Involve, Improve, Inspire: Evaluation of a Learner Voice programme piloted in eight prisons to develop rehabilitative cultures.

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1. Executive Summary

Introduction

This report is based on a study that was part of a 12 month pilot, using action research, training sessions and on-going support to front line staff in eight prisons. The project aimed to facilitate the growth of a ‘rehabilitative culture’ by training staff about Learner Voice principles and activities. NOMS commissioning intentions (2014) describes a Rehabilitative Culture as one in which ‘There is a sense of purpose in relation to rehabilitation, desistance, and progression through a sentence which is shared and understood by all who work with offenders. All who work with offenders consistently demonstrate behaviours and attitudes that support rehabilitation and desistance’.

This project focused on defining, measuring and improving the ‘learning culture’ of the prisons, as an important part of a broader ‘rehabilitative culture’, through Learner Voice. Learner Voice is a means of enabling participation and developing a culture which is learner-centred (Rudd, 2006). The Ladder of Engagement (LSIS, 2012) below illustrates different degrees of involvement with learners.

This project used co-production and in doing so encouraged prisons to work at higher levels which involves ‘reframing roles and relationships between users and professionals’ (McCulloch (2015) Eight prisons were selected to reflect the broad array of functions, populations and management styles of prisons across England and Wales as well as different education providers. The research team also requested that NOMS select prisons that were felt to lie on different parts of a learning culture spectrum, for example as identified by Ofsted inspection reports.

Research Aims and Objectives

The study aimed to answer the following central research question: How effective is the co-design and development of a learning culture using Learner Voice activities which particularly support the engagement of hard to reach prisoners in the development of a rehabilitative culture and engagement with rehabilitation in eight English prisons?

The aims were:

- To encourage staff and prisoners to work together to enhance the learning culture in eight prisons
To encourage hard to reach prisoners to engage with learning opportunities in prison
To investigate ‘what works’ in setting up learner voice initiatives in different establishments

The Intervention: Learner Voice and Co-production

NOMS (2014) identified that in developing a rehabilitative culture simple staff behaviours ‘such as pro-social attitudes, perspective taking, agency, problem solving, recognising strengths and conflict resolution’ are important. Rudd (2006) describes Learner Voice as being about ‘considering the perspectives and ideas of learners, respecting what everyone has to say, taking risks, sharing, listening, engaging and working together in partnership’. The project therefore included a ‘light touch’ intervention consisting of one training session designed to up-skill staff as to how Learner Voice can support a learning culture and develop confidence in working together with prisoners. There were then two follow up sessions, including prisoner learners, where staff and prisoners were helped to co-produce an initiative to engage ‘hard to reach’ learners and improve the learning culture.

Each prison chose and developed their own initiative co-produced by staff from different departments together with prisoners over a 4-6 month period. Initiatives included: a Learner Council, Prisoner Information Desks, mentors and champions to encourage ‘hard to reach’ learners into work or education, a student newspaper and an education department being rebranded into a College. It was intended that staff across the prison, learners and potential learners would become involved in promoting and shaping learning opportunities to improve the learning culture through a diffusion of pro-social attitudes, behaviours and new practices (Rogers, 1962). As Inderbitzin (2012) describes: ‘the power of education is the most vital tool we have to encourage change within the individuals in prisons and to begin to transform the larger culture of the institution’.

The project design built upon PETs earlier Learner Voice toolkit ‘Involve, Improve, Inspire’ (2013). The project aimed to fill in gaps in knowledge as limited research is available on the effectiveness of Learner Voice / co-production initiatives within prison settings and in particular their impact on the learning culture. McCulloch (2015) argues that ‘we should develop a relevant, grounded and resilient understanding of what co-production might mean in the justice context’ which requires ‘experimental co-productive pilots in which relationships, capacities and practices can grow’.

Defining and measuring ‘Learning Culture’

This study was the first to attempt to define, measure and improve the learning culture of prisons. Learning Culture was defined by six conceptual dimensions: Empowering, Aspirational, Safe, Engaging/Relevant, Inclusive and Changing Lives.

This study used a multiple baseline research design and qualitative and quantitative tools to evaluate the effectiveness of individual projects in cultivating a learning culture. Tools included a baseline and follow up questionnaire for staff and prisoners, telephone interviews and observations from all sessions, feedback from training participants and focus groups with prisoner participants.

Hard to reach

Hard to reach was not specifically defined in the training session as it is not clearly defined in the literature. In the literature hard to reach can refer to ‘NEET’, someone not in education, training or employment, or can be more narrowly defined as being actively
resistant to education or ‘service resistant’ (Doherty et al. 2004). It was noted that research by the Ministry of Justice (Hopkins, 2012) found that only one in ten prisoners thought that ‘learning was not for people like me’, indicating that in fact in general prisoners are mostly open to the idea of learning. Wilson (2001) argues that ‘It is important to put more effort and creativity in reaching these groups’. Wilson also highlights that: ‘people could be hard to reach because they think the council does not care about them, does not listen or even is irrelevant to them’. The training session asked participants to focus on co-producing initiatives that used creative Learner Voice activities with a particular focus on engaging ‘hard to reach’ prisoners into education. As a ‘light touch’ intervention it was left to the participants to interpret the brief.

Results and interpretation

Evaluation forms completed by those attending the training sessions and follow up workshops indicted that staff felt:

- The project was effective in building on existing provision in the prison
- Aims of the project were clearly communicated and embraced
- Practical, actionable and ‘owned’ outcomes from the sessions were important
- The creative and reflective space for cross-departmental sharing of ideas and experiences was positive
- Prisoner involvement was valued
- It would have been beneficial to have more prison officers present

Qualitative evidence suggested that the intervention led to improvements in a number of ways:

- A catalyst and space for discussion
- External scrutiny provided motivation
- Challenge to aim higher and do more

The prisoners involved said the benefits of the project were:

- Feeling listened to
- Feeling positive about being a part of change
- Seeing benefits in prisoner-staff relationships

The results indicate that the intervention was successful in supporting the development of Learner Voice activities and a learning culture in some of the prisons:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prison</th>
<th>Number of dimensions improved (with statistical significance)</th>
<th>Cluster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prison two</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 ‘Visionaries &amp; Enthusiasts’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison eight</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison five</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 ‘Mainstream Adopters’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison one</td>
<td>2 (both staff)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison three</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison six</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 ‘Resisters’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison seven</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison four</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Throughout the document the following notion is used: † <0.1; * < 0.05; ** < 0.01; *** < 0.001
The overall results for the prisons placed the eight prisons into three broad clusters:

**Cluster One, ‘Visionaries & Enthusiasts’:** included prisons where quantitative findings for prisoners were statistically significant and qualitative evidence demonstrated that progress had been made. (Prisons two, five and eight)

**Cluster Two, ‘Mainstream Adopters’:** included prisons where quantitative findings for prisoners were not statistically significant but where qualitative evidence suggested that progress had been made. (Prisons one and three)

**Cluster Three, ‘Resisters’:** included prisons where quantitative results for prisoners were not statistically significant and where qualitative evidence suggested limited or no progress had been made. (Prisons four, six and seven)

Figure 1: Changes in dimension scores (mean difference) for prisoner surveys

![Graph showing changes in dimension scores for prisoner surveys]

Figure 2: Changes in dimension scores (mean difference) for staff surveys

![Graph showing changes in dimension scores for staff surveys]
Empowering: Statistically significant increases in the mean score for the Empowering dimension at prison five and prison eight (both in Cluster One) together with qualitative evidence highlighted that these prisons had effectively built on existing structures within the prison that were being run by responsible prisoners.

Inclusive: The results obtained from the prisoner survey revealed an increase in the mean dimension score for prisons two and eight (Cluster One). The results for staff show significant increases again for prison two (Cluster One) and a weakly significant increase for prison one (Cluster Two).

Aspirational: The prisoner results reveal that there was only one increase in dimension mean score for Aspirational at prison two (Cluster One) that was weakly significant. However, the staff data revealed a statistically significant increase in mean scores at prison one (Cluster Two).

Engaging / Relevant: The prisoner results reveal three statistically significant increases in dimension mean scores; prison two, five and eight (Cluster One). The staff results revealed one significant increase for prison two (Cluster One).

Safe: It intended to measure the extent to which each prison was an environment where learning was delivered in ‘safe spaces’, where prisoners feel comfortable (both physically and emotionally). Unfortunately, the reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha = α) for this dimension did not meet acceptable levels of internal consistency.2

Changing Lives: The prisoner sample was asked an additional four questions about the role of staff in rehabilitation and changing their lives. At the end of the project, positive increases in the prisoners evaluations of the role of education staff in improving their lives was seen in four prisons; prisons five and eight (Cluster one) and prisons one and three (Cluster two). In prison eight this increase was found to be statistically significant.

Enabling characteristics:

This project used Rogers (1962) ‘diffusion of innovations’ theory as a conceptual paradigm for culture change. He predicts that for culture change to occur this depends on different characteristics of individuals and organisations. In examining ‘what works’ the overall findings led to the conclusion that Learner Voice / co-production activities have the potential to support the improvement of a learning culture providing prisons have the following enabling characteristics;

- good levels of staff involvement and engagement

Including strong senior management support for Learner Voice and willingness from prison staff across the whole prison to involve and meaningfully engage with prisoners.

- good levels of prisoner involvement and engagement

Meaningful engagement at higher levels of the participation ladder.

- effective communication systems

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2 It was suggested that item q5 ‘In this prison learning most often takes place in a traditional classroom environment’ should be removed from this dimension, however, after this was done the Cronbach’s alphas were still far below conventional levels of acceptability.
Effective channels of communication amongst and across departments and levels of hierarchy reflecting both horizontal (peer to peer) and vertical (hierarchical) networks.

Prisons in Cluster One demonstrated good levels of the conditions above, whilst those prisons in Cluster Three did not. Prisons in Cluster Two demonstrated some of these conditions and may have, with a longer time period, been able to move into Cluster One.

‘Hard to reach’ prisoners

There was not sufficient time to tackle the methodological problems of trying to define and quantifiably measure the impact of the Learner Voice activities on ‘hard to reach’ prisoners and therefore no quantitative data were able to be produced on this aspect of the study. However some qualitative evidence was found about successfully engaging ‘hard to reach’ prisoners into education and work, particularly at prison three where they introduced wing-based ‘Skills Champions’, one of whom said:

‘I just wanted to update you on the project we started with your help. The Employment and Skills Support mentor team we set up works great. Six inmates and numerous staff are involved and we have weekly meetings....in the first week we managed to bring 33 people into work and education, the second week 47 so it’s starting to work really fine’

Also at prison eight where they used peer mentors to support the work of the National Careers Service and reach ‘resistant’ prisoners, one staff member noted;

‘Prisoners listen to prisoners, they don’t listen to staff. So it is a case of, you know, I can sit here and tell them about how great education is every day of the week, but if they don’t want to do it, they’re not going to listen to me’

Limitations

Staff sample sizes: Throughout this study a large amount of quantitative data was obtained with almost 1200 completed prisoner questionnaires collected throughout the project. However, in some cases the sample sizes were relatively small, particularly in relation to the staff surveys.

Lack of engagement from prison officers: 29.72% of baseline staff survey responses and 31.05% of end of project survey responses were from prison officers (see Appendix J, Table B). It was particularly difficult to engage prison officers and encourage them to complete surveys in all the prisons, which may have affected representativeness. Only 10% of the staff who engaged in the training sessions and follow up sessions were uniformed staff. This was disappointing given the importance of wing officers in influencing the prison culture. Staff participants saw the value in engaging with officers ‘To encourage a unified attitude/belief in education’ and ‘to spread the word on the wing’. Where it did happen, it had a positive impact: ‘when I first entered prison I didn’t like officers, a year ago I wouldn’t have been sat at the table. They’re the people that lock you up, but they listened to everything we said today and hopefully we can work with them to make [prison three] a better place’ (Prisoner, prison three).

Time: The time constraints of the project also meant there was not sufficient time to follow all of the projects into implementation phase. Positive findings were recorded for some prisons but with a longer period of time, more changes may have been found. Additional time would also have allowed an extra focus on defining and quantifying the impact on engaging ‘hard to reach’ prisoners.

Recommendations See Recommendations Chapter.
2. Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature concerning the four key concepts included in the research question.

1) Rehabilitation

1.1 Rehabilitation and desistance theory

Defining rehabilitation is not straightforward as the concept is not fixed. Rehabilitation can be understood as a general objective or goal, and also as a process or set of practices (Rotman, 1990). A model of rehabilitation that has gained influence in the last two decades is that of desistance theory. In the desistance literature several themes have been identified as being important including: re-biography, developing strong relationships, agency, social capital and finding purpose (Maruna 2001, MoJ, 2013). Developing and maintaining motivation and hope are key aspects of the desistance process. Emphasis is also placed upon identifying strengths and developing these through positive relationships with practitioners (Moffatt, 2014).

1.2 Education as rehabilitation

Within many prison systems, education is advocated as one of the key elements in the process of change and transformation (Wright, 2008). Education, training and employment form one of NOMS ‘seven pathways’ (NOMS, 2009) to resettlement back in society.

There is an evidence base for the impact of education on reducing reoffending:

- Research carried out by the Ministry of Justice (2013) shows that: prisoners who reported having a qualification were 15% less likely to be reconvicted in the year after release from custody than those having no qualifications.
- The one-year proven re-offending rate for 3,085 offenders who received a grant through the Prisoners’ Education Trust (2014) for distance learning courses or arts materials was over a quarter lower than a matched control group of similar offenders (19% compared with 26%).
- A meta-analysis (Davis et al, 2013) found there was a reduction in re-offending of 13 percentage points for those who participated in correctional education programmes in the USA compared to those who did not.

The role of prison education provision is seen as foremost to address the academic deficits of prisoners. The Ministry of Justice found that 47% of prisoners reported having no qualifications, compared with 15% of the general population (Hopkins, 2012). Recent statistics published by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS, 2015) based on the results of 74,300 prisoners assessed on entering prison since August 2014, show:

- 46% of people entering the prison system have literacy skills no higher than those broadly expected of an 11 year old child. This is three times more than the 15% of people with similar skills levels in the adult population generally. 52% of those assessed have the equivalent capability in numeracy which compares with 49% of the general public.
- The statistics also show that 46% of newly assessed prisoners have Level 1 and Level 2 literacy skills, (GCSE equivalent) which compares to 85% of the general population. In contrast, 39.8% of prisoners assessed had the equivalent level of numeracy skills compared with 50% of the general population.
Also, almost a third (23,550) of those prisoners assessed self-reported having a learning difficulty or disability.

Employment is a protective factor highlighted by the Ministry of Justice (Hopkins, 2012):

- For custodial sentences of less than one year, the proven one year reoffending rate was 9.4 percentage points lower for those who found P45 employment than those that didn’t.
- For sentences longer than a year, the one-year reoffending rate was 5.6 percentage points lower.

