



PLA Awards 2019

The Winners

PLA Awards 2019 - the winners

Outstanding Teacher

Mark Brewster - HMP/YOI Nottingham

Paul Dance - HMP Littlehey

Perry Emms - HMP/YOI Norwich

Linda McLoughlin - HMP/YOI Bronzefield

Andrea Thompson - HMP Brixton

Viktorija Tsaroucha - HMP Lowdham Grange (now at HMP/YOI Lincoln)

Outstanding Officer

Nathan Carby - HMP/YOI Isis

Steph Mythen - HMP/YOI Norwich

Outstanding Peer Mentor

Andrew - HMP Whitemoor

Ishmail - HMP Haverigg (now at HMP Kirkham)

Shauna - HMP/YOI Bronzefield

Outstanding Individual

Rachel Bailey - HMP Dartmoor

Tom Barker - HMP Ashfield

Sharon Champion - HMP Liverpool

Rowan Mackenzie - HMP Gartree

Young People's Estate

Dionne Emmanuel - HMYOI Feltham

Rachna Moudgil - HMYOI Feltham

Supriya Tamang - HMYOI Feltham

Category 1: Outstanding Teacher

Mark Brewster - HMP/YOI Nottingham

Mark is a Construction Tutor at HMP Nottingham, a role he's had for just over a year. He teaches students theoretical and practical skills that can give them a new start in life after they leave prison.

He says:

"I am privileged to be able to see the students grow and mature through the course.

"I am very happy that they appreciate what I am doing. It shows that the strategies I am employing are working."

Nominations say:

"He is the man"

"He wants to see all of us succeed in life and he's the person who has the perfect attitude towards helping us change our lives. No one has a bad word to say about him."

Paul Dance - HMP Littlehey

Having worked as a chef for 20 years, Paul went to university in his 40s to study English and Creative Writing and subsequently gained a teaching qualification. He has worked as a Tutor for Creative Writing & Academic Writing at HMP Littlehey for eight-and-a-half years.

He encourages learners to submit to Koestler and generally they get around 30-35 awards each year. One learner recently received a Platinum award - given to the entry that gets most cards from visitors to the exhibition.

He says:

"I enjoy seeing people achieve what they thought they could not; writing a story, a poem, an essay, a play.

"Highlights apart from this are just people in their 40s/50s finishing writing books when they have not written since primary school and others ending up in tears because of exercises releasing feelings they have bottled up for years, in some cases decades."



Nominations say:

"Prior to my attending Paul's writing classes I had never written anything more than a Christmas thank you letter."

"Paul's course is spoken about positively throughout the entire prison. Creative Writing is often a popular subject but Paul's enthusiasm for his job and the subject raise the course to a new level."

Perry Emms - HMP/YOI Norwich

Perry Emms, a Painting and Decorating Tutor at HMP/YOI Norwich, delivers the City & Guilds Level 2 diploma. He received 11 nominations for the PLA Awards.

He says:

"I find with my passion for the trade I inspire something within these learners that may make them want to become painters and decorators of the future and leave a life of crime behind.

"What really gives me a boost is when I have a learner who does not have confidence in themselves, a self-doubter, to watch them grow in stature and skill to become a better person and excel in Painting and Decorating."

Nominations say:

"He has great personal skills, makes everyone feel important and gets the group together."

"I wake in the mornings and can't wait to get to painting and decorating. He has made such a great difference to my time in HMP Norwich."



Linda McLoughlin - HMP/YOI Bronzefield

Linda works in HMP Bronzefield as a Functional Skills tutor. She teaches English and Mathematics, alongside Life Skills in the form of Parenting Skills, and helps lead the prison's Peer Mentoring Programme, which received praise from Ofsted.

Nominations say:

"Linda has supported me from my first day in Education. She recognised my potential and inspires me to achieve."

"Linda's Maths class not only refreshed my Maths skills but also provided me with safety and security."

She says:

"My colleagues and I have worked with many students that have been successfully rehabilitated back to society, found employment and are living productive lives. This is in-part because they engaged in education, gained qualifications, built their confidence and self-esteem, exhibited emotional maturity and were inspired and nurtured by an amazing education team.

"What is most important for me, is to know that I am part of a team that makes a difference to some students' lives."

Andrea Thompson - HMP Brixton

Andrea has worked within the prison system for a decade, spending the last six years at HMP Brixton. In her role, she has organised and developed a Level 1 and 2 City and Guilds and Level 3 Certificate in Fashion for residents.

Working with the charity Fine Cell Work, she offers her students through-the-gate opportunities upon release. She also oversees students' entries to the Koestler awards.

She says:

"I thoroughly enjoy spending time with our students, encouraging and supporting them to achieve.

"I would like to highlight that this would not be possible without the input of all my students, past and present. Their hard work and willingness to learn made my job easy and fulfilling and allowed me to develop a fashion department within a men's prison."



Nominations say:

"Mrs Thompson also will gently push her students so as to get them to achieve what they are capable of and then some!"

"For prisoners, going to work in fashion and textiles is really something to look forward to and makes imprisonment so much more tolerable."

