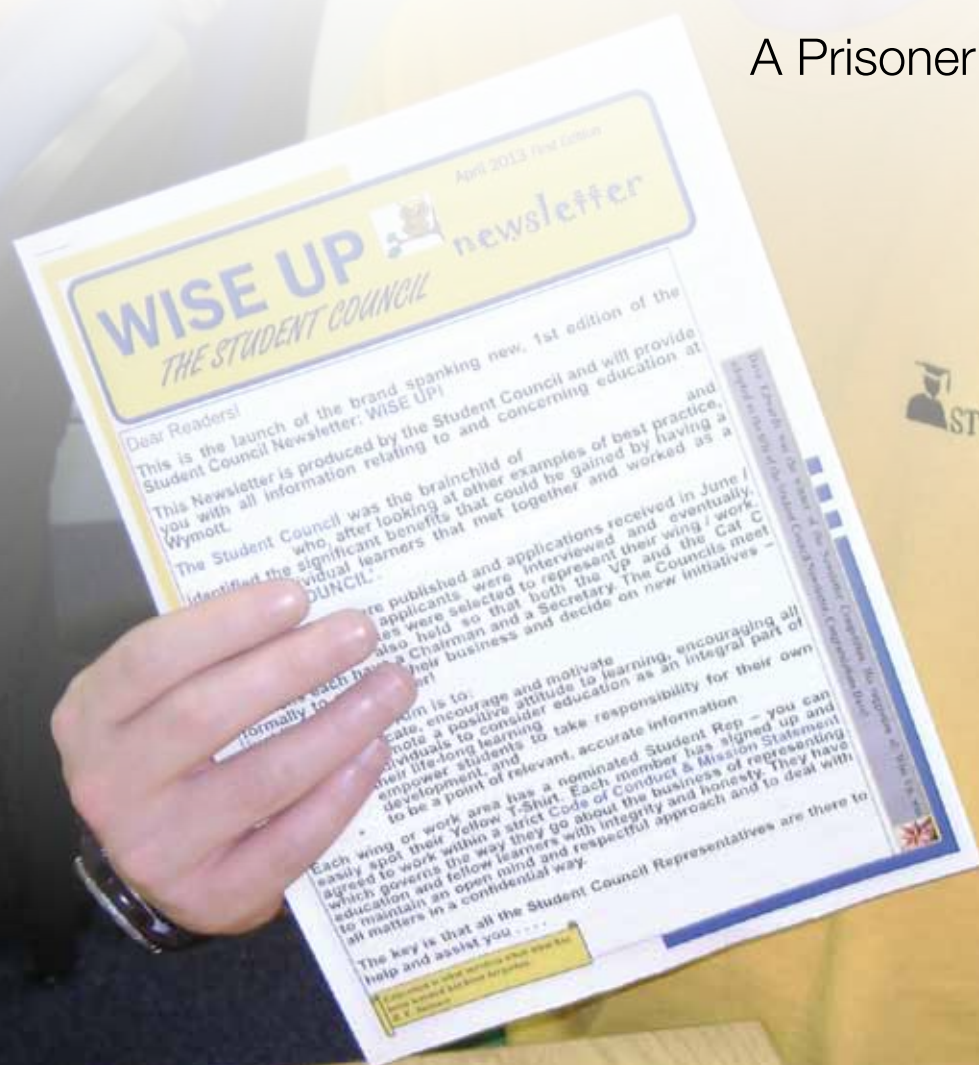




Prisoners
Education
Trust

Involve, Improve, Inspire

A Prisoner Learner Voice Toolkit



July 2013

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Training DVD

1. Involve, Improve, Inspire: HMYOI Cookham Wood
2. Help you, Help me, Help others: HMP/YOI Elmley
3. More than just a Prisoner: Prisoners Education Trust



Listen to the prisoners
- we are pushed from pillar to post
- not asked or listened to.

Prisoner survey respondent. Brain Cells: Second Edition, 2012





Prisoners Education Trust

Our vision is that every prisoner has the opportunity to benefit from education.

Our beliefs

- Education has the power to enrich, change and develop people throughout their lives.
- Offering prisoners access to education improves their self-esteem and enables them to choose a more constructive way of life making it less likely that they will re-offend.

Our purpose

- We support prisoners to engage in rehabilitation through learning.
- We do this by providing access to a broad range of distance learning opportunities and related services, to enable prisoners to lead more fulfilling lives and to contribute positively to society.
- We focus on those whose needs are not served by statutory prison education and who want to progress.
- We work to influence policy and practice so that education provision for prisoners becomes more effective; and we enable prisoner learner voice to be heard.

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Foreword

This invaluable toolkit will help prisons *involve* learners in shaping their educational experiences, *improve* their rehabilitation outcomes and *inspire* them to contribute positively to society after release.

Prisons have a dual purpose, to punish through loss of liberty, but also to rehabilitate. The Government has recognised this in their plans to transform rehabilitation, put education at the heart of the youth estate and focus on reducing the unacceptably high level of re-offending. Re-offending carries a huge cost for society, estimated at up to £13bn a year. It brings misery and pain to the lives of victims of crime that we can and must do more to prevent.

That is why it is so important to ensure that opportunities for learning in prison are effective in enabling prisoners to develop and transform their lives, to desist from crime and have a constructive role in society after release.

Listening to prisoner learners is a vital way to do this. No-one designing any modern service would fail to build feedback from service users into their approach to improving and maintaining the quality of that service. By involving prisoners, establishments will be better able to remove barriers to education and improve the teaching and learning that can transform prisoners' lives. Prisoners involved in learner voice activities take on a position of responsibility. This can play a vital part in helping them develop the skills, attitudes and behaviour to move their own lives onto a more positive and responsible course.

Prison Governors now take the lead in assessing education providers' performance. Recent NOMS guidance makes it clear that learner voice should be part of this quality assurance process to ensure that learning in prison is as effective as possible in helping reduce reoffending. This toolkit is therefore essential reading to help every prison governor and education manager. We hope that this toolkit helps you to *involve*, *improve* and *inspire* in your prison and we encourage you to join the PET National Prisoner Learner Voice Network: www.bit.ly/learnervoice.



Governor Emily Thomas
HMYOI Cookham Wood



Alexandra Marks
Chair of Prisoners Education Trust

Introduction

Learner Voice is the involvement of learners and potential learners in shaping the learning opportunities that are available to them.¹ (Niace)

This toolkit is designed for prison officers and education staff who have an interest in improving education and learning opportunities in their prison. It aims to provide information, advice and ideas for effective ways of introducing Learner Voice into prison establishments.

The first section of this report makes the case for introducing and building on learner voice activities in custody

Chapter one defines learner voice and dispels some of the myths about it. Chapter two looks at levels of participation and explores how you can move from consulting to empowering learners. Chapter three explains the potential benefits of learner voice. Chapter four explains how learner voice fits in with OLASS 4 and with Ofsted inspection criteria. Chapter five explores how learner voice can promote desistance from crime.

The second section of this report is a practical learner voice toolkit

Chapter six gives some ideas on how to get started and Chapter seven gives advice on putting learner voice into practice. Chapter eight gives a host of valuable case studies. Chapter nine contains some sample templates. Finally in chapters ten and eleven we explain how you can use learner voice to have a wider influence across prison education policy as a whole and also support each other in developing learner voice further by sharing good practice.



How to use the toolkit

Each chapter has related activities to use with staff and prisoners to help develop learner voice in your establishment. Attached to this report is a DVD containing three films about prison education and learner voice. These can be used in conjunction with the activities to help explore the benefits of learner voice and to get ideas about how to put it into practice. We don't expect everyone to read it from cover to cover but we hope it will be a resource you will want to come back to again and again in developing your establishment's learner voice journey. We hope the bookmark helps!

Feedback

We hope you find the toolkit useful. We look forward to hearing about how learner voice is being developed in your establishment. Please let us know what you think of this resource and how you have used it by completing our short online survey: www.bit.ly/learnervoicesurvey. By completing the survey you will also be added to the PET National Prisoner Learner Voice Network to help share and learn from good practice across the prison estate.

Section one: making the case for learner voice



Chapter one: what is Learner Voice?

1.1 What do we mean by Learner Voice?

Learner voice is about empowering learners by providing appropriate ways of listening to their concerns, interests and needs in order to develop educational experiences better suited to those individuals. It is also about ensuring that this engagement is done on a regular basis so it forms part of the culture of the establishment and is not 'tokenistic'.



Developing a culture and processes whereby learners are consulted and proactively engage with shaping their own educational experiences.²



Learner voice initiatives are about:

- listening to learners' concerns, interests and needs
- responding to what learners say by involving them as partners, contributors and agents of change in areas that affect them
- reforming education with and not for learners

Such initiatives empower learners by giving them opportunities to exercise levels of social responsibility and developing social skills.

1.2 A partnership approach

Learner voice is about moving to a more learner-focused or learner-centred model of education. This means learners, and importantly prisoners who are not currently engaged in learning, having input into defining what, where, when and how they learn.

This sharing of power with learners can be controversial, especially in a prison environment where prisoner autonomy and agency is greatly diminished. However:



Learner voice is not about learners shouting to be heard, nor is it teachers giving over all their 'powers' to learners. Learner voice is about considering the perspectives and ideas of learners, respecting what everyone has to say, taking risks, sharing, listening, engaging and working together in partnership.³



Whilst there may be some initial doubts on the part of both teachers and learners, the case studies contained in this toolkit suggest that it can have many benefits for both the staff and prisoners involved and there are many different approaches to learner voice to suit different establishments.

1.3 Learner Voice – Myths & Reality

Myth	Reality
I can't deliver learner voice in this prison, due to high churn of prisoners	Learner voice can be delivered in different formats for different types of establishment (See Chapters 7 and 8)
Prisoners are not willing to participate, and they are not reliable	Prisoners are very willing to participate when they have a sense of purpose and appropriate support. (See Chapter 3)
Learner voice makes staff feel uncomfortable	Staff can be very supportive of learner voice, when they understand it. Having a parallel system for staff also helps. (See Chapter 6)
Only highly articulate learners take part	Learners with different abilities can participate if processes allow them to. (See Chapter 7)
We can't do learner voice under OLASS 4	Learner voice fits in under OLASS 4 as well as Ofsted criteria (See Chapter 4)
We do surveys so we already 'do' learner voice	Surveys are one method of consulting prisoner learners, but there are benefits to using other participation methods too (See Chapter 2)
Learner voice isn't going to stop re-reoffending	There are links between learner voice and desistance principles. (See Chapter 5)

Activity one: understanding learner voice.

This activity can be done with staff and / or prisoners. Read the chapter entitled 'What is learner voice' and then ask the following open questions to encourage discussion and debate.

This exercise can be used to establish a definition of learner voice for your establishment.

How would you define learner voice?

How do you feel about working 'in partnership' with prisoner learners / staff to shape education?

Do you think prisoners should have a voice about prison education? What are your doubts about learner voice?

What would a 'culture' of consulting and engaging with learners look like and feel like?

Chapter Two: Levels of Participation

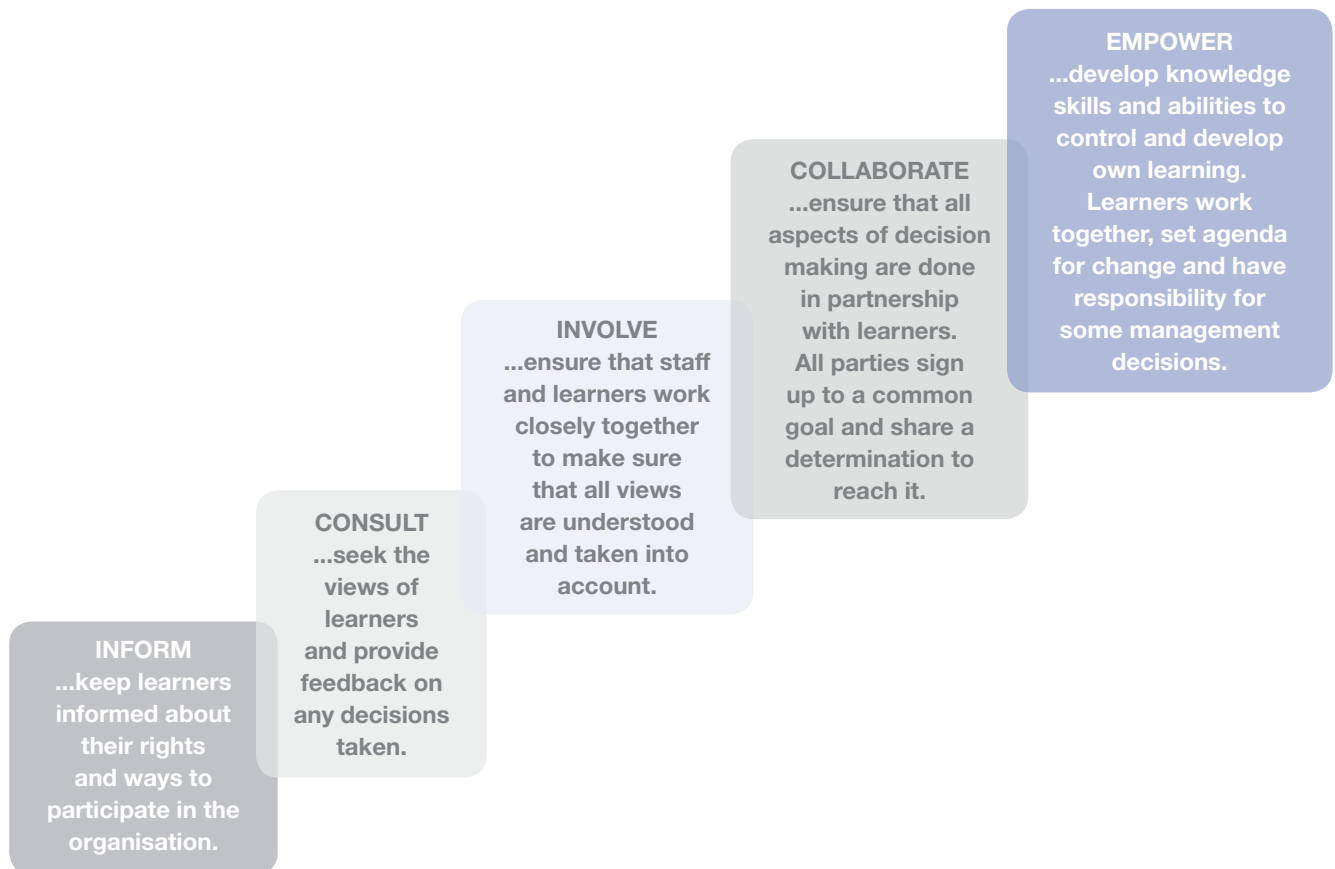
2.1 Participation

Learner voice is a means of enabling participation. Roger Hart describes participation as “the process of sharing decisions that affect ones life and the life of the community in which one lives”⁴. Variations of his ‘Ladder of Participation’ have been developed which illustrate different degrees of involvement with learners. One version is the LSIS Ladder of Engagement (2012).

