

Day, Harley, Fowles, Georgia, McElhone, Gerard and Ewin, Robert (2019) How innovation contributes to a prison culture of rehabilitation: the student experience. In: Learning & Teaching Fest 2019, 3 July 2019, University of Cumbria, Carlisle, UK. (Unpublished)

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Innovation and Contributing to a Prison Culture of Rehabilitation: the Student Experience

Ged McElhone, Harley Day, Georgia Fowles and Rob Ewin

Introducing Learning Together

- Our Learning Together Learning Community involves University of Cumbria students and HMP Haverigg students learning and working together
- We learn from each other through dialogue, discussion, debate, and collaborative working
- UoC and HMP students work in partnership to complete assignments, which are based on current course content
- At introductory level we consider a “case study” and work with visiting professionals
- At undergraduate level we consider issues such as prison life, criminal justice, restorative justice
- At Master’s level we work on the design of ethically informed rehabilitation interventions

Core Values of the Learning Together Network

Potential	Nurturing talent wherever it is found.
Progression	Providing routes for our learners to reach their potential and challenging structures and practices that limits this.
Participation	Collaborating with our students and with each other.
Praxis	Acting in theoretically informed ways that shape and change the world and our knowledge, and feeding new knowledge back into our action.

Focus on Progression and Participation

- **Progression :**
- The aim being to challenge both individual potential and structures, institutional and/or personal; the programme introduces learners to our community that for many of our colleagues present challenges
- **Participation :**
- Working alongside those who may have had some involvement in the determination of guilt and sentencing, form a central tenet of our learning. Challenging these concerns directly opens many doors

Rob Ewin



Georgia and Harley



Why did we do Learning Together?

- To push our boundaries, challenge ourselves outwith our comfort zone
- Diverse learning environment- independence and more responsibility
- Unique learning opportunity which is rarely available- going into a prison setting
- Ability to interact with people we would not have the opportunity to meet elsewhere
- To test theory and opinions of others and hopefully prove them wrong

Why did our colleagues take part?

- Biscuits and cake
- A day off from being a “prisoner”
- To learn and give them a sense of purpose
- To broaden their opportunities when they are released

What did we learn during this module?

- Not to believe the media and opinions of others
- To understand that being in prison does not make anyone less of a person, everyone makes mistakes just some are bigger than others
- More support is needed – 'are we really free upon release?'
- Social identity- prison head

What did our colleagues learn?

- Confidence
- That not everybody is going to judge them
- That they are human beings and people value them and what they have been through
- That their thoughts and opinions matter
- That two very different groups of people can work together in harmony

How are we going to use our experience?

- Educate others- to make people aware that our colleagues at Haverigg will be released into our society and therefore rehabilitation, forgiveness and acceptance is necessary in order for them to go on to complete fulfilling lives
- Masters in forensic psychology- mentor
- Master in counselling and psychotherapy- learnt to be more non-judgemental and bring out the best in people

How are our colleagues going to use their experience?

- Gained credits towards a university degree which many have discussed about applying upon release
- More open to discussion and become accountable for their mistakes in order for them to move forward and make better decisions
- Gives them an opportunity to talk about learning together in job interviews
- Confidence that they can do better in the future and are able to continue with their education and give them the belief to do so

Contributing to Rehabilitation

- Experiencing humanist, as opposed to humanitarian engagement
- Through the eyes of our students and their experiences on the Learning Together course, learning has been described as offering 'the transformational potential of opportunities for meaningful encounters that create a sense of individual, social and institutional connectedness and togetherness
- By connecting with others through Learning Together, students connected with themselves in new ways and reshaped ideas they previously held about each other and themselves and their roles in society. These connections and realisations opened up a sense of belonging within broadened social spaces in which new futures could be forged

(Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016)

What Next?

- Exploration of Community Provisions of Learning Together
- Increasing Engagement and Participation
- Continue to contribute to 'social and institutional transformation'
- Introducing, and challenging barriers to introducing technology to our learning environment
- Bringing the 'Inside, out'

- Thank you for your time today, if there are any questions we would be happy to answer them