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# Reviewing voluntary sector activities in prisons:

a Guide for Heads of Learning and Skills and  
Managers in the Voluntary Sector

Prepared in collaboration with CLINKS

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Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit  
2004

# **Reviewing voluntary sector activities in prisons: a Guide for Heads of Learning and Skills and Managers in the Voluntary Sector**

A OLSU/Clinks publication

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February 2004

# Reviewing voluntary sector activities in prisons: a Guide for Heads of Learning and Skills

Reviewing voluntary sector activities in prisons:.....	
a Guide for Heads of Learning and Skills.....	
Foreword.....	
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
What is the Guide?.....	1
What is the voluntary sector?.....	1
The involvement of voluntary and community organisations in prisons....	2
The special contribution of voluntary and community organisations.....	2
<b>Who is this Guide for?</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Scope of the Guide</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>How to evaluate a voluntary organisation's activity using the Guide.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Stage 1: Setting up the activity.....</b>	<b>6</b>
A. Holding preliminary discussions.....	6
B. Completing the schedule for setting up an activity to be run by a voluntary organisation in prison.....	7
C. Drawing up necessary agreements.....	9
<b>Stage 2: Collecting information and views.....</b>	<b>10</b>
A. Collecting administrative information about the activities and participants..	10
B. Using the Learner Self-Assessment Checklist after the activity to collect prisoners' views.....	10
The Learner Self-Assessment Checklist - what does it show?.....	11
Learner Self-Assessment Checklist.....	12
How to administer the Learner Self-Assessment Checklist.....	14
C. Gather other perspectives on the activities and any changes they have brought about for learners.....	14
<b>Stage 3: Analysis, discussion and action planning.....</b>	<b>15</b>
A. Analyse the findings of the Learner Self-Assessment Checklists, and other information about the results of the activity.....	15
Analysing the administrative information.....	15
Analysing the Learner Self-Assessment Checklists.....	15
Analysing other perspectives and evidence.....	15
B. Discussing the findings.....	16
Schedule for review (evaluation) meeting.....	16
C. Agreeing whether to repeat or change the activity, or other actions.....	16

In conclusion.....	17
Who else can use the Guide?.....	17
How ALL inspectors can use Guide.....	17
How quality groups can use the Guide.....	17
How voluntary organisations can use the Guide.....	17
Questions frequently asked by voluntary organisations.....	18
Practical matters.....	18
Using the information.....	18
Bringing in our own values and aims.....	19
Appendix one: Expectations of the OLSU.....	20
Appendix two: Key Principles.....	20
Appendix three: Learner Self-Assessment Checklist - Analysis form.....	21
Appendix four: Useful organisations and publications.....	23
Useful organisations.....	23
Useful publications.....	23







## Foreword

Voluntary and community organisations make a considerable contribution to enhancing learning and skills provision in prisons and in work with offenders in the community.

With an increasingly strong emphasis on meeting the resettlement needs of offenders, there is now a growing understanding of the important contribution that voluntary and community groups can make to offenders' learning and skills.

Monitoring and evaluation are an essential part of this area of service delivery, helping to show the effectiveness of services. This guide is intended to ensure a consistent approach to joint working on setting up and evaluating services. It offers practical ideas for use by Heads of Learning and Skills and voluntary and community organisations, whilst recognising the need not to overburden learning providers. It will also ensure that the views of the offenders are reflected.

I hope the guide will enhance a valuable, important and developing relationship between Prisons and the voluntary and community sector.

Chris Barnham  
Head of Unit  
Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit



## Introduction

### What is the Guide?

Clinks (the umbrella organisation supporting voluntary sector organisations working with offenders and their families) and The Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU) have commissioned this guide for Heads of Learning and Skills and managers in the voluntary and community sector to use in assessing the work of organisations that deliver activities with prisoners. The expectations of the OLSU are set out in Appendix 1. The Guide will assist establishments in delivering HM Prison Service Strategy for Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector, as set out in PSO4190, and the OLSU's own strategy: Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector in Learning and Skills.

The Guide enables simple and effective monitoring and evaluation of voluntary organisations' activities. Repeated use of the Guide's methodology should drive up standards by systematic assessment of a service's potential benefit, and by putting the prisoner at the centre of measuring the success of activities.

The Guide is designed to provide reassurance about the quality and value of activities for prisoners, without overburdening the voluntary organisations' administrative capacity, which is especially important as many of the organisations working in prisons are small.

