Doing Action Research in the Secure Estate

A Guide for Educators

ccConsultancy September 2022

The Education and Training Foundation (2022)
Doing Action Research ^ A Guide for Post-16 Practitioners.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Doing Action Research in the Secure Estate: A Guide for Educators. This guide has been developed as a companion guide to Doing Action Research: A guide for post-16 practitioners (ETF, 2021).

The aim of this guide is not to replicate what is already written in Doing Action Research, but to complement it with some specific and important considerations for teachers who are interested in carrying out action research projects within the secure estate.

You can read an e-book version of Doing Action Research: A guide for post-16 practitioners.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for anyone working in the secure estate (e.g., a pris

- Doing action research as part of your everyday teaching practice
- What happens if your plans are interrupted or if changes happen within the prison that are beyond your control?

Part 2: Working as part of an action research team within secure settings

This section includes:

- How to gain the interest of your collea

https:/ / ccpathways.co.uk/ practitioner-research/ otla8/ 2a/

https:/ / ccpathways.co.uk/ practitioner-research/ otla8/ 2b/

https:/ / ccpathways.co.uk/ practitioner-research/ otla8/ 2c/

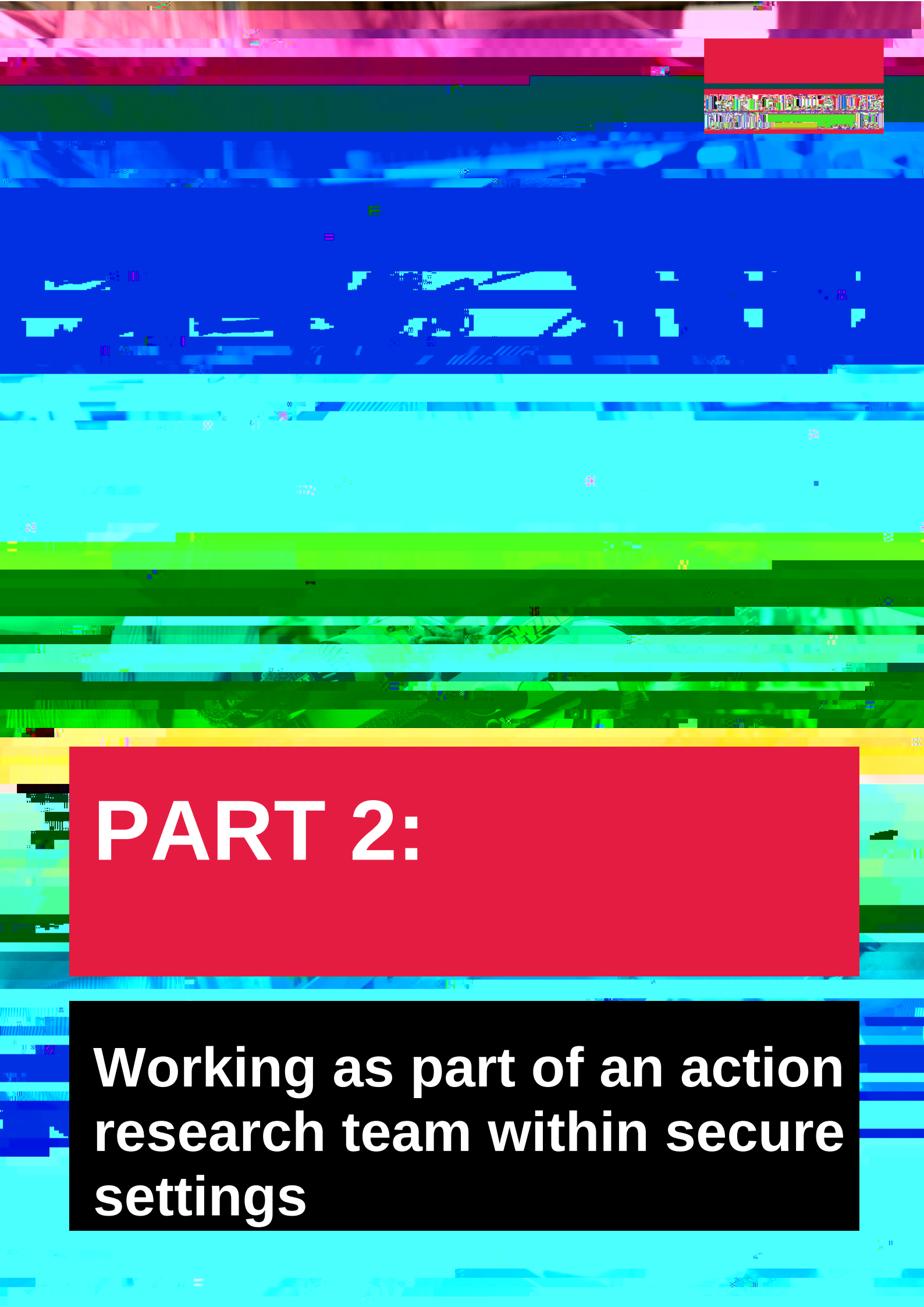
Part 1b: Doing action research as part of your everyday teaching practice

