Pat Jones
Director
Prisoners Education Trust

Prisoner learning and the rehabilitation revolution: a voluntary agency perspective

Opportunities and threats for voluntary agencies

- Rehabilitation: a bigger idea than reducing re-offending.
- ‘Big society’: a bigger role for voluntary groups and charities.
- Suggestion that many small charities won’t survive.
- Payment by results may be impossible to access for niche and upstream interventions.

Making the case

It is in the interests of the criminal justice system as a whole to retain as much as possible of the criminal justice related voluntary sector,
focused on both custody and community, local and national, and to grow its capacity.

In offender learning and skills, voluntary organisations make significant contrbutions.

The horizon for learning and skills in custody:

Rehabilitation must mean

- A broader focus, not just employability
- A positive focus, not just on offending
- Inclusion and participation as a citizen
- Engagement in further learning
- Engagement in family and community

Prison learning
–and prisons as systems –

Need the range, reach, vision and impact of diverse voluntary partners and will be less effective without their contributions.

These contributions address needs and enable development that statutory provision cannot meet or prioritise.

Characteristics of voluntary provision

- Strong focus on quality of relationships with prisoners who engage.
- Take a holistic view even when a highly specific niche intervention.
- Innovative models and approaches.
- Engage ‘hard to reach’ and disaffected prisoners
- Leverage of additional resources.

SG
Koestler Trust
arts by offenders
CONCORD
PRISON
TRUST
Self-
Esteem
Prison
Radio
Association
SHANNON
TRUST
Trust
Skills
GRANGE PARK
OPERA

Prisoners Education Trust

- Enable almost 2,500 prisoners each year to take distance learning courses in subjects and levels not available in prison.
- Over 400 subjects and levels funded 2010
- Administer access to initial HE via the OU with BIS funds for c. 850 prisoners; completion rate of around 80-85%.
- Services; advice, support, voice.

Underpinning concepts: Desistance research

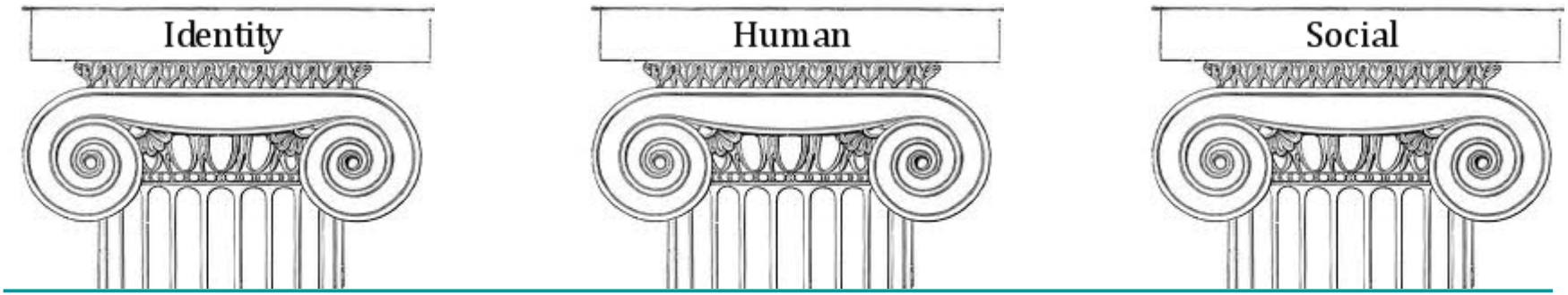
Key elements:

- A hook or trigger
- Someone who believes in you
- Thinking differently about yourself leading to an alternative positive identity
- An experience of agency.

Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, Fergus McNeil

‘Three Capitals’ - IFLL

- Identity capital: sense of personal worth and belonging.
- Human capital: skills and qualifications.
- Social capital: networks and shared norms.



Employability skills

- Literacy, language, numeracy and ICT, are fundamental but not alone sufficient.
- ‘Influence skills’, communicating, analysing and persuading, all growing in importance.
- And ‘aesthetic skills’ – being able to look good and sound right.
- To sustain employment, the ability to keep on learning and adapt to change is crucial.
- Increasing need for higher level skills.

UKCES: Employability Skills: A research and policy briefing. 2010.

‘I am now 20 years into a life sentence and it has taken this time for me to develop the self-confidence needed to study at degree level….

I believe that completing this course will help me change my life for the better and give me further insight into my own responsibilities to society.’

Andy, OU student

‘This position of imprisonment was not planned but I am trying to make the best of it.

My morals and work ethic are not to be disposed of because I tragically broke the law for the only time in my life.

I need sufficient level of education to maintain my self-esteem, to rehabilitate myself and to give myself new skills and knowledge so that I can be an economically active and productive citizen.’ *Stuart, studying OU Maths*

‘I cannot change the fact that I am in here but being here has given me the opportunity to further my education…

I would like to be able to work in a field that helps people that are less fortunate or have not had such an easy life.

I want to put something back into the community and if I can help one person to not mess up their life then this will all have been worth it.’

Anne, studying Health and Social Care

Pat Jones

pat@prisonerseducation.org.uk

020 8648 7760

www.prisonerseducation.org.uk