Viktoria Tsaroucha - HMP Lowdham Grange (now at HMP/YOI Lincoln)

Now at HMP/YOI Lincoln, Viktoria worked as a ESOL Tutor at HMP Lowdham Grange for nearly three years. Having taught English as an additional language since 1990, she helps learners improve their English ahead of their exams.

Nominations say:

"I am very happy coming to ESOL class. I like Viktoria because she is kind and very good teacher."

"Our teacher teaches us ESOL & explains us properly. Viktoria likes all her students and we like her."

She says:

"My classes, ESOL classes, are multicultural, multi-national and multi-lingual. It is amazing how learning English can bring people from all over the world together and help them to share experiences and ideas.

"If you can make someone who never liked learning and dropped out of school at an early age, start to pay attention to you and start to learn and enjoy being in your class, what else can you ask for?"



Category 2: Outstanding Officer

Nathan Carby - HMP/YOI Isis

Nathan has been part of the Prison Service for nine years. He has been running the Game Changers programme at HMP Isis for the last year. He and a group of officers developed the innovative support group for young black men with a history of violence and childhood trauma.

He says:

"I'm shocked to have won the award. It's amazing - I love doing what I do and helping people from areas that I came from. It doesn't feel like work to me."

Nominations say:

"The hard work and determination he has shown within this programme really demonstrates how much he cares about the youth and his community."

Steph Mythen - HMP/YOI Norwich

Steph has worked in the Prison Service for two years, spending the last 20 months as a Prison Officer at HMP/YOI Norwich.

She says:

"It's a great feeling knowing that I have helped to make even the smallest change to the guys' time in prison and this makes my job all the more worthwhile."

"What do you like most about it? My job is unlike any other and can be very rewarding but exhausting at the same time! I love my job and the best thing about it is that no two days are ever the same."



Nominations say:

"I cannot emphasize how much I feel Miss Mythen deserves this award."

"If not for her I would be very much in the dark with my possible future."

Category 3: Outstanding Peer Mentor

Andrew - HMP Whitemoor

Andrew is a peer mentor at HMP Whitemoor. As well as supporting learners with Maths, English and Spanish, he helps with applications and letters. He received 20 nominations.

Nominations say:

"I have seen Andy mentoring various people over the years. It's a role he's gifted at, and extracts prisoners' potential."

"Andy brings joy and hope to our classroom."

"He's a good role model and is always recruiting people for courses."

"I don't think I would have learnt anything if it wasn't for him."

Ishmail - HMP Haverigg (now at HMP Kirkham)

Ishmail was working in the prison kitchens, "cooking some of the finest curries", when a member of the education team asked him to become a Peer Mentor in their department. He keeps a diary in class, recording the ups and downs, progress and tasks ahead.

He says:

"There were many positive and memorable experiences from my role. The one that put the biggest smile on our faces was working with an ESOL learner, who was very reserved and a real challenge. He wouldn't communicate much with anyone. Having gained his trust and friendship, I engaged and interpreted however he could understand - continuously demonstrating using drawings, signs, pictures.

"He would attend every session, week after week, making good progress. Awaiting his deportation papers I was working against the clock to ensure he passed before he departed. He made us all proud. He passed his Maths and English, Entry Levels 1, 2 and 3, and his hard work and perseverance achieved these great results."

Nominations say:

"I was refusing to do education. I owe it to Ishmail."

"Most helpful person in the education department. Really made me push myself to the limit, which I have not seen in myself."

Shauna - HMP/YOI Bronzefield

Shauna became a teaching assistant and peer mentor at HMP Bronzefield after completing her Level 1 and 2 in hairdressing and beauty therapy.

Nominations say:

"She has been very supportive, kind and friendly to us all"

"I have learnt so much from Shauna"

"She helps to ensure the smooth running of the salon"

She says:

"In an environment such as this, a lot of women did not get much of an education and have had real difficult lives, so do not have any confidence in themselves, but once they begin to complete qualifications their confidence and self-belief begins to grow.

"The feeling of helping these ladies is amazing, when I am explain something to them and I can see them get it, like a light that has finally been switched on, it is one of the best things that I have experienced."

Category 4: Outstanding Individual

Rachel Bailey - HMP Dartmoor

Rachel is a Library Supervisor at HMP Dartmoor, where she has been based for a year.

As part of the library team at the prison, she runs events and activities for everyone to enjoy -including a BAME group, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller events and regular afternoon reading groups, ranging from book discussions to play reading.

She says:

"I am overwhelmed with the positive responses about our library and the work I have been doing.

"Knowing everyone has something to do with their day is important and I believe that we create lots of opportunities to keep men active and engaged."

Nominations say:

"Rachel has encouraged me to read books and I have found a new love in them. I've never sat down to read. Now I do, often getting through a book a week and learning new words."

"She makes me feel welcome at all times. I find life more difficult than others and feel so much better after popping to the library."