2.2 LSIS Ladder of Engagement (2012) from LSIS Talking Learner Voice⁵

LSIS describes evolution in ‘genuine’ learner voice along a continuum:

At one end of the spectrum, learner voice is about keeping learners informed as to how decisions are taken and processes involved. At the other end of this spectrum we see decision - making about the form, style, content and purpose of education that is negotiated and shared with learners. Learners are offered greater opportunities to have their voices heard, to affect outcomes and bring about change.



The prison council is good for meaningful engagement. It is not tokenistic like it was before.
Prison Governor

We've not had a proper learner forum before this. If we had anything it used to be 'you listen to what we say and tell others' – rather than us listening. I would like to see a more pro-active model and to establish learner reps on the landings. I see it as a two-way thing.
Education Manager

2.3 Surveys

In a survey of over 500 prisoners⁶ conducted by Prisoners Education Trust,

- 40% of respondents said they had not been given an opportunity to feedback about their learning experience.
- Of those who had, surveys were the most popular tool, with nearly a third of respondents having completed a survey.
- Only 9% of respondents had participated in a learner forum, however 28% indicated they would like to take part in a learner forum.
- 27% wanted to receive training in participation skills to help them communicate their views better.
- Over half (56%) wanted the chance to meet directly with policy makers.

This indicates that most learner consultation in prison is done by using a survey or end of course evaluation form. Although surveys are one way of gathering feedback, the survey reveals that many prisoners would like more meaningful participation and engagement in shaping their learning experiences. However they may need skills training to enable them to do this confidently.

Benefits of surveys / evaluation forms include:

- Relatively quick and easy to administer.
- Can get quantitative results.
- Can gather feedback from a large number of learners.
- Can ask open questions to get qualitative feedback.
- Can be anonymised to encourage greater honesty.
- Can be used as a starting point to explore some issues in greater detail.

Disadvantages of surveys / evaluation forms include:

- Can exclude those with learning difficulties or disabilities or low literacy levels.
- Can be confusing if questions too difficult, such as using a scale.
- There is less opportunity to get the reasons behind certain answers and to probe more deeply into issues.
- Less opportunity to explore in detail with the respondent their solutions, suggestions and ideas for improvement.
- It is a one-way information flow. Can be difficult to give feedback to the respondent and to explain why something may or may not be possible.

Although surveys and course evaluation forms are a very useful tool for listening to learner voice, and a good starting point, the case studies show that in order to develop a 'culture' of engaging with learners, ideally there should be a mix of learner voice activities at different levels of the participation ladder, as appropriate.

If it's just a survey then you are only filling in a box, but if you can sit and talk face to face then you can get your point across more.
Chair of the Youth Council

2.5 Some examples of learner voice activities include:

A learner forum or student council	Learner attendance at staff or senior management team meetings
Focus groups	Learner class observations
Peer – led research	Learning Champions / Reps
Learner working groups or steering groups	Prisoner learner newsletters
Suggestion boxes	Learners on interview panels
Wing meetings	Question time events
Participation skills training	One-to-ones

Activity Two: Levels of Participation Brainstorm

Draw a basic ladder on white board or flip chart. Add the LSIS labels to the steps (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower). Ask staff to contribute ways in which they listen to learner voice currently and where those activities might fit on the ladder of participation.

Then ask staff to brainstorm other possible ways of listening to learner voice and write them up in the relevant step of the ladder.

Discuss:

How useful do you find the concept of the ladder of participation?

What ideas do you have to get more activities at the higher participation level?

What concerns do you have about the higher levels of participation and how could these be overcome?

Chapter Three: Benefits of Prisoner Learner Voice

3.1 Why is it important to listen to learners?

Listening to learners is critical if your educational institution wishes to deliver a personalised education system to address the particular needs of your learners.

If prisoners enjoy their activities and feel involved they will engage better and learn more.
Staff survey response at a YOI

By listening to learners and giving them a voice, you are addressing four key challenges:

1. How to engage more prisoners in learning and other purposeful activities;
2. How to provide better information, advice and guidance to prisoners to help them to make informed choices about their lives and prepare for release;
3. How to provide better and more personalised learning in order to address the specific needs of your learners with a range of educational abilities and a wide range of interests;
4. How to promote personal responsibility and develop soft skills.

Activity Three: Benefits

This activity can be done with staff and/or prisoners.

Watch the film: 'Help me, Help you, Help others: Learner voice at HMP/YOI Elmley'. Then take five sheets of flip chart paper. On each sheet write at the top the following headings (one per sheet)

For the learner

For the prison

For the education provider / teaching staff

For society

For policy makers

Ask the group to brainstorm all the possible benefits of learner voice activities for the different groups mentioned. Note down their ideas on the relevant flip chart.

Did you come up with the same benefits listed below?

Were any of them different?

Did the film give you inspiration for some of the benefits?

Were there benefits that you didn't think of initially?

How might you measure the benefits when implementing learner voice in your establishment?

3.2 Possible benefits of Learner Voice for the learner:

- If learners feel that their views are taken seriously it makes them feel more respected.

“A lot of people don’t feel like they have a voice in jail” Young person in a YOI

- Learners are more inclined to reflect and discuss their learning, which should provide the tools to influence what, where and when they learn.

“If you can’t get the right qualifications in jail then you’ve no chances to get a job”
Young person in a YOI

- Positive benefits from raising self esteem, personal development, learning new skills and developing confidence

“I’m more confident in speaking – used to stutter when speaking to adults – now I can be confident”. Youth Council rep

“If did this voice thing happened then people would also learn about themselves, find a direction and it might make them more mature” Young person in a YOI

- Route from passive to active participant. Develops the learner’s ability to make choices and take responsibility on release. It empowers and enabling prisoners to be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem.
- Failure to engage with learners in the education process risks increasing disengagement and disillusion amongst learners.

“There is a lot of despair in jail. This might help”. Young person in a YOI

- Learner voice activities help learners to see how their views translate into positive outcomes for their learning and the educational establishment.

“The institution only provides what they think we need, and actually pointing your voice across and saying - I need this qualification or this is not appropriate for my level of education...I think it’s important! If you’re not consulted and put your views across nothing will change” Learner Forum Rep

- When learners have a voice and an influence on decisions and outcomes they are more likely to participate and also to learn through participation.

“It will actually engage people – there’s no point doing something you don’t enjoy. You want to make sure that what you’re doing will get you a qualification and that it will actually benefit you. I want to be doing something that can be continued on the outside and lead to a job”.
Young person in a YOI

- Representative roles are an opportunity to develop transferable skills such as canvassing for opinion, diplomatic skills, facilitating or chairing meetings, communication skills, listening skills, customer service skills.

“It would boost the person’s confidence, help them to be more focused by being a leader and give them a better chance of getting somewhere in life”. Young person in a YOI

3.3 Possible benefits of Learner Voice for the Prison

- Improved effective running of the prison

‘By listening we will know where progress and improvements are needed or required in future’. Staff member responding to PET survey

- Improved security by defusing tension

“It gives them a formal route to take their complaints, issues and suggestions”. Governor

- Improved staff/prisoner relationships which can lead to a better atmosphere

“It makes the place feel better and improves prisoner-staff relations. The first time a prisoner spoke at a staff meeting for a staff hustings, the staff broke out into spontaneous applause”. Governor

- Over the period that the User Voice Prison Council functioned at HMP Isle of Wight, there was a 37% reduction in the number of complaints (Albany site) and the amount of time prisoners spent in segregation units significantly declined from 160 to 47 days (Parkhurst site)⁷.

“I wasn’t the best behaved person before I started all these roles, it’s got a lot better since, some people do recognise it, I mean I spoke to an officer the other day and they said ‘you’re doing really good, keep it up’”. Learner Voice Rep, Learning Champion and Peer Mentor

- NOMS have conducted a ‘Measuring the Quality of Prison Life Survey’ at HMP Maidstone where a User Voice run a Prison Council and, relative to other establishments, the prisoners scored it highly for ‘Personal Autonomy’⁸.
- Frees up staff time by having an effective mechanism for concerns, rather than prisoners putting in multiple apps and multiple staff dealing with issues.

“Before the student council you had to ask lots of individuals before you got something resolved, now this is a better way of getting things done and sorted out”. Student Council rep

- Assists the Governor with their role in reviewing delivery under OLASS 4.

“Is the curriculum right? Is the mode of delivery right? Are we missing anything or anybody? Is there a target group that we’re failing, or missing to engage with? Hopefully learner voice will give us more clues to that”. Governor

- Less distressed population

“One member was on suicide watch when we started. The prison council has helped his confidence and he is coming along leaps and bounds now and is off his ACCT. In his hustings speech he said ‘12 weeks ago my life was a mess, I couldn’t cope, thanks to User Voice they helped turn my life around. They have given me some meaning within the jail’. User Voice Prison Council facilitator

- Improved staff and prisoner buy-in for changes

“Prisoners come up with solutions. Many of them are things I had on my list anyway, but it comes from them and it helps me prioritise and gets prisoners and staff buy-in”. Governor

3.4 Possible benefits of Learner Voice for the education provider / teachers:

- Accessing non-learners to identify barriers to accessing education

“Student reps have a dual role: learner voice and promoting education. They help engage non-learners. We miss their voices so we encourage reps speak to them too on the wings”. Education Manager

- Reps can be a good resource for disseminating information about education

“It is good for us to have their voice on the wings to share information out, such as if a new course is available. There is a two-way information flow”. Tutor

- Help improve teaching and learning

“Learner Voice is great because it offers the men the opportunity to feed back to us as teachers, and obviously education is all about learning, it’s lifelong learning, we’re learning ... so if they have needs they must put those needs to us and we must try and address those needs”. Tutor

- Improve numbers attending education

“When competing against the working prison agenda, we felt we needed to give education a louder voice and push for more men to do education. The student reps help with that”. Education Manager

- A source of ideas and inspiration

“The student council is about solutions and ideas too for example when we were organising a men’s health event, the reps gave us lots of ideas how to make it successful”. Education Manager

3.5 Possible benefits of Learner Voice for society:

- Learner voice can help lead to desistance from crime by promoting a positive sense of self, an opportunity to improve agency and responsibility and enabling prisoners to have a meaningful role in their community (See Chapter 5)
- More effective prison and rehabilitative services should cut crime by reducing re-offending

3.6 Possible benefits of Learner Voice for policy makers:

At Prisoners Education Trust we always underpin our policy positions by listening to the real experts; prisoners and prisoner learners. In 2012 we established a National Prisoner Learner Voice Panel which enables prisoners to write to us, using a freepost address, to share experiences of learning in prison and to make suggestions to improve prison education (See Chapter Nine for more details). Therefore when responding to Select Committee inquiries, party justice reviews or government consultations, we ensure learners voices are at the heart. As the comments from the politicians below indicate, policy makers are keen to hear directly from the ‘service user’ as it helps them to make more effective policy.

Listening to the voice of the prisoner as learner can give a new, important insight on the effectiveness of this reform agenda. Understanding that [the prisoners’] perspective is a crucial part of changing the system. We have to make sure that the policymaking process responds to learner voice.

**Matthew Hancock MP, Minister for Skills, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills,
Launching PET report Brain Cells (2012)**

Dear Contributors,

I am writing to thank you for the contribution of your views to the Prisoners Education trust which informed their work in submitting evidence to the Justice Select Committee as part of our Older Prisoners inquiry. It is important that the evidence, which we will consider in our examination of how the criminal justice system treats older prisoners, includes the experience of those who have been part of that system. In your submissions you have highlighted areas of success as well as concern; my Committee will investigate these issues and produce a report detailing our findings. I would encourage you to continue to share your experiences and views in similar inquiries and projects.

Yours sincerely,

Rt. Hon. Sir Alan Beith MP, Chair, Justice Committee (2013)

Dear Contributors,

I'm writing to thank you for adding your ideas and suggestions to the Labour Party Justice Review. It was important that we received views of those with current or past experience of the penal system so your thoughts are most welcome. Your contributions will go forward as part of the process of deciding the party's upcoming policy and I'd like to thank you for adding your own frontline knowledge of the prison system to the consultation.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Sadiq Khan MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Justice (2012)

"It is important to get the prisoners-eye view. As when I found when inspecting, being based on the views and experiences of prisoners themselves, it is 'fact' and not the 'fudge' that all too often I found being fed by officials to Ministers, because it was what they wanted them to believe".

Lord Ramsbotham, Former Chief Inspector of Prisons at launch of PET Brain Cells report (2012)



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25 JAN 2012

January 2012

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Chapter Four: Incorporating Learner Voice within OLASS 4 and Ofsted/HMIP Inspection Criteria

4.1 Making the case

Promoting learner voice within any institution should not be undertaken merely on the basis that it will improve the meeting of 'targets' or indeed for any other purpose other than to elicit learner voice with the express intention of empowering learners as co-designers of their educational experiences. However we understand that the structures in prison can present additional barriers to implementing learner voice, that are not present in other learning institutions in the community. We also understand that to gain the 'buy-in' from managers, Governors and others up the line of command, teachers and staff may need to 'make the case' for learner voice activities and show how it fits with OLASS 4 and Ofsted/HMIP criteria.

4.2 Delivery of Offenders' Learning and Skills Service Phase 4 (OLASS 4)⁹:

4.2.1 Learner Feedback

One of the Key Delivery Indicators for the OLASS 4 contracts is 'Learner Feedback' which the Skills Funding Agency and NOMS have advised should be discussed in quarterly performance management meetings with the Lead Governor and other stakeholders:

The Skills Funding Agency and NOMS have provided a summary of the aspects they would usually expect to be covered by these reviews. The list of key deliver indicators is intended by NOMS and the SFA to be used as a guide to inform the agenda for the performance management meetings.

OLASS Delivery Key Indicators includes:

Priority Level	Key Indicator	Purpose
2	Learner & other Stakeholder Feedback	To review feedback received and areas for improvement or good practice.
1	Quality Assurance - Ofsted - Quality assurance and improvement	To ensure the processes for continual improvement are working effectively and to review any additional information including external feedback.

In order to inform to the Lead Governor, there needs to be effective structures in place to capture learner feedback and areas for improvement. Learner voice (the 'service user experience') is also a key strand of 'external feedback' in the quality assurance key indicator.

4.2.2 Numbers in learning

Learner voice reps can also have the role of promoting and informing their peers about education and encouraging them to access learning opportunities. Participation skills can also lead to accredited qualifications.

Priority Level	Key Indicator	Purpose
1	Numbers in learning – unit level – cluster level – prison level	To establish how enrolment is taking place across the unit, and to discuss any issues with the level of activity within prisons.

