

Learning Together: Report of the Transition Board

Background

1. On 29 November 2019, Saskia Jones and Jack Merritt were unlawfully killed by Usman Khan, an attendee at an event at Fishmongers' Hall, London. The event was held for the five-year anniversary of Learning Together, an initiative based at the Institute of Criminology.
2. Learning Together at Cambridge is a programme where students are taught alongside prisoners, and has extended to activities where former prisoner participants have been meeting University students and others in community settings.
3. Since the incident on 29 November 2019, the University has paused all courses, events and other meetings organised by the Learning Together Programme that bring together University staff, students, former students and visitors with those in prison or under criminal justice supervision outside prison.
4. Since the pause, and prior to the work of the Transition Board, the University has completed three pieces of work, each designed to consider different aspects of Learning Together.
 - 4.1. **The Reflection Group Report** (Annex A): in March 2020, the Reflection Group made recommendations to the Council and the General Board on the safety and wellbeing of students and staff who participate in the Learning Together Programme; the contribution of the Programme to the mission of the University; and on the future organisation of the Programme. Its first recommendation was to establish an Advisory Body to advise on the further development of the Programme's safeguarding and risk assessment processes and to sign them off. The second recommendation was to appoint an interim Chief Executive for a year whose principal responsibilities would be to oversee operational matters; to line manage, guide and mentor the co-Directors; and to help to steer the strategic development of Learning Together.
 - 4.2. **(a) The Advisory Body's First Report** (Annex B): in October 2020, the Council established the Advisory Body to take forward the first set of recommendations from the Reflection Group. It reported in March 2021, and its recommendations were endorsed with further strengthening by the Health and Safety Executive Committee in April 2021. The report makes detailed recommendations on risk assessment, management and governance for the Learning Together Programme.
(b) The majority of members of this Advisory Body have continued on the 'Transition Board'.
(c) Attention is drawn to the detailed commentary and recommendations contained in that first report. The Report of the Transition Board should be read in the context of that earlier work.
 - 4.3. **The Strategic Advisors' Report** (Annex C): in December 2020, the Council decided that the Reflection Group's second recommendation should be divided into two sequential parts, the first being the creation of an advisory role to consider the future of the Programme. Accordingly, the Strategic Advisors' Report was commissioned to make recommendations relating to the future of the Programme and the Network, including the most suitable host institution and the appropriate legal and governance structures. The report was delivered in April 2021 and sets out a sequence of questions, with supporting commentary, for the University to consider. It also sets out a series of suggested timelines, milestones and decision points.
5. The University is in receipt of the Coroner's Report '*Inquests arising from the deaths in the Fishmonger's Hall terror attack – Regulation 28 report on action to prevent future deaths'* (Annex D).

6. In July 2021, the General Board and the Council approved the establishment of the Learning Together Transition Board to make recommendations regarding the transition of Learning Together into its next phase.
7. The Transition Board held its meetings and made its considerations through September to November 2021. The General Board received the Report of the Transition Board for approval by circulation on 3 December 2021.

Action Requested of the Council

8. The Council is asked to **approve** the recommendations of the Transition Board.

Further Context

9. The University has committed to learn from the tragic deaths of Jack Merritt and Saskia Jones and to play its full part in helping to ensure that the recommendations made by the Coroner in his Report (Annex D) are implemented.
10. The Board is clear that projects and programmes that involve students and prisoners learning alongside each other, in a controlled environment, can deliver positive benefits to all involved. The Board notes that a University commitment to offenders and former offenders having access to education fits entirely with the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence. In particular, ensuring inclusivity in education to raise aspiration and widen participation amongst people from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, and enhancing the ability of students to learn throughout life, aligns with the University's education mission.
11. The University's place within the broader academic and local community, its relationships with society, and its engagement in opportunities for innovative partnerships with business, charitable foundations, and healthcare facilitate its aims for the widest possible student access to the University, and supports its contribution to society through the pursuit, dissemination, and application of knowledge.