These and other important principles on which the Guide is based are set out in Appendix 2.

Reviewing (evaluating) the voluntary organisations' work takes place in the three stages set out by the Guide:

#### **Stage 1: Setting up the Activity**

#### **Stage 2: Collecting information and views**

#### **Stage 3: Analysis, Discussion and Action Planning**

### What is the voluntary sector?

It may be helpful to start by defining what the voluntary sector is. The term 'voluntary sector' may cause confusion because it appears to describe organisations which use volunteers as opposed to paid staff. In fact the term is used to describe a vast range of organisations with diverse ways of working. At one end of the voluntary sector are large, professionally managed organisations such as the drug agencies that hold many of the contracts for treatment and assessment work in prisons. These organisations make little use of volunteers – their staff are employed and usually highly trained, often working in similar voluntary sector organisations throughout their career. At the

other end of the spectrum are small, locally-based organisations run entirely by volunteers – for example some play projects in prison visits areas. In between are many organisations using some volunteers but relying on paid staff to maintain the quality of service. The voluntary sector is united by the way in which it is managed rather than how it carries out its work. Voluntary sector organisations:-

- are non profit making
- are usually registered charities
- have management committees made up of volunteers (who must not be paid or receive benefits in kind) who hold the legal responsibility for the way in which the organisation is managed and its financial affairs organised.

### **The involvement of voluntary and community organisations in prisons**

Current information gathering (December 2003), based on returns from 110 prisons and incorporating information from the Arts in Prisons directory, shows that:

- There are 286 organisations working with Prison Education Departments in 110 prisons
- 76% of these organisations are listed as only working with one establishment
- 17% work with only two/three establishments
- 7% work with four or more prisons
- These organisations between them delivered 703 projects in 2002/3 of which 394 were delivered by arts organisations

### **The special contribution of voluntary and community organisations**

The Government has fully recognised the contribution of the voluntary sector in delivering services to the public, and this is certainly true as regards the rehabilitation and resettlement of offenders.

To date, there has been no consistent way of evaluating the benefits for prisoners provided by voluntary and community organisations. This Guide sets out ways of measuring and demonstrating their contribution.

Voluntary organisations contribute a wide range of services related to learning and skills, to prisoners in many establishments:

- Employment
- Basic and key skills
- Personal and social skills
- Parenting and family learning
- Debt Counselling
- Money management
- Driving skills
- The Arts
- Work with young people
- Work with women
- Health and sexual health
- Environmental awareness
- Mentoring
- Victim awareness

As well as a wide range of specific skills, the activities often provide interesting, challenging and varied experiences. They stimulate learning and can help re-connect the prisoner with learning. Above all, they provide opportunities for personal and social development, especially increased confidence.

Voluntary organisations are known to bring a range of unique qualities to their services:

- they can be flexible and innovative
- they run on the commitment and enthusiasm of paid staff and volunteers
- they often bring a wide range of specialist skills and interests
- they work with feelings as well as facts
- their main aim is positive outcomes for prisoners
- their activities often provide an informal, non-institutional approach to learning
- their activities can make a real contribution to purposeful activity and key performance targets (KPTs) for prisons
- they add value by broadening the activities and opportunities offered to prisoners – outside the KPTs for example
- they can create a positive atmosphere in the establishment.

Because they are not in a position of authority, and are from outside prison life, they operate from a supportive position with prisoners.

In addition, the voluntary organisations may bring with them valuable funds for activities that the Prison Service alone cannot offer.

## Who is this Guide for?

The Guide aims to assist both Heads of Learning and Skills and the voluntary organisations themselves. It creates a framework for establishing and demonstrating the value of activities such as courses, workshops or projects. The Guide is based primarily on the perceptions of the prisoners as learners, and also draws on perspectives of the provider organisation and the prison establishment.

The Guide helps in these ways:

- It offers Heads of Learning and Skills a tool to assess the value of contributions, and to set up and review (evaluate) agreements

- It shows provider organisations how to demonstrate what they achieve for prisoners.
- It helps Heads of Learning and Skills and the voluntary organisations to work together in a positive way, and ensure the quality of provision, and
- It enables them to have clear expectations of each other and agree in advance what is to be achieved.