The benefits of having Learner Voice at Elmley and the benefits of prisoner engagement across the whole jail in general, is it enables prisoners to feel they are directly contributing and shaping to their own specific needs - education. And it gives education, if I can use the word, some ‘street cred’
Governor

When competing against the working prison agenda, we felt we needed to give education a louder voice and push for more men to do education. The student reps help with that. Education Manager

Training and support may be needed so that the learners have the confidence to take a full part. This could involve training in participations skills such as: how to canvass opinions, problem solving, putting forward informed opinions supported by argument or evidence and communication skills.

Education providers can deliver a wide range of participation skills courses to help train learners to become Learner reps, or courses can be delivered as active learning as Learner reps are performing their role.

Qualifications by different accredited bodies OCN, OCR, ASDAN, Duke of Edinburgh, are available and many such qualifications are on the LARA database (See Appendix One).

If the prisoner is investing time in this work, then they should actually leave this jail with the evidence that they’ve been doing this, and the transferrable skills, so linking these and making sure they’ve got the qualifications is our responsibility to them. Governor

4.2.3 Employability

There are strong links between the skills gained in learner voice and learning champion roles, and the soft skills that are looked for by employers.

Priority Level	Key Indicator	Purpose
1	Reducing Re-offending – job outcomes – progression to training /education on release	To assess the impact of provision following release and how future activity can be developed to further improve outcomes.

CfBT Education Trust's Research Report into 'Employers' perception of best practice in prison education' (2012)¹⁰ found that personal skills such as:

- Positive attitude' (44 per cent)
- Communication skills (37 per cent)
- Reliability (34 per cent)

are highlighted as the type of skills or attributes applicants most need to demonstrate to prospective employers. In Prisoner Education Trust's report 'Fit for Release' (2012) an analysis of job adverts for sports-related roles indicates that

- One in five employers of personal trainers wanted evidence of good communication skills
- Half of employers for gym instructors wanted candidates to demonstrate excellent customer care skills.
- Other skills mentioned by employers for sports-related jobs included: problem solving, good organisational skills, ability to build good relationships, confident, ability to act as a role model, proactive, team player and leadership skills.

There's a whole raft of soft and transferrable skills. Particularly social skills, communication skills, developing a sense of empathy which people have not necessarily had before. Prison teacher

When you put yourself in a situation like Learner rep or Learner Voice or whatever, you know, it's forcing you to get yourself involved with something and speak openly in front of people and in meetings and stuff so it brings out your confidence. It's all people skills and most jobs these days need people skills. Prisoner Learner Voice rep

The NOMS Commissioning Intentions Criteria highlights the importance of prisoners being able to practice the soft skills they have learnt:

Teaching skills, particularly social skills like interpersonal problem solving, conflict resolution, communication skills, emotional management skills, etc. Skills need to be taught primarily through active methods such as coaching and role-play, and the intervention should encourage frequent practice of new skills in real life situations.

4.2.4 Peer mentoring

Priority Level	Key Indicator	Purpose
2	Peer mentoring	Exchange of good practice.

In some case studies there are overlaps between Learner Voice roles and Peer Mentoring. After completing a peer mentoring qualification, prisoners are often keen to practice their skills with a position of responsibility. Learner voice can be a progression route for those who have taken this qualification under OLASS provision. Many of the skills learnt in peer mentor training can be used effectively to help develop Learner Voice reps or Learning Champions:

There's a lot of things I learnt which I didn't have a clue of. You were trained in asking questions, like probing questions, closed questions, open questions. You just don't look at things like that normally.
Prisoner Learner Voice rep and Peer Mentor



4.3 Ofsted

4.3.1 Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework 2012

Under the 2012 Inspection Framework, providers will need to achieve 'outstanding' in teaching and learning to earn an 'outstanding' grade overall. Ofsted are particularly interested in getting learners direct feedback about teaching. A learner forum could help give you the 'heads up' about any concerns with teaching and learning, so the inspection is less likely to reveal surprise comments from the learners. A learner forum could also help formulate solutions.

Learner voice has developed significantly over the past five years but is still embryonic in many places and needs nurturing to fulfil its potential as a quality improvement tool and as a process to improve learners' aims and aspirations.

As teaching and learning have now become an urgent first priority learners, practitioners and providers need to understand how get the most out of collaboration.

The drive to learn more from learners' experiences acquires greater urgency through changes to the Common Inspection Framework for 2012 which sets a new, high profile agenda for teaching and learning - and dialogue with learners.¹¹

LSIS, Talking Learner Voice, 2012

Anything that improves the relationships between teachers and learners is a good thing, because let's face it - teachers are learners, aren't they. We are all learning all the time. Education Manager

*Learner voice has the potential to help eradicate the barriers to learning
Jen Walters, Ofsted at launch of Brain Cells Report, 2012*

4.3.2 HMIP/Ofsted Inspection of HMYOI Cookham Wood, January 2012

There was good consultation with young people... We observed relaxed and friendly relationships between staff and young people. Young people were encouraged to complete surveys regularly which, in addition to the consultation through the young people's council, helped to foster good communication...

The appointment of a youth worker [NB: A youth worker from Kinetic Youth facilitates the Youth Council], again linked in to the community, was a creative way of supporting personal and social development...

The curriculum had developed well, largely through the introduction of new courses such as motor vehicle engineering [NB: PET have been told this was a youth council success]... The governor and her staff should be commended for what they have achieved so far.¹²

Activity Four:

Incorporating Learner Voice in OLASS 4 and ofsted criteria

How do you currently communicate learner feedback to the Lead Governor? Are there any ways in which you could improve this process as an effective measure of quality assurance? If possible, discuss this issue in your next quarterly meeting and agree how learners' experiences and suggestions for improvement can be fed back.

How could you collaborate with learners as 'learning champions' or 'peer mentors' to help encourage and support other prisoners to consider education?

What opportunities are there for you to give training and accredit some of the soft / transferable skills developed by prisoners involved in Learner Voice activities?

What would you like your next inspection to say about education and learner voice?

What do you think your learners would say if asked the following questions by an inspector?

Is education meeting your expectations?

Would you recommend it?

How could it be improved?

Chapter Five: Learner Voice and Desistance

5.1 Desistance

Academics such as Fergus McNeill and Shad Maruna have analysed personal narrative life stories of ex-offenders to help identify what helps them to desist from crime. They have identified several themes, discussed below. This chapter explores possible links between desistance and learner voice activities.

5.2 Re-biography

Essentially, secondary desistance is about ceasing to see one's self as an offender and finding a more positive identity; it is about successfully peeling off the criminal label that criminal justice systems are so effective at applying.¹³ Fergus McNeill

I think a lot of them visibly grow, they begin to feel that they are not just an offender, they are not just a prisoner, they're not just a number, they are a person that we know, we talk to. OLASS Manager

I wasn't the best behaved person before I started all these roles, it's got a lot better since, some people do recognise it, I mean I spoke an officer the other day and they said you're doing really good, keep it up. Learner Voice Rep, Learning Champion and Peer Mentor

A new positive identity can be promoted by the use of T-shirts, ID badges, folders and cell door stickers.

I am proud to be on the Student Council and to have been voted as Chair. I can promote education on the wings, my workplace, everywhere. I know people watch me in my T-shirt. I know I'm a role model for others, so this has helped me think about how I behave. I was brought up thinking I was stupid, so to now be doing OU and Chairing the student council has blown me away!



5.3 Agency

Perhaps because of their experience of adversity, both research evidence and practice experience tend to confirm that persistent offenders are very often highly fatalistic; to use psychological terms, they often evidence 'low self-efficacy' and an 'external locus of control'. They feel a lack of capacity to determine the direction of their own lives. Yet Maruna (2001) discovered that, despite this background and previous outlook, desisters somehow managed to acquire a sense of 'agency' – of control over their own lives.¹⁴ Fergus McNeill

I am really glad to be part of the committee. It has enabled me to contribute and influence others to change their lives. I like using this channel to spread my knowledge and abilities. It is a privilege and I really enjoy it. Learner Voice Rep

Learner Voice emphasises people's agency and autonomy; the skills of negotiation, advocacy and taking responsible action; an interest in improving things; and an understanding of decision making. It can also help them to become a 'better citizen':

Citizenship... places an emphasis on involving learners in decision making at all levels and provides opportunities for learners to develop negotiation and advocacy skills and greater confidence. It also enables them to help shape their education and training and this in turn impacts on communities, as they learn to exercise their responsibilities in a wider context as effective citizens.¹⁵ 2007, LSIS

Citizenship means being a responsible and active citizen – showing an interest in issues that concern the community or state and acting with others to achieve agreed aims. Citizenship and Learner Voice have the potential to be extremely powerful in a prison context, given that many prisoners have committed crimes that affected other people and may feel alienated from and by society.

Citizenship education through Learner Voice can have a number of positive effects:

- It can encourage socially-responsible behaviour and can, for some, be a first step towards feeling a part of society.
- It can help reduce the risk of re-offending by encouraging learners to draw on their own experiences and consider the impact that an individual's actions can have on society and the wider world.
- It sets out to develop the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed for active participation in mainstream community life.

Prisoners are active citizens when they exercise responsibility by making positive contributions to prison life or the wider community' including 'Democratic participation in prison life'
Prison Reform Trust¹⁶

5.4 Social capital

Learning is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding that takes place in interaction with people. Rogers (2003) maintains, however, that many adults with negative experiences of compulsory education struggle to marry their construction of themselves as capable learners in everyday life with their sense of self as (not very) able learners in structured educational contexts.

To overcome this, it is necessary to create the right environment and the right relationships to support learning. In particular MacLachlan et al., (2008) identified the importance of supportive relationships between tutors and learners and amongst peers where expertise and support were offered within reciprocal relationships through exchanges of skills and knowledge.¹⁷ Fergus McNeill



It is nice to be part of a positive group Learner Voice Rep

I enjoy being part of a team Student Council Rep

I like being vice chair and meeting people I wouldn't meet if I wasn't on the student council.
Student Council Vice-Chair

We have differences of opinion, we are usually quite noisy, but it is wonderful to come together and produce something positive at the end of it, like the 'wise up' newsletter. Student Council rep



5.5 Finding Purpose



There is also evidence that for many ex-offenders desistance is about personal redemption, not necessarily in the spiritual sense but rather in the sense of finding a way to 'make good' on a troubled and troubling past by making a positive contribution to families or communities now and in future (Maruna, 2001). Developmental psychologists refer to this as 'generativity'.¹⁸ Fergus McNeill



I think it's [learner voice] gonna encourage them to feel like they're part of the class that they're studying in, we're all numbers at the end of the day, but we wanna feel more important than that. Learner Voice Rep

You do get a nice feeling because you're helping people with where they wanna go. And you get to meet more people than you would normally, because people talk to you who wouldn't usually talk to you. Learner Voice Rep

There's no better feeling than knowing you've helped somebody to change where their path is going. In life you know.
Learner Voice Rep and Learning Champion

I like it, I like responsibility. It's just helping people; it's what I like to do. Learner Voice Rep and Learning Champion

My education wasn't brilliant, I was self taught, I like to help push others and motivate them to do education.
Student Council Rep



5.6 NOMS guidance in applying principles of desistance in practice¹⁹:

NOMS have advised that:

Provider organisations are most likely to be effective in reducing reoffending if staff engage well with offenders and provide them with safe and supportive environments that encourage change.

Learner Voice activities can help to improve the learning environment and relationships between staff and prisoners:

It's actually given me a better relationship with a lot of prisoners Education Manager

What I have learnt is to appreciate the staff better and what they do. I really liked doing the interview with the education manager for the student council magazine Student Council Rep

I think it's worth saying that prisons are inevitably quite harsh places, and anything that tempers that harshness by adding a human dimension has got to be a good thing. Education Manger

NOMS also advise that:

'some simple staff behaviours can increase the quality of engagement between staff and offenders'.²⁰

These include:

- taking time to listen
- giving focus to practical and social problems as well as attitudes, thinking and behaviour
- expressing and encouraging motivation and hope
- recognising offenders' strengths and resources; building on these and on their existing social supports ("social capital")
- giving practical assistance in problem solving (rather than solving the problem for the offender, or expecting him/her to solve it alone)
- setting goals for supervision collaboratively rather than imposing goals; listening to what the priority issues for the offender are

All of these steps resonate with the practice of 'learner voice' by encouraging a culture of collaboration, listening, problem solving together, building on strengths and resolving practical barriers.

NOMS also highlight the importance of:

Developing the confidence and competence to negotiate/manage interactions with providers of essential facilities and services e.g. housing providers, power companies and banks.²¹

This is a skill which can be developed through Learner Voice activities:



Anger management is not a problem no more, which it has been in the past, but now its not, I've learnt to listen instead of shout and scream, that's what it's done for me. Learner Voice Rep

I've learnt how to work within this committee, when to speak and when to hold back, I'm quite voicey normally, so I have learnt when to keep quiet. Student Council Rep



Activity Five: Learner Voice and Desistance

Watch the 'More than Just a Prisoner' Film included in this pack. Discuss what 'pro-social' identities are open for learners in your establishment which help them become 'more than just a prisoner'.

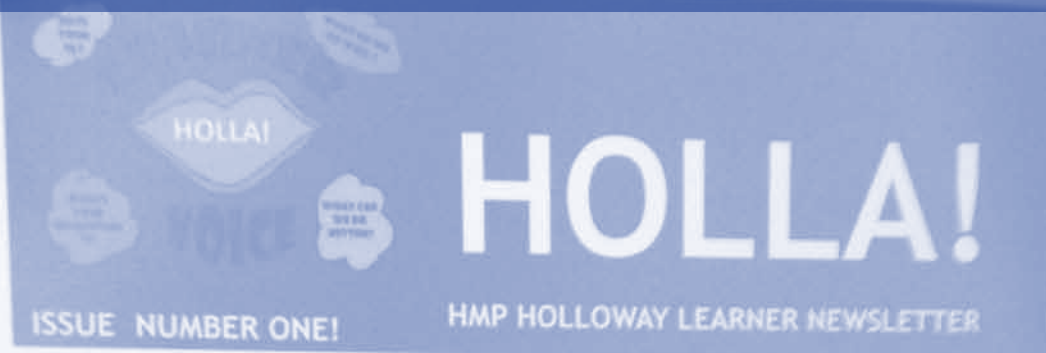
Dedicate a wall of a corridor to celebrating the positive identities and roles of learners, learner reps, learning champions, peer mentors, classroom assistants etc.

When setting up a learner forum, you may want to consider how to ensure the prisoners take ownership of the forum and their roles, for example by designing a t-shirt to wear, a logo, a newsletter or a cell door sticker.

Discuss how your establishment can implement NOMS advice about promoting desistance principles. Brainstorm with prisoners and staff ways in which you could do this.