The primary goal of action research is to improve practice, so your action research in your classroom or workshop is likely to be closely interwoven with your everyday teaching practices. For example, you might be working on a project that seeks to understand how best to identify learner goals and motivations for learning, which is something that you would likely be doing anyway as a

something similar, as it is already part of the teaching role to explore your own practice and this does not usually require official approval. Similarly, action research encourages what is sometimes

responsive to the specific contexts of your own setting. For example, instead of applying a blanket initiative that has been generated by people outside of your organisation, action research enables you to start from exactly where you and your learners are at, supporting you to focus on and address the issues that are particularly important to you right now. In this sense, action research enables you to work collaboratively with your colleagues and learners to trial fresh teaching and training approaches and work out together what constitutes effective teaching and training practices within your specific setting.

Action researchers are constantly tweaking and adapting their research plans and approaches as they reflect on the effect of the actions they have taken so they can decide what to do next. This is not dissimilar to how you might naturally engage in reflexive practices within your classroom (e.g., how you carefully adjust and adapt your teaching approaches and resources to accommodate the specific needs of learners you are working with at any given moment). Where action research takes this process slightly further is in the opportunity it provides to think deeply about not only what you are doing, but to be able to articulate why (McNiff, 2022).



PART 2:

Working as part of an action research team within secure settings

PART 2: WORKING AS PART OF AN ACTION RESEARCH TEAM WITHIN SECURE SETTINGS

Part 2a: How do I gain the interest of my colleagues?

Sometimes, you may find that your colleagues are not always as initially enthusiastic about engaging in action research as you are. Teachers are busy people, and teaching within a prison environment brings with

HMP Liverpool and Novus: How sharing action research plans and findings with colleagues in multi-disciplinary roles can support policy development and effect change.

Example from practice

Following on from their research as part of the OTLA 7 programme, the team at HMP Liverpool and Novus extended their work during OTLA 8 to consider the role of blended learning (a mixture of face-to-face teaching and in-cell learning using pre-prepared work packs). The team had been surprised to discover that some of the men they were working with had stated that they preferred to engage in learning in their cells as opposed to in the classroom, particularly as the in-cell learning had been designed as an interim measure in response to restrictions being placed upon classroom teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. Because the research team at HMP Liverpool had actively involved their heads of learning and senior managers at both the prison site and with Novus, the project lead was subsequently invited to share her findings on the potential benefits of blended learning in prison environments with both HMIP and Ofsted, helping shape future recommendations in relation to promising, learner-centred practices within the secure estate.

> [3] 7KH UHVHDUFK SURMHFW SURYLGHG NH\ HYL monitoring visit to justify our blended learning approach and show that we

To learn more about this project please visit: https:/ / ccpathways.co.uk/ practitioner-research/ otla8/ 8b/

Part 2c: Thinking beyond the classroom; using action research within secure estates to help develop sustainable, prison-wide educative practices

For educational action research initiatives to be most successful within the secure estate, it is important to consider the different aspects of prison life and how this affects or impacts upon the changes you are hoping to make within your teaching or learning support practices. In this section, we share some highly successful examples of action research that have been driven by partnership working; between those working in educative roles, those supporting othe
lives, and those working in other pertinent roles.