For Heads of Learning and Skills, the information generated by following the Guide will complement routine monitoring against targets. The framework for monitoring and evaluation in the Guide does not affect the Head of Learning and Skills' (or a prison's Voluntary Sector Co-ordinator's) general oversight of voluntary organisations' activities in the prison. If an issue arises, it should be dealt with immediately.

For voluntary and community organisations, evaluation can demonstrate their distinctive contribution to prisons. It can also be a valuable tool in accounting to funders, and in seeking further funding from the Prison Service and elsewhere.

The establishment's Voluntary Sector Coordinator may also assist in setting up the working relationship, and if so, should discuss with the Head of Learning and Skills how they will share the roles of setting up an activity and reviewing (evaluating) it.

## Scope of the Guide

The Guide applies to activities that primarily focus on the prisoner's development and/or learning. It applies to the following categories of activities:

- Courses, such as anger management or parenting
- Classroom work, such as talks on debt management or sexual health
- Craft activities, such as pottery
- Projects, such as a drama or music production, or 'Write-on Dads'
- Group work, such as victim awareness
- 1:1 work, such as counselling or mentoring

The Guide does not apply to distance learning or grants to individual prisoners.

It has not been designed to evaluate wider resettlement work, but the approach could be adapted for that purpose.

## How to evaluate a voluntary organisation's activity using the Guide

The evaluation takes place in three stages, with the Head of Learning and Skills and the voluntary organisation working in partnership:

### Stage 1: Setting up the Activity

- *holding preliminary discussions*
- *completing the Schedule for setting up an activity*
- *drawing up necessary agreements*

### Stage 2: Collecting information and views

- *collecting administrative information about the activities and participants*
- *using the Learner Self-Assessment Checklist after the activity to collect prisoner's views*
- *gathering other perspectives on the activities and any changes they have brought about for learners*

### Stage 3: Analysis, Discussion and Action Planning

- *analysing the findings of the Learner Self-Assessment Checklists, and other information about the results of the activity*
- *discussing the findings*
- *agreeing whether to repeat or change the activity, or other actions*

If a voluntary organisation already has a fully established and agreed system for setting up, monitoring and evaluating the activity, the Head of Learning and Skills may wish to continue with it. Perhaps after reading the Guide there may be amendments to ensure that there is consistency in the evaluation of activities.



## Stage 1: Setting up the activity

Most prisons receive approaches from voluntary and community organisations suggesting an activity. When this happens, the Head of Learning and Skills should ask for a summary of the activity and arrange to meet if it appears relevant to prisoners' needs and interests.

Alternatively, if the Head of Learning and Skills knows of a need or interest among prisoners they can look for the right voluntary organisation to run activities to meet it. Clinks and the Unit for Arts and Offenders will be a good source of information and contacts. The voluntary sector umbrella body local to the establishment (usually called a Council for Voluntary Service or a Rural Community Council) could also be of help.

See Appendix 4 for details of these and other relevant organisations.

It will also help if Heads of Learning and Skills share good practice between establishments on which voluntary and community organisations are providing which activities. If prisoners routinely come from or go on to another establishment, it might be valuable to make links with the activities offered there.

### A. Holding preliminary discussions

Once the best voluntary organisation to provide a new activity or course or project has been identified, the Head of Learning Skills should meet with their representative to discuss the ideas in a creative way.

Together they should shape the voluntary organisation's planned activity to really meet the needs of prisoners in the establishment, based on previous activities, and the Head of Learning and Skills' detailed knowledge of prisoner's needs or interests.

If the voluntary organisation has worked in another prison, it could be valuable to discuss what the differences are between the two establishments, and what is similar. The Head of Learning & Skills or Voluntary Sector Coordinator from that other establishment would be well placed to act as a reference.

Once the proposed activity has started to take shape, the Head of Learning and Skills and the voluntary organisation representative should complete the Schedule described in Section B below, in order to agree how the activity will be delivered and how it will be reviewed (evaluated).

## B. Completing the schedule for setting up an activity to be run by a voluntary organisation in prison

If the Head of Learning and Skills and the voluntary organisation record information under each of the following headings, they will have a good basis for future reviews (evaluations). Establishments will also collect other related information according to local practice and the requirements of particular activities, and will pull all this together into a formal written agreement, to support the relationship with the voluntary organisation (see Section C, page 9).