The Ministry of Justice (2013) found that ‘evidence suggests that steady employment – particularly if it offers a sense of achievement, satisfaction or mastery, can support offenders in stopping offending’. There are also broader benefits to education. These include resilience to cope with prison life and avoid ‘prisonisation’ (Clemmer, 1940, Nichols, 2013). Education can become a coping strategy (Hughes, 2012). Other benefits include improvements to mental health and well-being (Chevalier and Feinstein, 2006). For arts-based learning NOMS (2013) found improved mental health and behaviour. Inderbitzin (2012) describes prisons as ‘places of hope and transformative learning’. In an appreciative inquiry of education in prisons, she finds that:

‘prisons may seem designed to strip inhabitants of their humanity, but some individuals discover new hope and strength during their incarceration...education acts as one important lifeline...they may never be able to erase past transgressions but can work to build new skills and hope to leave a legacy other than pain and loss’.

2. Culture
2.1 Prison Culture

Culture is defined as ‘The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society’ and the ‘attitudes and behaviour characteristic of a particular social group’ (Oxford Dictionary, 2015). Most research on prison culture has focused on decency, respect, authority and power, and in particular the importance of relationships with staff in the formation of an organisational culture. For example Hulley et al. (2012) identify two types of respect; respect as consideration i.e. being civil and courteous such as using their name or saying good morning; and respect as esteem i.e. being individually recognised, being listened to, being effective and ‘getting things done’. The second type of respect was less common, but was highly regarded by prisoners where it existed (Butler and Drake, 2007). Liebling found that respect was significantly positively correlated with relationships, trust, support and fairness (2004). To feel respected, prisoners need their emotional and interpersonal needs to be recognised by staff, but they also need their practical needs to be taken seriously. Both aspects are important for legitimacy.

Liebling (2011) has proposed that the moral social climate and quality of prison life is ‘enacted and embodied by the attitudes and conduct of prison officers’. Sennett describes authority as ‘a bond between people who are unequal’ (1980). He therefore highlights that ‘good uses of authority allow for a reflection’. Norris & Norris (1993) describe that like prison staff, good policing can; ‘only be systematically developed if the organisation creates the ethical space to allow officers to critically reflect on practice’. The workshops in this project offered a space for reflection. Liebling (2011) argues that staff professionalism or legitimate practices lie at the heart of prison life and that the role of ‘talk’, time and relational work in making authority legitimate is ‘under-conceptualised and undervalued’ in prison life.
2.2 Rehabilitative culture

Commissioning Intention 1 (NOMS, 2014)

‘Enhance public protection and ensure a safe, decent environment and rehabilitative culture. Protecting the public, reducing reoffending and the delivery of the sentences of the court are NOMS’ primary objectives. Providing a safe and decent delivery environment is fundamental to achieving these outcomes. It is also an essential foundation for building a supportive and rehabilitative culture that motivates and enables offenders to make positive changes in their lives. This intention focuses on the active development of an environment which is safe, secure and decent, and one which assists offenders towards rehabilitation while ultimately ensuring that the public is protected. This requires a culture where authority is exercised confidently, consistently and fairly in order to build trust and improve safety’.

The above statement in the commissioning intentions highlights that a large part of building a rehabilitative culture is the quality of relationships between prisoners and staff. NOMS (2014) have identified that simple staff behaviours can increase the quality of engagement ‘such as pro-social attitudes, perspective taking, agency, problem solving, recognising strengths and conflict resolution’. NOMS describe a rehabilitative culture as one in which ‘There is a sense of purpose in relation to rehabilitation, desistance, and progression through a sentence which is shared and understood by all who work with offenders. All who work with offenders consistently demonstrate behaviours and attitudes that support rehabilitation and desistance’.

NOMS have defined ways in which promoting desistance and reducing risk can be promoted through staff attitudes and behaviours. Those particularly relevant to this project and the training provided include:

- Convey hope and optimism that change is possible
- Build strong relationships that demonstrate genuine care
- Enable offenders to set and work towards goals for changing their lives
- Ensure staff actively listen
- Provide a variety of resettlement and training services

2.3 Learning culture

Given that learning is an important part of rehabilitation, it therefore follows that a learning culture is an important part of a rehabilitative culture. A culture of learning is also important to develop across the whole prison. The Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA, 2013) found that in many prisons learning is felt to be the remit of just the education department. Braggins and Talbot (2005) argue that ‘the idea that education is a place to take prisoners to, where they will spend time in classrooms, is firmly rooted in the organisational structure and culture’. In prison it is particularly important to break down this silo approach, as many prisoners had negative experiences of school and fear entering a traditional classroom space. 42% of prisoners reported having been permanently excluded from school (Hopkins, 2012). Ofsted found that ‘few prisons had effective procedures for ensuring that those with the greatest need took up the provision’ (Ofsted, 2014).

It is therefore important that learning opportunities are available and encouraged in all parts of the prison. Part of the purpose of this project is to help develop a whole-prison approach to education. Braggins and Talbot (2005) who researched the involvement of prison officers in supporting prisoner education recommended that prisoners’ learning should be an integral part of the common purpose of the institution, communicated to all
involved and that promotion of learning should be covered in initial training, professional development and appraisal for officers.

Inderbitzen (2012) identifies that as individuals engaged in education ‘grow and change’, the culture of the prison may slowly change too. She predicts that ‘as the critical mass of inmate students grows, the institution also slowly begins to change’. She says ‘the power of education is the most vital tool we have to encourage change within the individuals in prisons and to begin to transform the larger culture of the institution’.

The Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA) carried out extensive consultation and roundtables culminating in their report ‘Smart Rehabilitation’ (Champion, 2013). They found that to be effective, education in prison needed to be underpinned and driven by five key values: Inclusive, Engaging, Aspirational, Safe and Empowering. Over half (58%) of prisons inspected in 2013/14 were judged as ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ for learning and skills provision. None were judged as ‘outstanding’. This indicates that there is work to be done to improve the quality of prison education and the culture of learning in prisons.

2.4 Changing culture

This project focuses on building a culture in prisons to change the ideas, customs, behaviour and attitudes of the prisons towards enabling and supporting rehabilitation. Prisons are organisations made up of individuals; staff and prisoners. They also have systems and processes that help define how the organisation is run. In thinking about how to change the culture of an organisation, the ‘diffusion of innovations’ theory seeks to explain how, why and at what rate new ideas (‘innovations’) spread through and change cultures (Rogers, 1962). This project has used the theory as a conceptual paradigm for culture change.

Rogers explains that diffusion tends to begin with recognising a problem or need. In this case, the need to develop a learning culture and to engage ‘hard to reach’ prisoners in learning. Roger argues that when new ideas are diffused and adopted, social change occurs. The four main elements which influence the spread of a new idea are the innovation itself, communication channels, time and the social system.

Innovation is defined as an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or organisation. Someone may have known about an innovation for some time but not yet developed a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward it. For example staff may have known about the concept of Learner Voice or co-production, or prisoners may have known about education opportunities in prison, but may have had an unfavourable attitude to it. Rogers suggested the following characteristics of an innovation will affect the rate of diffusion:

1. **Relative advantage**: economic, social prestige, convenience and satisfaction.
2. **Compatibility**: how consistent the new idea is with the existing values and norms.
3. **Complexity**: the degree to which it is perceived as difficult to understand or use.
4. **Trialability**: the degree to which the innovation can be experimented with.
5. **Observability**: the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible.

Communication channels

Rogers found that interpersonal channels are most effective in persuading an individual to adopt a new idea, especially if two or more individuals who are near-peers. This is because more effective communication occurs when two individuals are homophilious i.e.
they share common meanings, a mutual subcultural language and are alike in personal and social characteristics’. Rogers observes that traditionally, most communication of innovations happens between individuals who are heterophilus, which is ineffective because ‘they simply do not talk the same language’, such as between staff and prisoners. He describes that ‘horizontal networks’ are therefore the main mechanism through which innovations spread: ‘At the heart of the diffusion process is modelling and imitation’. Therefore the role of learners in communicating messages to their peers is likely to be influential in developing a learning culture.

**Time**

The rate of adoption (time taken for the innovation to diffuse) follows an S-shaped curve with diffusion ‘taking off’ at about 15-20%. However there will be variations in the slope due to the time taken to diffuse the innovation. He found there were five categories of adopters: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Therefore it could be expected that different prisons will adopt a learning culture at different rates.

The social system

A social system is made up of patterned arrangements of units in a system; both formal and informal structures (interpersonal networks or ‘cliques’). Norms are established behaviour patterns and serve as a guide or standard for members of a social system. An important factor affecting the adoption rate of any innovation is its compatibility with the values, beliefs, and past experiences of the social system. Rogers highlights the structural characteristics which impact diffusion of innovation in organisations:

- **Centralisation** - the degree to which power and control in a system are concentrated in the hands of relatively few individuals.
- **Interconnectedness** - the degree to which the units in a social system are linked by interpersonal networks. Higher interconnectedness means ideas can flow more easily and rapidly.
- **Organisational slack** - the degree of uncommitted resources available for innovation.

Building on the Rogers theory of diffusion, other academic works and their own research, the Behavioural Insights Team have designed a model for encouraging the adoption of particular behaviours called EAST (Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely) (Behavioural Insights Team, 2012), which has also been built into the design of this project. The four key principles are:
Make it Easy: By harnessing the power of defaults and simplifying messages.

Make it Attractive: By attracting attention, e.g. through the use of images, colour or personalisation.

Make it Social: By using the power of networks and encouraging people to make a commitment to others, e.g. by showing that most people perform the desired behaviour.

Make it Timely: By prompting people when they are likely to be most receptive and encouraging them to consider the immediate costs and benefits.

3. Service User Involvement

Clinks (2011) define Service User Involvement (SUI) as ‘the process by which the people using a service become involved in the planning, development and delivery of that service to make changes and improvements’. McCulloch (2015) observes that in other public service provision there has ‘emerged a shift towards more participatory, personalised, self-directed and co-productive public services’. Following the Strangeways prison riots in the early 1990s, The Woolf Report highlighted the importance of listening to prisoners’ concerns and how this could lead to a more stable environment (Solomon & Edgar, 2004). Woolf said:

‘[prisoners] should be able to contribute to and be informed of the way things are run. This is a matter of common sense as well as of justice. If prisoners have a greater understanding of what is happening to them in prison and why, they are less likely to be aggrieved and become disaffected. This should, in turn, improve relations between staff and prisoners’ (Woolf, 1991).

The report led to the development of different forums, including; prisoner councils as well as committees on issues such as race relations, suicide prevention and older prisoners. The Woolf Report was followed ten years later by a report titled ‘The Responsible Prisoner’ (2001) produced by former prison governor Stephen Pryor. He argued that prison unnecessarily takes away responsibility from prisoners and invited the prison service to change this situation, which would lead to people being equipped to deal with responsibility much better on release, thus aiding their rehabilitation.

Clinks (2011) found ‘Over recent years, there have been efforts in the CJS to promote and develop the involvement of offenders in the services with which they engage’:

- 84% of prisons have prison-wide consultations in the form of committees or councils
- 20% have an elected prison council
- 86% run focus groups
- 96% have prisoner diversity representatives.

Clinks (2011) also highlight that ‘desistance theory supports the view that playing an active role in one’s community and taking on a measure of responsibility can assist in the offender journey away from crime’. McCulloch (2015) highlights the difference between formal compliance versus substantive compliance. Substantive compliance is ‘a person’s active and meaningful engagement, evidenced by positive attitude and engagement and internalised decision and capacity to desist from criminal activity’. One of the aims of learner voice is to promote substantive engagement with education and learning as part of the desistance process.
3.1 Learner Voice

Service User Involvement in the education sector is often referred to as ‘Learner Voice’. Rudd et al. (2006) describe Learner Voice as ‘developing a culture and processes whereby learners are consulted and proactively engaged with shaping their own educational experiences’. Learner Voice is about moving to a more learner-focused or learner-centred model of education. This means learners, and importantly prisoners not currently engaged in learning, having an input into defining what, where, when and how they learn. This ‘sharing of power’ with learners can be controversial, particularly in a prison environment where prisoner autonomy and agency is greatly diminished. However Rudd et al. (2006) respond to this by clarifying the definition further;

‘Learner Voice is not about learners shouting to be heard, nor is it teachers giving over all of their power 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’.

Currently there is little research available on the effectiveness of Learner Voice initiatives within a prison environment, making this study timely and needed. However, research carried out in the wider education sector lists a range of reasons for investing in Learner Voice. Fielding (2004) suggests that using Learner Voice will encourage learners to feel that their views are taken seriously, which makes them feel more respected. Hargreaves (2004) identifies a range of benefits for institutions embedding Learner Voice including; deeper engagement with learning, better relationships between learners and staff and greater responsibility amongst learners.

PET (2013) published a Learner Voice toolkit specifically for prisons to assist officers and education staff with an interest in improving education and learning opportunities by providing information, advice and ideas for effective ways of introducing Learner Voice into prison establishments. In developing the toolkit PET visited eight prisons that were engaged in a variety of Learner Voice activities, with different population types, in order to identify good practice. PET found there was no ‘one size fits all’ approach to Learner Voice. When on these visits, speaking to staff and prisoners, PET found anecdotal evidence of benefits to prisoner learners including:

- Feeling like their views are taken more seriously
- Feeling more respected
- More inclined to reflect and discuss their learning
- Raising self esteem, personal development and developing confidence
- Developing transferable skills such as diplomacy, communication, facilitation, advocacy, leadership, listening and customer service
- More engagement and participation
- Increased wellbeing among prisoners with emotional / mental health problems.

After the launch of the toolkit, PET was invited by The Manchester College, to run a training session with their Learner Voice development group. After the session, their Director of Learning Support said;

“Participation and Learner Voice is important to us because it addresses those aspects of learning that are about working with other people that are about tolerance, about recognition of diversity, about expression, about articulation, about being able to make your voice heard, about democratic participation, and about analytical and critical thinking”.

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As well as benefits for the individuals taking part, the purpose of Learner Voice is to improve the quality of education provided and engagement with education (PET, 2011). PET found that that Learner Voice helps education staff:

- Review the curriculum and delivery of learning
- Promote learning on the wings and engage non-learners
- Develop a ‘two-way information flow’
- Improve teaching and learning by giving an opportunity for feedback
- Help learners come up with new ideas and solutions
- Improve numbers coming to the education department by identifying and resolving barriers to education
- Diffuses tension
- Improves prisoner-staff relations
- Gets prisoner and staff ‘buy-in’ for changes.

3.2 Co-design / co-production


LSIS described ‘genuine’ Learner Voice as on 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 voice heard, to affect outcomes and bring about change”.