Watch the HMYOI Cookham Wood and HMP Elmley films included in this pack. Discuss how the films reflect the principles of desistance (Re-biography, Agency, Social Capital and Finding Purpose).

Section Two: Learner Voice Toolkit



Happy Easter and welcome to the first edition of HOLLAI! Your Education newsletter. All of us in the Forum wanted to find a way to tell you a bit more about what is on offer in Education, keep you up to date with breaking news and also to give you a chance to have your say about what you think about the classes and courses available.

'Action 4 employment' (A4e) is now the organisation that provides the classes and teachers in Holloway. They took over in November and there have been some changes to the forms we use and what the certificates and paperwork looks like, but apart from that all the classes have stayed the same and we have the same staff.

Over the next few issues, we will tell you more about the courses you can take, the staff who work in Education and any exciting changes that will be coming soon.

We, the prisoner learner reps in the Forum, are 'your voice' and a source of information for you, so if you see us and have questions or any good or bad comment to make about education in Holloway, please speak to us or fill out the blank form on the back of this newsletter and we will do our best to help you.

Happy reading!

WHATS UP AND GOING DOWN?

A report from your Learner Rep Forum

Learner forums are meetings where your representatives make sure that your views about learning and training in Holloway are discussed and where any questions you have about education and training will be answered. You can be a learner representative if you'd like to be, so you could be someone who represents the views and experiences of the women in Holloway with regard to any aspect of education and training. By giving your views to one of the rep's or by being a rep yourself, you have the opportunity to tell us what works for you, how we can improve your learning experience in Holloway and how we can best meet your educational and training needs.

In the Learner Forum we listen to your concerns and interests in order to develop and improve the educational opportunities on offer in Holloway.

The main focus of the Learner Forum is education, training and related issues.

This can include a wide range of topics, such as:

- Classroom environments
- Teaching Methods
- The types of courses and qualifications offered
- Course content and the levels of courses
- Resources
- Access to education
- Timetables
- Induction
- Safety

Learner Forums are held once a month (every 3rd Friday of the month) and are a great way to share your comments, compliments and suggestions about learning & training in Holloway. You can attend in person as an individual or as a learner representative.

If you want to become a learner representative or to attend the learner forum, just fill in an application form and speak to a learner representative or with a teacher!

Chapter Six: Getting started

6.1 Developing a Learner Voice ethos

The most effective Learner Voice takes place in a culture that values the involvement of prisoners in decision-making and facilitates this. Ideally, everyone (prisoners, staff, managers, partners from the wider community) needs to agree on a basic set of values and rules by which they work together.

Questions that you may wish to consider prior to considering exploring learner voice further in your own institution are:

- What is your institution doing already to promote learner voice?
 - If no learner voice activity appears apparent, why not?
 - Do learners themselves feel they are being listened to – ask them?
 - Who is being heard – are your current methods only accessible to particular learner groups?
 - Does the culture of your institution foster the development of learner voice?
 - Are there clear processes for involving learners in decision-making or are they simply informed or consulted on decisions that are ‘out of their hands’?
 - Are learners able to drive their own agendas or issues or are they always led by the educators?
 - What methods and tools are being used – are your tools suitable for engaging the voice of all your learners?
 - Why is learner voice important to you and what would successful learner voice engagement look like in your context?
- Remember to ask learners - do you share the same vision

The aim is to develop a supportive ethos within which the views of prisoners are listened to and respected. They need to be included in the decision-making processes, but also helped to understand why things are not always possible.

It helps if organisations appoint an enthusiastic person with sufficient time and resources to co-ordinate Learner Voice activities.

The commitment of senior managers is a key determinant in the overall status and quality of Learner Voice, demonstrated through having a clear policy, development plan and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation. But also resourcing and ‘championing’ Learner Voice in ways that actively support staff, prisoners and partners in their activities are important.

6.2 Building staff and prisoner support for learner voice

It is vital to have the buy-in of staff and prisoners. Consulting and involving staff and prisoners so they can understand the benefits of learner representation across the organisation is important. Below are examples of how establishments have involved prison staff and prisoners in establishing Learner Voice:

6.2.1 A staff survey

Before launching their student council, HMYOI Feltham, in partnership with PET, conducted an all staff survey that was promoted on the staff intranet. ‘Survey Monkey’ was used for the ease of use and collation of results. Staff were asked about their experience of service user involvement activities, their attitudes to education and their thoughts on giving the young people more say. All staff, uniformed and non-uniformed, were invited to respond and both did in equal numbers. This enabled the management team to gain insight into some of the potential barriers, but also found a mostly positive response to the idea from both staff and prisoners. It also enabled the management to identify good practice in prisoner consultation taking place in the prison already and to establish which staff had previous experience and skills in this area.

Sample staff survey questions: (which had multiple choice answers, but also space for comments)

- Have you had any prior experience or involvement with any of the following 'user participation' activities in your life either in work or outside of work?
- Have you been involved with or organised any of the following types of prisoner engagement activity either at Feltham or any other prison?
- How important do you think it is to listen to prisoners opinions about purposeful activities?
- What benefits do you see in listening to prisoners' views and engaging them in planning purposeful activities?
- What potential barriers or difficulties do you foresee in running prisoner engagement activities at Feltham?
- What are your views about prisoners taking part in learning activities in prison?
- Thinking about your department in the prison, how might it be possible to listen to prisoners' views and engage them in planning purposeful activities to better meet their needs?
- Any other comments, ideas, suggestions or concerns about prisoner engagement activities and listening to prisoners' voices?

6.2.2 Prisoner focus groups

Before launching their student council, HMYOI Feltham, in partnership with PET, conducted a set of focus groups with the young people. The prisoner focus groups were useful in exploring different models and hearing about their experiences of learner voice in other YOI's. It was also an opportunity to hear about some of the issues they would like to be addressed.

Sample focus group discussion questions:**Ice breaker**

Ask each young person to introduce themselves including:

- What learning they are currently doing
- What they would like to study or learn if they had the chance

Scaling exercise

Put numbers from one to five on pieces of paper spread across the room in a line as a scale with one as terrible and five as excellent. Ask the prisoners to stand somewhere on the scale which reflects how they would rate education in the prison. Then ask them to explain the reason why they are standing at that point of the scale (i.e. what is good and what could be improved)

General questions:

1. Do you think prisoners here should have a say about how education and learning here could be improved?
If so, why?
2. Have you got any experience either in prison, at school or college of giving feedback on education or learning?
3. How do you think the staff here could better listen to your opinions and ideas?
How often would you like to be asked for your opinions about learning?
4. It is important that the staff feedback to prisoners the outcomes of the concerns or suggestions raised?
If so, how should they do this?
5. Imagine there was a 'learner forum' here, where there were 'learner reps' who could represent the views of other prisoners to prison education staff.
What training do you think they would need to be able to do this role well?
What skills would they need to develop?
How should learner reps be selected?
6. What do you see as the main difficulties to prisoners here influencing changes in learning?
How could those difficulties be overcome?
How could people that are only here for a short time contribute their views?
7. Would you be interested in being involved in learner voice activities?
Why / why not?

6.2.3 Staff / prisoner consultation days

At HMYOI Cookham Wood a prisoner/staff consultation day event was organised. The young people formulated proposals based on the four elements of a 'healthy prison': safety, respect, purposeful activity and resettlement. An event was then arranged by the Governor whereby the young people each had a desk and flip chart in the four corners of a large room, one for each element of a healthy prison. Staff were then invited to drop-in and talk to each of the groups in turn about their proposals and to discuss ways forward. This gave the staff the chance to see some of the proposals, speak to the Youth Council reps about their ideas and understand better what the Youth Council was about.

6.2.4 Seeing is believing

Key to securing staff and prisoner support is seeing the suggestions of the prisoners come to fruition and noticing the positive impact they have. Having some 'quick wins' when you first set up a forum or council is therefore key to building support and momentum from both the prisoners and the staff. These successes need to be visible, recognised and promoted to the prisoners and staff by having good feedback mechanisms that reaches as many staff and prisoners as possible to raise awareness of learner voice and what it is achieving. Newsletters, posters, notices, staff intranet and updates in staff meetings are ways to feedback positive changes.

6.2.5 A parallel system for the staff

Staff are more likely to engage in learner voice if they feel they also have a voice and that their concerns and suggestions are listened to. As learning should be a prison-wide activity, this should involve all staff, not just in the education department.

Prisoners should be listened to but management never listen to staff. Staff work with the prisoners on a daily basis and have a clearer understanding of them yet we are never asked our opinion on the matter. Staff member

We as staff are sometimes distanced from the education department and we have no input into what happens. Staff member

Not enough opinions gathered from teaching staff. Staff member

Therefore it is important to think about mechanisms to ensure staff can make suggestions and feel listened to. At HMP Elmley they have introduced 'Staff Voice':

Prisoner Learner Voice came about as a way to empower the learners to put across their ideas to the education department. It was seen by management in the same manner that Staff Voice could be a way for us to get across our issues as well as through the normal means of management directly, a way that we could look at the issues ourselves and then take them up as an individual working group to the management.

If any staff member has an issue they can raise it by dropping a leaflet into the box and writing down what the issue is and then the staff voice would get together and they would then discuss the issues and then take that forward in for a meeting with management and then go on from there.

Staff Voice and Learner Voice very much both feed on each other, issues that staff and learners are both aware of do occasionally tend to parallel so you find that issues that are raised in staff voice tend to get raised in learner voice as well. So they do tend to have a similar effect. Tutor at HMP Elmley

A similar system was set up at HMYOI Cookham Wood:

Some staff said you are listening to the kids, but don't do the same for staff. You have to run systems in parallel so staff feel they have a voice too. Staff consultation is now on SMT agenda as adjacent item and we do staff surveys too. Governor

6.2.6 Strong leadership

Learner Voice is most effective where there is strong leadership from the top and where the Governor and Senior Management Team are seen by the staff and prisoners to be actively engaged in the participation of the prisoners. Where the Governor personally meets on a regular basis with Learner Voice reps, such as at HMYOI Cookham Wood and HMP Aylesbury, this sets the example and communicates to both staff and prisoners that this is not tokenistic, that they support meaningful participation and is a priority in that establishment.



Governor of HMYOI Aylesbury supporting prisoner engagement

Activity Six: Getting started

Use the audit tool below with other staff to stimulate discussion about organisational development. You can also use it to review learner voice activities over time to monitor development.

Consider how you are going to get staff and prisoner buy-in. Look at the examples above and consider whether any of these would be appropriate for your establishment.

Write a Learner voice mission statement with the involvement of staff and prisoners (samples can be found in Chapter Eight).

Getting started audit, LSIS²²

Tick Box			
1 = thinking about it 2 = working towards 3 = we're happy with this	1	2	3
A. Leadership, management and coordination			
Managers share their vision of learner voice with staff and learners			
There is a clear policy and a strategy for implementing this			
Managers allocate sufficient status and time to coordinate learner voice			
B. Resources			
Existing staff expertise is identified			
Adequate time is allocated to the provision of learner voice			
An allowance is available for learner voice resources			
C. Provision and assessment			
All learners have opportunity to participate in learner voice activities			
Learner voice achievement is recognised			
Barriers to learners taking part in learner voice have been addressed			
D. Staff development			
Staff involved in learner voice have clearly defined roles			
Staff have the knowledge and skills to facilitate learner voice activities			
Time and space are allocated to learner voice activities			
E. Monitoring and evaluation			
The programme is effectively monitored			
Action is taken on the basis of evaluation findings			
Learners are involved in monitoring and evaluation			

Chapter Seven: Putting it into practice

7.1 Learner voice activities

Ways of implementing the concept of learner voice are many and varied. Some build on existing practice whilst others take a more radical view. The particular population of your institution can affect the model of delivery, for example low/high churn, male or female, adults or young people.

Listed below are just a few of the numerous types of events, roles and activities that could provide possible channels for greater learner engagement and involvement in your establishment.

Elections	Learners may want to vote for representatives to promote issues important to them. This method is easier with longer term, stable populations.	e.g. HMP Aylesbury (Chapter 8)
Learner Forums/ Student Councils	Student councils tend to have some say in the day-to-day running of the institution. How much power to effect outcomes and how well they represent all learners are important issues to consider.	e.g. HMP Wymott (Chapter 8)
Management Meetings	Learner Reps may be asked to attend a section of a staff or Senior Management Team meeting to have more formal representation. Learners may be asked to consider a particular issue before attending the meeting so they are prepared.	E.g. HMYOI Cookham Wood (Chapter 8)
Working Groups and consultation workshops	These are good ways of gauging the views of learners and exploring issues in more depth. They provide a good way of exploring the views and key issues of learners outside of more formal learner forum meetings.	E.g. HMP Holloway (Chapter 8)
Message boards / 'You say, we did' notice boards	These can take a variety of forms. Largely used to convey information to learners but can also provide a way in which learners can express their own opinions or convey information to others. They need to be made accessible to all prisoners and kept up to date.	E.g. HMP Holloway (Chapter 8)
Peer research	Peer research can promote a range of skills, especially if the research agendas, planning and data collection are set and managed by learners. For example a learner rep might want to canvass opinions of their peers about their experiences of learning.	E.g. HMYOI Cookham Wood (Chapter 8)
Focus groups	Represents a good way for learners (and educators) to discuss issues that are relevant to them. Can be very flexible and open in the way they are conducted and the range of issues covered. Useful for high-churn populations.	E.g. HMYOI Feltham (See Chapter 8)
Ballots	Can be particularly useful when seeking consensus decisions but not as useful when seeking to gauge the breadth of opinions that may exist. These are more empowering when the 'issues' to be balloted on are decided by learners in the first instance.	E.g. HMYOI Aylesbury (Chapter 8)
Interest and action groups	Useful in allowing small groups of prisoners to gather together to focus on specific issues.	E.g. HMP Pentonville (Chapter 8)

Learning Champions/ Mentors	Learners can be trained to promote learning on the wings and workshops and to provide support for prisoners interested in learning or those doing learning activities.	E.g. HMP Elmley (Chapter 8)
Participation skills training	Formal or informal training to enable learners to become more confident in their roles.	E.g. HMP Aylesbury (Chapter 8)
Suggestion Boxes	Prisoner designed suggestion boxes based around the prison for prisoners to put in ideas. These can then be opened by learner reps at regular intervals and prioritised.	E.g. HMYOI Cookham Wood

Adapted from Citizenship and Learner Voice, LSIS²³

7.2 Ongoing activity

Ultimately, the emphasis should be on embedding learner voice as an ongoing process and evolving a set of practices rather than one-off exercises. A number of events, activities and methods may occur concurrently. The focus should be on trying to ensure that learners become increasingly more involved in setting the issues and agendas.

7.3 Dealing with high churn populations

Promoting the voices of learners will take many different guises and within each institution there will be differing possibilities based on a whole range of cultural, structural, human and institutional factors. It is possible to run learner voice activities in high churn prisons, however thought needs to be given to suitable activities. See Chapter Seven for case studies.