1. Basic information about the organisation:
  - Name of organisation and contact person, and address telephone, e-mail, web-site
  - Aims of the organisation (their mission statement or constitution)
  - Annual report and accounts
2. Background information about running the activity
  - Funding amounts brought in and sources
  - Numbers and roles of paid workers and volunteers who will deliver the activity (and relevant experience where known)
  - Names, ethnicity and any other relevant information about the paid workers or volunteers (e.g. any offending background)
  - Equipment/materials to be brought in by voluntary organisation
  - Space, equipment and materials to be provided by establishment
  - Establishment staff support and time needed (e.g. for escorting prisoners)
  - Any training or information needed by the voluntary organisation (e.g. security or suicide awareness training, or Prison Induction Pack)
3. The activity (outputs)
  - Brief description of activity
  - Number, frequency and duration of sessions; timetable if relevant
  - Numbers of prisoners to be involved (range)
  - Which prisoners will be involved (Category, first language, basic skills, parents etc)?
4. Setting up the review (evaluation)

*Refer to the Learner Self Assessment Checklist on page 12 for the suggested changes (outcomes) for the prisoner.*

  - What will be the changes (outcomes) for the learner?
  - Any direct contribution to qualifications?
  - Any other benefits to the establishment or other prisoners?
  - Agree which items in the Learner Self-assessment Checklist the activity is designed to improve, and add any extra questions to the Learner Self-Assessment Checklist (see page 12)

- Date of first review and frequency thereafter, if relevant (see box below)
  - Agree the administrative information to be collected (see suggestions on page 15)
  - Agree who else should provide a view on the benefits to learners, such as: prison officers for any improvement to the atmosphere on the unit; tutors for any impact on basic and learning skills or other qualifications; the Chaplain
  - Agree other evidence that will help evaluate the activity, such as: case studies; personal commendations; publications; performances; videos; paintings; anecdotal evidence; and comments and reflections and learning by the voluntary organisation.
5. Communication within the establishment
- Who needs to know about the planned activity to gain staff confidence, and to communicate with prisoners?
  - Any wider communication such as through prison magazines or radio stations

#### **When to review?**

Q: How often should the activity be reviewed (evaluated)?

A: If the activity is a short course or project, lasting less than three months, then it is best to evaluate it at the end.

If it's an on-going project it could be reviewed once at the mid-point and once at the end - or twice a year.

Q: Prisoners are often moved, so a course will often end with less or different people - at what point do we use the self-assessment with prisoners?

A: Review the course as suggested in the previous question. If numbers fall off, it will be important to detail which prisoners stopped coming for which reasons.

Q: A lot of our activities are short and repeated for a different group of prisoners every week - how can we evaluate them?

A: Taking a snapshot using the self-assessment checklist every 6-8 weeks should be possible - but information on who attended each activity should be routinely kept.

**If it is a one-off day, it may not be worth formally reviewing it - unless it is a pilot and the establishment might run it again.**

## C. Drawing up necessary agreements

In drawing up an agreement, Heads of Learning and Skills should be aware of PSO 4190 Strategy for Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector and should liaise with the Voluntary Sector Coordinator in their establishment. Among other things, PSO4190 deals with Security Checks and Health and Safety.

Voluntary Sector Coordinators may already have drawn up a model Agreement for the Provision of Services. Samples of such agreements are available through the Learning and Skills Advisers.

Where the establishment is funding the activity, a grant agreement or contract will be necessary.

Information gathered under Section B should be included into either the Agreement for the Provision of Services or the grant agreement/contract as appropriate.

Guidelines on types of agreement and contracts are available from HM Prison Service Contracts and Procurement Management Unit.

## Stage 2: Collecting information and views

*Many voluntary and community organisations already collect information about their activities. If paperwork already exists, check it against the suggestions below – it may be easier to update existing forms rather than duplicate effort by issuing new ones.*

### A. Collecting administrative information about the activities and participants

Some basic information should be recorded by the provider organisation for every activity:

- dates of sessions/activities
- names of learners taking part
- numbers of learners taking part
- numbers attending each session
- number of learners completing the activity
- reasons for any dropouts

Where appropriate, they might also record the following:

- numbers of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (if known)
- numbers of learners with basic skills needs (if known)
- numbers of learners for whom English is an additional language
- number achieving qualifications - and their names
- numbers achieving other goals, such as a new skill, or a personal goal - and their names

Other information on the activity may also be appropriate or useful, and this should be locally agreed.