PET published two reports in a series titled ‘Brain Cells’ (Champion 2012; Taylor 2014) which questioned prisoners about their engagement in Learner Voice activities as part of a survey included in Inside Time newspaper. Several hundred prisoners responded to each of the bi-annual surveys. Although not a representative sample, positive findings were made in relation to Learner Voice over time, for example; only a third of prisoners said they had completed a survey in 2012, however by 2014 over half had done this. In 2012 only a quarter of prisoners had given feedback on a specific course or activity, but in 2014 over half (57%) had done this. There had also been an increase in participation in learner forums from 3% in 2012 to 12% in 2014. Although positive, some respondents felt that although they were informed and consulted, they were not empowered to influence change or participate meaningfully in Learner Voice activities. For example one response said; “They do surveys with prisoners but never take board anything that is said, they just
run the same courses year after year, it is time to change”. This project encourages prisons to develop Learner Voice activities at the highest levels of the engagement/participation ladder by having staff from different departments co-design those activities with prisoners. This is also called ‘co-production’.

McCulloch (2015) argues that effective provision through co-production ‘depends as much on the knowledge, assets, action and commitment of service users as much as professionals’. She has found it ‘requires a reframing of the role of and relationships between users and professionals’ and ‘entails the redistribution of power within these groups’. McCulloch describes co-production as ‘the liberation and mobilisation of users from passive recipients of services to active agents’. However she is clear to highlight the difficulties in establishing co-production in a criminal justice setting. She says ‘Progressing a model of practice rooted in respect for persons, devolved power, collaboration, reciprocity, risk taking and shared decision making is far from straight forward’.

The barriers include;
- Existing cultures, structures and resource frameworks
- A need to reconsider issues of communication, engagement, authority and power
- The embryonic nature of existing knowledge about co-production in justice settings
- The pressures and particularities of the justice context.

However McCulloch describes co-production as having ‘transformative potential’ and invites more research ‘to build on these promising beginnings towards a credible and resilient platform for change’. In terms of next steps in developing that understanding, McCulloch makes the following recommendations:

- Co-production should be advanced in a spirit of collaborative, experimental and iterative inquiry
- There is no blueprint in co-production and no standard way of doing things. It is about establishing a new set of connections and working out how we go
- There is a need to experiment with co-production - talking, listening and experimenting is key in a process of collaborative and experimental inquiry
- We should develop a relevant, grounded and resilient understanding of what co-production might mean in the justice context
- This will require investment in programmes of research and experimental co-productive pilots in which relationships, capacities and practices can grow and take shape without funders demanding too soon that they ‘work’.

McCulloch understands that ‘this is a big ask’ and is far from straight forward, but argues that it is an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of what matters in individual and real world journeys of compliance, progression, recovery and change-outcomes. This project is therefore a timely opportunity to add to the knowledge base about co-production in prison settings, in the experimental and collaborative spirit which McCulloch suggests, but with a mind to the potential barriers and resistance with which the innovation may at first be received. In ‘Building a Rehabilitation Culture’ the RSA found that a key element of an ‘enabled environment’ includes the role of active citizenship (peer-led, peer-supported and representative council work’ (O’Brien et al, 2014)

4. ‘Hard to reach’

Brackertz (2007) states that there is ‘a lack of clarity about what exactly is meant by ‘hard to reach’”, highlighting that the term is employed inconsistently. In the service context hard to reach often refers to the ‘service resistant’ (Doherty et al. 2004). Brackertz (2007) argues that the problem with using the term ‘hard to reach’ is that it
‘implies a homogeneity within distinct groups, which does not necessarily exist’. The other danger with this term is that it can be stigmatising in itself. Freimuth and Mettger (1990) offer an illustrative summary of prejudices: ‘Hard-to-reach audiences have been called obstinate, recalcitrant, chronically uninformed, disadvantaged, have-not, illiterate, malfunctional, and information poor’. Sim (2014) identifies that ‘hard to reach’ is frequently interchangeable with equally contested terms such as ‘at risk’, ‘vulnerable’, ‘socially excluded’ and ‘NEET’ (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

Simmons and Thompson (2011) argue that, in spite of its shortcomings, the term NEET ‘provides a reference point from which to critique inequality and, for most young people, being outside education and employment is not only a consequence of poverty and disadvantage, but increases the likelihood of more sustained social exclusion’. There is what The University College Union (UCU) have described as a ‘scarring effect’ associated with being NEET, especially for those who spend substantial periods of time outside education and the labour market (Scarpetta et al. 2010). It is for this reason that engaging this group is a focus of this project. In the context of this project ‘hard to reach’ was defined as not engaged in education, training, work or other learning activity.

It is worth noting however that research by the Ministry of Justice (Hopkins, 2012) found that only one in ten prisoners thought that ‘learning was not for people like me’, indicating that in fact in general prisoners are mostly open to the idea of learning. Wilson (2001) argues that ‘It is important to put more effort and creativity in reaching these groups’. Wilson also highlights that: ‘attitudinal aspects are a contributing factor. For example, people could be hard to reach because they think the council does not care about them, does not listen or even is irrelevant to them’. Learner Voice activities are therefore a means of listening to their needs.

The Nuffield Review (2007) established the ‘Engaging Youth Enquiry’ which found that the NEETs group was very heterogeneous. Most did not conform to the media stereotype. Common factors were that they were likely to suffer from economic and social disadvantage; to have low levels of attainment; and to have been turned off by the education system, so that they typically saw themselves as failures. The inquiry, and other similar research, found the following important in engaging ‘NEETs’:

**Context:** Provision for NEET young people frequently focuses too much on the content of courses, when it needs to place more emphasis on the context. Simmons et al (2014) also found that ‘It is necessary to think about the quality and purpose of the activity in which a young person is engaged’.

**Relationships:** Evaluations of programmes for NEET young people have consistently indicated that the quality of the relationship between young people and support staff is a significant factor in the effectiveness of interventions (Spielhofer et al. 2009). Establishing a relationship based on trust and respect between personal advisers and young people was also highlighted as a key factor.

**Involving young people themselves:** Young people themselves are heralded as key partners. This supports ‘word of mouth’ recruitment, which was identified as the best form of recruitment onto NEET programmes.

Although this research relates to young people, it was felt the recommendations could also be applied to adults who were not engaged in education, training or employment. This project design incorporated the Nuffield Review findings by focusing on learner voice, peer to peer communication and building relationships of trust between staff and prisoners.
2. Methodology

This study was a 12 month pilot project using action research to give training sessions and on-going support to front line staff in eight prisons around Learner Voice principles and activities. Working with staff and prisoners, it aimed to measure and facilitate the growth of a ‘learning culture’, as one aspect of a broader ‘rehabilitative culture’. Through these methods, it was intended that learners and potential learners would become involved in shaping learning opportunities and co-design activities with staff to engage more prisoners into learning and that this would positively impact the learning culture of the prison.

The project included an intervention which was made up of an initial training session and two follow up sessions designed to up-skill the staff participants in how Learner Voice can support a learning culture. The project design built upon an approach developed by Prisoners’ Education Trust in partnership with an experienced Learner Voice consultant in 2012/13. This approach formed the basis of ‘Involve, Improve, Inspire’, the Learner Voice Toolkit and films which were used in the training.

The current study evaluated the effectiveness of the project in cultivating a learning culture by using a multiple baseline research design including both qualitative and quantitative tools. These tools included a baseline questionnaire for staff and prisoners, observations of the training sessions, feedback forms from training participants, telephone interviews with staff participants and focus group observations from initial sessions. These were followed by observations of the subsequent second and third sessions, feedback from training participants and focus groups with participants and finally a follow up survey for prisoners and staff.

Research Question

How effective is the co-design and development of a learning culture using Learner Voice activities which particularly support the engagement of hard to reach prisoners in the development of a rehabilitative culture and engagement with rehabilitation in eight English prisons?

Aims:

- To encourage staff and prisoners to work together to enhance the learning culture in eight prisons
- To encourage hard to reach prisoners to engage with learning opportunities in prison
- To investigate ‘what works’ in setting up learner voice initiatives in different establishments

Objectives:

- To up-skill a team of staff in the use of Learner Voice activities through sharing knowledge and best practice
- To explore the existing Learner Voice activities in each prison
- To create a space where staff and prisoners come together to share ideas
- To support the implementation of these ideas into the development of prison-led Learner Voice initiatives in each prison
- To explore effective partnership working (with prisoners, across departments and with external providers) in expanding a learning culture throughout these prisons
- To establish a network of support for prisons developing Learner Voice
- To share prisons’ experiences, hurdles and good practice and promote the further development of Learner Voice initiatives.
Eight prisons were selected to reflect the broad array of functions, populations and management styles of prisons across England and Wales as well as different OLASS providers. The research team also requested that NOMS select prisons that were felt to lie on different parts of a learning culture spectrum, for example as identified by Ofsted inspection reports.

**The intervention**

The intervention consisted of an initial training session in each prison followed by two follow up sessions. Throughout the programme, the facilitator supported the design and implementation of a Learner Voice activity, developed in collaboration with staff and prisoners.

Each prison received an email explaining the purpose, structure and requirements of the project (Appendix A). A central aim of the training was to promote cross-departmental working in the promotion of a learning culture. As such each prison was requested to invite to the first session: Head of Reducing Reoffending*, Head of Learning and Skills*, Education Manager*, Teachers, National Careers Service, Offender Management Unit, Probation, Healthcare, Gym, Workshop, Wing officers, Probation/YOT and Voluntary Sector organisations. (*It was essential that these members of staff attended the training sessions to ensure the project involved input from senior management staff). The training was developed to require relatively small external resource and so develop sustainable activities, which would continue once the pilot had ended.

**Session One**

Session one was a whole day training session, facilitated by a Learner Voice trainer (see Appendix B for Powerpoint presentation). A variety of interactive teaching methods were employed throughout the day. The morning session consisted of; exploring the concepts which frame the project (Learner Voice, hard to reach learners and rehabilitative cultures), the benefits of adopting learner voice practices, discussion on existing learner voice activities in the prison and sharing good practice. The afternoon session was dedicated to creating an action plan for the Learner Voice activity that was to be developed throughout the course of the training period.

**Session two**

The second session took place approximately two months after session one. Efforts were made to maintain the same running order as the first session to allow each prison the same amount of time between sessions, however this was not always possible and so some sites had less time between sessions. This session was half a day long and more informal than session one. Participants from the first session were required to be present and each prison was requested to invite between two and six prisoners. One key aim of this session was to track the progress against the action plan developed at the first meeting. The session was designed in conjunction with the lead contact for each prison through phone and email communication and was jointly led by the facilitator and the project lead in each establishment. Prisoner participants were invited, to reflect the needs of the prisoners and provide feedback on the initial action plan. Through facilitated group discussions, the action plan was developed further.

**Session three**

Led by the project lead for each prison and supported by the facilitator, session three was designed to be an event which launched the Learner Voice initiative, allowed for reflection on achievements and finished with discussions for future development.
Ongoing support
Throughout the training period ongoing support was offered to the prisons by way of email; prisons were able to request resources, advice and guidance. Each prison was also contacted between sessions by the research team and the facilitator to ensure that they had everything they needed for the project to develop. An email network was also developed for the lead prison contacts to promote the sharing of good practice and experiences between the research sites throughout the project. Two regional seminars were also organised at the end of the project for the prisons to share their experiences.

Intervention evaluation and practitioner reflexivity

The implementation of the training was assessed through observations and participant evaluation forms. This was to distinguish between any theory failure and implementation failure in the findings.

Observations

A researcher was present in every session to make observations using an observation tool. To ensure that different researchers were using the tool in the same manner, the initial training sessions in the first four prisons had two researchers present to establish consistency in approach. The researcher(s) took an ‘observer as participant role’ (Foster, 1996) including; interacting with participants but not taking an established role in the group, whilst not overtly resisting invited participation and maintaining a friendly and professional manner by introducing themselves and their role at the beginning of the session. A structured approach was initially adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative observations. The aim of more structured observation is to produce accurate quantitative data on particular pre-specified observable behaviours or patterns of interaction (see Appendix C). These behaviours were measured to determine the level of engagement participants had towards the training. This was supplemented by unstructured observations of the quality of the facilitation, measured partly against the aims of each session, to determine the success of the training programme. The observation tool was initially piloted at a prisoner meeting after which minor alterations were made to streamline the tool. The researchers practiced continuous monitoring of and reflection on the research process and the researcher role throughout the project. As a result, amendments were made to the observation strategy, which included a stronger emphasis on the qualitative elements of the observation tool as this more appropriately captured the nuanced behavioural changes and reception of the intervention than a focus on the more quantitative elements of the tool.

Evaluation Feedback Forms

Confidential feedback forms were constructed for each participant to complete at the end of each session. These forms were designed to capture data on participant perception of the training itself, their self-reported development of learning of Learner Voice and to establish the level of engagement of participants between sessions (Appendix D).

Practitioner reflexivity

Following each session, the facilitator and researchers would reflect on the sessions. Areas for improvement were discussed and amendments made. Although there were no major changes to the content of the sessions, alterations to the structure and timings were made which streamlined the facilitation. These methods allowed for an assessment on the implementation of the intervention. The following section outlines the methods of evaluation used to assess its success in meeting the wider aims of the project.
The Evaluation

Research design

This project employed a multiple baseline research design to investigate whether a change in learning culture occurred in the different prison populations involved in the study. According to Hawkins et al. (2007), like randomised controlled trials (RCTs), the multiple baseline design can demonstrate that a change in behaviour or culture has occurred, the change is a result of the intervention and the change is significant. They also highlight the practical advantages of this style of research design such as requiring fewer population groups and communities acting as their own controls. Using this design, interventions and data collection was staggered across time and intervention populations. Both qualitative and quantitative evaluation tools were used to triangulate and strengthen the results.

Baseline and follow up questionnaires

A questionnaire was developed using a structure adopted through the well established Measuring Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) and Staff Quality of Life (SQL) questionnaires. Building upon the theoretical development framework developed by the Prisoner Learning Alliance (2013) report ‘Smart Rehabilitation’, conceptual dimensions were created which reflected the dimensions of an effective Learning Culture; Empowering, Inclusive, Aspirational, Engaging/Relevant and Safe. Questions for both staff and prisoners were developed to measure these dimensions, with an additional dimension of ‘Changing Lives’ developed for the prisoner questionnaire. Questionnaires also included qualitative questions which invited respondents to reflect further on the culture of their prison and their experiences of the learning environment (see Appendix E).

Questionnaire Administration and Sampling Strategy

The baseline questionnaire was distributed the day prior to session one in each prison. This was either collected the following day or could be sent back in the freepost envelope given out with the survey. The administration and sampling strategy was informed by the MQPL and SQL strategies. For each prison, 200 prisoner questionnaires (printed on white) and 100 staff questionnaires (printed on blue) were taken. Each one was attached to a sealable freepost envelope addressed to PET. The researchers were escorted around the prison by an escort who was assigned to us by the prison. This varied from our lead contact for the prison escorting us around to an Officer Support Grade (OSG). The sampling was designed to create as representative a prison-wide sample as possible. In order for it to be as random as possible, every third cell on a wing was targeted. However, due to the regime in each prison the location of prisoners varied. We therefore also attempted to get to as many places of work and education as possible. During the first three visits, three researchers attended to administer and collect the questionnaires. This method was successful in maintaining good return rates. After this, due to resource constraints, only two researchers attended the prison to administer questionnaires, relying more on postal returns, which saw a drop in the return rates.

