

Becoming a Learner Rep

HMYOI Aylesbury

HMP Elmley

HMYOI Feltham

HMYOI Cookham Wood



Elections - HMYOI Aylesbury

Unlike other settings, elections are very rare in custody. However one organisation, User Voice, runs a number of Prison Councils facilitated by ex-prisoners. In HMYOI Aylesbury User Voice facilitated an election process. They began by spending time talking to prisoners and collecting names of those interested in participating. Once they had 50/60 names, they ran 8 weeks of training including brainstorming sessions whereby the young people explored issues they would like to discuss as a Prison Council.

These ideas were then collated into three broad themes. The themes became 'parties'. One of the parties was called the 'training party' who have a focus on promoting education and learning opportunities in the prison. The prisoners decided which party to support and they decided on a leader and vice-leader for each party. Prisoners received training in planning a campaign, public speaking, designing manifestos and designing publicity materials.

The leaders of each party had to give speeches in hustings-type events in the lead up to election day. On election day, all prisoners and all staff were entitled to a vote. The parties could then appoint party representatives to attend the monthly Prison Council meetings in proportion to the number of votes cast for that party. This system works at HMYOI Aylesbury as the young people are on longer sentences and therefore there is a more stable population.

Teacher nominated - HMP Elmley

At HMP Elmley, the teachers nominate one learner voice representative from each class to attend a monthly learner voice meeting on a Friday afternoon. This representative then gathers the views of their fellow students before the meeting to advocate on the classes' behalf. The meeting is chaired by the OLASS Manager who writes up notes of the meeting and actions. These minutes are distributed to all the reps so they can feedback to their class. The last minutes are read at the start of each forum so the reps can be updated with progress on the agreed actions. Teachers also nominate Learners of the Month and one is chosen by a panel of tutors and fed back to the Learner Voice Forum.

Whoever is available and willing! - HMYOI Feltham

In HMYOI Feltham A-side (under 18's), there is a high turnover of young people. The average stay is only two weeks. Therefore it is very difficult to get a consistent number of learner reps. However their approach is to set regularly monthly meetings and on the day of the meeting the staff who facilitate the student council speak to the young people in the education department at the time and ask if they would like to take part in the meeting and contribute their views. This model shows that despite a high turnover, learner voice can still be implemented if the will is there.

Open to anyone - HMYOI Cookham Wood

At HMYOI Cookham Wood the youth council is a voluntary activity that the young people can choose get involved in. Young people can volunteer, often encouraged by their peers on the youth council. Staff also encourage the young people to engage with the youth council. The youth council is also popular with the young people doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award for the volunteering section.