Some of this information can usefully be entered onto Regime Monitoring Forms.

### B. Using the Learner Self-Assessment Checklist after the activity to collect prisoners' views

This Guide shows how to collect learners' views about how they have changed as a result of the activity. This is done by using a Learner Self-Assessment Checklist.

The Checklist includes possible changes that are known to be important to both the Prison Service and individual voluntary organisations. There are empty boxes where Head of Learning and Skills and voluntary organisations can write in other possible benefits they hope to produce.

## The Learner Self-Assessment Checklist – what does it show?

Using the checklist helps collect information about what changes for the prisoner as a result of the activity, i.e. the 'outcomes' for learners. Outcomes are explained below.

### **Outputs and outcomes**

The activity that the organisation provides for prisoners needs to relate to the expectations of the OLSU, as outlined in Appendix 1. But of course voluntary organisations will also want to achieve their own aims for prisoners. Both perspectives are covered in the Learner Self-Assessment Checklist and other aspects of the review of the activity.

There are two things that need to be measured: outputs, and outcomes.

**Outputs** are about the activities provided and to whom. This involves recording how many sessions are run, and how many people attend. The Administration checklist (see page 14) records this information.

**Outcomes** are different. Outcomes are:

*changes which result from the activity - usually changes in individuals.*

Changes in levels of individual prisoners' Basic and Key Skills are usually already monitored. But much of what voluntary organisations provide in prison is designed to achieve a different sort of change in prisoners, such as building confidence, self-esteem and the ability to work with others. These sorts of outcomes are important but because they can be harder to measure, they are often not systematically monitored.

The Learner Self-Assessment Checklist is a simple and direct way of measuring outcomes.

*The Checklist which follows can be photocopied for use. See page 14 for how to administer the Checklist.*

## Learner Self-Assessment Checklist



Name of Establishment..... Date .....

*We would like to know how useful you think the activity was.*

*Please could you tick to show how you agree or disagree with the statements.*

*You can say what you really think because your name is not on the form.*

What was the activity/course/project called? .....

<b><i>As a result of the course or project I have been doing:</i></b>	Strongly disagree 	Disagree 	Neither agree nor disagree 	Agree 	Strongly agree 
I feel better about myself					
I have more confidence					
I am better at talking					
I am better at listening					
I am better at getting on with people					
I am better at understanding other people's point of view					
My attitude has changed for the better					
I have more self-control					
I am in trouble less					
I did something I never thought I could					
I am keener to continue learning					
I have made better use of my time in prison					
I believe I will lead a more productive life on release					
I am better prepared to get work on release					
I feel more positive about the future					
I am taking more responsibility for my actions					
<i>Another outcome?</i>					
<i>Another outcome?</i>					
I would recommend the course to someone else					
The course/project was interesting					
The course/project met my needs					

**Could you help us with a bit more information? Thanks.  
What is your ethnic group?**

Choose ONE section from A to E, then tick the appropriate box to indicate your cultural background<sup>1</sup>.

- A. White
  - British
  - Irish
  - Any other white background, please write in
  
- B. Mixed
  - White and Black Caribbean
  - White and Black African
  - White and Asian
  - Any other mixed background, please write in
  
- C. Asian or Asian British
  - Indian
  - Pakistani
  - Bangladeshi
  - Any other Asian Background, please write in
  
- D. Black or Black British
  - Caribbean
  - African
  - Any other Black background, please write in
  
- E. Chinese or other ethnic group
  - Chinese
  - Any other, please write in

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<sup>1</sup> These categories are taken from the 2001 Census



## How to administer the Learner Self-Assessment Checklist

At the last session of the activity, or at the agreed review point, the voluntary organisation's facilitator asks prisoners to complete the Checklist.

It is important to:

- allow at least 10 minutes for prisoners to complete it
- explain why they need to complete the form
- offer help in reading or understanding the questions, if needed
- re-assure them about confidentiality (names of learners are not required on the form – so they can be honest about what they say)
- avoid the very end of the session when prisoners are ready to leave the classroom/workshop.

Where possible, an independent person could administer the checklist.

### C. Gather other perspectives on the activities and any changes they have brought about for learners

In the setting-up stage it was agreed who else could provide a view on the quality of the activities and any changes the activities might have brought about for the prisoners. This might have been Prison Officers or Tutors or Chaplains, for example. The Head of Learning and Skills and the voluntary organisation need to think through how they will collect those views for the evaluation.