Tom Barker - HMP Ashfield

Tom worked as HMP Ashfield's Librarian for four years. As well as developing the library's collection, he ran creative workshops, organised the prison's arts festival, and collected entries for the Koestler awards.

He says:

"I love libraries. I love working in libraries. I like working with a community of men who truly appreciate their library service, are engaged and creative in helping to improve it, and who respect the library as a unique space within the prison.

"I enjoy working closely with men, listening to their stories and debating with them. It's nice for my work to be recognised by the PLA but it is especially satisfying to be recognised by the men I serve."



Nominations say:

"A fine role model and example to me, and the population of Ashfield."

"He took over a library that was full of old and badly damaged stock. Tom has completely transformed the service."

Sharon Campion - HMP Liverpool

Having worked in the Prison Service for over a decade, Sharon has been the Specialist Laundry Instructor at HMP Liverpool for the last five years.

Within the laundry, Sharon creates a calm environment away from the wings, where residents are encouraged to take ownership of their work area.

Nominations say:

"Even though we are in a workshop she is willing to help us with our reading and writing. She always has a positive attitude which transfers on to us."

"She helps people if they are having a bad day. She will take time out to sit and talk with you."

She says:

"I feel humbled and privileged to have been nominated for this award by the prisoners as it underlines the fact that small actions make a large impact on their lives.

"They know that if they have any problems they can discuss it with me and I can signpost them in the right direction.

"I am hopefully installing some work ethic into them to try and help them on the outside gain employment and prevent them from returning, knowing that I've had some successes because I never see them again."



Rowan Mackenzie - HMP Gartree

Rowan is a facilitator for Shakespeare in Prisons. Since early 2018 she has worked with residents to edit, rehearse and perform Shakespeare.

The Gallowfield Players at HMP Garfield have so far performed *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*. This year Rowan has set up the Emergency Shakespeare Company in the same model at HMP Stafford.

Nominations say:

"I have never done anything like this before and it felt so strange to be empowered, in such a way, within prison."

"My knowledge and interest in Shakespeare has greatly increased since Rowan's arrival into my life and it's the first time in three years I've been inside prison that I've actually engaged."

She says:

"At Garfield, we are now working on an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* which we are using to tackle the stigma within society of having a life sentence as well as issues of race, gender and sexuality.

"We rehearse every Friday but the men also use their association time to work on their lines. As one of them said 'you can't walk along the wings in here now without hearing Shakespeare.'"



Category 5: Young People's Estate - Outstanding staff member

Dionne Emmanuel - HMYOI Feltham

Dionne has been a Learning Support Assistant at HMYOI Feltham for over a year and half, having working in the prison service for nearly five years. She previously worked at HMP Brixton as a Sessional Support Worker where she would facilitate and support the men through different activities, trying to ensure their experience was positive.

She says:

"I want to make a difference to young people's lives and if I can be that change for three out of 10 then that is a massive achievement for me.

"The biggest highlight of my job is seeing the young people I work with achieve goals and push limits that they thought they would never reach. Seeing the confidence and pride brings me joy and I would not change it for anything."



Nominations say:

"Enthusiastic teacher - very hard working and makes me want to come to education every single day."

"She is very helpful, caring, kindful and patient and always very positive."

Rachna Moudgil - HMYOI Feltham

For nearly three years, Rachna has been a Learning Support Tutor at HMYOI Feltham, teaching English, Maths, Art, PHSE, and employability skills from entry level up to Level 2. She works with two groups of learners - Phoenix and Pegasus - who are either vulnerable or cannot mix with other residents.



She says:

"Once my learners achieve their set goals it feels like it's my achievement too. We have mutual respect and appreciation for each other and share in each other's achievements.

"I am quite proud of helping the learners. One example is when we have learners who can't speak any English. They come into my class and within a couple of weeks they are talking, reading, writing and spelling in English."

Nominations say:

"Miss helps me with everything and actually teaches us new things, she's the best teacher here."

"Since being in Feltham Rachna has been very supportive and she is a very good teacher."

Supriya Tamang - HMYOI Feltham

Supriya is a Youth Support Worker with Kinetic Youth at HMYOI Feltham, a role she's had for two-and-a-half years. She has delivered AQA accreditation on various subjects including Victim Awareness and 'onfidence Building.

She has also set up the prison's Youth Council, giving young people the opportunity to have their voices heard.

She says:

"I like seeing the little changes in young people when I have worked with them for a while.

"By achieving the accreditations I deliver it's given many young people more belief in themselves which has led to better behaviour.

"I also like being able to see young people be listened to and respected through my work with the youth council in HMYOI Feltham."

Nominations say:

"Helps outs whenever she can and a good person to talk to about life issues. Gets our voice heard and point across."

"Everyone likes her. She's very nice and goes out of her way to help us."

The PLA awards recognise those who have made an inspiring contribution to prison education.

This year we received over 1000 nominations.

Thank you to everyone who helped promote the awards and sent us nominations,
and congratulations to all our winners!



The Prisoner Learning Alliance is a network of organisations and individuals with the vision that all prisoners can engage in high-quality and diverse learning opportunities to help them transform their lives.

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