The sampling strategy for staff consisted of visiting every wing office and administering questionnaires to as many members of staff as possible in each place of work and education. We also aimed to administer questionnaires to some administrative staff and senior management staff where possible. Due to the restrictions placed upon us by the regime, incidents within the prison and our escorts, who gave us varied access to the prison, it was necessary to be flexible with the sampling strategy. This process was
replicated for the final data collection day. This occurred the day after the final session (session 3).

The follow up surveys were designed to capture if there had been any changes (increases or decreases) to the scores in each dimension from the baseline surveys. The time in between distributing the two surveys was between four to six months (depending on where each prison came in the order of the visits). The idea was that culture change would result from the effects of a slow diffusion of attitudes and new practices from the intervention, which involved both staff and prisoners working co-productively over a 4-6 month period. Whilst this is a relatively short period of time to achieve prison wide culture change, it was felt that it could be sufficient time to produce statistically significant increases in some of the dimensions.

Telephone Interviews with staff participants

Telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of participants at times between session one and two and follow up interviews were conducted after session three. A random selection of four session attendees per prison were contacted for the initial interview and the same interviewees were contacted for the follow up interviews. The response rate for interviews was relatively small; six interviews with a range of staff from five prisons at time one and seven interviews with a range of staff at time two. Unfortunately no officers were available for interview, therefore all interview participants were either education, industries or senior management staff. To allow for the attrition rate between time one and two, further participants were contacted for interviews at time two. Each interview was recorded to a Dictaphone, later transcribed and deleted. The interviews used a focused semi-structured approach and were designed to allow each interviewee the opportunity to talk about their opinions around the themes of learner voice and rehabilitative cultures (Appendix F). Interviews ran between 30-60 minutes.

The interviews employed an appreciative inquiry (AI) methodology, allowing staff to focus on the best aspects of their work and the role and the conditions in which they function especially well (Bushe, 1995). The basic process of AI is to begin with a grounded observation of the ‘best of what is’, then through vision and logic collaboratively articulate ‘what might be’ (ibid). This approach aims to shift staff from an exclusive focus on ‘deficits and deficiencies’ to ‘accomplishments and achievements’ (Elliot, 1999). AI method is, in its pure form, action research (Elliott, 1999). It seeks to transform organisations, to encourage a spirit of hope and growth, and to lead towards constructive change. The appreciative researcher starts from a construction of empathy and supportive interest, rather than from judgement or condemnation (Vickers, 1968). However, it was in some cases difficult to get some interviewees into appreciative mode and needed some guiding by the interviewer by reframing their responses. The idea was to get the interviewee to shift from a critical, deficiency focused account back into identifying the conditions that need to be met for life to be as good as it can be.

Critics of AI point out that transformational change will not occur from AI unless it addresses problems of real concern to organisational members (Bushe, 2010). Furthermore, as AI focuses on the best of what is, it may ignore justified criticisms of this approach. It is deliberately partial and therefore on its own, incomplete, hence why it was used alongside observation and survey methods.

Focus Groups of prisoner participants
Focus groups are useful for seeing interaction and therefore establishing beliefs, attitudes, experiences and feelings in ways that other forms of evaluation can miss (Gibbs 1997). They can help to establish why people feel or think the way that they do (Litosselitti 2007, 18). They are also helpful in establishing the ‘shared understanding of everyday life’ and examining the culture of particular groups (ibid). They are also appropriate for obtaining information from less literate communities and therefore a useful and inclusive tool. Focus groups were used in this research evaluation to examine the experiences, motivations and future hopes of the prisoner participants in the project (see Appendix G). They were held without a member of prison or education staff present and so formed an important supplementary tool to triangulate with observational data from the sessions, written evaluations and survey data. The focus groups were held at the end of our involvement with the project, and so were designed to examine and promote reflection on the prisoners’ experiences throughout the project and promote creative thinking about how they envisage it continuing. The amount of data that can come from a focus group can be significant. It is not merely the words of the participants being analysed, but the interactions between the group. A recording device was used, when possible; however there was not sufficient time in the project schedule to transcribe the recordings. Notes and recordings were referred to during the analysis phase of the research where particular issues were raised so that prisoner voice maintained significance in the research.

Regional Seminars

All the prisons were invited to send representatives to attend an end of project regional seminar, one in the North of England and one in the South West. These were an opportunity to feed back on the process, meet the other prisons who had taken part and share their experiences and knowledge and form part of the evaluation process. All representatives were education of Senior Management Team staff (such as Heads of Reducing Reoffending). Unfortunately no prison officer participants attended.

Analytical Approach

Quantitative questionnaire data

The responses to each item in the questionnaire were coded (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Mean scores for each dimension were then produced, with a higher score indicating an overall more positive result for that dimension. A threshold of 3.00 was adopted, so that scores over this were generally viewed as a positive score. The impact of the Learner Voice intervention was analysed by looking at the difference in the dimension mean scores before and after the workshops sessions using t-tests. All analyses were conducted in statistical packages SPSS and STATA.

Qualitative questionnaire data

Qualitative data was analysed using a content analysis approach. This approach was used as it is a flexible method for analysing text data which can be adopted to meet the research needs across many different data sets (Hseih and Shannon, 2005). As the majority of this qualitative data was in response to specific questions (excluding wider ‘any other comments’ sections), coding was developed through emerging themes in each response. The number of themes was not assigned in advance in order to more accurately reflect the data available. Questionnaires had been inputted into SPSS before being transferred into Microsoft Excel. Data was split prison by prison and themes were developed for each
prison site. Comments that most effectively expressed a particular theme were noted for the report discussion.

**Interview and focus group data**

Interviews were listened to and then transcribed. Through this process, emerging themes were drawn out. Attention was given to data that touched upon the overarching dimensions and areas of interest for the research. Some focus groups were not successfully recorded due to technical issues or issues with the prisons, although notes were taken in all groups. Those that were recorded were listened to and broad themes and quotations were taken down relating to the themes of interest. As such a large amount of data was generated through these research practices, in depth analysis was not possible within the timescale of the pilot project. All of the qualitative data could be subject to more rigorous analysis. This would be valuable to conduct in the future.

**Ethics**

There were several ethical considerations relevant to this project. All study procedures were reviewed and approved by the University of Cambridge Research Ethics Committee. None of the prisons are from the high security estate or held young people under sixteen; however, all prisoners may be regarded as vulnerable. The overall sample included individuals with a range of vulnerabilities, such as continued drug use, potential mental health issues and low levels of literacy. However, the content of the questionnaire, interviews and focus groups were not deemed to be of a sensitive nature regarding these issues. Researchers went through the questionnaire individually if a prisoner disclosed illiteracy or other learning difficulties, or it was suspected that such difficulties may exist. This was done away from staff wherever possible to allow for prisoner confidentiality.

The project was overseen and supervised by Dr. Auty of Cambridge University, who was able to advise throughout on any ethical issues that arose. All efforts were made to ensure that the physical, social and psychological wellbeing of individuals participating were not adversely affected. Information about the project was given to all prospective research participants prior to them taking part including; who was undertaking and financing it, why it was being undertaken and how the findings were to be disseminated. Informed consent was gained and participants told that they have the right to withdraw at any time. The anonymity and confidentiality of participants was secured, although it was made clear at the outset that there are limits to this and in some cases, should certain information be shared, confidentiality would need to be overridden and discussed with third parties. All data from the project was stored safely and securely and in a way that maintained the confidentiality and anonymity of research participants. Participants were also informed at the beginning of the research and reminded throughout that the data collected in regards to them would be retained by PET for the duration of the project and for seven years thereafter.

4. **Prison Portraits**

This chapter provides an overview of the activities of each of the eight prisons:

**Prison One:**
Prison One is a male Cat B local prison with an operational capacity of approximately 750. It has a high population churn (with a full population turnover approximately six times per year). The new initiative adopted by prison one was the introduction of Prisoner Information Desks (PIDs) on every wing. These desks were designed to be managed by a
trained prisoner mentor and have information available on the range of opportunities available at the prison, including education, as well as information from agencies who offer support on release. This initiative arose through discussion of the need to have more accessible information for prisoners, particularly when it is their first time in custody.

**Prison Two:**
Prison Two is a closed women’s prison holding around 350 women, the majority of whom are serving short sentences of around 6 weeks. The two main Learner Voice activities were to develop a newsletter written by prisoners for the prisoners and to rebrand the education department as a ‘College’. The newsletter, entitled Prisoner Voice, was the idea of and has been taken forward by a prisoner who attended the second and third session. She is serving a longer sentence and is also studying a journalism course through distance learning. The newsletter is a way of reporting on events and celebrating successes around the prison relating to learning, such as a Toe by Toe celebration event.

Feedback from the prisoners in session two suggested that some of the resistance towards engaging in learning is that education is seen as being too much like school. They felt rebranding the education department as a ‘College’ would send out a positive message to the women that they can expect the same as a College in the community. Staff, including officers, were asked to use the term ‘College’ rather than ‘Education’. The prisoners also highlighted that current promotional materials all featured male prisoners. As part of the rebranding process, the prison and education provider produced new promotional materials, including posters with photographs of the women learners alongside inspirational quotes from the learners about the benefits of the different courses of offer.

**Prison Three:**
Prison Three is a private male Category B local prison. It has an operational capacity of around 1,300. It holds both remand and sentenced prisoners. The participants agreed that they wanted to use this project to target the high numbers of ‘hard to reach’ prisoners not employed or in education. This had been a big issue for the prison for some time. They decided to build upon the good practice brought to the training sessions through equality and diversity prisoner consultation practices and use of mentors. A new ‘Skills Champion’ role was developed. Each department had a Skills Champion e.g. a gym champion, an education champion, a joinery champion etc. These mentors were all involved as participants from the second session and had a high level of ownership over the project.

**Prison Four:**
Prison Four is a male Category D prison with an operational capacity of around 600. As a Cat D prison, the resettlement needs of prisoners were the central priority. The participants were keen to develop the model of the ‘7 Pathways Reps’ which was an example of good practice in the Involve, Improve, Inspire Toolkit. They felt this would allow them to expand the existing orderly system and increase responsibility of the existing roles so that there would be one prisoner representative for each resettlement pathway supported by a staff member. They were to work together to promote the opportunities available for each pathway and feed back highlighted needs from prisoners. The Reps would be identifiable through lanyards and would provide a source of information to prisoners around the prison. This role was still under development by the end of the pilot project timeline. Some staff and prisoners had been identified and meetings were arranged to facilitate further as to how to embed the model into the existing structures at the prison.

**Prison Five:**
Prison Five is a large male Cat B local prison with an operational capacity of around 1200. During the initial session participants identified that there was a problem with prisoner
applications as there was a backlog and this was hindering prisoners accessing information about and securing places on education courses. Therefore to resolve this, the participants wanted to set up Prisoner Information Desks. The system was originally piloted in one of the seven house blocks and was then rolled out into a second. The desks were managed by prisoners who had developed new initiatives for the more effective processing of apps on the wing. They were responsible for discussing issues with prisoners, providing advice and processing applications. On one house block, the responsible prisoner was given an office in the form of a cell. It was hoped that the desks will then be rolled out across the prison.

**Prison Six:**
Prison Six is a closed Cat C adult male and young adult training prison with approximately 760 prisoners. Participants developed an idea of having Learning and Skills Champions. Two types of Champion were constructed; one role was attached to an activity (such as the National Careers Service, industries) and the other was to be based on the wing. The activity Champions were to be mentors and also granted free movement to work across the prison in order to promote them. The wing based Champions were to be a source of more general information and did not require free movement. This was designed to make the role accessible to prisoners who were not promoted to red band status. By the time the project ended, the prison had introduced two Champions to take a role in their Quality Improvement Groups (QIG) to give direct learner feedback. The project also inspired a development in the peer mentoring provision available in the education department, which now allows for an extra week to support the learning support mentors in their new mentoring roles within the classrooms and workplaces. They have also introduced an additional course for learning support mentors. The role of Champions was due to go live shortly, as the structures required to support the system were in place.

**Prison Seven:**
Prison Seven is a category C training prison with around 850 male prisoners. Staff participants in the first session identified that there was no prisoner involvement in the OLASS (Offender Learning and Skills Service) Quality Improvement Group (QIG). Participants highlighted that feedback evaluation forms were collected from prisoners but then not followed up on. Participants felt it was important to have prisoner feedback at the QIG meeting through engagement of some of the different mentors within the prison. It was envisaged that the mentors could speak to other prisoners, ask for their opinions about learning and then feed this into the meeting. At the second session there were four prisoners present at the meeting who were all mentors from different departments who were very keen to be involved. By the end of the pilot project, the prison were still in the process of recruiting the other mentors to be involved in this work with the aim of having 6-8 mentors in attendance at the QIG meeting.

**Prison Eight:**
Prison Eight is a large Category C prison with an operational capacity of about 1000. It has recently rerolled as resettlement prison with changes underway during the research period. The two main initiatives that arose from the project were the development of a Learner Council and a wing based mentor for the National Careers Service (NCS). By the conclusion of the project, three learner council meetings had been held (plus an interim meeting which made up the final session). The meetings were held at the same time every month and had quickly become recognised within the education department. Each class had an elected representative who attends to voice issues. The meetings had a high attendance with seventeen reps present at the final meeting. The session is attended by the Education Manager and other members of the department who are able to attend. Minutes are written up by a member of staff and are used to lead the following meeting. There have been ideas put forward to develop the council model for workshops, as well as including reps from industries into the existing model. The NCS mentor pilot had begun
and the system was developing a positive relationship with staff. There were plans to roll out the mentoring system onto other wings across the prison.

5. Workshop Evaluations

The success of the training sessions in achieving the aims of the project were evaluated through the use of participant feedback forms, session observations and prisoner focus groups. The number of staff and prisoners attending each of the workshops is shown in Table 6.1. The majority of staff participants were; education staff and senior members of prison staff. Less than 10% of overall participants were uniformed prison staff. The level of attrition between sessions one and three for each of the prisons could be an indicator of commitment to the project. However, the number of staff attending a session was not a wholly accurate assessment of staff engagement, as due to the flexible nature of the project, some of the activities adopted did not require a large group of staff to be present.

Table 6.1: Number of staff and prisoners at each workshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prison</th>
<th>Session 1</th>
<th>Session 2</th>
<th>Session 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Prisoners</td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison One</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Two</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Three</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Four</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Five</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Six</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Seven</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Eight</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total n</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff Workshop Evaluation Form Feedback

The staff and prisoners who attended the three workshops were asked to complete an evaluation form immediately afterwards (see Appendix D). The evaluation forms were designed to fulfil two purposes; as the intervention was being piloted, it allowed for the facilitator to have immediate feedback in order to reflect and build upon the delivery of the session. It also gave an overall picture of the progress of the intervention.

