



Studies in Workshops — Opportunities in Prisons to support learning with ReaderPens and ExamReaders

Tutor: *"The fast changing and transient nature of the prison population engaging in workshop programs can result in courses not being completed, so any reduction in delivery time of the course while maintaining understanding for the learner is a desirable goal of the tutor."*

Prisoner: *"I found headphones in it really helpful, cause like today it's quite a small class but when you got everyone that's turned up, like we are missing about four or five people out of this class today. But when you got everyone that's turned up that can get quite noisy so having the headphones to put into your ears is really helpful so that you can hear it."*



The 'voice' is easy to understand



ESOL workshop learners report listening to English is easier than reading English



Course work takes less time as the learner reads 'independently'



Noise cancelling headphones work well in workshop environments

Independent Researcher, and member of the PLA — Prisoners Learning Alliance, Christine Franklin, has undertaken a series of studies exploring issues affecting the educational outcomes of learners in prison. Her findings indicated the positive impact of Scanning Pen technology to support the implementation of learning, improve educational outcomes and independence. Christine's findings support the importance of gaining transferrable skills, such as those taught in workshops, and increase confidence in learning, as an important part of the rehabilitation process. The prisoners using scanning pens were able to overcome the barriers created due to illiteracy and weak reading, enabling prisoners to successfully gain qualifications or strategies to access the written word.

The following gives a brief overview of the information obtained from Christine's studies in public Category C Prisons in the South West, East and North of England. The studies introduced the use of ReaderPens within practical workshop courses. Peer mentors demonstrated the use of ReaderPens to learners in these courses. A peer mentor approach acknowledges the positivity of the learner's relationship when accepting the introduction of assistive technology from a peer as opposed to a tutor.

Tutors stated an increase and acknowledgement from learners experiencing reading difficulties. Additionally, prisoners wished to be supported by their peer mentors and the ReaderPens. Workshop courses are often considered to be accessible due to the assumption of little or no reading. However, these courses do involve workbooks/worksheets which have to be completed to enable a qualification to be gained.

Tutors reported a reduction in time required during lessons, to support reading therefore allowing them to teach the modules. Each section of the course was delivered faster. Reading support was achieved independently by the prisoners using the ReaderPen™ to decode the text. The capacity to undertake the course quickly and independently increased pass rates in each unit and gave the prisoner transferable qualifications and skills.

Results from the study using Scanning Pens in the Workshops:

- Increased confidence and faster course delivery. Tutors reported this was due to not having to support basic learning difficulties.
- Peer mentors said the ReaderPen™ was easy to use and learners were quick to develop skills when using the pens.
- The learners like the pens. Comments were made about how the pens had helped them become independent learners. Requests were made to have pens available in the library or overnight in their cells.
- When learning needs were identified by the tutors, a quick readily available tool was at hand. This alleviated issues such as waiting for an LSA or having to stop the progress of the course to "teach; reading, writing, spelling, and comprehension."

