



# Christine Franklin Consultancy

Educational Research

RESEARCH – FIRE. HEALTH & SAFETY, SECURITY COMPLIANCE NEEDS IN PRISONS WHEN USING READERPENS/EXAMREADERS

I would like to thank the Head of Security and Intel at Prison D who helped compile this document, who gave advice and support as to the practice's security departments adhere to within HMPPS.

In 2017 I began studies within prisons regarding the introduction of assistive technology, ReaderPens and ExamReaders and their success within prison educational departments.

From an initial meeting with the prison governor at Prison A, (then Prisons, B, C and D), to the delivery of pens to prisons and agreement to participate in a study by the education providers, each step of the way has been overseen by each prison's security team and the National Research Committee (Ministry of Justice).

Security approaches may vary prison to prison. For example, the security team at Prison A were happy to undertake checks and then pass the pens into the educational department. Prison B security team gave a set of specific instructions as to how the pens would be stored and kept within the various prison departments to which they were distributed. Prison C security team wished for a specific adherence to protocols to be met during the study process; interestingly since the education department subsequently bought pens these are still held in security and have been there for nearly a year! Finally, Prison D's governor, education department and head of security discussed and considered how to ensure the well-being of the prisoners, staff and longevity of having access to ReaderPens and ExamReaders to create a cohesive strategy to ensure future use of the pens. They hope these concepts will be disseminated to all prisons who purchase and have access to reading pens. These frameworks for security, fire risk and inclusion are as follows:

## FIRE RISK

Standard 'accidental' fire risk tests were carried out by <https://www.cqc.com.cn/www/english/>. This included:

Battery testing for 'external short circuiting' which in turn may lead to the product overheating or catching fire.

The pens gained a 'PASS' for no fire, no explosion and no leakage by the external accredited laboratory following the regulations of CQC.

## SECURITY RISK

Within all the prisons I visited most equipment is locked into a 'shadow board'. A shadow board is a wall mounted cabinet with a toughened glass/Perspex door, so the items are clearly seen within the cabinet. The items placed into the cabinet are drawn around and the shadow of the item painted black/white onto the contrasted coloured board. This is to identify which tool/equipment is stored on that section and when it has been issued out to a prisoner for use, they are allocated a unique code number which is matched to a tool inventory. Staff then check the inventory daily once all items have been removed and before prisoners leave the area.



Image 1: Photograph of a Shadow Board, note the removed item can easily be identified as to where it should be replaced due to the 'shadow' left behind when the item is in use. This ensures a quick visual check would immediately identify if anything was missing during cursory and formal checks.

Shadow boards are located within the offices within education blocks. The leads to enable charging of ReaderPens and ExamReaders were also kept in the shadow boards. Requests for smaller storage cases, the 10-pack case was simply too big, were requested by some prisons for ease of movement into and out of workshops, classrooms and learning areas.

Shadow boards are accounted for twice a day, with a yearly audit to evaluate the process alongside monthly management checks. Each prison may operate a slightly different approach, but shadow board checks will be a minimum requirement as part of each prison's Local Security Strategy Function 9 requirements when accounting for the use of tools and equipment.

However, as indicated the shadow board process comes into operation for reading pens once they have passed into the prison. Prison C security have held onto the purchased ExamReaders for a year, this is after the study was completed. The education department who purchased the pens have had no success in seeking the pens being moved into their department and to follow the shadow board

process they adopted during the research project. Therefore, a standardised policy may support prison education departments fulfilling their inclusive approaches to educational delivery.

## INCLUSION

One area which is potentially creating blocks for inclusion is due to the different functions of the current reading pens. ReaderPens were used within Prison C due to the dictionary function, which was found to be invaluable for prisoners with reading difficulties, pronunciation and communication needs and English as a Second Language prisoners. The potential security issue relating to this type of pen is the storage capacity, particularly the audio recording function. Prisons who did use ReaderPens in their research project did not experience any security issues. The ReaderPens were used within the classrooms or workshops with supervision.

However, Prison D considered the impact of a ReaderPen for one specific prisoner. Prison D agreed a prisoner would be given permission to purchase his own reading pen. The prisoner is to purchase an ExamReader as this is deemed the least risk for him and his environment. However, he would benefit immensely from the use of the dictionary function. Although there has been great advancement on the ReaderPen, such as an exam lock, the ability to potentially override this and gain access to storage continues to be a security concern. A reading pen which offers a 'reading' function and access to a dictionary but with no storage capacity would be of immensely empowering in this type of environment, and others who wish to ensure data protection, confidentiality and security measures are adhered to.

The studies have been incredibly rewarding, the voices of the learner have been strongly advocated and an andragogy method has enabled assumptions and blocks to learn to be addressed and critically evaluated. Offering the prisoner, a chance to 'read' their own private correspondence, books and information that is of interest to their lives has been seen to create a 'hook' to take a leap of faith into the learning world. As one prisoner stated, 'That reading pen has given me another lease of, I don't know what you call it, life, interest...'.