Quakers in Criminal Justice Conference, 22–24 March

Gateways to Rehabilitation

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Shannon Trust transforms lives by supporting disadvantaged people to learn to read.

“We are a registered charity, and work across all prisons in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to train and inspire prisoners who can read to teach those that can’t.”

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Nobody left out of learning

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What percentage of adult prisoners in the UK have a reading age below that of an average 11 year old?

Data published by the Ministry of Justice claims that 57% of adults in prison in the UK have a reading level below that of an average 11 year old.

Why might someone reach adulthood without learning to read?

- *Additional learning needs.*
- *Missing out on traditional education.*
- *Lack of support.*
- *Reading isn’t a priority in some communities (e.g. Irish travellers).*

- Muddled Words 1 Activity
- Muddled Words 2 Activity

Why is it a particular problem if you are unable to read in prison?

In prison, everything is delivered by the written word (instructions, rules, appointments, menu, canteen, applications, letters from home, legal documents).

Without the skill of reading, you are isolated, vulnerable and unable to access opportunities that the prison might offer. Being a non reader in prison impacts on rehabilitation and reducing re-offending.

How does Shannon Trust work?



- *Shannon Trust is a peer mentoring programme.*
- *Mentors are trained to teach learners to read by using our Turning Pages resources.*

What Is Phonics?

Phonics is a form of teaching how to read by breaking words down into their constituent parts. Spoken word parts are called ‘phonemes’ and written word parts are called ‘graphemes’.

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Have a go! 😊👌

- *Find a partner, one of you will be the mentor and the other will be the learner.*
- *The mentor will teach the learner the skill from the Turning Pages lesson.*
- *Go for it! Be brave…*
- *How did it make you feel to be a mentor / learner?*

What difference has Shannon Trust made?

- *We reached over 4100 new reading learners in 2023 (prisons and community) and 1300 new numeracy learners.*
- *Almost 2000 new mentors have been trained.*
- *3030 reading manuals and 1021 numeracy manuals have been completed demonstrating progression.*

Where do we go from here?

3 year strategy

We are in the final year of our 3 year strategy – the aims of which are to:

- *Increase numbers of learners completing our programmes in prison*
- *Grow availability of our programme in the community.*
- *Test new ideas to address our skills gaps – eg. Numeracy.*

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“My mentor has been so patient with me. Learning to read was a task for me as I never could read before. He broke the tasks down, and if I got stuck on a word he helped me until I got it right. When I first looked at the manual I thought “no way!” but he made the sessions perfect for me, going at my speed. He sat me down, made me a coffee and said “come on, you can do it!” It gave me a buzz, I feel so proud. I couldn’t even read my address before. Now I can read books for myself. My mentor and me have just completed the Read Ahead quiz through the library. I read six books and so did he. We did it together. I tell my kids I can read now and they are so proud for me. It’s all thanks to my mentor, I can’t thank him enough. He taught me things like the difference between “bow” and “bough”, like the bough of a tree. I didn’t even know that word and now I can read it! As I’m walking around looking at the posters they now suddenly make sense, I can read all the words. It’s wonderful!”