Specific Recommendations Regarding the Learning Together Programme and Wider Network

12. The earlier report of the Advisory Body (Annex B) and of the Strategic Advisors (Annex C) outlined the growth of Learning Together from a small research project (in one prison involving MPhil students) to a much larger programme involving undergraduates from a range of disciplines in a number of prisons and beyond. These reports identified a range of concerns regarding the breadth of the programme, its governance, management and risk assessments.
13. The first report of the Advisory Body (Annex B) looked at the design, governance and delivery of the Learning Together Programme, and wider network, in so far as it was able to examine that. The Board did not focus on the Fishmongers' Hall event, as that was the subject of the inquests and report by the Coroner (Annex D).
14. The first report of the Advisory Body underlined the need for a new governance structure, whether within or outside the university. In paragraphs 37-9, 47-8, and 58-9 the concerns about the nature of the social interactions and relationships between students and offenders and ex-offenders were detailed.
15. After further consideration of those reports, perusal of programmes in other institutions, discussions with relevant individuals and specifically referencing the recommendations of the Advisory Body on Work with Offenders and ex-Offenders (Annex A) as the foundations for the further recommendations, the Transition Board has developed five recommendations.
16. These five recommendations relate strictly to the confined remit of the Transition Board regarding Cambridge Learning Together activities only.

17. There is ongoing research at Cambridge with prisoners and people who have offended, and the further recommendations of the Transition Board in points 18 to 23 do not relate to that other work. These other programmes will need to have the same rigorous and strict management, governance and risk-assessed conditions set out in the first recommendations of the Advisory Body, those dictated by the University Health & Safety Executive, and those arising from this piece of work.

Recommendation 1.

18. There now needs be a clear stop to the delivery of the Learning Together Programme in Cambridge, both within and beyond prisons.

Recommendation 2.

19. The entirety of the Learning Together network (including any intellectual property, residual funds, practice and guidelines) should be handed over in a planned manner to a suitable, respected and established organisation (for example, the Prisoners' Education Trust; Clinks; the Prison Reform Trust or similar charity) whom we would expect and hope would develop a suitable framework, potentially with Ministry of Justice involvement.
20. The planned handover of the Learning Together network - in so far as possible with remaining resources - to another organisation does not preclude the University from either being part of a new framework for such activities or engaging with activities in this field in the future, possibly in collaboration with other academic institutions.

Recommendation 3.

21. It is hoped that work in prisons (i.e. a controlled environment) could happen in the future and that there will be active consideration of prisoners and University of Cambridge students learning alongside each other. This potential activity would be absolutely contingent on - and should only happen with - sound governance; proper safeguards; appropriate management and structured risk assessment; adequate finance in place; and proper frameworks that would suitably guide and support what is done and those leading it.
22. We are told that the Ministry of Justice may develop a new framework and we would welcome that framework if it defines which organisation is to be responsible for which risk, and what type of activities can or cannot be undertaken in future. We believe this would assist in the proper planning, delivery and oversight of any future activity.

Recommendation 4.

23. Should any similar activities be considered in the future with individuals who have offended but who are now in the community, such activities should be recognised as taking place in an "uncontrolled environment" and, therefore, a markedly higher level of risk assessment and management would be required.

Recommendation 5.

24. Recommendations (1) to (3) do not preclude a well-structured research programme involving MPhil students going into local prisons as part of the research.
25. Once/if a Ministry of Justice framework and a properly governed network are established, it may be possible for the University of Cambridge to operate a programme, in prison settings only, at least in the first instance.

Membership of the Transition Board

26. Mr Andrew Bridges (Justice Advisor, former HMCI Probation); Professor Nicholas Hardwick (Royal Holloway, UoLondon); Professor Fiona Karet (UoCambridge); Ms Juliet Lyon (former Dir Prison Reform Trust); Baroness Sally Morgan (Chair) (Master Fitzwilliam College,

UoCambridge); Dr Andrew Sanchez (UoCambridge); Dr Susan Wan (Secretary) (UoCambridge)

Next Steps

27. Subject to the Council's approval, the recommendations of the Transition Board will be implemented.