

PET podcast written, presented and produced by Andrie Morris
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Higher Aims, Further Goals: part 4

Twenty Five Years of Prisoners Education Trust:
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Presenter: Andrie Morris

Contributors:

James Dixon: former Treasurer, Prisoners Education Trust

Lady Elizabeth Andrew, OBE: former Chair, Prisoners Education Trust

Jenny Talbot, OBE: Director of *Care not Custody* programme, Prison Reform Trust

Lloyd: PET-funded ex-prisoner

John Samuels, QC: President, Prisoners Education Trust

JAMES DIXON:

We were so small in the early days, we knew there was an awful lot to be done.

Hello, I'm James Dixon. I was the honorary treasurer of PET from 1996 until 2002.

Now at that time – the figure has increased significantly since then – the cost of keeping a male prisoner in prison was in the region of about twenty seven thousand pounds a year.

ELIZABETH ANDREW:

I always used the common sense arguments which still apply.

PRESENTER:

Lady Elizabeth Andrew, OBE.

ELIZABETH ANDREW:

The average cost of a PET grant is still round about two hundred and fifty pounds.

JAMES DIXON:

On top of that, if you can keep people out of prison, there's going to be less crime, less victims of crime, fewer police are needed, the number of people going through the courts is going to reduce, if costs of crime can come down, it's a win-win situation.

ELIZABETH ANDREW:

And for two hundred and fifty pounds we can prove that a lot of people will take the opportunity to better themselves, to give themselves more confidence to face life when they get out.

PRESENTER:

Jenny Talbot.

JENNY TALBOT:

The Prisoner Education Trust perform a really valuable role in the provision of further and higher educational opportunities for prisoners who *are* in prison for a long time and who *do* want to develop and explore and progress in that way. Without PET, I think many prisoners would be denied that opportunity and that would be a tragic loss.

PRESENTER:

I'm meeting another member of PET's alumni.

Lloyd studied a counselling course.

LLOYD:

What they have done for me in relation to that course, that has definitely opened up my whole idea of peer to peer support and things like that so I kind of enjoyed that side of it and I'd never read so much actually until then, so when it came it was just a point of as soon as the door was locked up at night, that was when I would start until I'd finished what I wanted to do that night.

PRESENTER:

Books and materials generously offered by prison staff supplemented Lloyd's studies. Smarter use of prison resources would he says, show a real commitment to rehabilitation.

LLOYD:

See if you could kind of say, get a wing where you knew everybody wanted to go on education, everybody was interested in improving their lives, making their lives better when they leave prison, that would be probably the most productive place in London, or wherever that might be.

The prison governor in Brixton was brilliant with me; he saw that I wanted to make a change and I had a lot of people, staff on the wing as well that were exactly the same view so I kinda got a load of help. But it's the resources that kind of hinder what can be done and prevent actually better work from being done in the prison education system.

JOHN SAMUELS:

PET gives grants between two thousand and two and a half thousand grants every year and for the most part, those who receive those grants complete their courses and take a huge amount from them.

PRESENTER:

President of Prisoners Education Trust, His Honour, John Samuels, QC.

JOHN SAMUELS:

That over 25 years represents opportunities not only to change all those lives but to reduce the number of victims of crime. There's been a huge amount of concern recently in relation to the impact of prisoners not being able to access books and writing materials. Rightly so, because this is not a privilege, this is an entitlement in terms of civilisation.

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