



UNLOCK, the National Association of Reformed Offenders

Individual Member Response to:

BIS Department for Business Innovation & Skills

Call for Evidence

Review of Offender Learning

August 2010

Ministry of Justice

UNLOCK, the National Association of Reformed Offenders is an independent charity and membership organisation, aiming to achieve equality for people with criminal conviction previous convictions.

We believe in a society in which reformed offenders are able to fulfil their positive potential through equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities.

UNLOCK’s Mission Statement:

Driven by the needs of reformed offenders, UNLOCK works to reduce crime by helping them overcome the social exclusion and discrimination that prevents them from successfully reintegrating into society.

UNLOCK empowers reformed offenders to break down barriers to reintegration by offering practical advice, support, information, knowledge and skills. It also acts as their voice to influence discriminatory policies, behaviours and attitudes.

To contact UNLOCK:

Head Office: 35a High Street, Snodland, Kent, ME6 5AG

Telephone: 01634 247350

Email: enquiries@unlock.org.uk

Website: www.unlock.org.uk

President: General The Lord David Ramsbotham GCB CBE

Vice-President: Judge John Samuels Q.C

Chief Executive: Bobby Cummines FRSA

Patrons: Lord Corbett of Castle Vale, Baroness Helena Kennedy Q.C., Professor Andrew Coyle, Flo Krause - Barrister of Law, Dr Silvia Casale, Dr Deborah Cheney, Anne Piggott OBE, Matthew Hyde, Dr Phil Bayliss, Katie Adie OBE, Jill Stevens, Edward Garnier Q.C. MP, Dexter Dias Q.C., Professor Shadd Maruna

Registered Charity Number: 1079046

Company Number: 3791535

UNLOCK is pleased to submit this response for and on behalf of 'M', being a member of the charity.

Noticing the following proviso stated in the Review's call for evidence¹, M wishes his identity to remain confidential to avoid any possible adverse consequence arising as a result of potential disclosure of his identity.

The following response therefore is the complete and unabridged submission received from M by UNLOCK, and should not be considered to represent the views of the charity.

“Question 28 – Has the perceived gap of professionalism between the teaching workforce in offender learning compared with those in other settings narrowed, and to what extent might this be further improved?”

Response:

A way of improving the perceived gap would be to enable teachers with convictions to use their skills and experience to teach within prisons. There is no law to stop this happening, but this does not happen because of the perceived security risk of employing teachers with convictions within a prison.

However the benefits of employing teachers who also have the real life experience of being convicted and being in prison, being able to share with prisoners how rehabilitation is possible would be a further positive contribution that such teachers could make within the prison education system.

¹ "Information provided in response to this call for evidence, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Regulations 2004, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). If you want information you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department"

Such teachers should be encouraged to seek such appointments in order to use their skills and experience within prison education, as teachers in the prison, as inspectors of prison education, or as providers of in-service training for teachers within prisons. This would give encouragement to those in prisons that there is hope for them when they return to society.

Case Study - David

David has a unique insight into prison education, having served a 3 year sentence, 18 months of which was served in Leeds and Acklington. The education department at Acklington were able to organise the viva for his doctorate and time out of work for revision and for writing the minor deficiencies for his thesis. He was able to help other inmates with their work in education. All of this gave him back a feeling of self worth. However despite support from teachers in the prison the prison authorities would not allow him to support the teachers in the classroom. This seemed a waste of his skills, which nobody was able to explain.

Since leaving prison over 10 years ago, David has been in full time employment. He has published teaching materials in mathematics, which could be adapted for use with adults who have difficulty with numeracy. He has written and delivered training courses for teachers, including the teaching of entry level mathematics. He has had published articles on the teaching of mathematics. He was a member of the coursework task force team for QCA. He is a marker for GCSE mathematics and functional skills mathematics.

David has tried to gain employment as a teacher of mathematics in adult prisons and as a manager of education within prisons, and as an inspector of prison education. For all of these posts he was eminently qualified and had suitable experience having taught mathematics in secondary schools for 20 years and having been a Head of Department. The reasons given for not short listing him was the perceived risk of security within the prison. UNLOCK does not accept this as a reason.

The benefits to the prison education system of employing people such as David far outweigh this perceived security risk. There would be no risk if people like David were able to teach in prisons and also to be able to talk/discuss freely having been in prison and how they have been able to rehabilitate themselves, without the necessity to discuss their conviction. Being in a secure environment means there is no more risk to people like David than to any other person working in a prison.

[The Sun headline of ““Convicted teachers teaching inmates” should be seen as a positive. The population would see this as convicts getting what they deserve – indeed they would, quality education by experts]”.

End.