This may not be possible for very short courses or activities, but usually somebody will have a view on the activity – for example the prison officer who sat in on some sessions.

There is a range of other possible evidence that will help evaluate the activity, including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ case studies</li><li>▪ personal commendations</li><li>▪ publications</li><li>▪ performances</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ videos</li><li>▪ paintings</li><li>▪ anecdotal evidence</li></ul>
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It is always useful to bring together the opinions of the people from the voluntary organisation who ran the activities:

- How well did it go?
- How did the learners respond?
- Would the organisation do anything differently next time?
- Any issues around access to prisoners?

## Stage 3: Analysis, discussion and action planning

At the agreed point, the Head of Learning and Skills and the representative of the provider voluntary organisation will review progress and what has been learned. They can agree between them who will analyse which information.

### A. Analyse the findings of the Learner Self-Assessment Checklists, and other information about the results of the activity

#### Analysing the administrative information

The information gathered could be presented as it has been collected, for example, on a Register. However it may be of more value to summarise it onto one page, so that it can be seen at a glance.

Considerations for analysis might be:

- What was the average level of attendance (if more than one session)?
- How does attendance compare with other similar activities?
- How did prisoners without English as a first language participate in the activity?
- What sort of prisoners started or completed the activity?

#### Analysing the Learner Self-Assessment Checklists

The Learner Self-Assessment Checklists can be interesting to scan one by one, but they yield more useful information for evaluating the activity when they are analysed together.

Detailed advice on how to analyse the Learner Self-Assessment Checklists is included in Appendix 3, along with the analysis form of the Checklist.

The analysis can show:

- Overall learner response to the activity
- Particular outcomes brought about by the activity
- Comparative responses by groups of prisoners e.g. black and minority ethnic prisoners compared with white prisoners

Both the Head of Learning and Skills and the voluntary organisation need to keep a copy of the forms and the analysis, to refer back to at future reviews. This will help to carry on improving the course, and will provide evidence for other purposes such as funding bids.

#### Analysing other perspectives and evidence

It will help the review if either the voluntary organisation or the Head of Learning and Skills keep a note of any feedback received. If videos or case studies have been made, they can be brought to the review.

## **B. Discussing the findings**

### **Schedule for review (evaluation) meeting**

The voluntary organisation and the Head of Learning and Skills then look through all the information that has been collected and discuss it. It might help to start off by looking back at the set-up schedule, to see again what opportunities for learning and/or development the activity hoped to achieve, and the possible changes in prisoners it might bring about.

The discussion should cover the following points:

1. General report on the activities, including the administrative information
2. Learner Self-Assessment Forms - summary and analysis
3. Other perspectives and evidence, as agreed at the set-up meeting
4. Equal opportunities issues: analysis of Learner Self-Assessment forms by ethnic origin, first language, learning difficulties, as appropriate
5. Assessment of value for money
6. Comments from the individual or team who ran the activity
7. Any learning for the establishment
8. Summary of the above points.

## **C. Agreeing whether to repeat or change the activity, or other actions**

The second half of the review meeting takes decisions about the activity and plans for the future, as follows:

1. Decide if the activity should be continued, or repeated
2. Agree any necessary changes to the activity in the future
3. Plan dates of further sessions of the activity
4. Plan how to communicate what the review has shown, and to whom
5. Review funding and resource issues
6. Decide how to monitor and evaluate the activity in future
7. Agree next review date, where applicable.

## In conclusion

### Who else can use the Guide?

We have described above how Heads of Learning and Skills can use the Guide. We describe below how the Guide is also helpful to:

- Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) inspections
- quality groups in prison
- voluntary organisations providing services.

### How ALI inspectors can use the Guide

ALI inspectors look primarily at accredited training in prisons, but are also interested in the full range of services and in how prisoners respond to them. Head of Learning and Skills can use the Guide to build up systematic information about the outcomes of activities, and demonstrate to ALI inspectors how prisoners themselves assess the benefit of activities.

Inspectors also consider the annual Self-Assessment reports by Heads of Learning and Skills, and may ask what contribution prisoners themselves have made to these reports. Information generated through applying the Guide can help strengthen the reports.

