

Learning Together Newsletter



Issue 2
June 2018

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We are running a 10 mile race to raise awareness and money for Learning Together.

We need your support! Please read more on page 5.



Education as the practice of freedom

Welcome to our summer newsletter!



It has been a busy year! In December, the Cambridge team identified four projects to work on throughout the year to strengthen our community. With lots of hard work, all four projects are now coming to fruition: our first Alumni Event will happen on 10 September; our HMP Warren Hill scholars are busily finalising their legal resources ready for distribution; our access contacts database is taking shape so we can keep in touch with

each other more effectively; and we've successfully piloted a new digital learning platform for all of our Learning Together students. This year has also seen some unplanned adventures: our new 'Big Ideas' seminar series and Rebecca's artistic residency at Whitemoor, and international community building visits to Cambridge from a Latin American delegation in September and Mary Nel from South Africa in December.

So, 2018 has been busy, and it hasn't always been easy, but we are spurred on by knowing that you are all working hard too. As you'll see from the picture above, in May, we welcomed two of our former students to Cambridge for the day—Nick and John. We dream of these days. They keep us going. This year, celebrating our students in Grendon, we reflected on the words of Mumford and Sons from 'After the Storm'. Their song speaks to the importance of community to sustain determination in the face of life's storms. What we've learned together over the last four years is that while we all might be able to begin something brilliant on our own, we need each other to sustain anything good. Thank you for doing your bit—we hope you enjoy reading about each other's achievements in these pages. Until next time ...

Ruth & Amy

Key news for this issue of the newsletter:

Recognising the hard work and talents of our learning community at end of course celebrations in Grendon, Warren Hill and Whitemoor.

Celebrating new studies, jobs, awards, funding, progress and publications within our community.

Launching our new HE Funding Guide so that more students can access the information they need to achieve their learning aspirations.

Fundraising calling all runners and supporters to get involved with the Great South Run.

Getting together at the LT Annual Conference in Hull and our first ever Alumni Event in Cambridge.

*The first prison is the body,
At least that's what they say.
But your mind can shape
Your own confines: open gates,
windows, a doorway.
If the body is a prison,
The mind is parole.
Holding the key to your freedom
Unchaining your soul.
Moses and Ellie*



Learning Together
Anthology

class of 2017-2018

Evelyn put together a lovely anthology of work produced by criminology students, mentors and facilitators in our workshop with Joelle Taylor at Grendon. Daniel and Becca's poem below, is one example of some of the great work that is included in the anthology.

Mystery Triangle

Is it a diamond or
a pyramid?

What lies beneath,
what treasures
could be hid,

Don't judge a book
by its covers, see
colours,

Not shades of dull
and grey.

Because the reality
of this illusion

Could cause confu-
sion

And send your
mind astray.

It may even cloud
your vision,

So you choose the
wrong decision.

Don't do it, dig
deep,

And find the col-
ourful treasures
that lie beneath.

Daniel and Becca

'Tis the season of celebration!

Those well-versed with the LT calendar will know that March, April and May are busy months of the year — when hard work comes together to be recognised and celebrated. Music, flowers, tears, hope and pride abound!

This year, having sworn to never again hold two end of course celebrations in quick succession, we had the privilege of hosting not two but FOUR end of course celebrations—three of which happened in the same week. In true Learning Together style, Grendon, Warren Hill and Whitemoor made sure that the celebration days showcased, not only respect and gratitude for each other but, also, the fruits of everyone's learning and hard work.



Our Writing Together students and mentors in Whitemoor produced a powerful collection of work called 'Free Writers', beautifully illustrated by one of the group's writers, Isaac. All writers were presented with a copy of the anthology at the end of course celebration, which contains two pieces of writing from each student and mentor—a combination of poems, short stories and scripts. All of the writers read aloud from the anthology at the event. Dr Preti Taneja, who convened the course, described the writers as 'a group of fierce and brilliant new literary voices'. She's not wrong!