Higher Churn Prisons (Such as HMYOI Feltham)	Lower churn prisons (Such as HMYOI Aylesbury)
Focus groups	Formal learner forums / learner councils
Select whoever is willing to participate or teacher nominated reps	Elections / open selection process learner reps
Smaller activities at regular intervals	Longer, more involved activities at defined intervals e.g. monthly
Ask prisoners to suggest / recruit replacement reps before they leave where possible.	Decide on process to enable new reps / other prisoners to join in with learner voice

7.4 Internal or external facilitation?

Some prisons or education providers employ external, independent facilitators for learner voice activities. For example HMYOI Aylesbury employ 'User Voice' and HMYOI Cookham Wood use 'Kinetic Youth'. A4E at HMP Pentonville and Holloway use Learner Voice consultant Jose Aguilar. However even with external facilitation there can be input by the staff, for example in HMYOI Aylesbury, User Voice facilitate the working groups, but the Governor Chairs the monthly Prison Council meetings. Other prisons use their own staff for example HMP Elmley is facilitated by The Manchester College OLASS Manager and HMP Wymott is facilitated by The Manchester College Education Manager. However the responsibility for Chairing and writing the minutes of the HMP Wymott student council meeting is the role of prisoners who have been elected by their peers Chair and Secretary.

Various combinations exist and are possible. It must be about what is right for your particular establishment and population.

Advantages of External Facilitation (E.g. HMP/YOI Holloway and HMYOI Aylesbury)	Advantages of Internal Facilitation (E.g. HMP Elmley and HMP Wymott)
Independence	Staff have an understanding of the education provision in the establishment
Might encourage a more honest and open dialogue with prisoners	Staff can make changes themselves
Can bring in specific learner voice expertise and experience (e.g. a Learner Voice consultant)	Help improve staff/prisoner relationships
Can help build rapport with prisoners by using ex-prisoner facilitators (e.g. User Voice) or trained youth workers (e.g. Kinetic Youth)	Utilise skills amongst current workforce or an opportunity for CPD of staff

Top Tips for Learner Voice Coordinators

- ✓ Allow the learners to take the lead - the stronger their involvement, the more they will achieve
- ✓ Allow sufficient time to support learners' projects
- ✓ Celebrate quick wins. It will spread the learner voice message and build learners' self-esteem
- ✓ Be prepared to have to motivate both staff and learners - not everyone can see the benefit of learner voice!
- ✓ Gain support from senior management and agree a learner voice strategy through consultation with the whole organisation to develop an ethos of learner voice within the organisation's culture
- ✓ Challenge the students, make them the centre of the project, give them credit, let them see themselves positively
- ✓ Use a learn-think-act process – get learners think how to do something as responsible citizens
- ✓ Guarantee feedback mechanisms are in place. It's vital learners have feedback. Feedback is important, even if you have not taken action as a result of the listening to learners; the essential thing is to have listened.
- ✓ It is important to build on existing resources. Many teachers, administration staff, and prison staff have already have an array of 'primary evidence'
- ✓ Learn and build on good practice in other prison departments, e.g. Equality reps, Listeners, Violence reduction reps and any other services' reps

Activity 7: Effective participation - a checklist

Addressing the following questions will help think about getting started with learner voice. Use the empty column to make notes or use the headings to stimulate a discussion and brainstorm with staff and prisoners.

Action	Why?	Notes
Identify the benefits you want to achieve	By identifying the benefits that you are primarily interested in achieving through learners' participation, you will be able to set clear objectives and success criteria on which to base and evaluate that participation	
Provide a range of opportunities	By offering different kinds of opportunities for participation an institution will help to facilitate and encourage the participation of a wide range of learners.	
Provide support to develop skills of effective participation	Training for learners to enhance their participation skills is crucial. All Learners should be able to benefit from this training, not just those currently directly involved in offering their views or representing their peers.	
Address equal opportunity issues	The learners involved in decision-making must be representative – in terms of age, (gender), ethnicity, disability, culture, religion, language or learning abilities. Institutions should take steps to facilitate and encourage the participation of hard-to-reach groups. They should also consider how to ensure those with special needs are involved on an equal basis.	
Ensure provision for participation links to the curriculum	Provision for participation should be embedded in the work of the institution. This includes having clear links between learners' participation and the curriculum so that these components become mutually reinforcing.	
Develop provision that is fun and interesting for learners	If learners feel they are not being challenged by the process or feel that it is not relevant to them, they are likely to lose trust in its importance.	
Think about providing rewards to recognise learners participation	Show learners that their input is valued and help them to understand the potential benefits of their participation – for themselves as well as for their peers or the institution. An institution may wish to recognise learners' efforts formally through awards.	
Review the impact that Learners participation is having	It is important to monitor the impact that learners' participation is having, in order to assess the benefits and refine practice.	
Provide feedback to learners	Providing learners on how their views have been taken into account, and if not, why not, and on what has changed as a result of their efforts, will prevent them from becoming disillusioned where they feel their input is not making a difference.	
Share effective practice with other institutions	There is some excellent work taking place. As well as making use of published case studies, it is useful to visit other institutions to share good practice. This will help institutions and learners to continue to enhance their provision for participation. Institutions' partnerships may prove helpful here.	

Adapted from "Post 16- Citizenship" LSIS²⁴

Chapter Eight: Case Studies

8.1 Prisons and YOIs engaging in learner voice activities

This is not an exhaustive list of prisons engaging in learner voice, however they represent a selection of examples that PET and Jose Aguilar became aware of during the course of writing this toolkit. The case studies reflect a variety of different approaches and prison populations. If you have other case studies, PET would like to hear about them (see Chapter Eleven).

8.2 HMP Pentonville

Category	B/C
Type	Local prison
Gender / Age	Adult Males
Average stay	55 days
Region	London



Delivery model:

Internal / external facilitator	The education provider, A4E, employ an independent consultant (Jose Aguilar) to facilitate citizenship classes
Activities	<p>One of the ideas which sprung from the prisoners in the Citizenship classes was to produce a guide for prisoners, written by prisoners, with information and advice on the help available, based on the 7 reducing reoffending pathways. The guide was called 'What's in it for me?'.</p> <p>The consultant, together with the prisoners in the citizenship class expanded this concept to develop a model of '7 pathways reps': accommodation; education, training and employment; mental & physical health; drugs & alcohol; finance, debts, and benefits; children and families; attitudes, thinking and behaviour.</p> <p>The role of a 7 Pathways Rep (Learner Rep):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend a 7 Pathways meeting every fortnight • Attend monthly reducing re-offending meetings with the Head of reduce re-offending and organisations delivering services under the 7 Pathways • Collect learner and non-learner views and feed back on education and training issues. • Represent fellow learners at meetings • Act on the views of learners • Act as a source of information about education to other prisoners • Help set up focus groups in different education locations in the prison • Set up and deliver '7 pathways road shows' on their wings • Attend an education induction • Help to set up events throughout the prison
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Learner Reps are identified through different departments of the prison: teachers, library, equality & diversity departments and different agencies working within the prison • Prisoners wanting to become Learner Reps do need to have at least one month to stay • When possible learner reps are put on hold • Learner Reps have the responsibility to identify and recruit a replacement when they leave

Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 7 Pathways Reps created a brand with a unique colour scheme, which merges with posters, leaflets, and reps' t-shirts • Identifying posters on cell doors of Learner Reps and throughout the prison and education departments • The independent consultant advertises the role during staff meetings. • Using media available in prison: 'Voice of the Ville' newsletter; internal prison TV channel and National Prison Radio
Feedback mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education managers and prison governors attend Learner Forum and 7 Pathways meetings to inform on developments and give feedback on actions taken. • 7 Pathways Reps disseminate information and feedback to other prisoners by delivering 7 Pathways surgeries on the wings and one to one sessions. • "You said, we did" notice board in the education department
Achievements so far	<p>Culture change: The 7 Pathways Rep role is consolidated and embedded in the life of prison as part of a change in culture. The reps are instrumental in disseminating information, representing the views of other prisoners and acting on them.</p> <p>Information Booklet: The 7 Pathways Reps took part in putting together an information booklet for prisoners and staff about the services available in Pentonville. As follow up of these booklets, the Reps helped to set up a reduce re-offending fair "<i>What's in it for me</i>".</p> <p>The idea about an information booklet came up during the citizenship classes and focus groups with prisoners. The Head of Reducing Reoffending commissioned Jose Aguiar to take the project forward. A group of prisoners were assembled to work on this project and the booklet became reality within 3 months.</p> <p>As a follow up to this booklet, Prisoners and Jose Aguiar decided it would be of importance to create a group to disseminate information about the 7 Pathways among prisoners, and to set up events to address prisoners needs.</p> <p>The idea for '7 Pathways reps' started to take shape. The group worked on logos for the project and on the roles and responsibilities of the 7 Pathways reps.</p> <p>Organising events: The first task of the 7 Pathways reps was to help to set up a "<i>What's in it for me?</i>" fair. This fair brought together all the services available in Pentonville under the 7 Reduce Reoffending Pathways.</p> <p>The 7 Pathways reps are in the process of helping to set up another fair "Business Start Up" fair in July. The aim of this fair is to offer prisoners help, support and guidance in starting their own business.</p> <p>The 7 Pathways reps have been delivering surgeries on the wings to inform prisoners about services available and how to access them, and delivering Learner Forums in different locations in Pentonville.</p>

Learner Comments	<p><i>“I think I’m going to be part of a changing process”</i></p> <p><i>“I’m hoping to make a positive contribution to help other inmates to access education”</i></p> <p><i>“The learner forum gave me a voice. I feel we can bring change about”</i></p> <p><i>“ I spent most of time moaning about the services in prison. The learner forum gave me the chance to voice my views in a constructive way”</i></p>
Staff comments	<p><i>“Exceptional work these group of prisoners have been doing. A real role model to their peers”</i> Prison officer</p> <p><i>“The 7 Pathways reps are making a real difference in the prison”. Governor</i></p> <p><i>“The 7 Pathways reps are playing a major role in promoting the services in the prison and to help inmates to access to them”</i> Governor</p>



8.3 HMP and YO1 Holloway

Type	Closed
Gender / Age	Female adults and young offenders
Average stay	28 days
Region	London



HOLLA!
HMP HOLLOWAY LEARNER NEWSLETTER

Delivery model:

Internal / external facilitator	Education provider A4E employ an external facilitator, Jose Aguilar.
Feedback mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education manager, and Head of Learning Skills attend Learner Forum to give feedback on Learners' views and suggestions • Learners' comments box • "You said, we did" notice board • Learner Voice newsletter 'Holla'
Activities	<p>A learner forum is held on the third Friday of every month with an external learner voice co-ordinator (Jose Aguilar), reps, Education Manager and Head of Learning & Skills.</p> <p>Every fortnight the learner voice co-ordinator meets learner reps in the library for 30 minutes to catch up on any pending or arising issues.</p>
Recruitment	<p>Once a month the learner voice co-ordinator and reps go to each of the classes to recruit new learner reps and to listen to as many learners as possible, about their teaching and learning experiences, to feed back to the Learner Forum.</p> <p>Learner reps are identified through different departments of the prison: teachers; classes; library, and they can self refer by making an application</p> <p>Learner rep application forms are made available throughout the prison</p> <p>Learner Reps have the responsibility to identify suitable candidates, and recruit a replacement when they leave</p>
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner reps created a brand with a unique colour scheme, which appears on the posters, leaflets and reps' t-shirts • Identifying posters on cell doors of Learner Reps • Learner rep identity cards • Posters throughout the prison and education departments • Advertising the role during staff meetings to get as many staff as possible engaged with the scheme • Learner Voice newsletter 'Holla' written by and for the women prisoners • Promotion on internal prison TV channel and National Prison Radio

Achievements so far	<p>Newsletter: Learner Reps are responsible to produce and design a bimonthly newsletter, where learners can express their views, and it works as vehicle to give feedback about the issues discussed in the learner forum and disseminate information about education.</p> <p>The newsletter is divided into multiple sections; an editorial – ‘Whats’s up and going down’; interviews with teachers – ‘meet the teacher’; education issues and information; and a page dedicated to entertainment including puzzles.</p> <p>With the first issue soon to be distributed, the newsletter will now become a regular part of prison life. <i>“We are planning to have an issue every two months, and an insert for inmates feedback, called, ‘now we listen – you talk’. An editorial group is being formed among the learners, who will take full responsibility for writing the content and editing the newsletter – with little help from A4e staff.”</i></p> <p>Logo: Learner reps designed the logo which now features in all formal learner forum documents, promotional material, t-shirts and ID cards.</p> <p>Radio documentary: Learner Reps worked with the students in the radio production class to produce a short radio documentary about the learner forum which was broadcast on National Prison Radio.</p> <p>ICT software: After a request from the learner reps the prison purchased some additional computer software so the women could improve their ICT skills.</p> <p>Class allocation: As a result of a request from the learner reps the method for allocating prisoners to classes has been reviewed.</p>
Learner Comments	<p><i>“The learner forum is a chance to voice opinions and changes that need to be made”</i></p> <p><i>“Learner reps can help people on their wings and should be the first port of call for new prisoners or any other prisoners who want to keep updated and have their queries answered”</i></p> <p><i>“There are two parts, education and prison. Many times education staff don’t communicate well with prison staff. Learner reps can bridge this gap”</i></p> <p><i>“Learner reps can influence sustained change”</i></p>
Staff comments	<p><i>“Learner reps are playing a major role in promoting education and engaging other learners”</i> Education manager</p> <p><i>“The newsletter Holla is an excellent product of learner engagement”</i> Prison governor</p> <p><i>“Learners reps are doing a brilliant job being a source of information for other learners. It really has a positive impact in our workload”</i> Education staff</p>

8.4 HMYOI Cookham Wood

Gender / Age	Male Juvenile and YOI (15-17 yrs)
Average stay	151 days
Region	Kent



Delivery model:

Internal / external facilitator	The prison pays for an external facilitator who is a youth worker from the charity Kinetic Youth. ²⁵
Feedback mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governor chairs the meetings • Youth Council Reps attend the Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings • Youth Council Reps cascade down feedback back to learners • There is a review folder explaining changes or why things haven't happened and different changes being implemented
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Council meetings every two weeks. This can discuss issues effecting whole YOI, but includes education and training. Other issues such as safety/violence reduction/ IEP etc are broader issues, but have a strong impact on learning and providing a safe learning environment. Youth Council reps come to these meetings. Agenda set, minutes taken, staff asked to attend meeting to discuss actions. • Youth worker facilitates small group sessions to brainstorm ideas, sort the suggestions into priority order and devise proposals and work plans. These are held every two weeks, in between the Youth Council meetings. Anyone can come to these sessions. • Suggestion boxes designed by the mural art class are located around the prison. These are emptied by the Youth Council reps and using a 'diamond ranking system' are prioritised as to what is taken forward into a proposal.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer-led surveys. The Youth Council, with the facilitator, develop and conduct surveys of their peers, for example on courses that the young people would like to have and those they do not find useful. • Chair and Vice Chair of the Youth council (as voted for by their peers) attend section of Senior Management Team meetings. This was a suggestion by the youth council agreed to by the Governor. The SMT give youth council a topic or issue in advance and young people, facilitated by Kinetic, canvass opinion of young people and develop solutions. • Prisoner/staff consultation events based on healthy prison criteria. Prisoners set up 'stalls' with proposals and staff drop in and talk to them about their ideas.
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is open to anyone to get involved. • Posters on display which say "Meet with the Governor and work together to make Cookham Wood a better place for young people". • Young people can volunteer, often encouraged by their peers on the youth council. • Staff also encourage the young people to engage with the youth council. • The youth council is also popular with the young people doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award for the volunteering section.
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with PET the film club at HMYOI Cookham Wood have made a short film about learner voice and the council which will be shown to young people on induction.