### How quality groups can use the Guide

Following the publication of "Quality Assuring Learning and Skills Provision" (OLSU, 2003), quality groups will be increasingly important in prisons. It can be difficult for such groups to get access to systematic information about what is really achieved by activities run by voluntary organisations, and the Guide will help on this. It may also be useful to invite a voluntary organisation representative to join the quality group.

The Guide will help to demonstrate the value of activities that add to prison culture by supporting learning and development where there is no accreditation.

### How voluntary organisations can use the Guide

In all voluntary and community sector work, it is becoming more important to show evidence that what you do works - that individuals really do benefit. This stress on outcomes (changes in individuals) means you need a way of measuring outcomes. The Guide provides a Checklist of outcomes - many of which are likely to be relevant to your work. You may choose to add other outcomes, relating to your own particular service. You will then have a ready-made way of collecting evidence that you really do make a difference. This can be useful in promoting and reporting your work to other audiences, such as other prisons and funders, and agencies such as Custody to Work. It will also help pinpoint areas for improvement.

## Questions frequently asked by voluntary organisations

The following questions are sometimes raised by voluntary organisations, and the Head of Learning and Skills may find the suggested responses below useful.

### Practical matters

Q: Can changes in learners really be measured?

A: More and more funders want such information. Many voluntary organisations are now more systematic in collecting information about changes rather than relying on hunch.

Q: Why do we have to give so much information about our paid workers and/or volunteers?

A: It's partly to see that they have appropriate experience or training, and also we are trying to meet the needs of all prisoners, including minority groups. So we ask, for example, about the ethnic background of your staff/volunteers so we can talk to you about how to meet the language, cultural or religious needs of prisoners. We think they respond well when they have common reference points with the people running the activities.

Q: Won't some prisoners have difficulty getting their heads round the form?

A: Experience shows that most people can deal with these questions. Do not worry if you need to help some people. It's always helpful to explain why you are asking them to fill in the form.

Q: This new monitoring is useful but it takes time and we are short of resources; how can we cope?

A: It's easy to fit the self-assessment into the normal activity of the session, and remember that it will not be used at every session, by any means.

Q: Can organisations use case studies to show aspects of what is achieved?

A: Yes. You agree with the Head of Learning and Skills on the full range of evidence you will bring.

### Using the information

Q: How can we get recognition of this information beyond the Prison service, including at policy level, with the public and other funders?

A: The information gathered allows you to make well-supported statements about what is achieved for individuals by your work. You can draw on this for many audiences, including other funders. Policy-makers and funders are increasingly interested in evidence that real changes happen.

Q: How can we use the information for organisational learning?

A: When your activities are reviewed, you have valuable information about your effectiveness. This helps your organisation build on success and evaluate where changes are needed.

## Bringing in our own values and aims

Q: Will this kind of information really be valued by the OLSU/improve activities offered to prisoners?

A: The OLSU is setting up this system because it is recognised that voluntary organisations' achievements in prisons need this kind of measurement in order to be fully recognised.

Q: Some benefits to learners only show up later on – how are they dealt with?

A: This self-assessment provides a snapshot of what an activity achieves. Assessing longer-term benefits can be difficult and expensive, but some organisations do find a way of doing this. The Home Office may be able to help with information on re-offending by learners.

Q: Confidentiality is very important to us. How can it be safeguarded?

A: When prisoners complete the self-assessment, they do not give their name. The focus of interest is how learners as a whole respond to an activity, and there is no need at any stage for the prisoner to be identified.

## **Appendix one: Expectations of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU)**

The OLSU Vision is that prisoners have access to educational and learning opportunities that are relevant to their needs, and which compare with provision on the outside. The OLSU is seeking to strengthen partnerships between prisons and the voluntary organisations that provide activities for prisoners, thereby increasing capacity.

The OLSU and the Prison Service expect to see beneficial changes in prisoners as a result of the activities, and they believe that these changes can be demonstrated. They are particularly interested in improvements in prisoners' personal and social skills, and preparation for Basic Skills (literacy, numeracy and ICT). They also welcome activities that increase the likelihood of prisoners going on to further learning. All these benefits, they believe, will help reduce reoffending after release.

The Guide reflects the OLSU's commitment to working within the Compact between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The Guide was developed in consultation with Heads of Learning and Skills and with the voluntary and community sector. It recommends a participative approach to evaluating voluntary sector organisations' contributions.

## **Appendix two: Key Principles**

The Guide provides a consistent framework across all establishments and will generate useful information for the evaluation of voluntary organisations' activities without overburdening their administrative capacities.