In Warren Hill, students celebrated the completion of our first Butler Law Course—a legal research course, which takes the contemporary challenges of accessing justice as inspiration, and galvanises students into action to improve the accessibility of legal knowledge in their chosen field. At our end of course celebration, students presented the resources that they have produced together, which span a wide range of legal areas —from Cat A reviews to legal self-representation in civil cases. Students' work was met with glowing praise from criminal justice practitioners, and an incitement for them to extend their work to new media and new topics. Jack and the Warren Hill team have a busy summer ahead, implementing feedback ready for the launch of the resources in early autumn.



'I feel like I have made lifelong friends with the Cambridge students. My mum and sister came down for the day. The Learning Together presentation was the best day of their lives with me—those are the words of my Mum!'

Ryan, Warren Hill student, 2018

Back in Whitemoor, we celebrated the second year of our philosophy and ethics course, 'The Good Life and the Good Society', led by Drs Beth Phillips and Ryan Williams. Highlights of the day included Chris' recital of Shakespeare's St Crispin's Day Speech from Henry V, and Arabella's exuberant leadership of her group's news report project presenting a vision of what the good life and the good society might look like in 20 years time. Friends and family gathered for the day to celebrate the achievements and hard work of all involved.



And last, but by no means least, our final celebration was at Grendon, where we brought to a close the fourth year of our 'Introduction to Criminology' course. Back by popular demand, we welcomed creative talent, and friend, Joelle Taylor, who spoke about 'poetry, power and a politics of togetherness'. Further highlights included music by a joint 'Grenbridge' choir, in partnership with Joe Shaw and Sing Inside, a talk by Gareth and Jack about Learning Together beyond Grendon, and powerful reflections from Shahid, Chris, Max, Muzzaker, Daniel, Daley, Jake and Julianna about their course experiences and hopes for the future. We were also thrilled to welcome back Zaheer, from Ford, who was the brains behind the Learning Together mug... more of which, next...

The LT mugshot

2016 LT Grendon alumnus, Zaheer, now works at the amazing Timpson Academy. Earlier this year, his new skills, the ideas of some of our Grendon mentors, and the generosity of James Timpson came together, to result in the production of these new mugs. They were presented to all students and mentors at this year's end of course celebrations. Hurrah!



Congratulations!

In just over six months, since the last newsletter, members of our community have done some amazing things! Here are just a few:

New studies: Gina and Craig from Whitemoor have begun their MST in Penology at the Institute of Criminology in Cambridge, Chris from Whitemoor has just finished his Open Degree with the OU, Obi and Ben from Grendon are taking steps to begin their degrees and some of our Whitemoor students' children are beginning degrees and joining Learning Together communities within the Network.

New jobs: Megan is now leading a Master's course in criminology at Leeds University (see page 4), Marc from Springhill is working for the Prison Reform Trust, Zaheer is training at the Timpson Academy, Laura has moved from the Ministry of Justice to the Home Office and Nick is working hard as a fettleer.

Awards and funding: Patrick received funding for his PhD, the LT Cambridge office received funding from the Cambridge Humanities Grant Scheme and British Academy to do follow up interviews with LT students and funding from the ESRC to host a conference in Argentina, and Amy was a finalist in the Law Teacher of the Year award.

Terrific transitions: Dean, Nick, Ahmed and Marc from Grendon and Ben from Warren Hill have now all progressed to open conditions, Tom and Iain will join them soon. Jay and Adam have progressed to new Category C establishments, with Keith from Whitemoor hot on their heels. Some of our students have been downgraded from High Risk and Cat A. John and Nick have returned to the community and are working hard up in Manchester and down in Kent.

New publications: Jack's article on solitary confinement for YOs was published in the March issue of the Prison Service Journal, Gareth, Amy and Ruth wrote a chapter with Shadd Maruna, Ellie Price and Jon Reed called *Experiencing Time on Death Row*, which was published in *Living on Death Row: The Psychology of Waiting to Die* (April, 2018), Bob and Geri's *Imprisoned Fathers* is expected to be published in the Prison Service Journal in July, and Moses and Ellie's Poems were exhibited at the Heong Gallery in Cambridge in May.