The theory of practice architectures

The ex

PART 3:

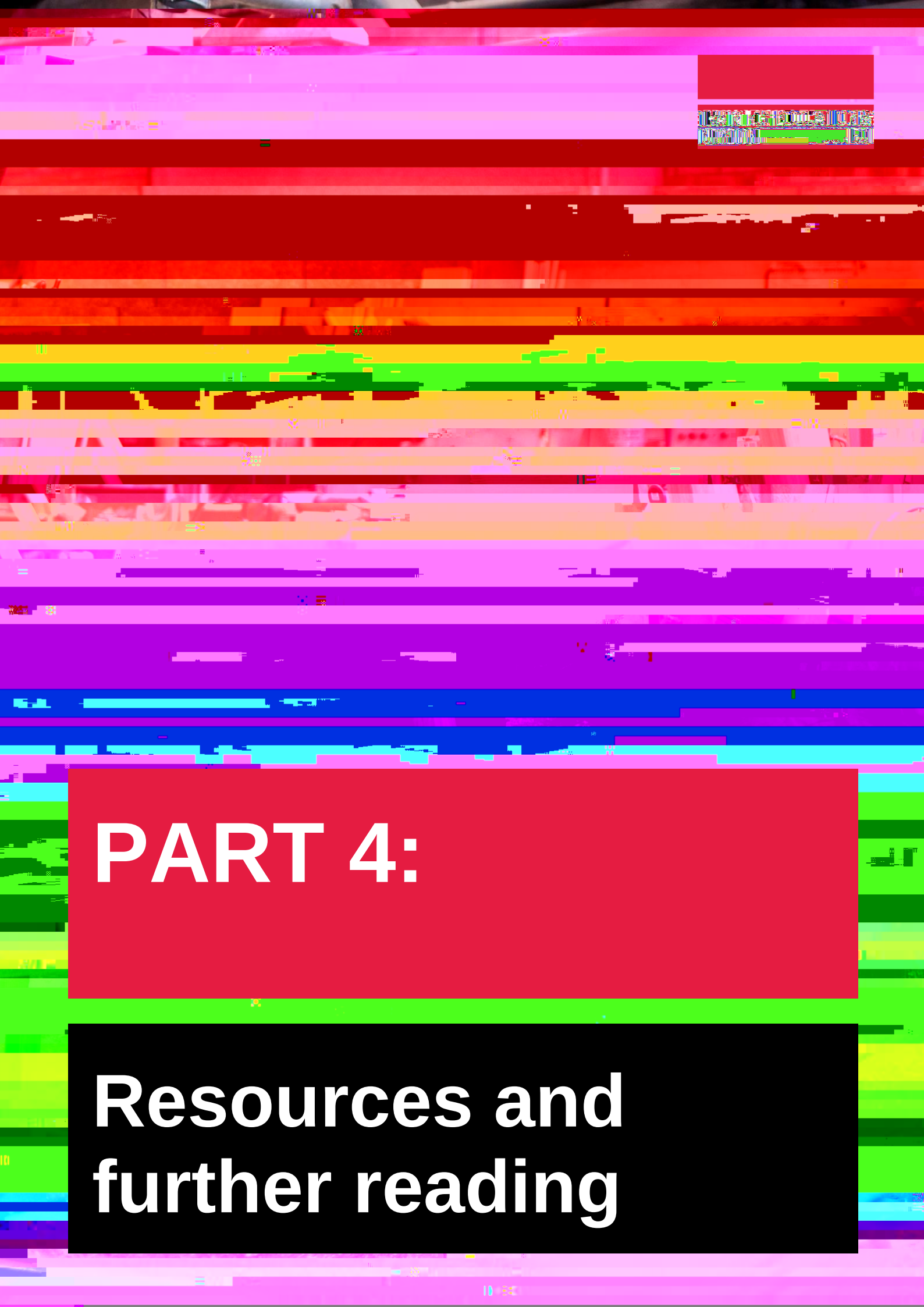
Ethical and safeguarding considerations for prison-based action research

Part 3b: Ensuring learner confidentiality and anonymity

An area that requires careful thought and planning is around safeguarding and ethics in prison settings. We have already noted in part 2 of this guide that many of the action research activities you might carry out during your project are not separate to your teaching role but deeply embedded in this. As such, asking prison learners how they feel about, e.g., their target setting approaches should not present you with particular ethical challenges. However, some projects do necessitate careful ethical consideration, as the example from practice below demonstrates.

