

Time to Think

Open University Journeys in British and Irish prisons during the years of conflict, 1972-2000

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Diana Purcell**
Interviewed by: **Pat Jess**
Date of interview: **11/06/2012**

Important

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Diana Purcell Clip

Clip title:

Why are you doing this?

Duration: 00:01:50

Clip start point in full interview:

Clip end point in full interview:

Interview identifier: 054_T_01

Description: Diana Purcell, Senior Counsellor with The Open University reflects on her long professional career working with Open University students in the prisons, noting how Open University education gave students incredible confidence. She also addresses the contested idea of whether or not it was reforming.

Transcript:

Well, I suppose that people did ask me quite often, “Why are you doing this” or “What do you think this will do given the political circumstances in Northern Ireland”, of which we were all very much aware at the time. And I think, I myself felt, that we weren’t going to reform anybody, which was again a question I was often asked; “Do you think you are reforming people?” But I felt very strongly that, with education, that people will think a bit harder or think in a slightly different way or use thought perhaps before action, and that it does affect the way they will behave and perhaps the way they will see their place in the community. And also it certainly, and this was a very obvious one, it gave students incredible confidence which they didn’t have before, and they would admit this themselves, that they were able to speak, put their case, to argue. And this at the graduation ceremonies was always, I think, one of the moments of considerable pleasure, when you would see the student stand up and make his speech and you knew that he felt he was speaking as well as or maybe even better than the Governor of the prison.