Drawing Connections

Our creative leader, Rebecca, has begun an artistic residency at Whitemoor, working especially on D and F wings. Through *Drawing Connections*, Rebecca uses creativity to build community and promote wellbeing. Activities so far have included creative explorations of mathematical ideas in nature, a large community tree mural, and clay modelling, working with LT's multi-talented administrator, Lisa.



WhatsApp Doc?

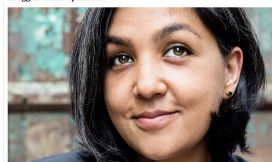
Learning Together sisters and brothers are doing amazing things—it's hard to keep up with it! With continued national and international growth, and ever more prison-based students returning to the community, we have created a WhatsApp group—called LT Family—as a way of everyone staying connected. WhatsApp is a mobile phone application that lets lots of people chat together as a group to share news, ideas and progress. So far, 23 people have joined. We have had a few impromptu 'best photo' and 'quotes of the day' competitions, but the main thing is knowing that there are loads of people rooting for you—a network of motivation and support. Please contact Gareth if you'd like to be added to the group.

'At first, we were strangers with little in common. Now we are all writers. We found, and have created a passion for learning and creative writing that radiates out, for all to see. Looking on during our end of course celebration, there was no divide – just a room full of talented writers, working hard to create something bigger and better together. What more can you ask for?'

An extract from HMPPS intranet blog about this year's first Writing Together course

Preti Taneja's 'awe-inspiring' reimagining of King Lear wins Desmond Elliott prize

Debut novel *We That Are Young* takes £10,000 award after early struggles to find a publisher



Huge congratulations to *Writing Together* course convenor, Dr Preti Taneja, who has won the Desmond Elliott prize for her novel *'We That Are Young'*. The prize is the UK's most prestigious award for first-time novelists. Well done Preti!



John and Nick joined the LT Team for a spot of lunch in Hogwarts... no wait, that's Cambridge!

What role for LT after courses end?



Some of you will have heard from me already, and some of you may know me a little from the blog of my interview with Lisa and Jack. I joined the LT team a few months ago and, since then, I've been meeting students from LT 2015, 2016 and

2017 courses to hear about what they've been up to in the hope of understanding what role LT plays (if any) in life's highs and lows after individual courses have ended. It's been amazing to catch up on everyone's news and share in your reflections about the role of LT in your lives. I look forward to hearing from more of you in the following months! Best wishes to everyone, Victoria.

Off to Whitemoor to write something awesome... like this...

'As usual, Tommy was exhausted when he stepped off the tube. He had woken up just in time for his stop, and plodded the few hundred metres back to his flat with bleary eyes and a growling stomach. Opening the door, he flicked the lights on and was greeted by the unmistakable aroma of his favourite dish...'

Excerpt from 'Working Late' by Mihir, Writing Together student 2017.

Funding Further Studies

The first point of contact for finance training support should usually be the Finance Learning Coordinator at your establishment. This guide offers information to help you find funding for educational courses and materials. If you have further sources of funding that are not included, please do contact us at the address below or on our website or email address.