It brings in the voice of the prisoner, systematically reported, and ensures that changes in learners (outcomes) are measured.






The Guide promotes a culture of self-assessment by the voluntary organisations providing the activities, and aims to bring about improvement by helping providers identify strengths and weaknesses, and highlight good practice.

The Guide reflects equal opportunities principles by ensuring that monitoring and evaluation practice focuses on the experiences of the learner. It also, for example, directs attention to the match between the people running an activity and the prisoners taking part.

## Appendix three: Learner Self-Assessment Checklist - Analysis form






Name and date of activity/course/project

See page15 for how to use this analysis form

<b><i>As a result of the course or project I have been doing:</i></b>	Strongly disagree 	Disagree 	Neither agree nor disagree 	Agree 	Strongly agree 	Total agreeing and strongly agreeing
I feel better about myself						
I have more confidence						
I am better at talking						
I am better at listening						
I am better at getting on with people						
I am better at understanding other people's point of view						
My attitude has changed for the better						
I have more self-control						
I am in trouble less						
I did something I never thought I could						
I am keener to continue learning						
I have made better use of my time in prison						
I believe I will lead a more productive life on release						
I am better prepared to get work on release						
I feel more positive about the future						
<i>Another outcome?</i>						
<i>Another outcome?</i>						
<b><i>Total in each column</i></b>						



To analyse the information, enter in each box on the analysis form of the Checklist the numbers of learners that ticked that box, as follows

<b><i>As a result of the course or project I have been doing:</i></b>	Strongly disagree 	Disagree 	Neither agree nor disagree 	Agree 	Strongly agree 	Total agreeing and strongly agreeing
I have more confidence	1	0	3	5	1	6

If you add the totals of learners that ticked 'agree' or 'strongly agree' in each row, and write the total into the right hand column, you can see how positive the group's response is on each question.

Here is how to get a percentage positive score for each question:

1. *Add up the number of positive responses (agree and strongly agree) on each line*
2. *Divide that number by the total number of prisoners completing the checklist*
3. *Multiply by 100*

So, for example, if as in the example above, 6 prisoners out of a group of 10 who completed the checklist said that they agreed or strongly agreed that they had more confidence after completing the activity, that would be:  
 6 divided by 10 = 0.6  
 multiplied by 100 = 60%  
 so 60% had a positive outcome.

Comparing positive outcomes for each question will show where the activity is most successful. For example, an activity might have significantly raised confidence and self-esteem but made little impact on interest in learning, or vice versa.

If the totals in each column are added together at the foot of the checklist, then it is possible to calculate what the overall percentage of positive outcomes from the activity were.

It may be important to check whether prisoners of a particular ethnic group or age group benefited more or less than the average. If so, complete one analysis form for that group of prisoners – e.g. black and ethnic minority prisoners, and complete another analysis form for the other prisoners. Comparing the two will show any differences in how they have responded.

## Appendix four: Useful organisations and publications

### Useful organisations

1. Clinks

Phone: 01904 673970

[www.clinks.org](http://www.clinks.org)

2. Unit for Arts and Offenders

Phone: 01227 470629

web-site [www.a4offenders.org.uk](http://www.a4offenders.org.uk)

3. Charities Evaluation Services

Phone: 020 7713 5722

web-site [www.ces-vol.org.uk](http://www.ces-vol.org.uk)

4. National Association for Councils for Voluntary Service

Phone: 01142786636

web-site [www.nacvs.org.uk](http://www.nacvs.org.uk)

### Useful publications

1. *GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE – getting it right together. Prisons and the Voluntary and community-based Sector*: published by HM Prison Service and Clinks

2. *An introduction to working with the Prison Service – Guidelines for Voluntary and Community Sector Staff and Volunteers*: published by HM Prison Service June 2002

3. *Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector in Learning and Skills: The Development of a Strategic Approach* published by the DfES OLSU

4. *Strategy for Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector : Prison Service Order 4190* , HM Prison Service 2002.

5. *Voluntary in Prison*

*A Resource Pack*

Published by Clinks

6. The following publications are available from Charities Evaluation Services (0207 713 5722):

Practical Monitoring and Evaluation: a guide for voluntary organisations.

First Steps in Monitoring and Evaluation

Discussion Paper 7 Outcome Monitoring