

# **LSIS Leadership in Technology (LIT) grant based intervention**

## **Final Report**

### **Title :**

HMP CASTINGTON: IMPROVING THE RECORDING AND USE OF VISUAL IMAGES IN AN OFFENDER EDUCATION SETTING.

### **Introduction:**

HMP Castington is a Category C prison located in Northumberland, serving the North East, particularly the urban centres of Newcastle upon Tyne, Sunderland and Middlesbrough. It has a population of prisoners approaching 400, and is committed to every prisoner being employed in some capacity with a large number attending educational programmes.

This project was created specifically to tackle the dearth of provision for the use of digital media within the prison system. Whilst a strong case still exists relating to the security implications of utilising digital media in secure institutions, the undimmed development of digital media 'on the outside' leaves both staff and prisoners at risk of being left behind. The aims of the project were to safely imbed the use of digital media – where appropriate - into the programme of education available to prisoners, giving them opportunities to take on new skills, acquire new interests and keep abreast of technological advancement.

### **Methodology:**

With the support of our project mentor we produced a programme of events to introduce And/or increase the use of digital media to the prison. These included workshops explaining the merits of harnessing digital media, the power of peer mentoring, technical skills and creative practices with digital media. To test and showcase these new skills, four prisoners then volunteered to be the subject of four documentary short films, developed, shot and edited (with the guidance of our mentor) by the prisoners themselves. The experience of this was clearly very moving at times for prisoners, and presented them with many opportunities to reflect on their pasts and their future, whilst also crucially giving them a taste for the developments in digital media.

To ensure the legacy of the project beyond its initial participants we instigated a 'colleague coaching' principle whereby good practice learnt as part of the project would have to be passed on to others in future. This included both members of staff and prisoners sharing their new-found skills with others. Though staff were free to sign up for the programme, prisoners were closely vetted to ensure they had an interest in supporting this colleague coaching principle.

**Results:**

Our aim was simple: to increase the availability and use of digital media at HMP Castington, and with the coupling of this grant and the connected capital grant we have achieved that aim. The prison is now equipped with the knowledge, skills, and technology required to have a lasting policy towards the use of digital media where appropriate within the prison.

In truth the impact of the project has yet to be witnessed fully. Though we have utilised the expertise of our mentor to the full and developed the skill base in the establishment immeasurably, and completed a meaningful first project with prisoners, it may only be possible over the coming weeks and months to see just how much the project will change actions in relation to digital media. Only with the development of further projects and the building of a portfolio of creative work will we witness the real impact of the project on the establishment. However, it is inevitable that its impact we only bring about positive change. Staff and the management of the prison have been impressed by the opportunities afforded to all by the project and to the potential of what we have developed and purchased. For example, the management have already indicated that an in-house, prisoner-made induction film would be achievable as a result of the equipment and skills acquired as a result of this project. Such a development would be an unexpected but welcome one and an ideal opportunity to test our newly developed skills.

**Actual or planned savings:**

We have so far only made planned savings related to future digital media production. We will, thanks to the skills and equipment acquired by the prison, be able to develop digital media projects without significant costs involved.

**Lessons:**

Most of the lessons we learned relate to prison procedure that would have no bearing on most other institutions or their projects. However, we are now equipped with the knowledge to overcome numerous challenges with future projects in relation to equipment procurement and setting up projects which are within guidelines acceptable to the establishment. We will also seek to share our experiences with other secure institutions.

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