Action research enables teachers to work together to think carefully and deeply about their practices, which in itself can help support safeguarding practices. Imagine for a moment that the research team had not taken the time to discuss and reflect upon the potential impact of revealing

that you will need to be mindful of when undertaking action research in a prison setting. You also need to be aware of what other support each prisoner might be accessing and which types of activity or questioning could potentially trigger an emotion or



PART 4:

Resources and further reading

> 7KH UHVRXUFHV SURGXFHG HPSRZHUHG OHDUQHU communication skills as they drafted business Facebook pages, recipe website content and online review site content... the research activity opened up an opportunity for the production of learner-led, co-designed digital skills development strategies and resources, which can be incorporated into future schemes of work as OHDUQHUV VXJJHVW WKH SODWIRUPV DQG GLJLWDO

Through their action research project, the team were able to work together to overcome some of the barriers to embedding essential digital skills that had been present before. The project also helped the digital champions appreciate that vocational specialists were not resistant to engaging in digital literacy work, they just needed some tangible examples to draw from:

> 2QFH HQJDJLQJ UHVRXUFHV VXFK DV UHDOLVWL templates for online tasks using authentic

To learn more about this project, please visit: https:/ / ccpathways.co.uk/ practitioner-research/ otla-7/ otla-7-cluster-12/ 24-novus-hmp-liverpool/

HMP Low Newton. Using action research to explore ways of promoting
S D U H Q W D O H Q J D J H P H Q W L Q F K L O G U H Q ¶ V O H D U

Case Study 3

Developing business enterprise/ employability ideas through cooking and baking for the event and selling produce to raise funds for the charity;

Delicious looking cakes for the charity bake sale formed part of the event.

What was the impact of the project? What difference did it make?

In evaluation and follow up discussions with learners, the practitioners discovered that giving the learners the autonomy and responsibility for all aspects of the project and their own learning, increased their motivation an13(e)-8( )t 19/L8(d)13(u)(scu/)17( )-4(e)17(e)-8(ve)0 G[(;)] TJETQq45

Community examples include - poor housing, poverty or historical trauma, lack of clean air or water.

Environmental examples include - natural disasters such as floods or fires or pandemics.

Examples of **risk factors** may include - poor mental health, school exclusion, peer pressure, gang membership, poverty, an institutionalised up-bringing, being a victim of violence or abuse and **protective factors** could include educational achievement, supportive parents and networks, emotional well-being and an environment based on trust.

> It is well-known that the experience R I W U D X P D F D Q K D Y H O D V W L Q J L social, physical and emotional well- E H L Q J ´
>
> **- Vaswani and Paul, 2019, p.1.**

How do we prevent trauma?

Serious violence, trauma and adversity cannot be tackled in isolation, it needs to be a collaborative partnership between organisations and communities taking an all-round approach to embed prevention.

How can we make a difference?

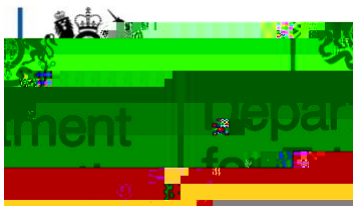
- Accept that people who experience complex trauma are not broken or beyond repair.
- Promote positive mental and physical well-
  trauma and build strong relationships.
- Recognise that positive/ strong relationships can be seen as the key to overcoming trauma.
- Support financial stability that may include a curriculum that addresses the need for skills in budgeting and financial management.
- Offer employment advice and guidance, vocational training, relevant Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE) subjects and qualifications in English and maths.
- Avoid telling -traumatised or

Below is information on the initial opening plans for the Rivendell Unit at HMP/ YOI New Hall. In working together to create an environment of safety and trust, the multi-disciplinary team involved aimed to recognise the need for trauma informed practices and embed these in their shared plans for the Unit.

staff, Health Care, Counselling Services) regularly met to plan how they would work with the young people in their care to create an environment of safety and trust and support them with gaining the skills required to have the confidence and resilience to better manage their own emotional well-being. The overall aim was that, in the absence of stable parents, the multi-

Thankyou

Our Partners

ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES

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