Achievements so far	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Youth Council were asked by SMT to think of solutions to reduce violence. Their mediation scheme has been implemented and has reduced violence. • They succeeded in bringing back the popular 'Motormex' class. • Enabling more young people to get release on temporary licence (ROTL) to attend volunteering and college placements or to study online courses not available in the prison due to the lack of internet access. This has resulted in students being able to progress to higher levels than were available in the prison. • Improved communication between the staff and young people. The Youth Council and film club worked together with the staff to produce 'Re-code'; a series of short film clips used to train the young people and staff about how to better understand each other and how certain language, tone of language or body language can be interpreted. This has helped to improve staff/prisoner relations. • Enable youth council reps to gain ASDAN citizenship qualifications and also Duke of Edinburgh Awards for volunteering.
Learner Comments	<p><i>"At the first workshop we were given a list of things and we were asked to voice our opinion on them. That's the best thing about it – you are listened to – get to speak to the person directly, it's not left to chance if your opinion is listened to or not".</i></p> <p><i>"We have made lots of little changes, but they've had a massive impact".</i></p> <p><i>"It was the Youth Council's idea to ask to go to SMT meetings – that's where everything is decided. If it's just a survey then you are only filling in a box, but if you can sit and talk face to face then you can get your point across more".</i></p> <p><i>"Some people ask for silly things in the suggestion box, ridiculous things – like certain types of magazine – but we choose the ten most important points so those silly ideas don't make the priority list".</i></p>
Staff comments	<p><i>"It is important to discuss the difference between wants and needs early on. It is also important to discuss what things they think will help them in the short-term and what will help them in the future. The youth council reps learn to prioritise suggestions from their peers on this basis". Governor</i></p> <p><i>"The Youth Council suggested more ROTL. The young people really understand what they have to do to get ROTL and it has helped to improve behaviour". Governor</i></p>

8.5 HMP Elmley

Category	B/C
Type	Local
Gender / Age	Male adults and Young Offenders
Average stay	16 weeks
Region	Kent



Delivery model:

Internal / external facilitator	Internal. The Education Manager, employed by The Manchester College, co-ordinates, Chairs and minutes the meetings.
Feedback mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education manager chairs the learner forum and provides information and feedback • Learners attending the learner forum then feedback to their class • “Learning Champions” provide information and feedback to other prisoners on the wings and in the workshops
Activities	<p>At HMP Elmley, in consultation with the learners, the teachers nominate one learner voice representative from each class to attend a monthly learner voice meeting on a Friday afternoon.</p> <p>This representative then gathers the views of their fellow students before the meeting to advocate on the classes’ behalf.</p> <p>The meeting is chaired by the OLASS Manager who writes up notes of the meeting and actions. These minutes are distributed to all the reps so they can feedback to their class. The last minutes are read at the start of each forum so the reps can be updated with progress on the agreed actions.</p>
Recruitment	At HMP Elmley, each of the class teachers, in consultation with the learners, nominate one learner voice representative from each class to attend monthly learner voice meetings. Can be the same person or different each month due to high churn.
Promotion	One idea the forum had was to establish a team of Learning Champions to be advocates for learning and learning – related issues. The Learning Champions wear a distinctive green t-shirt ‘Learning Champion’ on the back and “Learn to be free” on the front. This promotes the learner voice activities and encourages prisoners to approach them to discuss learning.
Achievements so far	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner forum and “Learning Champions” are firmly embedded in the life of the institution. The brand “Help me, help you, help others” is established and recognised throughout the prison. • Learners asked for events to celebrate learners achievements and these have been held. • In partnership with PET the learner voice reps story boarded, devised and filmed a short film about learner voice. This will be used in future in the induction process at the prison to promote learner voice.

Learner Comments	<p><i>"9 times out of 10 if they have got a problem and if they put in an application to try and get the problem sorted out, they either don't hear back from it or they get pushed from pillar to post, but here I can talk to somebody who's higher up in the education department you know, and get their problem sorted out a lot quicker".</i></p> <p><i>"When you put yourself in a situation like Learner rep or Learner Voice or whatever, you know, it's forcing you to get yourself involved with something and speak openly in front of people and in meetings and stuff so it brings out your confidence".</i></p>
Staff comments	<p><i>"We deep cleaned all of education and made it more user friendly, because Learner Voice really complained about that and yes I've taken notice of it". Governor</i></p> <p><i>"For anyone thinking of introducing Learner Voice into their establishment, and education and peer support workers, don't hesitate. Because we haven't regretted it" Governor</i></p> <p><i>"Learner Voice is great because it offers the men the opportunity to feed back to us as teachers, and obviously education is all about learning, it's lifelong learning, we're learning, so if they have needs they must put those needs to us and we must try and address those needs, and therefore the Learner Voice is a brilliant initiative". Tutor</i></p>

8.6 HMP & YOI Feltham A-side

Type	Remand
Gender / Age	A side for juveniles (15-18). B side for Young Offenders (18-21).
Average stay	15 days
Region	London

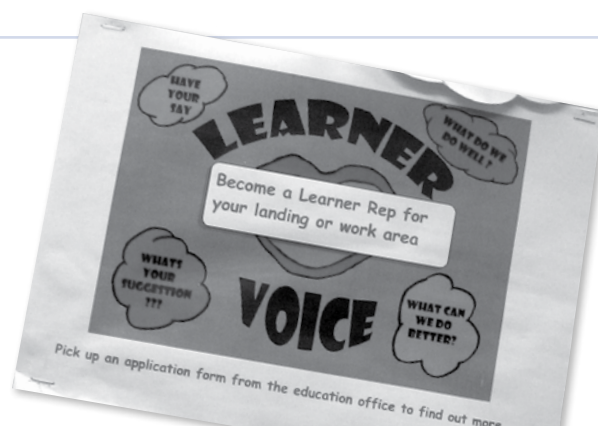


Delivery model:

Internal / external facilitator	Internal facilitator. The PSD (Personal Social Development) Tutor, employed by CfBT, co-ordinates the Student Council.
Feedback mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education managers attend the student council to inform about any developments and to give feedback on students suggestions • Student council students feedback on their class
Activities	In HMP & YOI Feltham A-side (15-17), there is a high turnover of young people. The average stay is only two weeks. Therefore, it is very difficult to get a consistent number of learner reps. However, their approach is to set regular fortnightly meetings and on the day of the meeting the staff who facilitate the student council speak to the young people in the education department at the time and ask if they would like to take part in the meeting and contribute their views. Roles are allocated, such as spokesperson for the group and minute taker.
Recruitment	On the day of the monthly meeting, the student council coordinator goes around the education department and invites students to participate on the student council.
Promotion	The student council members are currently designing t-shirts for council members to ensure they are identifiable to other learners, as well as posters to highlight the purpose of the student council.
Achievements so far	The student council members were tasked with reviewing the education department's proposed 'Rewards and Incentives Scheme'. The problems they highlighted, their new suggestions and their positive feedback were sent to management. The feedback was extremely beneficial for staff and several changes were made to the final policy thanks to the student council's input.
Learner Comments	<p><i>"At first I didn't wanna do it cos I thought it was a waste of time and that nobody would actually listen to us, but people are always interested in what we do, from teachers to the governors. It feels like we have a say in the stuff that goes on here".</i></p> <p><i>"I like that senior members of staff come to our meetings and want to listen to what we have to say. We've discussed things about different courses on offer and even the way they test us for our levels when we first arrive. We've even started to see things change!"</i></p>

8.7 HMP Erlestoke

Category	C
Gender / Age	A side for juveniles (15-18). B side for Young Offenders (18-21).
Average stay	15 days
Region	South West

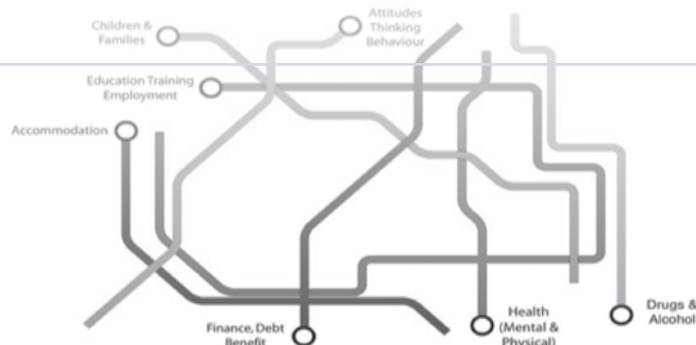
**Delivery model:**

Internal / external facilitator	An external facilitator (Jose Aguilar) ran citizenship classes and organised a one-off learner voice 'Question Time' event.
Activities	<p>The learners had autonomy to plan the Question Time event, with the learning and skills co-ordinator approving arrangements and acting as communicator. They organised meetings and decided on their own roles, the suggested panel participants, the venue, proposed date, learner involvement and the categories for questions including education.</p> <p>The learners (a diverse group) worked as a team, contributing and listening to each other's viewpoints, with lively discussions leading to negotiated agreement.</p> <p>They decided that for this event they wanted to invite the local Prospective Parliamentary Candidates for the three main political parties and Directors from Prison Reform Trust and Operation Black Vote to be potential panel members.</p> <p>Preparation also involved prisoners liaising with catering learners regarding refreshments, with video production course learners regarding recording parts of the event and with the chaplaincy regarding the venue.</p> <p>The itinerary and final questions were sent to panellists in advance of the event.</p> <p>A learner assumed the responsibility of acting as panel Chair. Learners from the audience were identified to stand up and ask the main questions.</p>
Promotion	The learners produced posters to inform all offenders of the future event and displayed these on each wing and communal areas such as the education department, library, workshops etc. They also devised and sent out proformas to each wing seeking suggested questions to be included.
Achievements so far	<p>Through their involvement in producing a DVD of the event, the video production course learners were able to meet their vocational course criteria, evidence key skills and achieve a purposeful outcome for the citizenship project.</p> <p>One of the prisoner organisers used the citizenship experience as the basis for their level 4 English speaking board examination for which their passionate presentation received distinctions in every category.</p> <p>Two other groups of learners also enrolled on other aspects of citizenship programme.</p>

Staff comments	<p><i>“Education staff and governors who were in the audience were very impressed. The learners all conducted themselves in an exemplary fashion and were a credit to themselves, the project and the prison. The visitors took away with them good impressions of the Erlestoke prison populations and political issues to follow up”.</i> Jose Aguilar, Co-ordinator</p> <p><i>“There was a particularly positive atmosphere post-event and learners had worked with others with whom they had not interacted previously”.</i> Jose Aguilar, Co-ordinator</p> <p><i>“The only word to describe the event is “extraordinary”. The quality of the questions sent to us in advance (all submitted by the inmates) was of such a high standard that I had to spent hours researching the answers, the event was chaired by a serving prisoner and attended by dozens more who contributed to a real discussion of critical issues on the table.”²⁶</i> Clare Perry MP</p>
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8.8 HMP Wandsworth

Category	B
Gender / Age	Adult Male
Average stay	3 months
Region	London

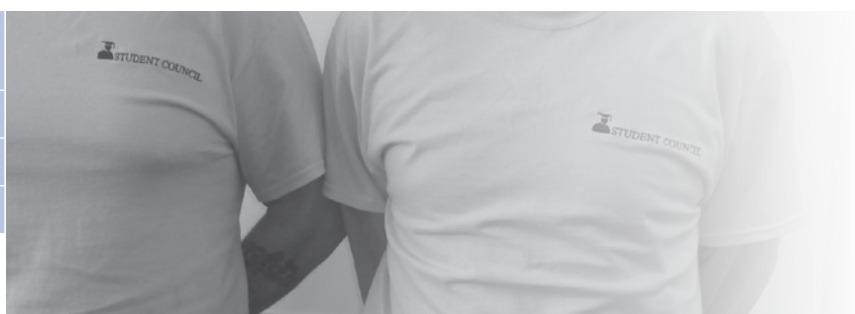


Delivery model:

Internal / external facilitator	External facilitator, Jose Aguilar is employed by Education provider A4E.
Feedback mechanisms	<p>Prison Governors and education managers attend 7 Pathways meetings to inform on developments and give feedback on actions taken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 Pathways Reps disseminate information and feedback to other prisoners • Feedback forms
Activities	<p>The role of the 7 Pathways representatives is to help prisoners to access services under the 7 Pathways (Accommodation; Education, Training & Employment; Mental and Physical Health; Drugs & Alcohol; Children & Families; Attitudes, Thinking & Behaviour; Finance, Debt & Benefits), and to give advice about the best course of action to achieve realistic goals.</p> <p>“Get up to get out” is the 7 Pathways motto.</p>
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 pathways are identified through different departments of the prison, and other existent structures of prisoners’ representation: Chaplaincy Reps; Equality Reps; Listeners. • Prisoners wanting to become 7 Pathways Reps do need to have at least three months to stay • When possible 7 Pathways reps are put on hold • 7 Pathways Reps have the responsibility to identify and recruit a replacement when they leave
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prisoners created a brand with a unique colour scheme, which merges with posters, leaflets, and reps’ t-shirts • Identifying posters on cell doors • Posters throughout the prison and education departments • Advertising the role during staff meetings to get as many staff as possible engaged with the scheme • Using media available in prison: in-cell radio station called ‘Radio Wanno’.
Achievements so far	<p>The 7 Pathways Rep role is still in an embryonic stage. However, the 7 Pathways already created a brand and logos, and are in the process of advertising the role. At the same time, they are putting systems in place to help them to better perform their roles and to enable other prisoners’ involvement</p>

8.9 HMP Wymott

Category	Cat C trainer prison plus VP Wing
Gender / Age	Adult male
Average stay	16 weeks
Region	North West



Delivery model:

