Minute of PLA Steering Committee Meeting
6th August 2019

Chair: Tom Schuller

Attendees:
Centre for Education in the Criminal Justice System, UCL Institute of Education (Jane Hurry, Co-Director)
Clinks (Jess Mullen, Head of Policy and Communications)
New Leaf (Marie Claire, Managing Director) *joined by phone*
PET (Rod Clarke, CEO)
Shannon Trust (Angela Cairns, CEO)
St Giles Trust (Maria McNicholl, Development Manager)
University and College Union (Angela Nartey, Policy Officer)
Weston College (Chris Emmett, Director of Strategy – Offender Learning)

Apologies:
Nnamdi Efobi (sector expert)
Open University (Ruth McFarlane, Senior Manager – Students in Secure Environments)
Prison Governors Association (Shaun Williamson, Finance Officer)

In attendance:
Andy Woodley, (Head of Digital Learning and Data, Employment and Industries Group, HMPPS), Melanie Jameson (PLA Member)

Secretariat:
Francesca Cooney (Prisoners' Education Trust), Joe Coules (Prisoners' Education Trust), Zoe Pritchard (Prisoners' Education Trust)

Andy Woodley – Digital Update

Database update
Andy informed the meeting that the new database (CURIOUS) is improving data collection. It has been a contractual requirement for providers to upload information since July. This is the first time data can be compared centrally without going to the establishment. It will take 6-12 months before it is operational.

Questions from SC Members on the CURIOUS database:
Maria asked which prison education services can be tracked. Andy confirmed that all education can be tracked – PEF outcomes, DPS outcomes and progress in non-accredited courses.
Rod asked if the learning that is tracked would vary between prisons. Andy confirmed that governor autonomy means that it is up to individual prison governors to decide what information from DPS providers has to be inputted into the database.
Angela Cairns asked if it is possible to see progression of learners from the new database. Andy confirmed that this is possible, and the personal learning plan is currently being redesigned, aiming for completion in October.
Angela Nartey asked who can access the database and whether it can be accessed for research purposes. Andy explained that anyone with a DPS log-in would be able to see some, anonymised sections of the database and to run reports. Other stakeholders, e.g.

Ofsted will have access, which means they will be able to look at outcomes in a prison prior to inspections.

Chris asked about accessing information that may be commercially sensitive. Andy confirmed that Information that business sensitive would not be accessible.

Jess asked if voluntary sector providers would be able to input information so that people are aware of their outcomes. Andy confirmed that individual prisons will decide what information can be inputted but organisations can request that their data be recorded.

Melanie asked if CRCs and offender management teams can use the database. Andy explained that in theory this was possible, however a conversation will need to take place, as CRCs are not contractually obliged to currently.

Andy also explained that that the new database allows for greater access to information in real time. For instance, they have been able to assess 48,000 learner assessments already in the last two months. This will enable HMPPS to assess learner need more accurately.

Andy also informed the meeting that arrangements for LD/D screening tool had still not been finalised and this is with the Commercial Team

Virtual Campus and in-cell technology update

Andy explained that computer suites in education are currently being upgraded. Every education department has a VC terminal and they are hoping to bring this into libraries. Andy also highlighted that currently learners and instructors in workshops cannot access the Virtual Campus. Andy feels that prisoners will buy into inputting onto their record because it potentially has implications for progression. They have secured a small grant from UFI to look at the security implications of unsupervised access. This will explore whether prisoner learners can use VC unsupervised and also has implications for use of in-cell technology. They are still looking for a standard platform for in-cell technology. Once they have the platform, they can use various devices. Andy explained that many prisoners are unable to use laptops and using tablets can be more helpful in terms of transferable skills (using apps etc.) on release. the grant will cover Birmingham University research, to get some real world information and analytics.

Questions from SC members on Virtual Campus and in-cell technology

Tom asked who decides what content is on the VC. Andy explained that ideally, in the future, teachers would be able to design content specific to their classes.

Rod asked if there is a process for sign off for the PLP. Andy explained that the personal learning plan is being redesigned into the new VC so prisoners and teachers can update it. Teachers can add comments to the PLP. They are still looking at how the plan is structured but the intention is learning can be tracked from prison to prison

Rod asked whether the system would download content to a device beforehand or connect from in- cell. Andy explained that it might vary between prisons, as wireless networks are hit and miss from prison to prison. They are hoping to put Wi-Fi in the education departments.

Chris asked if books would be available on the platform, because it can be difficult for learners to access the library. Andy confirmed that eventually this will happen but not many of the devices currently have this access.

Francesca asked if there would there be a coherent, costed joint HMPPS/MOJ strategy on digital technology. Andy explained that Digital Studios (MOJ team) have costed models for in-cell technology. They need to be working on a strategy that could be rolled out quickly if funding became available. HMPPS do not see the pilot at HMPS Berwyn and Wayland as the right model for the rest of the prison estate