

**APPLIED BASIC SKILLS IN NEW
TECHNOLOGIES FOR DRUG PREVENTION
IN PRISONS**

Summary

DRAFT to BSA

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INTRODUCTION

PROJECT AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The ABSINT project was concerned with developing training modules and teaching materials, using multimedia and new technologies, to help young offenders with poor basic skills who are marginalised by drug and alcohol misuse. The project aimed to address the needs of participants that have low levels of literacy and numeracy on health/drug rehabilitation/prevention programmes in prisons by:

- a) training staff to teach basic skills using new approaches for drug prevention programs;
- b) involving young offenders in the development of curriculum materials; and
- c) utilising multimedia technology in programmes.

The project aimed to improve basic skills provision and integration into specific drug prevention and generalist health programmes containing information on drug awareness by addressing those barriers to learning accessibility on drug programmes caused through poor basic skills. The use of multimedia technology aimed to bring a fresh approach to language and literacy training, using information on drug prevention issues to provide a stimulating and involving context that would also enhance learning.

The main project objectives were to:

- design and develop basic skills training modules/materials to address barriers to learning on drug prevention elements of health and specific drug rehabilitation programmes, including new training materials, and to use new technologies in the context of drug misuse for use within prisons within the participating partner states;
- design and develop basic skills training materials and methodologies to up

- skill tutors and mentors in correctional institutions in the use of ICT and to use an integrative learner approach for drug prevention programmes;
- initiate an interactive curriculum development that involves young people in the development of materials (use of their own voices and life experiences to enhance the curriculum aims);
 - audit existing practices and build on projects that are already operating within the same field, rather than reinventing the wheel;
 - prepare and develop material in consultation with collaborative partners and experts in the field of drug prevention programmes and basic skills;
 - use multimedia technology to bring a fresh approach to basic skills education, incorporating drug prevention issues and content to provide a stimulating and involving context;
 - utilise the partnership network, to cross-assess the relevance of content within the training modules and teaching materials to be developed;
 - exert influence on those resources used in existing drug prevention programmes through the training of workers within this field in order to a) avoid mutual exclusion; and b) enhance motivation and stimulation of staff development activities in the acquiring of new competencies with the introduction of new technologies;
 - identify, select and recruit appropriate staff within the prisons who will be trained in the use of the new materials, delivery methodology and supplementary technology;
 - train relevant staff and practitioners nominated in each member state in the use of training materials and multimedia resources via directed training inputs;
 - trial training and teaching materials with up to 80 young people in prisons and community groups from 4 participating countries (4 prisons – 20 candidates from each prison);
 - evaluate the material, training and piloting stages, together with an external evaluation of the project.

The resulting new training and technology model would be used in future basic skills and drug prevention programmes for further dissemination to education and social partners at national and transnational levels.

EARLIER WORK

The project aimed to build on an earlier European project, funded through DG XXII, called **Connect** or '**Basic Skills and New Technologies for Young Offenders**'. This project included 4 countries, England, Ireland, France and Belgium with prisons in each of these countries. One prison involved in the Connect project, Amiens Prison in France, also participated in ABSINT.

The main aim of the Connect project was to also develop teaching materials using multi-media to teach young offenders. In this case, an existing product,

The New Reading Disk,¹ was used. The materials were trialed with a number of students in the participating prisons. The main outcome of the project was the production of a CD-ROM - a new version of existing software produced for Basic Skills learners in the UK that had been adapted for prisons. Each country contributed to the CD-ROM, producing materials in the working languages of the project - English, French and Flemish. The project was particularly successful, given the limited timescale. The CD-ROM had a multi-national theme, which enabled prisoners to communicate with one another, through a variety of stories and pictures, across 4 different countries.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Basic Skills Agency, London, **Lead Partner**;

Direction Régionale des Services Pénitentiaires, France, with specific reference to Amiens prison;

County Cork Vocational Education Committee, Ireland, with specific reference to Fort Mitchell Prison, Spike Island, Co. Cork;

Feltham Young Offenders Institution, Middlesex, England

Cardiff Prison, Wales

Institute of Education, London: responsible for technical advice for development of software and evaluation;

Illumina Digital Ltd: responsible for development of software and provision of technical support;

National Adult Literacy Agency, Ireland: national development agency for literacy in the Republic of Ireland.

STEERING AND WORKING GROUP MEETINGS HELD

26 March 2002, London

22 May 2002, Lille

16-17 June 2002, Cork

17 September 2002, Cardiff

¹ *The New Reading Disk*, Cambridge Training and Development.

Basic Skills Agency ABSINT Project Final Report

6-7 December 2002, Amiens
30-31 January 2003, London
25-6 September 2003, London
16 March 2004, London

PARTICIPATION

Partners in Cardiff Prison and Feltham Young Offenders Institution endeavoured to produce materials. However, staff changes outside the control of the project made it difficult for these partners to complete their respective work and materials to a satisfactory level.