Internal / external facilitator	Internal. The Student Council was the idea of two education staff, employed by The Manchester College, to enhance Personal and Social Development. They co-ordinate the Student Council, however the learners voted for a Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary. As the population is long-term and relatively stable this model works.
Feedback mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student rep log book contains a section to write down feedback on individual issues so the rep can go back to the prisoner and feedback by word of mouth. • The student reps also have recently launched a student newsletter as a feedback mechanism. They ran a competition to decide the name. • They also put notices up on the education noticeboard in their wings of any developments.
Activities	<p>Each rep was given a pack about their roles and responsibilities (see Chapter Nine for a sample template) including a 'student rep log book' where they can log down concerns and suggestions from other prisoners.</p> <p>They also have a guide to all the education courses and copies of education application forms.</p> <p>They were given Student Council t-shirts which they sign for and sign up to a 'Code of Conduct' about their roles and responsibilities [include in appendix].</p> <p>It is a dual role which involves learner voice and championing education on the wings and in the workshops.</p>
	<p>At the monthly meetings two education staff attend. Prisoners can also invite others to attend to individual meetings such as librarian, Head of Reducing Re-offending, the IMB, voluntary sector organisations etc. Minutes are taken and typed up by the Secretary and reviewed at the start of each meeting for accuracy. The Chair and Vice-Chair prisoners chair the discussions.</p>
Recruitment	<p>They advertised the role all round the prison.</p> <p>Applicants completed a simple application form including a short statement indicating why they wanted the role.</p> <p>The staff conducted interviews and selected 9 reps. They were mindful of having a variety of reps with different learning experiences. They have a mixture of reps including some with degrees, some who learnt to read in prison and also an ESOL student. Some are in education classes, others are in workshops and others are studying by distance learning.</p>

Achievements so far	<p>The first meetings involved a range of training activities to promote team work and a learning styles questionnaire was given out to complete and promote discussion about education. The reps also devised a mission statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written and produced a newsletter called 'Wise Up' (see p51). One student rep was able to complete a training course in graphic design and took responsibility for the design. Other prisoners wrote articles, conducted interviews and contributed to a quiz competition. • Student use their log books to collect issues from other prisoners to be addressed at the meetings. • Student reps are also encouraged to think of new ideas and future plans include an exhibition of art work and an awards ceremony for learners. • Reps also contributed ideas for a men's health event.
Learner Comments	<p><i>"Before the student council you had to ask lots of individuals before you got something resolved, now this is a better way of getting things done and sorted out".</i></p> <p><i>"I enjoy listening to positive contributions, it is nice to be part of a positive group. I understand better now the restrictions the staff work under and I understand better the direction of education in prison".</i></p>
Staff comments	<p><i>"I know that now we are a pilot for longer working hours the relationship between work and education can be fraught, but the student council reps are helping to oil these wheels".</i></p> <p><i>"I'm proud of you guys on the student council. It warms my heart. It's grand you all feel so passionately about education. I wish Chris Grayling had been here to see this meeting!"</i></p> <p><i>"It shows what you can do when you put your mind to it and the value of prisoners passing on their passion for learning".</i></p>

Completed application forms:

Please write below stating your reason for making the application, what you could bring to the council and how you would like to contribute. It would also be helpful to know about any previous experience you feel is relevant.

My early experience of education was very negative, most of this time was spent feeling stupid, this led to me having a low self esteem & confidence. I have completed lots of educational courses and I am a great believer in education being part of a prisoner's rehabilitation. I have lots of enthusiasm for education and the skills that can be learnt.

I see my own journey and how life changing studying can be, from someone who felt he had a low intelligence to looking forward to the next 6 years of doing a degree.

This says a lot on how far anyone can come, I will share my own experiences & my positive attitude to other learners, I will be fully committed to helping learners on their journey through education and a better future.

Please write below stating your reason for making the application, what you could bring to the council and how you would like to contribute. It would also be helpful to know about any previous experience you feel is relevant.

I believe that due to the many courses I have attended and contributed to, the experience gained will be of benefit to both current and potential students.

I also believe that my previous customer-facing experience will be of use when talking with fellow prisoners on the wing.

Newsletter:



The Life of a Toe By Toe Mentor

INTERVIEW WITH ANNE STAINES DEPUTY EDUCATION MANAGER

EDUCATION COURSES MYTHS & FACTS

QUIZ

Who said - You cannot teach a man anything, you can only help him find it within himself	“-----”
Name the Deputy education manager	“-----”

Until next time,... Let's **WISE UP** a little . Cheerio!

A word from the Chairman

I am a life sentence prisoner who came to jail in 2000. That person [me] who came into the custodial sentence was angry, non-trusting, and had real issues with authority. I had no self esteem. All contact with my friends and family was gone.

Looking back , I can now see the journey that I – have travelled. I left school and went straight into prison at 15 years of age with no qualification, not even with any desire to engage with education.

About three or four years into my sentence, I'd eventually made it into a workshop. Because it was so monotonous, so boring, I just wanted to get out of there. I decided to try education; sadly I went straight into the “bottom” class – a position I knew oh so well – it felt like I was back at school again. Then on one occasion a supply teacher came in who I hadn't met before. She challenged me to push myself and suddenly I realised I could be better – I could achieve more than I ever had in school. That was it . . . Eventually I worked towards the GCSE grade class and in the process I won a life-time achievement award.

It was this event that put me on the path. It was my lack of skills, the ability to deal with my emotions and to articulate that had held me prisoner.

So here I am today years later, studying for my Open University degree. I have enjoyed every learning challenge and opportunity that I have been given.

That is what makes me so passionate about the advantages of learning – and made me apply to join the Student Council. I was so proud to be elected as Chairman. My hope is that we can encourage every individual to consider their own future and find their voice through work skills and education.

8.10 HMYOI Aylesbury

Category	Long Term YOI
Gender / Age	Young males (18-21 yrs)
Average stay	2.5-3 yrs
Region	London/SE



Delivery model:

Internal / external facilitator	External. The prison funds the charity 'User Voice' ²⁷ to facilitate a Prison Council. The facilitators are both ex-prisoners themselves, who used education as a key tool in their rehabilitation and post – release. However the Governor chairs the Prison Council meetings.
Feedback mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User Voice facilitators support the parties to help them formulate proposals for the Prison Council meetings from issues that prisoners have raised with them. • Prison Council meetings are held on a regular basis with the Governor as Chair. • At the Council meetings proposals are put forward and progress on actions taken from previous meetings are discussed. The Council also acts as a sounding board for any current issues the Governor is facing.
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prisoner recruitment. Facilitators spend time with the young people on the wings, in classes etc. They chat to them, put up posters, hand out flyers and talk to as many of them as possible about the Prison Council. They then collect names of all the young people who say they are interested. • Prisoner Training. User Voice ran a training course for the young people interested in order to give them the skills and confidence to participate. • Election. Council members are elected to the Prison Council through a democratic process involving an election whereby prisoners form into issue based 'parties' (including Education & Training) and staff and prisoners vote for parties, as they would in a normal election.
Achievements so far	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Father's day event to support family learning • Prisoner/staff sporting challenges to improve relationships • Fundraising events • Establishment of an Education Steering Committee by the Governor to play a larger role in developing the Education Strategy and specifically around making the OLASS 4 provision more applicable for a long term YOI • A change to the visit booking process • Access to computers (beyond OLASS provision) to aid Council administration • Education Provision Survey • A programme of more informal, non-accredited, educational classes is being discussed and developed through the Council

Learner Comments	<p><i>"We want to form a steering group to meet with the new education provider"</i></p> <p><i>"12 weeks ago my life was a mess, I couldn't cope, thanks to User Voice they have helped me turn my life around. They have given me some meaning within the jail".</i></p>
Staff comments	<p><i>"The Prison Council is good for meaningful engagement. It gives them a formal route to take their complaints, issues and suggestions. Prisoners come up with solutions". Governor</i></p> <p><i>"The most important outcomes are relational. This process can break down barriers between staff and prisoners". User Voice Facilitator</i></p> <p><i>"One of the most important aspects of this is the reinforcing of skills that they learn elsewhere. This adds a dimension of learning cohesion throughout the prison – from education, OMU and the Council ."</i> User Voice Facilitator</p>

Activity Eight: Learner Models

In pairs ask staff and / or prisoners to read and discuss the different case studies.

Then ask them to present that case study to the rest of the group, highlighting the aspects of the model which might be of use in their establishment.



Chapter Nine:

Sample Templates and Activities

9.1 Sample Learner Voice Mission statement

A mission statement is a good way to summarise what learner voice at your establishment aims to achieve. This is best developed in partnership with prisoners and staff.

The Student Council's Aim is to:

- Educate, encourage and motivate
- To represent the views of all the prisoners, both learners and non-learners
- To help improve access to learning opportunities for prisoners
- To help the prison better meet the learning needs of prisoners
- To promote a positive attitude to learning, encouraging all individuals to consider education as an integral part of their life-long learning
- Empower students to take responsibility for their own development
- To be a point of relevant, accurate information

9.2 Sample Job Description

Job descriptions for learner reps can be useful to help set boundaries and help them understand what is expected of them. It can also help to clarify what training and development needs reps may have to enable them to fulfil the role expected of them. This is best developed in partnership with prisoners and staff.

Student Council Roles and responsibilities

Member's role is to:

- Represent their wing/workshop by attendance at Student Council Meetings [if absent from three meetings in succession, without apologies, members may be impeached. Student Council members would have the final decision].
- Assist Education tutors when appropriate with any specific initiatives / events
- Report and promulgate Student Council news and activities to their wing/workshop
- Share responsibilities for Council activities
- Communicate findings and feedback to education tutors on a regular basis
- Represent their student body at meetings with other student representatives
- Assist the Chair in reviewing the operations and developing a yearly improvement plan
- Review, respond and make recommendation for action to prison-wide issues affecting or impacting upon education provision and accessibility
- Assist in finding solutions to management challenges
- Respond to learner and faculty wide concerns
- Assist in the development of short-term and long-term goals in support of Education's Improvement Plan
- Research and present options for events and special initiatives.

9.3 Sample Equal Opportunities statement

It is important to ensure that staff and prisoners consider diversity and equal opportunities. An equal opportunities statement is best developed in partnership with prisoners and staff.

Representing the whole group

Equality of opportunity

You need to be sure that you are listening to all prisoners, not just the biggest or loudest. Some prisoners may find it difficult to talk with you or meet with you. They may have language difficulties or not may feel confident to do it.

Hints and tips

You could think about using feedback forms that prisoners could fill in and return to you at a later date.

You could put a feedback form on a notice board.

Remember that equal opportunities does not mean treating everybody the same, it means giving everybody the same opportunity to take part.

Diversity

When you are discussing ideas at meetings or at focus groups, you will need to think about the needs of all prisoners, not just the largest group. Think about how suggestions might affect different individuals.

9.4 Sample Code of Conduct

A code of conduct helps emphasise the role of learner rep as a position of responsibility. This is best developed in partnership with prisoners and supported by training and discussion to ensure they understand the reasons behind the Code.

Student Council Members will:

- Act with integrity, honesty and behave responsibly
- Use appropriate and correct language
- Maintain an open mind and respectful approach
- Deal with matters in a confidential way
- Not abuse their position – remembering they represent the whole council
- Seek not to trivialise anyone's problems or queries
- Allow everyone to speak freely, be fair and non-judgemental
- Promote the benefits of education
- Respect any criticisms that are made
- Be easy to approach
- Attend meetings promptly and regularly
- Consider and celebrate equality and diversity

9.5 Sample learner rep agreement

This can be added to the end of a code of conduct and / or job description.

Name:

.....

Number:

.....

Wing:

.....

This is to signify that I have undertaken the role of Student Councillor and that, as of today's date, I am in possession of the official Student Council T-Shirt which is now in my personal care. I understand that this is solely my property and must remain in my possession.

Signed:

.....

Issued by:

.....

Date:

.....

9.6 Sample agenda

It can be useful to have an agenda for main Student Council or Learner Forum meetings to ensure key issues are covered. This sample gives ideas for topics to discuss, but mostly meetings will be led by the topics prisoners bring to the meeting as a result of their discussions with other prisoners in their class, wing or workshop.

Agenda:

Welcome, introductions and apologies.

Minutes from last meeting (Feedback on agreed action points)

Topics for discussion could include:

- Feedback from each representative; matters arising
- Assessment of Education and Training Needs
- Development of the Curriculum and Accreditation (academic and vocational learning)
- Library / Careers Advice / Virtual Campus / Distance Learning
- Quality assurance of teaching and learning
- Informal learning opportunities (arts, PSD, reading groups etc)
- Learner Achievements
- Equal opportunities / Safer Custody (Anti-Bullying, Violence Reduction, Prevention of Self Harm and Suicide)
- New and planned initiatives / upcoming events / ideas and solutions (can link to national events such as Black History Month, Adult Learners Week etc)
- Guest speakers (e.g. prison staff or outside guests from charities)
- Ideas to promote the forum e.g. t-shirts, newsletter, posters, logo etc.
- National Policy Consultations to feed into
- Any Other Business / Dates of next meetings / Working Groups

9.7 Sample minutes

Minutes can be taken either by a staff member or a prisoner can be trained to take the minutes. Minutes are useful for transparency, recapping on actions to be taken forward and as a reminder of discussions which have taken place. They can also be provided to reps who were not able to make the meeting to keep them updated. Copies of minutes can also be placed on wing notice boards if appropriate to keep other prisoners updated.

Minutes of Student Council Meeting

Date: / / Time: Location:

Present:

Facilitators:

Apologies:

Introduction:

Minutes of last meeting read and agreed:

Item	Discussion	Action	Owner
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
	Any Other Business		
	Next meeting date and location		

9.8 Sample Learner Voice log

Learner reps will need to talk to other prisoners to collect issues and ideas. Giving learner reps a pack including a place to record these queries in an organised manner can help. They also provide a useful tool that learner can use to remind them of issues to be raised at the next meeting. The feedback section enables them to record the response to the issue given by staff at the meeting, to feedback to the prisoner who raised the query.

Date	Name	Location	Issue	Feedback

9.9 Sample learner rep application form

Have your say!



What is Learner forum?

- A platform where ideas and suggestions about your Education are put forward in order to deliver a personalised education system.
- It's about getting involved and having your say about what you want from Education.

What will be my duties as a Learner rep?

- You will attend regular meetings, to participate in various educational projects to share your ideas on how to improve Education in Holloway.
- Be the first point of contact for education-related issues for all prisoners.

Why become a Learner rep?

- To put your views in to make **CHANGE** to your learning and future employment.
- To help others and to get involved in the life of the Education Department.
- Rewards and bonuses!

Am I suitable to become a Learner rep?

- You don't need any qualifications or previous education to join. You don't have to speak English.
- You can join even if you have a disability or learning difficulties.

Everyone is welcome!