Course fees	Travel costs
<p>1. Over 8 years or less until 'Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) funding for complete the application form in this pack and send to your local office. Access to Higher Education and a range of PRISONER'S Education Trust (PET) and Local courses. Please see the link.</p> <p>2. Further Education (FE) courses. 120 credits and over. Use the same application form as for the Prisoner's Education Trust (PET) funding. Complete the application and send to your local office. Access to Higher Education and a range of PRISONER'S Education Trust (PET) and Local courses. Please see the link.</p> <p>3. Open university and FE. 120 credits and over. Use the same application form as for the Prisoner's Education Trust (PET) funding. Complete the application and send to your local office. Access to Higher Education and a range of PRISONER'S Education Trust (PET) and Local courses. Please see the link.</p> <p>4. Open university and FE. 120 credits and over. Use the same application form as for the Prisoner's Education Trust (PET) funding. Complete the application and send to your local office. Access to Higher Education and a range of PRISONER'S Education Trust (PET) and Local courses. Please see the link.</p>	<p>1. Over 8 years or less until 'Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) funding for complete the application form in this pack and send to your local office. Access to Higher Education and a range of PRISONER'S Education Trust (PET) and Local courses. Please see the link.</p> <p>2. Further Education (FE) courses. 120 credits and over. Use the same application form as for the Prisoner's Education Trust (PET) funding. Complete the application and send to your local office. Access to Higher Education and a range of PRISONER'S Education Trust (PET) and Local courses. Please see the link.</p> <p>3. Open university and FE. 120 credits and over. Use the same application form as for the Prisoner's Education Trust (PET) funding. Complete the application and send to your local office. Access to Higher Education and a range of PRISONER'S Education Trust (PET) and Local courses. Please see the link.</p> <p>4. Open university and FE. 120 credits and over. Use the same application form as for the Prisoner's Education Trust (PET) funding. Complete the application and send to your local office. Access to Higher Education and a range of PRISONER'S Education Trust (PET) and Local courses. Please see the link.</p>

Our new HE Funding Guide to help build on Learning Together

For many students, taking part in a Learning Together course inspires them to consider further education. But in pursuing that goal, our students often face significant information and funding barriers.

Responding to these experiences, over the last six months, we have worked hard to pull together a new HE Funding Guide, designed especially with our prison-based students in mind. Our Guide sets out sources of available funding for further study, as well as full details of application criteria and processes.

We hope that this guide will help members of our community who are passionate about education to take positive next steps in realising their educational ambitions. Copies of the Guide have already been circulated to partner libraries and education departments, but if you would like a personal copy, please contact Gareth. All feedback is warmly welcomed.

Ellie and Moses at the Heong Gallery



This year we welcomed Joelle Taylor back to Grendon to lead a session on voice and writing. In that session, Moses and Ellie wrote two poems which were later accepted as part of a pop-up exhibition at the Heong Gallery in Cambridge called 'Take me there', with the theme of 'Belonging'. An audio recording of Moses and Ellie reading out their poems was played alongside an exhibit of the texts of their work - an inspiring tribute to their creative collaboration. Congratulations Ellie and Moses!

The power of community!

Earlier this year, a call for help went out to our community, from Megan (Grendon, 2016), who asked us to share our thoughts about whether prisons are criminogenic. Megan hoped that our contributions would enliven debate among her students at the University of Leeds. Megan received an amazing response. In her email of thanks, she wrote:

I would like to thank all of you who wrote a response to my question. My students were really inspired by your contributions and many have been moved to choose this essay question. There was an overwhelming consensus among the students that more can be done to rehabilitate people whilst in prison [...] One student also suggested that more community links need to be made between those in society and those in prison which I thought really reflected of all the work we have done together through the Learning Together community! Thanks again! Megan

Our Annual Learning Together Conference — Hull, 2018

This year's Annual LT Conference will be held in HMP Hull and the University of Hull, hosted by our LT colleague, Dr Adam Calverley. The conference is a chance for our wider Network community to come together and share ideas, experiences and learning. Students, mentors and facilitators will participate, as well as course convenors and researchers, working together to strengthen existing practice and forge more connected futures.

Editor's tip: those attending should look out for the 'Points of view' session chaired by Jenny Fogarty. I imagine it will be slightly different to the BBC's show about poor TV. This might just turn out to be one of the highlights from day one!



**UNIVERSITY
OF HULL**

UCAS bans the box from its application form



Change is afoot to how UCAS (the UK's leading universities admissions body) requests information about people's criminal convictions when they apply to study higher education courses at college and university.

Two questions are currently asked by UCAS about criminal convictions in the online application form. The first asks applicants to declare unspent convictions. This will be removed before the next cycle of university applications (i.e. for students hoping to begin their studies in September 2019). The second question (which will remain) relates to criminal convictions which would appear on a DBS records check and only applies to courses that have a placement element e.g. a teaching course which requires a placement in a school.

As a community of enthusiastic learners, we have been involved in this campaign and are excited about the potential of this decision. More news to follow soon!

