



Peer Mentor Study — peer mentor support within prison workshops and classrooms and the introduction of assistive technology — ReaderPens and ExamReaders

The Peer Mentor role:

"Supporting others in anyway we can, I suppose, really."

"Reading, writing, it could be in a workshop, it could be on the wing. It could be anywhere in the prison system really."

"We can help with a letter from home, problems with money, they could be struggling in the workshop, they don't know how to do something, could be reading, writing, ESOL, all sorts."



Clear diction, to support reading and writing



Supports pronunciation and communication skills



New skills for those undertaking the peer mentor training programme



Listen via headphones

Independent Researcher, and member of the PLA — Prisoners Learning Alliance, Christine Franklin, has undertaken a series of studies exploring issues affecting the educational outcomes for prisoner learners. Her findings indicated the positive impact when introducing ReaderPens and ExamReaders to support independent learning, improve educational outcomes and confidence.

Peer mentors offer peer to peer learning support within prisons. It is an appreciated and effective service. The peer mentors not only assist inmates during functional skills lessons, but may be called upon to help read private letters and documents. Within an educational capacity they guide and support learners through their studies and encourage them to work towards achieving skills and qualifications.

Christine's research indicated peer mentors are highly skilled in supporting self-esteem and take the responsibility of supporting others very seriously.

The study involved an introduction of ReaderPens and ExamReaders to peer mentors during their own training course to enhance the supportive strategies and skills they would need when helping their peers. Having the opportunity to understand the concepts of reading pens, including how to use the functions, led to increased confidence when supporting others with assistive technology.

The strategies and skills to support others with reading pens were positively received:

"The pen helps within such a short time frame in this course, to enable the guys to pass the test at the end of the day." Peer mentor supporting the One-Day Health and Safety Course.

A peer mentor stated he *"hadn't thought about the impact"* when being asked to read private correspondence. He appreciated the desire to find the right solution when offering reading support. A non-reading prisoner described how difficult it was to build up a relationship of 'trust' when asking another to read, for example a solicitor's letter. The prisoner went on to explain *"the ReaderPen™ lets us read things privately, then I can decide to ask the peer mentor for more help or not."*

OUTCOMES: Peer mentors are held in high regard and respected when assisting with reading and writing. Peer mentors are well positioned to introduce the use of ReaderPen™ within the different learning environments in prisons.