Table 6.2: Descriptive data for workshop evaluation at each workshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>1 (n=74)</th>
<th>2 (n=46)</th>
<th>3 (n=30)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>% SA/A*</td>
<td>% SA/A</td>
<td>% SA/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project/session was well organised.</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project/session was well delivered.</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>97.4</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The training is relevant to me.</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The trainer used a range of techniques to accommodate different learning styles.</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have learnt a lot from today’s session.</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good understanding of Learner Voice and Rehabilitative Culture after today’s session.</td>
<td>91.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Sessions are defined as n/a when the sessions that took place did not align to this method of evaluation.
Although positive responses were very high (over 84 percent), only 39.7 percent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement ‘I feel motivated and keen to take forward this area of work’ after session one, suggesting some initial resistance. Positive responses to this statement had more than doubled by the final session. Part of this may be due to only the more motivated individuals participating in the final stages of the project. However, the attrition was not high enough for this to fully explain this increase (see table 6.1 above). It could be that participants felt more motivated to continue this work after the final session than after the first session. This suggests that the intervention was successful in engaging prison staff who had previously held some resistance towards the project in the earlier stages. Observations suggest that this may be due to the nature/format of the later sessions. The first session explored the concepts behind Learner Voice, and it is possible that this was less engaging for some participants. In contrast, in some prisons there had been visible ‘quick wins’ by a later stage which was a motivating force.

**Did the session meet your expectations?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Workshop 1 (n=74)</th>
<th>Workshop 2 (n=46)</th>
<th>Workshop 3 (n=30)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel motivated and keen to take forward this area of work.</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project is relevant to me.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am pleased I was involved in this project</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have learnt a lot from the project</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having prisoner involvement during this session enhanced the session.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* SA/A= Strongly agree/ agree

The responses from staff participants to this question were overall extremely positive, with between 78 percent and 100 percent agreeing that the session had met their expectations. The qualitative responses provided further detail about the elements of the project that participants enjoyed the most and also pointed to some lessons that PET could take from the project to ensure that expectations are clearly met in future sessions:

**a) The project was effective in building on existing provision in the prison**

A central aim of the project was to promote the development of a sustainable initiative that would continue after the project. One central way in which this was achieved was by building upon the existing provision in each prison. The first session allowed the participants to explore the activities that were already being undertaken in the prison.

‘The training session reinforced some of the work already going on here. It will be good to take this forward and I look forward to the evaluation’

Session observations highlighted that bringing together participants from different areas of the prison allowed the sharing of existing practice from across the prison. In one prison, members of the group stated that they had low response rates to feedback questionnaires they had sent out to prisoners. Another staff member from a different team offered the advice that they held regular focus groups with greater success. As a result other participants now incorporate focus groups into their prisoner feedback practice.
In some of the sessions participants said that they felt they already ‘did’ Learner Voice and therefore did not need to do anything more. In the first session the facilitator made the participants aware of the ladder of participation (see Chapter 3) and encouraged them, through discussions and activities, to develop a better understanding of the variety of activities that can constitute Learner Voice and the benefits of higher level engagement with prisoners. This allowed some participants to move away from an initially resistant stance and appreciate that Learner Voice is on a continuum that can always be built upon:

‘It helped to identify how to progress from where we are’

b) Aims of the project were clearly communicated and embraced

Participants reported that they appreciated the clarity of the project aims as well as the information given about the benefits of Learner Voice. Many participants stated that they saw ‘To build better staff-prisoner relations’ as one purpose of the project. Given that the research participants were able to effectively communicate the aims and benefits of the project suggests that the content and style of delivery was well managed in order to be ‘pitched appropriately’.

c) Practical, actionable and ‘owned’ outcomes from the sessions were important

This project was centred on a ‘light touch’ approach with relatively little involvement from the facilitator and external body (PET). The model required immediate action from the participants between sessions to maximise success. Therefore, the first session was tailored around co-developing an action plan for the participants to take forward. This was met with positive feedback from participants:

‘It was pleasing to end up with a realistic plan at the end of the day’

Feedback indicated that it was important that the activities were co-developed (between staff and the facilitator) and not imposed by PET. This was a significant part of the model targeted at ensuring the activities were ‘owned’ by participants and become embedded into the prison. It was also central to the co-design Learner Voice model used throughout the project, so was a useful way to model good practice before prisoner involvement in the second session. Session observations highlighted that those prisons where all or most participants contributed actively to the discussion in the first session, and had a role in developing the final action plan, were more successful in the wider aims of developing a learning culture. For example, during the first session held at one prison there were many good ideas produced by the group, but there appeared to be a divide between participants from different departments. This was also reflected in the evaluation forms:

‘I felt we seized on the improvement objective without exploring fully other ideas identified in the groups’.

This meant that there was less perceived ‘ownership’ of the project by some participants. By contrast in another prison where there was a high level of involvement from staff members in the first session, there was an inclusive atmosphere, characterised by staff members being listened to and positive responses to participant contributions.

Finally, responses to the question on the evaluation form ‘how likely are you to apply learning from the project in your day to day role’ received between 83 percent and 90 percent positive responses (very likely or likely). This high positive response rate was also seen in responses to the question ‘Please outline any actions you intend to take, or changes you intend to make within your prison as a result of the training’:
‘Contribute to agreed action plan’
‘To consult with reps already on House Block’
‘Seek out potential champions ready for next training’
‘Meet with project co-ordinator, agree next steps for next meeting. Contact pathway leads explain approach. Meet with governing governor advise on the project and required actions.’

By isolating specific tasks that could be undertaken towards the wider goal, participants were able to see how they will be involved in moving the project forward.

d) The creative and reflective space for cross-departmental sharing of ideas and experiences was positive

The sessions were designed to provide the space for staff from across different departments to come together to share ideas and experiences. In order for this to reach its maximum potential, it required a creative space where participants were given the time to reflect upon their own practices as well as their colleagues. Throughout the data collection period and in the regional evaluation seminars, held with prison leads after the project, many participants mentioned that there were many time pressures in the prison, so it was often difficult to find the time to reflect on professional practice. Feedback from participants suggested that being able to do this was a key benefit of the structure of the intervention:

‘It gave us a chance to evaluate our ideas and to develop a direction of travel’

This was supported through promoting cross-departmental working. Both staff and prisoner participants referred to the various prison departments regularly working in ‘silos’:

‘The session brought together different groups of people who share an aim but never meet to discuss’

The success of cross-departmental working is closely entwined with nurturing a respectful and inclusive environment that allowed people to feel safe enough to discuss their ideas. This was developed through the sessions using a series of different learning methods and activities, such as ice-breakers.

‘Everyone was able to be honest and open with thoughts and opinions and everyone was respectful of this’

It was important that participants were comfortable working in this way before the introduction of prisoners in the second and third sessions so that they were welcomed positively into the group. The role of the facilitator in supporting this environment is important, although it is also dependant on pre-existing relationships within the prison.

e) Prisoner involvement was valued

The co-development of the Learner Voice activities began with the staff members outlining the initial action plan together before inviting prisoner involvement from the second session onwards (although some prisons had begun the prisoner consultation prior to this). Bringing in the prisoners’ perspectives at an early stage in the development was an important aspect of the model which brought the concepts of Learner Voice into action. This element of the intervention was seen as a key strength by staff participants:
‘Very useful to get early involvement of potential learner champions’
‘Input from prisoners essential and voiced opinions from other areas’

f) Negative responses to ‘did the session meet your expectations?’

The negative responses to the statement ‘did the session meet your expectations?’ largely reflected a lack of preparation by the prison or minimal understanding of what the session was to entail on the part of the staff member:

‘I didn’t have any expectations-only put on at last minute’
‘I was very unsure of what it was about prior to the session so I had no expectations’

These comments reflected the manner in which participants were recruited within the prisons. Despite explanatory literature being circulated to the prison leads prior to the session and communication regarding the dates, availability and expectations; it was clear that in some prisons this was not circulated to attendees.

What level of involvement have you had in this project?

Table 6.4: What level of involvement have you had in this project?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Workshop 2 (n=46)</th>
<th>Workshop 3 (n=30)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What level of involvement have you had in this project?</td>
<td>50.0 31.6 18.4</td>
<td>50.0 31.3 18.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question from the evaluation forms received a mixed response. It was asked in sessions two and three as an indicator of the way that the project was developing outside of the three training sessions. 50% of staff participants reported that they were involved ‘a lot’ between sessions, but 1 in 5 staff participants stated they were involved ‘very little’. This was an important indicator of how the projects developed.

The facilitator

Within the qualitative data from the evaluation forms, there were many comments praising the style of the facilitator and noting that good rapport with the facilitator was key to creating a safe space to reflect and discuss ideas. In response to the question ‘Do you have any comments on today’s session lead?’ typical responses included:

‘Provided a relaxed, inclusive and engaging atmosphere’
‘Knowledgeable, informative of subject’
‘I felt that [the facilitator] had a great deal of passion for the rehabilitation of prisoners, the session felt as though it came from the heart and he really wanted to inspire support staff to do a greater job’

The comments above highlight the importance of having an engaging and knowledgeable facilitator if this intervention was to be rolled out more widely.

Are there any other members of staff who you think would benefit from being involved in the project?
In response to this question 58.3% of staff participants responded that there are other members of staff who would benefit from being involved in the project.

a) Prison Officers

A large number of respondents stated that it would be beneficial to have more prison officers present for the training. It was intended that officers would be invited and participate in the training sessions and was disappointing that only 10% of the staff involved in the training were uniformed. Throughout the research process it was also difficult to engage many officers in the questionnaire data collection. Some of the reasons given by participants for recommending more officers become involved relate to a perceived resistance to the aims of education: ‘Prison officers/wing officers. To encourage a unified attitude/belief in education’. Respondents highlighted that some officers have a unique relationship with prisoners, particularly those who the prisoners first meet when they come into the prison: ‘Induction officers and admissions officers-they are the first point of contact for prisoners’. Further, the activities that many of the prisons adopted were intended to have a prison wide effect. It was seen by some respondents that officers would be most suited to spread the message onto the wings: ‘PCO officers on the wing to promote the project and spread the word on the wing of what we are trying to do’.

b) Senior Management

Some prisons had Senior Management working closely with the project, which appeared helpful in moving the project along in the time available. For example in one prison the governing Governor was supportive throughout and it was clear that the project aims aligned with Senior Management priorities and that these supportive structures had allowed the project participants to progress in meeting its goals. However, this was not the case in all the prisons. Those without senior managers with decision making power attending stated that it would have been beneficial.

What further support would you like going forward?

Throughout the period of the project, prisons were offered continuing support through email and telephone contact with PET and the facilitator. This was taken up by many of the prisons who requested further information, clarification or examples of job descriptions, logos or booklets. There was also an offer of an email group through which prisons were able to communicate with each other about the progress of their projects, although the participants did not take this up. This ongoing support was supplemented by a question in the evaluation form asking what ongoing support participants would like to see going forward. The themes arising from responses to this question are:

a) Continuing to share knowledge and best practice:

Participants in the training and in the evaluation seminars stated that hearing best practice from around the prison estate was particularly helpful:

‘To share knowledge/ideas from other establishments’
‘Sharing of other project developments and best practice’

b) Ongoing support (similar to that given throughout the project):
Most projects were seen through to their launch but some were more developed than others by the end of the pilot. Some staff participants, along with members of a prisoner focus group, stated that they would like to see continuing support:

- ‘Support with ensuring the project continues’
- ‘Support by e-mails, being able to contact them with any issues for advice’

c) More time to develop the projects:

The time constraints for the intervention meant that many respondents requested more time to allow their projects to develop. This was debated during one of the evaluation seminars as some attendees brought attention to the benefits on having to work to a tight time schedule. Referring to the intervention as ‘a kick up the bum’ one participant stated that knowing that an external body would be coming in for a session and evaluate progress was a useful incentive to ensure that objectives were met. Another participant referred to the continuous ‘fire-fighting’ pressures of the prison environment meaning that more innovative work was often a lower priority. It was the short time frame between sessions and the knowledge of the external influence coming into the prison that kept this work ‘at the top of the pile’. It appeared that although the intensive time period from the start and end date of the project was a challenge; it was a challenge that some prisons were able to meet but was not suitable for all of the prisons involved.

d) Continued evaluation:

Building on from the requests for more time, some respondents felt that building external feedback into their future plans would help:

- ‘Review in one year with other prisons?’
- ‘Feedback and guidance on future projects’

Longitudinal follow up research would therefore be a useful way to promote good practice within these prisons, as well as allow them to assess their progress against other sites. It would also allow for changes to be tracked over time.

Prisoner feedback

How much information were you given about the project before this session?

Table 6.5: How much information were you given about the project before the session?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Workshop 2 (n=25)</th>
<th>Workshop 3 (n=28)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much information were you given about the project before this session?</td>
<td>9.1 63.6 27.3</td>
<td>15.0 60.0 25.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less than 10 percent of respondents reported they received ‘a lot’ of information prior to the session. The majority of prisoners stating that they had received ‘some’ information, which may be due to the project being exploratory and many of the staff being unsure about what the sessions would contain in detail. Approximately a quarter of prisoner participants said they received ‘Very little’ information before the session. This is similar for session 2 and session 3 which may reflect that some prisons had little consistency between the prisoner participants between sessions two and three. It also suggests that
some prisons did not communicate effectively with prisoners in the recruitment process prior to their attendance at the sessions. This was observed through some of the sessions where it was clear that prisoner participants did not know why they were there.

**Experiences of working in the sessions**

The qualitative responses from prisoner participants were positive with no negative comments in any of the feedback forms.

**Table 6.6: Descriptive data for workshop evaluation at each workshop**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Workshop 2 (n=25)</th>
<th>Workshop 3 (n=28)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The session was well organised and delivered.</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understood why I was invited to the session.</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of the session was made clear to me.</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am pleased to be involved in the project.</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have learnt a lot from the session.</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good understanding of Learner Voice and Rehabilitative Culture from my involvement in the session.</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel motivated and keen to take forward this area of work.</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* SA/A= Strongly agree/ agree

The themes resulting from this data set demonstrated that the benefits were:

a) **Feeling listened to:**

Prisoner participants reported they felt respected and their views were listened to:

‘I feel like everyone listened to my views and appreciated my honesty. I didn’t feel uncomfortable.’

‘I think it is a good opportunity for prisoners to express their thoughts and concerns’

The observation data from the sessions indicate that some groups were more successful than others at creating a safe space for prisoners.

b) **Feeling positive about being part of a change:**

Working together with staff was popular with prisoner participants. Further, co-developing the activities with staff allowed for a higher level of ownership over the project. It also created a real sense of being part of a change:

‘I am very happy to be able to participate in such a meeting that can be the cause/start of a positive change’.

c) **Seeing benefits in staff-prisoner relationships:**

The potential benefits in staff-prisoner relationship was highlighted by many staff and prisoners involved in the project. With a dialogue happening between staff and prisoners, particularly in the more successful prison sites, prisoner participants identified small changes which could have a large impact for relationships:

‘This will be beneficial for both parties as at the moment the relationship between prisoners and staff is strained because of over asking of simple questions’
This project was a relatively ‘light touch’ intervention. With the first day being led by a facilitator and two follow up sessions led primarily by prison staff, the external resource to run the programme was not hugely intensive. The prisons reported many benefits from their involvement in the project, including the creation of a creative and reflective space for cross-departmental discussion and staff-prisoner co-development of Learner Voice activities. By using a variety of flexible learning activities, the intervention was able to build on existing provision in the prisons in order to promote practical changes in the prison. The feedback data and observations have informed suggestions for future development of the intervention (see Recommendations Chapter). The intervention itself has therefore supported the research aim of establishing ‘what works’.