On Sunday 1 July, some of the Learning Together family are getting together for a picnic in Newnham Park, Cambridge. All welcome—including friends and family. 13.00 onwards....

Fundraising for LT on the run!

Galvanised by our brilliant colleague, Lorna Hackett, some of the LT team and broader LT family have signed themselves up for the Great South Run. On 21 October 2018, we will be running 10 miles to raise money so even more people can enjoy the support, knowledge and community that LT brings. We plan to run 'sister' events across all of our existing Cambridge partner sites so keep an eye out for more details. For anyone who fancies joining us for the race in Portsmouth, please register online and let us know. Go to <https://www.greatrun.org/great-south-run> to register and run with us, and <https://uk.gofundme.com/LearningTogetherCambridge> to fundraise. We'd be delighted if you, your family or friends, could join us in this running madness.

Our first Learning Together alumni event!

On 10 September 2018 we are holding our first ever alumni event, in Cambridge. The day will be a chance for members of our Cambridge LT community to:

CONNECT with each other and our community

CELEBRATE how far we have come together

COLLABORATE to advance understanding about big ideas and social questions

The theme for this year's event is 'Talking Technology'. The day's programme will provide varied intellectual and creative opportunities for us to explore the significance and impacts of technology within our ever changing global world together. We're working hard to ensure the participation of members of our community who cannot yet be with us in person. Upshot is—stay tuned and get excited, because no matter where we all are on the planet on 10 September, there'll be opportunities to take part in this special event, from submitting papers for debate to participating in some play writing and drama. Plans for some simultaneous yoga are also afoot! If you have any ideas for contributions please contact Gareth.

Until next time...

Keep working hard and doing great things, and know that you have a community around you striving towards similarly great things and rooting for you all the way. Do keep in touch with us and each other—we love hearing everyone's news. And hope you're as excited as we are about our fantastic year ahead of Learning Together!

We LOVE hearing from YOU...



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Our Cambridge team

A quick reminder of who we are, and what we do...

Izzie Rowbotham is Amy and Ruth's PA and office manager for the Learning Together team. *'Hi I'm Izzie! I'm currently Ruth and Amy's PA in Learning Together. I am also studying for a Psychology degree and in my free time I enjoy spending time with friends and family.'*

Lisa Ghiggini joined the team in September 2017 as our brilliant course administrator. Lisa writes, *'I dropped out of uni at 19 and moved to Italy where I worked summer and winter seasons, eventually saving enough money to go travelling. On my return to England I put a portfolio together, did an art foundation, and got into Art College in London. In London, I worked in the charity sector until I had children and moved to Cambridge and am now really excited to be part of the LT team.'*

Jack Merritt is at the helm of the our Butler Law Course at HMP Warren Hill, as course convenor. *'I am both a Cambridge local and a former MPhil criminology student. After having a taste of Learning Together in Grendon, I wanted to stay involved. Now I'm leading our new legal partnership with Warren Hill, putting my law degree from Manchester Uni to good use!'*

Gareth Evans is our Alumni and Mentoring Development Coordinator. *'Hey! I'm Gareth and I cannot tell you how proud I am to be part of the LT team in Cambridge. I am studying at Anglia Ruskin University alongside my Learning Together role, sometimes not quite believing how unrecognizably positive life is now. As one of the first to take part in Learning Together in Grendon, I understand the power of building connections and thinking ahead to the future.'*

Dr Victoria Pereyra Iraola is our newest team-member and a full-time researcher on the team, working with Amy and Ruth to understand whether, and how, LT might play a role in everyone's futures, beyond individual courses. Victoria writes, *'I did my undergrad, postgrad and worked several years in the social policy sector in Argentina, before I moved to the UK to do my MA and PhD at the University of Warwick. I am happy to join the team in this exciting study and I look forward to meeting you all!'*

Let's keep writing together... We love to receive short contributions about your ideas and experiences, for the Learning Together blog. Blog posts should be no more than 1000 words, but can be shorter than that if you wish, and we're always happy to review drafts. Please get in touch!