Learner rep Application

If you are interested in becoming a Learner rep, please fill out below and post into the Suggestions box in the Education Department.

Name: _____ Prison no: _____

Location: _____ Date: _____

Explain why you want to become a Learner rep: _____

9.10 Sample training activity

What do I do if...?

Learner reps might be worried about particular questions they could be asked by other prisoners. By discussing these situations beforehand by using this activity, it will help prepare the reps for their role.

- Put participants into pairs or groups, sitting round a table, and give each group a set of ten cards cut up from the handout.
- Two of the cards will be blank. Each set should be shuffled and placed face-down in the centre of the table.
- Ask groups to start with the person whose surname is highest in the alphabet. This person should pick up a card, read it out to the group and make a suggestion about how to handle the situation.
- The rest of the group will decide whether or not they agree with the suggestion.
- If a blank card is picked up, the person should suggest a genuine worry he/she has in relation to facilitating discussions on learner voice issues, and make a suggestion about how to handle it.
- When the group has finished discussing ways of handling the situation, they move to the next card, picked up by the person whose name is next in the alphabet.

Sample questions for discussion

1. <i>What would you do if...</i> someone complained about a particular course?	2. <i>What would you do if...</i> one fellow learner was having a problem with a member of staff?
3. <i>What would you do if...</i> a learner said there was nothing available at their level?	4. <i>What would you do if...</i> someone alleged that a racist incident had taken place?
5. <i>What would you do if...</i> there were a lack of information about classes available?	6. <i>What would you do if...</i> someone asked you to raise an issue that you didn't agree with?
7. <i>What would you do if...</i> someone told you they were going to harm themselves or someone else?	8. <i>What would you do if...</i> other learners complained about the discipline strategy not being consistent?
9. <i>What would you do if...</i> someone said they preferred to earn more money working than do education?	10. <i>What would you do if...</i> other learners were completely uninterested in learner voice?
11. <i>What would you do if...</i> someone asked you to help them read or write a letter as they were not confident with literacy or have a learning difficulty?	12. <i>What would you do if...</i> a group of learners wanted to take on a project?
13. <i>What would you do if...</i>	14. <i>What would you do if...</i>

9.11 Sample outcome measurement tool

It can be very beneficial to monitor the benefits of learner voice activities for the learners in order to measure distance travelled and to get feedback on the forum itself. You can adapt the categories to measure what you are interested in and you may also want to leave space for more open feedback questions or other comments the learners may have.

Benefits of Learner Voice Forums for participants

It would help us enormously if you could complete the following questionnaire when you first become involved in the Learner Voice Forum and at other intervals. It will enable us to assess the benefits of the forum for the learners. If you decide to opt out of the forum or you are being released or transferred, we would be grateful if you could complete a questionnaire before you leave if possible.

Please rank how you feel about the following where 1 is ranked the lowest and 10 the highest.

At the outset / after () weeks/months

1. Your confidence to talk about and share your ideas, opinions and experiences in a group setting

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. Your health and wellbeing

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. Your self esteem

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. Your social skills

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5. Your organisational skills

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

6. Your ability to influence change

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Activity Nine: Sample Templates and Activities

Take a look at the activity cards which are provided with this guide. Think about how you might use them to encourage debate and discussion.

Together with the prisoners and staff, use and amend the templates provided to fit your needs.

Have a go at the 'What if' training activity. Think about what other training might be required to prepare learner reps for their role.

Chapter Ten: Influencing Prison Education Policy

10.1 Influencing Policy

Sometimes there are going to be suggestions made by prisoners that, although you might like to implement, you cannot do so due to prison rules, contracts, targets, resources, capacity or policies.



Those prisoners [learner voice reps] are holding me to account, as the prisoner council does. They're not extreme, they just want a high quality service and what's difficult for me is that I can't always provide that, but they shouldn't stop asking for it. Governor.



It can be helpful to explain to learners the structures impacting prison education, who is responsible for what and process involved in making different types of changes.



Being part of the youth council I now realise that different departments have control over different things such as food and education. Youth Council rep



In the Brain Cells report²⁸, our survey revealed that over half of respondents (56%) wanted to meet with policy makers directly to feedback about their experiences and suggestions for learning in prison. Although Prisoners Education Trust can support policy makers to visit prisons and meet learners face to face, we also have other means of enabling learners' voices to be heard by policy makers, to help get the policy changes needed to improve learning in prison.

10.2 PET Prisoner Learner Voice Panel

At Prisoners Education Trust we always underpin our policy positions by listening to the real experts; prisoners and prisoner learners. In 2011 we established a National Prisoner Learner Voice Panel which enables prisoners to write to us, using a freepost address (FREEPOST: PRISONERS EDUCATION TRUST), to share experiences of learning in prison and to make suggestions to improve prison education. The Panel was advertised in the November 2011 Inside Time Education supplement²⁹:

Have your say!

Join the PET 'Prisoner Learner Voice Panel'

Prisoners Education Trust regularly speak to policy makers, education providers and prison staff to make the case for more and better learning opportunities in prison and to help share good practice. We believe listening to prisoners is key to improving learning in prison. Learning can include arts projects, reading groups, distance learning, vocational skills, family learning, sports courses, virtual campus and academic qualifications.

- Do you have something to say about education and skills training in your prison?
- What would you like to tell policy makers about learning opportunities in your prison?
- What has been your experience of learning both before prison and since being inside?
- What is good and what could be improved?

You are the experts about what would help you most. Through the PET Prisoner Learner Voice Panel you will have a chance to voice your opinions and suggestions to us and we will pass these on to those with the power to change things. If you are interested in finding out more, please send your name, prison and prison number to

FREEPOST: PRISONERS EDUCATION TRUST.

If you would like to also write us a letter about your views and experiences, that would be great too!

The Learner Voice Panel enables us to ensure that when responding to Select Committee inquiries, party justice reviews or government consultations, learners voices are at the heart. Where prisoners have written to us with individual issues, we do our best to advocate on their behalf with the prison to get the matter resolved.

10.3 PET Learning Matters E-news

Prisoners Education Trust has a monthly e-news bulletin called 'Learning Matters' that goes out to over 2000 prison educators, policy makers, academics and ex-prisoners. Every month PET feature learner voice articles from prisoners discussing their experiences of learning in prison and their suggestions for improving the system. Prisoners can write to FREEPOST: PRISONERS EDUCATION TRUST with articles and we will try our best to publish them.

10.4 Annual Inside Time Education Supplement

Inside Time newspaper kindly allow Prisoners Education Trust to put together an 8 page 'Inside Education' Supplement every autumn. This is another opportunity to showcase learner voice through prisoner learner articles on their experiences of learning as well as suggestions for change. We send copies of this supplement to policy makers. Prisoners can write to FREEPOST: PRISONERS EDUCATION TRUST with articles for the supplement and we will try our best to publish them.



10.5 Prisoner Learning Alliance

In November 2012 PET established a Prisoner Learning Alliance³⁰ made up of 16 organisations working in prison education. The Alliance meets on a quarterly basis with officials from the relevant government departments including Ministry of Justice, National Offender Management Service, Business Innovation and Skills. Representatives from Ofsted, IMB and the Skills Funding Agency also attend the meetings.

At every meeting there is a section of the agenda dedicated to hearing 'learner voice'. At previous meetings we have heard from a male ex-prisoner learner, a female prisoner learner on ROTL and one meeting was even held inside a prison so we could hear the views and suggestions of five different prisoner learners.

If prisons would like to nominate a learner or learner rep to speak at a Prisoner Learning Alliance meeting, please let us know and we will try our best to arrange this.

10.6 Sharing issues arising from Learner Voice activities

In order to get a feel for some of the issues impacting prisoners, Prisoners Education Trust would like to encourage Learner Forums to share with us their anonymised minutes or keep us updated with any issues which you have not been able to resolve at a local level. This will help inform our policy work and enable us to see patterns and themes across the prison estate.

We are also interested to hear about innovative solutions and ideas prisoners have come up with that we can share widely as examples of good practice.

10.7 Policy maker visits

You may wish to consider contacting your local Member of Parliament to ask them to visit your learner forum or student council. Alternatively you may wish to organise a Question Time type event (See HMP Erlestoke Case Study, Chapter Eight).

It warms my heart. It's grand that you all feel so passionately about education. I wish Chris Grayling had been here to see this meeting! Head of Reducing Re-offending

Activity Ten: Influencing Policy

Discuss with staff and prisoners the types of issues that might not be able to be resolved by an individual prison.

Think about how you are going to explain who is responsible for what in your prison.

Brainstorm ways in which your prisoner learners could contribute to the wider policy debate about education in prison.

Chapter ELEVEN: Sharing Good Practice

11.1 PET National Prisoner Learner Voice Network

If you are involved in running learner voices activities in your prison, and would like to share ideas and experiences with others doing the same, then you can join the PET National Prisoner Learner Voice Network.

By completing the 'Involve, Improve, Inspire' Feedback survey, PET we will add your contact details into a database of prison learner voice practitioners. In the future PET hope to organise events and devise other mechanisms to allow you to share good practice and learn from others.

11.2 'Involve, Improve, Inspire' feedback survey.

We are keen to have your feedback about the guide, how you have used it, what you found helpful and what learner voice activities you have been able to set up as a result.

We would therefore be very grateful if you could go to www.bit.ly/learnervoicesurvey and complete the survey. By leaving your contact details, you will be added into a database of Prisoner Learner Voice practitioners.

Activity ELEVEN: Sharing good practice

Please go to www.bit.ly/learnervoicesurvey and complete the survey and let us know your thoughts on the report and tell us about learner voice in your prison.

Concluding Remarks

Jen Walters, Her Majesty's Inspector, Ofsted

Prisoners should experience the same standard of good education and training provision in prison as that delivered in good or better providers in the community. The learner voice is an important part of Ofsted inspections and this includes the inspection of learning and skills in prisons when Ofsted inspects prisons jointly with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

Prisoners are bound by some high levels of compliance during their stay in prison. This can quickly erode a sense of personal responsibility and accountability, particularly with regard to personal learning goals. This toolkit is a constructive contribution to help prisons to understand what learner voice means and how it can influence the learning culture and change the direction of learning developments in prisons. It sets out a variety of approaches to help prisons to use the learner voice and also help prisoners to develop a range of key life skills that have the potential to inspire and change lives.

Watching a prisoner's self-esteem and confidence develop over time is rewarding and must not be underestimated. It is particularly gratifying when listening to prisoners effectively communicate concepts, opinions, ideas and beliefs. To involve learners in setting and achieving their learning goals, improve their life and work skills and inspire them to change and reform their lives for the better is fundamental in helping prisoners turn their ideas into actions for change.

The Prisoners Education Trust film 'More than just a Prisoner' was the start of the journey to recognise the learner voice. This toolkit builds on this film and makes a strong contribution in helping prisons to better understand the range of approaches to empower learners and promote the learner voice appropriate to needs. The learner voice is an investment and one that must be heard, listened to and used to direct and influence personal and work skills developments.

Prisoners Education Trust are to be congratulated for developing a toolkit that is easy to read, understand and one that can be put to immediate use for the benefit of all prisoners and learners.

Appendix one

Example Participation skills qualifications on the LARA database:

Learning Aim Title: Introduction to Teamwork Skills

Learning Aim Reference: A5004695

Awarding Org: MULTI - Multiple Awarding Bodies

Learning Aim Title: Teamwork skills for volunteers

Learning Aim Reference: F5023085

Awarding Org: MULTI - Multiple Awarding Bodies

Learning Aim Title: Award in Understanding Mediation (QCF)

Learning Aim Reference: 60052120

Awarding Org: OCNLR - Open College Network London Region

Learning Aim Title: Award in Peer Mentoring (QCF)

Learning Aim Reference: 50098056

Awarding Org: EDEXCEL - Pearson Education Ltd

Learning Aim Title: Award in Peer Mentoring (QCF)

Learning Aim Reference: 60058274

Awarding Org: OCNLR - Open College Network London Region

Learning Aim Title: Understanding Aspects of Citizenship

Learning Aim Reference: J5004778

Awarding Org: MULTI - Multiple Awarding Bodies

Learning Aim Title: Award in Preparing for Volunteering (Entry 3) (QCF)

Learning Aim Reference: 60067044

Awarding Org: OPENAWRD - Open Awards

Learning Aim Title: Introduction to sustainable development and global citizenship

Learning Aim Reference: T6007802

Awarding Org: MULTI - Multiple Awarding Bodies

Other learning opportunities include:

Distance Learning: EDEXCEL Global Citizenship I-GCSE

Duke of Edinburgh Awards - Volunteering

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people for their contributions to this toolkit:

Funders:

Bromley Trust

Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

Monument Trust

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

HMYOI Cookham Wood:

Governor Emily Thomas

Tim Cronin & Femi Oyeniran

Kinetic Youth: Esther Horner, Gess Aird & John Taylor

All the staff who helped make the filming possible

The talented young people who devised and made the film

The dedicated Youth Council members

HMP/YOI Elmley:

Governor Nigel Foote

Dr. Colin Morris & Anne Hopkinson

All the staff who helped make the filming possible

The inspiring Learner Voice Reps, Learning Champions and Learning Mentors

Catch 21 Productions: Alex Sergeant, Henry Scriven & Jonathan Argent

HMP Wymott:

Vilma Smith-Yates, Catherine Homer & Martyn McGonagle

The enthusiastic Student Council members

All the staff involved in the Student Council

HMYOI Feltham

Debbie Cousins, Leanne Forde-Nassey & Ruth McIntyre

Elaine Mander, Basil Tyson & June Marriot

The Student Council members

The learners who contributed to the focus groups

All the staff who completed the survey

HMP/YOI Holloway

Mark Welsh

The dedicated Learner Forum members

All the staff involved in the learner forum

HMP Pentonville

Eamon Dowling

The hard working 7 Pathways Learner Reps

All the staff involved in the Reps initiative

HMP Wandsworth

Louise Ysart

Claire Willis

The dedicated 7 Pathways Learner Reps

All the staff involved in the Reps initiative

HMYOI Aylesbury

User Voice staff

Governor Kevin Leggett

The inspiring young people on the Prison Council

All the staff involved in the Prison Council

More than Just a Prisoner Film

Media Trust

Will Francome & Mark Pizzey

Chris Streeks, Eve McDougall, Frankie Owens & Chris

All the staff at HMP Ford who made the filming possible

Seb Klier

Others:

NUS: Ben Kinross

MoJ: George Barrow, Debbie Kirby & Richard Wood

NIACE: Dr. Peter Lavender

Ofsted: Jen Walters

LSIS: Geraldine Burns & Joanne Lewis

A4E: Sally Wentworth-James

The Manchester College: Penny Askew and Pat Walker

OCN: Mark Sutton

PET: Rod Clark, Clare Taylor, John Lister &
Stephanie Ransome



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