



## PLA Conference 2022

### Self-Directed Learning with HMP Bronzefield

The session was led by Tanvir Hynes, the Head of Learning and Skills at HMP Bronzefield. Tanvir started by explaining a bit about the population at her prison - the prison can hold 527 people, and it usually holds about 500 women at any time. In addition, women enter the prison with high levels of need and around 130 women are usually detoxing. They have introduced a two week 'lay down', so that women can detox and go through recovery before they go through educational assessments and participate in education.

Tanvir explained that support needs have to be met before education can start - often women need to build their confidence and self-esteem before they can think about getting involved in education. Also, the catchment area for the prison is huge, as it runs from Oxford to the Isle of Wight and covers all of the different London boroughs. This has an impact on family contact and communication, which can be very difficult for the women.

All of the tutors at Bronzefield have an understanding of working in a trauma informed way. They are also expected to understand what makes an outstanding lesson, as they have to develop personalised lesson plans and meet the needs of the women they are teaching. All of the learning plans and portfolios have the specific needs of the women noted at the top of the document. This ensures that education staff do not need to read through the whole document to understand someone's needs.

Tanvir explained that when developing the education model at her prison, she and her colleagues used the research of John Hattie, 'Visible Learning' published in 2009. This identified 252 influences on student achievement. Bronzefield have looked at which have the most impact and use these elements of these in their teaching.

The education team make sure that they respond to all feedback from learners, verbal or written. They continually look at what works well and what can work even better.

#### **Self-directed learning and peer support**

HMP Bronzefield developed this model, firstly as a response to lockdown, but have continued and enhanced it following the pandemic. It was praised by Ofsted during the last inspection. Learners are encouraged to know their own abilities and set their own

targets. The teacher's role is to help them exceed these targets. This model has developed so much that sometimes students actually lead sessions when they want to.

The prison uses their peer mentors a lot to support the women. They offer their peer mentors Level 3 qualifications. The system of self-directed learning helps provide people with study skills and capabilities that they can use for life, and learners on lower-level qualifications receive more peer support. The peer workers are a key part of their strategy, and they are paid for the sessions that they deliver. They can put their peer workers on hold for transfers.

### **Regime change**

HMP Bronzefield have also changed their core day - lessons are now one hour and a quarter long, with two sessions in the morning and two sessions in the afternoon. This is extremely popular with learners and tutors and results in better connections and engagement during lessons. Workshops still can last three hours because these are practical and hands on. This generated a lot of questions from participants in the workshop, who were keen to know how this was managed and whether it could work in their prison.

Tanvir explained that, as a contracted out prison, they can be more flexible. And their achievement data shows that they are the 11<sup>th</sup> highest performing prison in the country for education!