6. Results

Sample (See Appendix J for Tables A, B & C)

Table A provides information on the number of questionnaires completed in each prison both baseline and end of project. Survey response rates varied widely between the prisons with rates as high as 71 percent and as low as 9 percent in one instance. Response rates for prisoners were almost always higher and in almost all cases, response rates were lower for the end of project survey. Table B provides demographic information on the jobs and grades of staff who responded to the surveys. It shows that nearly 30% of baseline surveys were completed by prison officers, senior officers and PEIs. Just over a quarter was education staff and 43% were other staff. 31.05% of follow up surveys were completed by prison officers. Table C gives information on the number of telephone interviews that were conducted with staff in each of the prisons. These were all with education, industries or Senior Management Team staff, unfortunately no officers responded that they were available for interview. One interview was refused.

Results by conceptual dimensions

This chapter will describe in detail the results obtained from the data collection instruments which aimed to measure learning culture through the conceptual dimensions: Empowering, Aspirational, Inclusive, Engaging/Relevant, Safe and Changing Lives. The project measured learning culture using questions related to these dimensions contained within the staff and prisoner surveys given out at the start and end of the project. The results indicate that the intervention was successful in supporting the development of Learner Voice activities and dimensions of a learning culture in some of the prisons. The overall results for the prisons placed them in three broad clusters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prison</th>
<th>Number of dimensions improved (with statistical significance)</th>
<th>Cluster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prison two</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 ‘Visionaries &amp; Enthusiasts’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison eight</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison five</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison one</td>
<td>2 (both staff)</td>
<td>2 ‘Mainstream Adopters’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison three</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison six</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cluster One ‘visionaries and enthusiasts’ included prisons where quantitative findings for prisoners were statistically significant and qualitative evidence demonstrated that progress had been made. Prisons two, five and eight were in Cluster One.

Cluster Two ‘mainstream adopters’ included prisons where quantitative findings for prisoners were not statistically significant but where qualitative evidence suggested that progress had been made. Prisons one and three were in Cluster Two.

Cluster Three ‘resisters’ included prisons where quantitative results for prisoners were not statistically significant and where qualitative evidence suggested limited or no progress had been made. Prisons four, six and seven were in Cluster Three.

The differences in mean scores (baseline and follow up) for each dimension of learning culture are shown for the prisoner survey data in Figure 1 and for the staff survey data in Figure 2.

**Empowering:** Statistically significant increases in the mean score for the Empowering dimension at prison five and prison eight (both in Cluster One) together with qualitative evidence highlighted that these prisons had effectively built on existing structures within the prison that were being run by responsible prisoners.

**Inclusive:** The results obtained from the prisoner survey revealed an increase in the mean dimension score for prisons two and eight (Cluster One). The results for staff show significant increases again for prison two (Cluster One) and a weakly significant increase for prison one (Cluster Two).

**Aspirational:** The prisoner results reveal that there was only one increase in dimension mean score for Aspirational at prison two (Cluster One) that was weakly significant. However, the staff data revealed a statistically significant increase in mean scores at prison one (Cluster Two).

**Engaging / Relevant:** The prisoner results shown in Table 4.1.1 reveal three statistically significant increases in dimension mean scores; prison two, five and eight (Cluster One). The staff results revealed one significant increase for prison two (Cluster One) in Table 4.1.2.

**Safe:** It intended to measure the extent to which each prison was an environment where learning was delivered in ‘safe spaces’, where prisoners feel comfortable (both physically and emotionally). Unfortunately, the reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha = $\alpha$) for this dimension did not meet acceptable levels of internal consistency.\(^4\)

**Changing Lives:** The prisoner sample was asked an additional four questions about the role of staff in rehabilitation and changing their lives. At the end of the project, positive increases in the prisoners evaluations of the role of education staff in improving their lives was seen in four prisons; prisons five and eight (Cluster one) and prisons one and three (Cluster two) one, three, five and eight. In prison eight this increase was found to be statistically significant.

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\(^4\) It was suggested that item qq5 ‘In this prison learning most often takes place in a traditional classroom environment’ should be removed from this dimension, however, after this was done the Cronbach’s alphas were still far below conventional levels of acceptability.
Figure 1: Changes in dimension scores (mean difference) for prisoner surveys

![Graph showing changes in dimension scores for prisoner surveys.](image1)

Figure 2: Changes in dimension scores (mean difference) for staff surveys

![Graph showing changes in dimension scores for staff surveys.](image2)

Exploring the dimensions of a learning culture

For the full results showing how each dimension was analysed for each prison please see Appendix Q. The following is a short summary of those prisons who were in cluster one ‘Visionaries & Enthusiasts’:

**Empowering** (See Appendix K for figures and tables 1.1.3 and 1.1.4)

‘Seeing the prisoners’ side of it as well, it gives you that bigger picture doesn’t it? It is not just seeing it from a staff perspective or an education perspective or [an education provider] perspective. It is seeing that actually the prisoners are why we are here, so why shouldn’t they have a perspective as well’? (Prison Eight).
Ten questions on the prisoner survey tapped into the dimension Empowering. Table 1.1.3 gives reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha = \( \alpha \))\(^5\) that suggest that the measurement of the Empowering dimension had a high level of internal consistency in every prison. Figure 1.1.1 also gives the mean dimension scores for the Empowering dimension for each of the eight prisons' prisoner survey results.

Statistically significant increases in the mean score for the Empowering dimension at prison five and prison eight (both in Cluster One) together with qualitative evidence highlighted that these prisons had effectively built on existing structures within the prison that were being run by responsible prisoners. Prisoners in the Cluster One prisons were more likely to welcome working with staff. For example at prison two approximately two thirds of respondents (both at baseline and end of project) indicated that they wanted to work together with staff to shape education:

‘I would welcome the opportunity to engage with staff regarding education’
‘Positive - would welcome it, prison officers are keen to support learning’

However some prisoners at made a distinction between education staff and officers:

‘Education staff work well with us prisoners. Unfortunately prison officers don’t have any involvement with us’. [prisoner, prison two]

At prison five in comparison to the baseline survey, a larger number of those responding to the end of project survey reported feeling positively about working together with staff. Again there were mixed responses about education staff compared to wing staff:

‘I have no problem working with staff or officers. Certain officers on my wing I treat with a lot of respect because they do the same which I appreciate and it gives me the incentive to behave and learn’

‘The relationship between prison staff and prisoners is very one sided, a lot of prisoners feel judged by the officers, so there’s no communication or rapport between both parties’

At the first training session at prison five a senior member of staff said:

‘Peer workers and advisors have really flourished over the last couple of years here. We have a culture of asking and responding to feedback but there’s always room for improvement’

Observations from the second and third sessions at prison five which included prisoner mentors, suggest that the project was empowering prisoners. As one senior member of staff involved in the project stated:

‘It’s about developing a working culture, giving them responsibility’

At prison eight one prisoner involved in the project spoke at the final meeting about how the new Learner Council had personally benefited him:

‘Some people sit on the wings and because they are doing nothing they stop caring. I’m being empowered by going to meetings and it gives me something productive to do’

\(^5\)Cronbach’s alpha (\( \alpha \)) is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group and to what extent they "measure the same thing." A reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research situations.
Inclusive (See Appendix L for figures and tables 2.1.1. and 2.1.2)

The second dimension measured by the surveys was Inclusive. This dimension attempted to capture the extent to which staff encouraged a wide range of prisoners to positively engage in some form of learning and celebrated their achievements when they did so. We were also interested in how prisoners and staff saw the role of learner reps; were they inclusive? Was it seen as something to aspire to? And could positions such as learner reps support prisoners’ positive identity change? The scale demonstrated a high level of internal reliability ($\alpha$) in the prisoner sample and lower levels in the staff sample.

The results obtained from the prisoner survey revealed an increase in the mean dimension score for prisons two and eight (Cluster One). The results for staff show significant increases again for prison two (Cluster One) and a weakly significant increase for prison one (Cluster Two). For this dimension, the overall qualitative data showed that prisoners from all eight prisons (even those where significant results had been found) felt similarly about how inclusivity could be improved in each of their prisons. When asked to identify three things that would make each prison a better place for learning (Q52), the most frequently cited responses were:

- a wider range of courses to address different needs
- higher level courses to meet the needs of those at level 2 and above for those serving longer sentences;
- better promotion of education and learning throughout the whole prison (particularly on the wings)
- better pay to encourage people into learning as opposed to work

The statistically significant increase in the inclusive dimension found for both prisoners and staff at prison two were supported by other qualitative data. In an interview, a senior member of staff at prison two spoke about the importance of peer mentors:

‘you can’t underestimate the power of peer mentors…it has been quite a cultural change for the staff - you can’t always tell who are staff and who are prisoners until you get to the gate and they don’t have keys’

Prison two’s overall aim through their Learner Voice project was to make the learning environment more inclusive and attractive to women who have had negative experiences of school. They did this through rebranding their education department as a ‘College’. As part of this process new signs and posters were made. Again the aim was to be more inclusive as previous information and posters had been designed for men rather than women. Speaking to one prisoner involved in the project she said this;

‘I was quite lucky with my education I went to a good school, my parents were supportive of me going to school, I then went onto College, but I know there are a lot of people who didn’t have that opportunity and with [prison two] rebranding their education department it gives everybody a chance to experience College and education that isn’t the same as being a child in school’

There was also support for an inclusive learning culture from the Governor:

‘You change culture in many different ways - one is being clear in who you are. We are a community College. When I visited [the education provider’s] College I thought ‘this feels like a centre of learning’. That is what we wanted here. Professionalising education provision is critical if we’re going to get women to leave prison and not reoffend’

(Governor, prison two)
There was a significant number of women in survey data both baseline and follow up surveys who felt that better incentives, including better pay for prisoners would make education more inclusive and an option for women with less available cash;

‘I think outside learning should be promoted more and wages changed so people who want to do education but have to work as they don’t get private spends. This is unfair as you could change a prisoner’s life with education’

Observations and interviews with prisoners and staff from visits to prison eight gave some support to the positive significant result for the Inclusive dimension. Both prisoners and staff acknowledge that information is often better delivered and received by other prisoner’s peer-to-peer as one staff member noted;

‘Prisoners listen to prisoners, they don’t listen to staff. So it is a case of, you know, I can sit here and tell them about how great education is every day of the week, but if they don’t want to do it, they’re not going to listen to me’

Prison eight set up a Learner Council, however one prisoner participant said ‘a lot of people don’t realise that these meetings take place’. In order to address this and become more inclusive to all prisoners, a mentor associated with the prisoner magazine now publicises the minutes of the meeting so that readers are aware that this is happening within the prison and they can feed into this process.

Aspirational (See Appendix M for figures and tables 3.1.1 and 3.1.2)

The third dimension that our surveys attempted to evaluate was called Aspirational. This dimension investigated the extent to which each prison fostered a culture that encouraged prisoners to imagine a positive future for themselves. It was thought that this was created through the efforts of staff and supported by the work of learner reps. Again, acceptable levels of internal consistency were observed for the survey questions on the prisoner survey and also for the majority of items on the staff survey.

The prisoner results (in Figure 3.1.1) reveal that there was only one increase in dimension mean score for Aspirational at prison two (Cluster One) that was weakly significant. However, the staff data (shown below in Figure 3.1.2) revealed a statistically significant increase in mean scores at prison one (Cluster Two). The combined quantitative and qualitative data showed that it was difficult for prisons to achieve change on the Aspirational dimension. A common theme running through qualitative responses to the survey from prisoners in all prisons was that prison education is in many cases not aspirational in terms of the variety and level of courses on offer or in links to future employment. Many prisoners said that they wanted learning to be more linked to their future goals;

‘I think there should be more courses for us to do, especially ones that will help us back into employment on release!’ (Prisoner, prison two).

Engaging/Relevant (See Appendix N for figures and tables 4.1.1 and 4.1.2)

The fourth dimension that the surveys attempted to measure was called Engaging/Relevant. This dimension attempted to capture the extent to which prisoners were made aware of the learning opportunities available to them by both staff and other learners. It also attempted to measure the extent to which these opportunities were varied, interesting and relevant to the prisoners’ future plans and whether they were able to give feedback. The reliability scores for the prisoner data demonstrated high levels of
internal consistency. Somewhat lower levels were observed for the staff survey data. The prisoner results shown in Table 4.1.1 reveal three statistically significant increases in dimension mean scores; prison two, five and eight (Cluster One). The staff results revealed one significant increase for prison two (Cluster One) in Table 4.1.2.

A common theme from prisoners across all the prisons was that many prisoners did not see learning in their prisons as being engaging or relevant to their future outside of prison:

‘The courses in here bar a couple are all low end grades which are useless for getting good pay jobs, so if a prisoner is released into a low paid job it won’t work, as they are more likely to go back to crime for the moneys’ (Prisoner, prison four).

‘This establishment runs well but could be more focused on the skills needed outside in British economy’ (Prisoner, prison six).

‘The Rail Track is the only thing offered where prisoners I knew left here and got a good job. We need more of this (Prisoner, prison three).

In general prisoners from all prisons wanted a greater variety of courses outside of Maths, English and IT; an availability of higher level learning including access to distance learning and Open University and a greater variety of vocational courses. Whilst the majority of the initiatives had a focus on increasing prisoner awareness of the learning opportunities available, it was beyond the scope of this project to directly influence changes in course curriculums. This may come after the timescale of this project as prisoner views are taken on board more through these Learner Voice initiatives. The long term impact of Learner Voice initiatives on curriculum change and satisfaction with courses on offer, and therefore the Engaging/ Relevant dimension, would be useful to research over a longer period.

In the baseline survey, when asked the question ‘What three things could be done to make this a better place for learning?’ the most prevalent answer from prisoners at prison five was a greater focus on encouragement and general access to information about learning:

‘There is no information noticeable on the wings with regards to any education available’

‘There needs to be more information available regarding just what is on offer, how to apply and details of how to apply and details of how and who provides funding if applicable. Education staff need to engage with inmates on the wings to encourage people with learning’

Some staff responses also highlighted similar concerns and therefore suggesting that work to take forward the PIDs as part of the project is a step in the right direction;

‘I don’t think prisoners receive enough information regarding education or the officers give enough support to prisoners’

Prison two was the only prison to achieve a statistically significant result for staff in the Engaging/ Relevant dimension. There was a highly significant increase for question 33 ‘Information on the learning opportunities often spreads to prisoners by word of mouth from other learners and learner reps’. This is in line with the initiatives taken forward as part of the project namely the re-brand and newsletter with its focus on learners promoting learning opportunities to other prisoners. One staff member said:

‘Education is an important part of this prison’s ‘rehabilitation culture’
At prison eight the strongest statistical increase was seen in the response to the statement: ‘Education staff have encouraged me to have my say on the learning opportunities in this prison’. Observations from the sessions and feedback from the focus groups suggest that the changes resulting from the Learner Council meetings have been well received within the three months of working:

‘Things actually happen as well and you can see things happening’ (prisoner, prison eight).

The observations and focus groups also suggested the potential for the Learner Council to have an impact on the provision of engaging / relevant education available. Discussion arose about the loss of the art and barbering courses, which allowed questions to be answered and issues to be brought up with staff members present. Staff involved in the project also became aware of their need to engage with prisoners more:

‘I think one of the things that I found, not so much in the student council, but when we were walking around with the questionnaires and the amount of prisoners that were saying to me ‘I want to get on to this education class, or I want to do this, or I can’t read or I want to do this’ and I was thinking, actually, if they have been saying this to other people, why has nothing happened? So when we were walking around, and I was taking names and you know, writing things down, and I think it is only when they have this opportunity to say ‘actually, can you do something’ and speak to the right person’ (senior staff member, prison eight).

Safe

There were six questions on the prisoner survey and three questions on the staff survey with which attempted to measure the dimension called Safe. It intended to measure the extent to which each prison was an environment where learning was delivered in ‘safe spaces’, where prisoners feel comfortable (both physically and emotionally). Unfortunately, the reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha = \( \alpha \)) for this dimension did not meet acceptable levels of internal consistency.\(^6\) Although the overall safe dimension could not be measured effectively, some qualitative responses did specifically mention safety issues in response to Q52: ‘What could be done to make this a better place for learning?’ For example, in the end of project survey for prisoners, two responses from two prisons (prison six and three) referred to stopping bullying and having a safer environment whilst a number of prisoners from three prisons (prison one, two and three) mentioned the need for more class discipline.

Changing Lives (See Appendix O for figures and tables 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3 and 5.1.4)

The prisoner sample was asked an additional four questions about the role of staff in rehabilitation and changing their lives.

- Education staff:

At the end of the project, positive increases in the prisoners evaluations of the role of education staff in improving their lives was seen in four prisons; prison one, three, five and eight. In prison eight (Cluster One), this increase was found to be statistically significant. In general, these findings coincide with observations about the progress these prisons had made in their projects and the involvement of education staff within those

\(^6\) It was suggested that item qq5 ‘In this prison learning most often takes place in a traditional classroom environment’ should be removed from this dimension, however, after this was done the Cronbach’s alphas were still far below conventional levels of acceptability.
projects. Many qualitative responses specifically highlighted the important role education staff play in improving lives;

‘Education staff work well with us prisoners’ (Prisoner, prison two)
‘The education staff are amazing’ (Prisoner, prison two).
‘Most of the educational staff are really good and they listen’ (Prisoner, prison eight).
‘The education staff here are brilliant and make every possible effort to encourage learning’ (Prisoner, prison one).

- Gym staff:

The results for the question asking about gym staff revealed non-significant increases in the mean scores of three of the same prisons; prison two and five (Cluster One), prison three (Cluster Two) and also in prison four (Cluster Three). There were only a small number of references to gym staff in qualitative responses to the survey and both quotes below indicate that they would like gym staff to play more of a role;

‘I think that stopping daytime PE, football, tennis, art, badminton etc., is a shame as these are all forms of good learning and education, but apparently governors said no daytime PE and the gym staff say they don’t have resources to provide it’ (Prisoner, prison seven).

Within the delivery of the project gym staff were involved in some of the initial training sessions in all but one of the prisons, but their involvement in taking the project forward and inputting into the shape of it unfortunately appeared to be limited.

- Prison Officers:

The results for the question asking about prison officers’ role in improving lives revealed increases in the mean score for five prisons: prisons two, five and eight (Cluster One), prison three (Cluster Two) and prison six (Cluster Three). The observed difference at prison three was weakly significant. The qualitative data provided a range of opinions and views about officer involvement in prisoners’ lives and how they made a difference. There were some who felt positively about it, for example;

‘I think officers are very good at listening’ (Prisoner, prison eight).

Some prisoners also suggested that they would like more involvement from prison officers and more direct one-to-one support;

‘I think we should go back to having a personal officer so we know who to speak to’ (Prisoner, prison two).

‘Personal officers to have more one to one meetings and show more interest in your curriculum’ (Prisoner, prison seven).

There were also some prisoners who spoke about the lack of prison officer involvement in educational issues;

‘Most of the officers seem like they don’t want to be here, they’re just here to lock us up, they don’t ever talk about education’ (Prisoner, prison two).
'There is a trust issue between staff and inmates. It's always been that way and with staff shortages in this prison, it's hard to engage in an educational level between the two’ (Prisoner, prison six).

However, it was evident from observations throughout the prison visits that the project was in some prisons helping officers and prisoners work together:

‘Today I've joined a group of staff and prisoners to help get other prisoners to work and education...when I first entered prison I didn't like officers, a year ago I wouldn't have been sat at the table. They're the people that lock you up, but they listened to everything we said today and hopefully we can work with them to make [prison three] a better place’ (Prisoner, prison three).

Prison three had experienced some initial hurdles in getting prison officers engaging with the new working practices within the project. As part of the Skills Support Mentor roles to engage with prisoners on all wings, they needed access to wings that they would not normally be allowed onto. Some officers were preventing this from happening and so it was raised as an issue at one of the weekly mentor meetings with education staff members. An education staff member from the project then shadowed the mentors one day, speaking to the officers about the project and the importance of each mentor being allowed access to the different wings and the issue was resolved.

Finally, the results for the question that asked about the role of workshop instructors in improving prisoners’ lives revealed increases in mean scores for four prisons; Prisons one, two, three and seven. None of these were statistically significant. In all of the four prisons where there was an increase in the dimension scores, workshop instructors/managers had some involvement in the project and in the training sessions.

See Appendix P for the staff quality of life (table 7.1.1) and promotion of learning (table 8.1.1) results.

7. Discussion

In this chapter the findings, including the strengths, limitations and implications arising from this research are discussed. Building on the structures that arose through the results chapter, the cluster model which splits the prisons into three groups will be developed and discussed. The characteristics which defined these contrasting groups will be explored in order to unravel the ‘what works and when’ learning from this project.

Revisiting the research questions

*How effective is the co-design and development of a learning culture using Learner Voice activities which particularly support the engagement of hard to reach prisoners in the development of a rehabilitative culture and engagement with rehabilitation in eight English prisons?*

**Aims:**

- To encourage staff and prisoners to work together to enhance the learning culture in eight prisons.
- To encourage hard to reach prisoners to engage with learning opportunities in prison.
- To investigate ‘what works’ in setting up learner voice initiatives in different establishments.
Objectives:
- To explore the existing Learner Voice activities in each prison.
- To up-skill a team of staff in the use of Learner Voice activities through sharing knowledge of these concepts and sharing best practice.
- To create a space where staff and prisoners come together to share ideas.
- To support the implementation of these ideas into the development of prison-led Learner Voice initiatives in each prison.
- To explore effective partnership working (with prisoners, across departments and with external providers) in expanding a learning culture throughout these prisons.
- To establish a network of support for prisons developing Learner Voice activities.
- To share prisons' experiences, hurdles and successes and promote the further development of Learner Voice initiatives.

Did the intervention support the development of a learning culture and how?

The project met the objectives of working with each of the eight prisons in the development and expansion of prison-led Learner Voice initiatives. Seven prisons were visited for the scheduled three sessions, and it was only in one prison that the final session did not take place. The prisons fell within three clusters:

- Cluster 1: Prisons where quantitative findings for prisoners were statistically significant and qualitative evidence demonstrated that progress has been made within the overall project.
- Cluster 2: Prisons where quantitative findings for prisoners were not statistically significant but where qualitative evidence suggests that progress had been made.
- Cluster 3: Prisons where quantitative results for prisoners were not statistically significant and where qualitative evidence suggests limited or no progress had been made within the overall project.

What made the project work?

The results indicate that the intervention was effective in some prisons, whilst in others there were little positive effects and some scores fell. Qualitative evidence suggested that the intervention led to the observed improvements in a number of ways:

- **A catalyst and space for discussion**
  
  The project acted as a catalyst for sparking ideas between participants from different departments by creating a space for discussions to happen which many participants found extremely valuable as highlighted in this quote: ‘in prison you constantly feel you’re responding to pressures...this wasn’t a pressure, this was a spark’ (participant, evaluation seminar).

- **External scrutiny**
  
  Having an outside organisation oversee the project and provide external scrutiny, in most cases, provided motivation to get things done in between sessions and within the timescale of the project. It was the short time frame between sessions and the knowledge of the external influence coming into the prison that kept this work ‘at the top of the pile’ (participant, evaluation seminar).

- **Challenge to aim higher and do more**
The project encouraged prisons to challenge themselves to have higher aspirations and build upon their existing and developing provision in innovative ways. It also enabled them to consider how to move higher up the ladder of participation highlighted in the literature review through the co-production of activities with prisoners and staff: ‘we already had a good sound foundation of mentors - this has taken it to the next level’ (staff participant, evaluation seminar).

**Hard to reach learners**

Hard to reach was not specifically defined in the training session as it is not clearly defined in the literature. In the literature hard to reach can refer to ‘NEET’, someone not in education, training or employment, or can be more narrowly defined as being actively resistant to education or ‘service resistant’ (Doherty et al. 2004). It was noted that research by the Ministry of Justice (Hopkins, 2012) found that only one in ten prisoners thought that ‘learning was not for people like me’, indicating that in general prisoners are mostly open to the idea of learning. Wilson (2001) argues that ‘it is important to put more effort and creativity in reaching these groups’. Wilson also highlights that: ‘people could be hard to reach because they think the council does not care about them, does not listen or even is irrelevant to them’. The training session asked participants to focus on co-producing initiatives that used creative Learner Voice activities with a particular focus on engaging ‘hard to reach’ prisoners into education. As a ‘light touch’ intervention it was left to the participants to interpret the brief.

There was not sufficient time to tackle the methodological problems of trying to define and quantifiably measure the impact of the Learner Voice activities on ‘hard to reach’ prisoners and therefore no quantitative data were able to be produced on this aspect of the study. However some qualitative evidence was found about successfully engaging ‘hard to reach’ prisoners into education and work, particularly at prison three where they introduced wing-based ‘Skills Champions’, one of whom said:

‘I just wanted to update you on the project we started with your help. The Employment and Skills Support mentor team we set up works great. Six inmates and numerous staff are involved and we have weekly meetings....in the first week we managed to bring 33 people into work and education, the second week 47 so it’s starting to work really fine’

Also a prison eight where they used peer mentors to support the work of the National Careers Service and reach ‘resistant’ prisoners, one staff member noted;

‘Prisoners listen to prisoners, they don’t listen to staff. So it is a case of, you know, I can sit here and tell them about how great education is every day of the week, but if they don’t want to do it, they’re not going to listen to me’

Although we observed successes in engaging with more prisoners through greater visibility of prisoner roles in some prisons, it is clear that more could have been done in the workshops to clearly define what was meant by ‘hard to reach’ prisoners and how this was going to be measured and monitored. Although hard to reach was discussed in groups during the first session, this did not necessarily feature directly in the action planning stage. Therefore, more support may be needed at this stage to support prison staff to identify who their ‘hard to reach’ prisoners are, and how to measure engagement levels of these groups and individuals. This could include providing examples of measurement tools and methods for this purpose and case studies of prisons that are successfully engaging with their ‘hard to reach’ groups.
Factors relating to the success in each prison

Enabling conditions:

The three cluster model that emerged from the research findings helps to explain the factors that made this project more or less successful in the eight prisons. The most important elements for success we identified were:

- the levels to which staff were involved and engaged throughout the project;
- the levels to which prisoners were involved and engaged in the project (including how they were recruited);
- the level and quality of communication both within the participant group and the wider prison, including how information about the project was communicated more widely.

The overall findings led to the conclusion that Learner Voice activities have the potential to support the development and advancement of a learning culture providing prisons have the following enabling conditions:

- **Good levels of staff involvement and engagement**

  Including: strong senior management support for Learner Voice work and willingness from prison staff to involve and meaningfully engage prisoners in the process.

- **Good levels of prisoner involvement and engagement**

  Including meaningful engagement at higher levels of the participation ladder

- **Effective communication systems**

  Including effective channels of communication amongst and across departments and levels of hierarchy reflecting the horizontal (peer to peer) and vertical (hierarchical) networks described by Rogers (1962).

Prisons in Cluster One demonstrated good levels of the conditions above, whilst those prisons in Cluster Three did not. Prisons in Cluster Two demonstrated some of these conditions and may have, with a longer time period, been able to move into Cluster One. These conditions will be discussed in more detail later.

If these factors are not present then it will be more difficult to achieve meaningful cultural change. Some prisons are likely to need more intensive support pre-intervention in order to be ready to take part in this work. Furthermore, if the necessary pre-requisites are not present and prisons are not ready, this could risk demotivating both staff and prisoners.

These conditions are explored in more detail relating to each prison in Appendix R, however below is a summary of the conditions found in Cluster One ‘Visionaries & Enthusiasts’:
a) Staff involvement and engagement

For the purposes of clarity it is important to differentiate between the terms involvement and engagement. Whilst both terms may be viewed positively indicating some action, the term involvement often refers to one way communication processes, whereas engagement, according to Pushor (2007) means ‘that the person ‘engaged’ is an integral and essential part of a process, brought into the act because of care and commitment’.

An overarching issue for all prisons was an inability to successfully recruit and engage prison officers in the project. This was raised by many staff and prisoners who said they wanted it to happen and appeared to have a significant impact on the success of projects in individual prisons and the project as a whole. A key consideration is just how much culture change can be achieved without engaging the key people in prison who largely create that culture; the uniformed staff. The extent to which educational staff, alongside other senior staff, are able to affect long lasting culture change is likely to be limited if they do not have support from uniformed staff.

The overall findings for Cluster One ‘Visionaries & Enthusiasts’ indicated that there were high levels of meaningful engagement and consistency throughout the project from staff involved and good senior management support outside of the project. In all three Cluster One prisons the lead contacts were highly committed and engaged with the project, all three assisting as an escort for the data collection both at baseline and end of project. These prisons all took real ownership of their projects being well prepared for sessions two and three. It was clear that internal meetings had taken place in between all the sessions with staff appearing engaged and enthusiastic about taking their projects forward. Clear agendas had been prepared with efforts to be inclusive. For example; specific action points at prison five applied to different staff members from across departments, with staff appearing to be committed to working together to create a successful project. At prison eight the project lead member of staff was very engaged in the overall project and worked closely with a senior member of education staff to set up the Learner Council.

b) Prisoner involvement and engagement

The prisoners researchers spoke to throughout indicated a keen interest in being involved and engaged in the project. Barriers to prisoner involvement, where they existed, often stemmed from staff resistance and not from lack of motivation from prisoners themselves. This supports what McCulloch (2015) identifies; that co-production has ‘transformative potential’, but may be difficult to establish in criminal justice settings and met with resistance by staff initially. However, we do see evidence of prisons in the higher clusters achieving meaningful engagement. In all Cluster One prisons the numbers of prisoners involved and engaged throughout the course of the project increased. Observations at the sessions in all these prisons indicated that prisoners’ ideas were welcomed, they were listened to and treated with respect.

At prison two there were relatively low numbers of prisoners involved in the actual sessions but the quality of the engagement was good. Through the rebranding process, more women became involved in the project. At the end of the project seminar the prison organised, women from around the prison in various mentoring roles were involved in hosting the event and speaking about their experiences.

Prison five was able to make good use of established peer-led structures in the prison and build upon them for the purposes of this project:
‘prisoner engagement is a key priority for [prison five] so the notion of building on our progress as part of the Rehabilitative cultures project was an attractive one’ (staff participant)

Peer mentors from the Engagement Centre were brought into discussions about the direction of the project at the second session. They were recruited into and engaged in the project through acting as trainers for the new PID workers on the desks. Through the Engagement Centre and this project, peer mentors are now distributed across the prison and the pay structure ensures they are the highest earners in the prison, reflecting the value the prison place on prisoner engagement.

At prison eight two prisoner learner reps were welcomed into the second session. They suggested that the prisoner magazine could be used to disseminate information from the monthly Learner Council meetings to the wider prison population:

‘I think if people start seeing little things happen it will change attitudes a lot’ (prisoner participant)

As the Learner Council developed throughout the project there was a consistency in the prisoners engaged, however the nature of the council was that new members would join. Prisoner engagement could be improved to higher levels on the participation ladder by giving prisoners greater responsibility for chairing, taking and distributing minutes.

c) Communication

The overall success of projects correlated with how well the prison as a whole communicated with staff and prisoners. This links in with Rogers (1962) concept of interconnectedness and the degree to which the units in a social system are linked by interpersonal networks, with higher interconnectedness resulting in ideas flowing more easily and rapidly. Consequently those prisons which demonstrated effective communication and greater interconnectedness generally saw changes within their learning cultures. In comparison, those demonstrating ineffective communication did not and in some cases saw decreases in their dimension scores. However, communication and interconnectedness may also be affected by ‘organisational slack’ (Rogers, 1962), that is the degree of uncommitted resources available for innovation which is likely to be affected by factors such as staffing issues.

Rogers (1962) highlights the importance of peer-to-peer interpersonal channels in persuading individuals to adopt new ideas. He argues when two individuals are homophilious, share common meanings, a subcultural language and are alike in social characteristics, greater effects in terms of knowledge gain, attitude formation and behavior change are likely to be found. The research findings indicated that those prisons that supported the development of peers as change agents, communicating with other prisoners in a variety of ways, had experienced most success. All the prisons that had effectively involved peers in the diffusion of information and ideas had achieved some cultural change or were headed in that direction. Prison three had started to see real results through the effective use of their Skills Support Mentors and prisons one and five had started this process through the introduction of Prisoner Information Desks. Staff understood the value of this approach:

‘Prisoners listen to prisoners, they don’t listen to staff’ (member of staff, prison eight).
The prisons which came under Cluster 3 had not made attempts to meaningfully involve prisoners as peer-to-peer change agents or to develop their ideas which may have been a crucial factor in their lack of cultural change and progress.

Within Cluster One ‘Visionaries & Enthusiasts’ observations and other research findings generally revealed effective communication. All three prisons kept in regular communication with PET about their progress throughout the project and sought guidance if they needed clarification at any point.

At prison two effective communication resulted in all members having a clear role in the project. They also communicated well with the rest of the prison about the project including the Governor, who spoke at the rebranding launch about his support for the project and building on their rehabilitative culture. There were also early signs that the rebranding process was leading to better communication between education staff and prison officers with newer officers in particular being receptive to using the new language of ‘College’. Adopting the new college language across the whole of the prison is not something likely to be achieved overnight as the lead for the project acknowledged;

‘we are getting there but it is a huge culture change!’ (staff participant, prison two)

Prison five also demonstrated effective communication throughout the project. Although there was Senior Management Team presence within the sessions and support throughout, the sessions themselves appeared hierarchy free with a calm and welcoming atmosphere. The project itself had increased communication between prisoners and prison officers and education staff and prison officers, due to the nature of and visibility of the PIDs.

Prison eight: Observations at prison eight did reveal some lack of communication between departments at the first session, with many of the participants not having met each other before. However, as the day progressed enthused discussions took pace which created ideas. Although the initiative taken forward was kept within the Education Department, communication within the group had led to a second initiative, the recruitment of a specific NCS mentor as well as the Education department focused Learner Council.

Building on the conceptual three cluster model

Now that the three cluster model has been used to discuss some of the key findings, this will be developed further by linking the clusters with some of the cultural change theories identified in the literature review. The theories are; the Everett Rogers’ diffusion of innovation model and the EAST model developed by the Behavioural Insights Team.

• Rogers Diffusion of Innovation model

Rogers’ diffusion of innovation theory explains how, why and at what rate new ideas spread through and change cultures. In relation to the rate of diffusion, Rogers identified different categories most notably; early adopters, late adopters and laggards. This model can clearly be seen to reflect what we also found in our three cluster model with prisons in cluster one (and some in cluster two) adopting their initiatives early on, prisons in cluster two adopting slightly later and those in cluster three lagging behind in development and implementation. As discussed above, the characteristics of the prisons determine how the learning culture and new learner voice practice diffuse across the prison and relate to those Rogers highlights in his theory of ‘diffusion of innovation’ (1962).

• EAST model (Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely)
In the prisons where we saw evidence of a change in the rehabilitative culture and qualitative evidence of progress, we also saw evidence of these four principles being used in the interventions.

**Easy** - Evidence of making things easy and simplifying messages to make them clear in order to increase response rates was evident at prison two with the change in identity from the education department to ‘College’. This is summed up in this quote from the Governor: ‘You change culture in many different ways - one is being clear in who you are. We are a community college’. Another example of making things easy was evident at prison five where the PIDs had been brought into simplify the application system making it easier to get applications, get information and feedback.

**Attractive** - Efforts to make the interventions attractive through the use of colour, images and personalisation were also evident in the cluster one and two prisons. For example through prison two’s posters advertising the new college and featuring inspirational quotes and photos of the women were more attractive. It was also evident at prison one and five where the aim was to make the PIDs as attractive as possible to both staff and prisoners and have a consistent look and branding on each of the wings. At prison one achieving consistency was taking some time with some PIDs on some wings clearly more attractive and well established than others. On the wings where the PID workers were well established, they were clearly identifiable through pink t-shirts and the desks were colourful and attractive with a good range of leaflets and information available. Efforts to make the intervention attractive were also seen at prison three where prisoners had designed their own project logo, which had been printed on to identifiable t-shirts for all the Skills Support mentors and launched at the final session.

**Social** - The project encouraged more prisoners into visible roles, modelling positive behaviours indicating these behaviours as a ‘norm’. All of the projects in Cluster One and Cluster Two had a social element to them, using the concept of the power of networks to enable collective action, provide mutual support and encourage positive behaviours to spread peer-to-peer. The social element of projects was not just about encouraging behaviour change in prisoners through the various interventions; it was also fostering new and deepened relationships with staff members through increased contact and dialogue between staff and prisoners. Where necessary staff members involved in the project facilitated this through becoming involved in the communication process with other staff members, such as wing staff, highlighting the importance of homophilious communication to reach solutions.

**Timely** Most of the projects in Clusters One and Two were set up directly to address the issue of making targeted interventions more timely. A frequent issue raised by prisoners (and some staff) spoken to throughout the project was that information was often given to prisoners at inappropriate times as part of their induction. Initiatives such as the PIDs, newsletters and Skills Support Mentors aimed to counteract this by making information available to prisoners not just when they arrive into prison but all the way through. There were also some immediate cost and benefit influences in the form of ‘quick win’ results for example at prison eight where input from learners on the Learner Council had led to small but important changes such as having kettles for refreshments in the education department, water jugs in the classrooms and allowing prisoners a second set of work clothes. Although these quick wins appear to be small, they are visible benefits which had taken effect immediately as a direct result of the Learner Council meetings as reflected in the quote by this prisoner: ‘things are actually happening and you can see things happening’.
Pressures on staff

Despite successful outcomes from some of the prisons involved in the project, the issue of pressures on staff was raised regularly by both prisoners and staff. Again Rogers’ (1962) concept of organisational slack is relevant because if resources are restricted it makes it difficult for innovation to occur. In some prisons the lead person for the project faced challenges in getting relevant cross-departmental attendees for the sessions despite the prison signing up to take part. Prisons said this was a contributory factor in the low numbers of wing officers involved in the project (particularly in the workshop sessions). However, this was a missed opportunity with prison officers playing a crucial role in supporting prisoners on the wings. However, despite these issues, some good work took place. In the more successful prisons, the perceived staffing pressures prompted creativity and innovation for example prisons five and one chose to implement PIDs and recruit prisoners as PID workers in part to reduce the pressures on wing officers. This is what Rogers (1962) terms ‘opportunistic innovation’ whereby organisations scan the horizon for new ideas that might be beneficial. This project created a space for prisons to creatively find solutions to these issues.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Methodological strengths of the study

For this project a unique survey tool to measure the learning culture of prisons was developed and used ensuring this project makes a valuable and unique contribution to developing knowledge in this area. No other study has attempted to research prison learning cultures using a structured tool such as this. The survey tool needs more development work in relation to the Safe dimension; however it does give other researchers interested in this important area opportunities to build on, develop and use it. Being based on the MQPL and SQL survey tools, which have been tested over a 10-15 year period, gives these tools a methodologically sound base. Another methodological strength was being able to collect data in all of the eight prisons both at baseline and follow up points. Researchers were also able to effectively use a mixed methods approach with the quantitative and qualitative data giving internal validity to the study.

Strengths of the intervention

This was an ambitious project that attempted to cover a lot of ground in a short period of time. Three sessions were successfully organised and facilitated in all but one of the eight prisons. Some prisons showed promising and statistically significant results in this short period of time. The project itself was innovative, allowing prison staff and prisoners to work together to co-produce in leading and develop initiatives relevant to their own establishments rather than having ready made solutions forced on them. After the initial training session, which was facilitated by an experienced external Learner Voice consultant, the rest of the sessions were the responsibility of the prisons to organise and deliver. As such the project was relatively inexpensive to administer. With the development of a best practice guide in the future, this project could be delivered easily and cost effectively by prison staff or external stakeholders.

Limitations of the study

Sample size

Throughout this study a large amount of quantitative data was collected overall with almost 1200 completed prisoner questionnaires collected throughout the project. However, in some cases the sample sizes were relatively small, particularly the staff
samples. It was difficult to engage prison officers and encourage them to complete surveys in all the prisons, which may have had an effect on the representativeness of the samples for the staff survey. 29.72% of baseline staff survey responses and 31.05% of end of project survey responses were from prison officers (see Appendix J, Table B).

Time
There was not sufficient time to follow all of the projects into implementation phase. Whilst some positive findings were recorded for prisons in the first two clusters, with more time some of the prisons in cluster 3 may have been able to move up. It would be ideal to follow up the projects to see how the initiatives continue to develop over time. Some prisons expressed an interest in PET following up with each of the prisons one year later as highlighted in the workshop evaluation chapter.

Although time was raised as an issue for all of the prisons, in some cases this was seen as a positive, particularly for the prisons that came under cluster one and two. In these cases the time pressure acted as a push factor and ensured that targets were met in between sessions. However, the time pressure proved to be too much for cluster three prisons as they were not able to accommodate such big changes in a small time period. This indicates that some prisons do require extra support and time depending on how advanced their rehabilitative culture is to begin with.

Resources
Throughout this project it was difficult to maintain consistency over the sampling process in different prisons, highlighting the difficulties in carrying out research in a prison setting. Researchers had only one day for distributing and collecting data, relying on the good will of prison staff to escort them. This was easier to achieve in some prisons than in others, due to staffing issues and prisoners being on lock down. In some prisons larger proportions of completed questionnaires were collected on the day whilst in others researchers had to largely rely on completed questionnaires being returned by post. This contributed to differing return rates.

Recommendations

Recommendations to improve the intervention:

This was a pilot project and as such, much learning took place during the course of the year. The initial project sessions developed through observations from the research team and from feedback gathered from participants. Generally feedback was positive, however there are a number of changes that would be made in the future, including;

- an increase in pre-training information to all participants
- More prior communication between facilitator and lead prison contact
- involvement of the lead person in introducing the first session
- increase the amount of group work in training sessions
- provide more guidance during the action planning stage of the session (including defining and measuring impact on ‘hard to reach’ prisoners)
- provide more guidance on prisoner recruitment processes
- improvements to better welcome and involve prisoner participants
- more prison officer involvement
- increased time, support and flexibility for prisons who need it i.e. the ‘resisters’
- finding other ways to facilitate of prison-to-prison support and best practice sharing as the email forum was not used.
Recommendations for NOMS:

- Provision of more guidance to prisons about how to define, measure and improve a ‘rehabilitative culture’

NOMS currently advocate the development of a ‘rehabilitative culture’ in prisons. However, the published materials setting out what this should consist of require more clarity and practical examples. This project has developed insights which could help prisons better understand how to define, measure and improve their learning culture, as an important aspect of a rehabilitative culture.

The definition of ‘rehabilitative culture’ should take into account important learning culture concepts such as: empowering, inclusive, aspirational, engaging, safe and changing lives. The importance of ‘conducive conditions’ should also be shared with Governors, SMT and staff to help them develop the rehabilitative culture of their prisons and to learn from best practice in use of Learner Voice to strengthen their learning culture.

We recommend NOMS develops a training pack for prisons keen to get involved in this process. The training could be delivered by NOMS, prison staff or external consultants. This training pack content could build on the first training session delivered to all eight prisons.

- Commission further research

The time constraints on the project left little time for the impact of initiatives in the prison to take effect. NOMS should therefore consider commissioning further research to see whether the ongoing initiatives in Cluster two prisons develop to give statistically robust quantitative evidence of improvements in the culture which would put them into the Cluster one category.

Further research could also look to define and quantify the impact of learner voice activities on engaging ‘hard to reach’ prisoners.

NOMS should also consider a longer term piece of research to test whether a more rehabilitative culture generates more effective rehabilitative outcomes as measured by rates of prisoner re-offending on release.

Recommendations for the Research community:

- Researchers should be encouraged to think about measuring the wider cultural impact in any evaluation research they are planning to carry out to build on the evidence base.

Recommendations for PET:

- Prisoners’ Education Trust should develop a best practice guide which will be produced (subject to NOMS approval), following meetings with all the prisons involved in the project, to share learning more widely and will be disseminated across the prison estate and with key stakeholders.

- Prisoners’ Education Trust should seek additional funding to further test and develop the understanding of ‘learning culture’ in future research projects.

References (Please see Appendix S)