

Vocational Training and Employability Skills in Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions

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Working for more and different adult learners

NIACE (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, England and Wales). A company limited by guarantee registered no. 2603322 and registered charity no. 1002775,

About NIACE

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is an independent charity which promotes adult learning across England and Wales. Through its research, development, publications, events, outreach and advocacy activity, NIACE works to improve the quality and breadth of opportunities available for all adults so they can benefit from learning throughout their lives.

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HMP Onley

HMP & YOI Reading

HMP Ranby

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Foreword

It is, surely, obvious that enabling offenders in prison to access education and training that develops job-related skills, enables them to gain qualifications and gives them real-life experience of the workplace must be a good thing. While being in prison is about punishment for crimes committed, it's also about reducing reoffending, and the surest way to do this is to give offenders skills, access to work, a steady income, a sense of self esteem and a chance to support their family and their community.

NIACE, as the lead national body on adult learning, has sought for many years to contribute to debates about the nature, extent and quality of learning and skills available to offenders. This is in line with our primary aim of advancing the case for adult learning in public policy and debate and to influence and persuade others that improving, increasing and extending opportunities for adults to learn throughout their lives has real public as well as personal benefits.

This report looks at how learning is key to responding positively to the issues and circumstances faced by offenders in male prisons, and gives some clear and exciting examples of how prisons, providers and employers are working together, often in difficult circumstances, to progress and support the learning for work and reducing re-offending agendas.

Learners and prison staff are honest about the difficulties they face, which include the movement between establishments, not setting up false expectations, the very low level of skills of many of the prisoners and enabling learners to access real life work situations. They are also clear about the benefits vocational training and employability programmes have on giving offenders a sense of purpose, a reason to get up in the morning and hope for the future.

Through this report NIACE is working to raise the profile of vocational learning and skills provision for offenders with policy makers, particularly in BIS, JAU and NAS and inform the development of future initiatives. What is needed is the showcasing of good practice - vital to show that it can be done; a national forum to take the thinking forward; and support for employers, providers and especially prisons to make it happen.

As one learner quoted in this report says: 'I would like to thank you for giving me a brilliant career on the railways. Thanks to you, and the way you taught me, I am progressing, just as you said I would.it gave me the boost I needed on release from prison.'

Carol Taylor, OBE

Director of Development and Research, NIACE

Executive summary

Under the 2012 programme of work funded by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) undertook a study to identify effective practice in vocational learning and employability skills provision across prison estates and young offender institutions (YOIs) to inform its work.

NIACE has always advocated that good learning opportunities can change lives significantly for the better and, in the case of learning for offenders, these benefits not only affect the individual but can also bring advantages to the whole community as learning plays an important role in reducing re-offending. In addition to producing several resources and publications on offender learning, NIACE has supported the implementation of the Virtual Campus, the online network which is being made available to the majority of secure institutions in England.

This research forms part of a wider research and development programme delivered during 2012-2013 that focuses on improving learning and skills provision for offenders and ex-offenders. A full list of projects and contact details for project leads can be found on the NIACE website.

This report sets out the findings of our study, including some detailed case studies. It also presents our suggestions for future action for the Department's consideration.

Through the field research conducted we have identified a number of factors which contribute to the successful delivery of vocational training and employability skills for offenders. Factors like good partnerships between prisons, providers and employers are key to preparing offenders for employment. In addition, offenders are benefiting from programmes which have embedded Functional Skills, programmes which have good progression routes and programmes which are supported by peer mentors.

We have also reported on some of the challenges in delivering a vocational training and employability skills programme within prisons. For instance, issues with staffing, poor progression routes, establishing effective partnerships and links with employers. The report also looks at how prisons are confidently overcoming many of these challenges.

Conclusions

Prisons faced a busy time in 2012 as they implemented the changes set out in Making Prisons Work¹, including a greater focus on skills development and routes to employment, in particular for prisoners nearing the end of their sentence; a revision

¹ BIS and Ministry of Justice (May 2011) Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32330/11-828-making-prisons-work-skills-for-rehabilitation.pdf

of funding with a focus on outcomes (enrolments, achievements/success rates and progression); establishing the new enhanced roles of Lead Governors; and planning curricula informed by local labour market needs.

The findings in the report reflect for the most part provision established under OLASS 3; it is anticipated that the good practice will be maintained under OLASS 4 where appropriate. As the new arrangements take shape, the leadership of senior managers as well as the dedication of experienced and passionate staff are proving crucial to developing effective high quality vocational training and employability skills for offenders. Over the coming months providers will start to report on their progress against the new targets and will be able to provide data on what kind of provision is effective so far under OLASS 4 and where better practice, resource and or support is needed.

Key considerations

The following is a list of key considerations for the attention of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills:

- There is a need for further research to monitor, track and document the development of apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships for offenders and to capture key features which could inform future initiatives.
- A national Offender Engagement Forum would support efforts to develop a more co-ordinated approach to engaging a wider range of employers.
- The sector would benefit from support in measuring the impact of the new arrangements under OLASS 4.
- An abridged version of this report for practitioners would be helpful in sharing good practice.

Introduction

Under the programme of work funded by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) undertook a study to identify effective practice in vocational learning and employability skills provision in men's prisons and Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) to inform its work.

The project objectives were to:

- raise awareness among key stakeholders of current vocational training and skills provision for offenders;
- inform the practice of vocational training and skills provision for offenders in custody;
- raise NIACE's offender learning profile; and
- inform NIACE's work in the areas of offender learning and learning for work.

The structure of the report

The main body of the report is divided into five sections; the first three sections (Parts 1-3) focus on key themes and highlights examples of good practice. Part 4 looks at some of the cross cutting challenges and how prisons and providers are responding positively to these.

The final part (Part 5) of the report looks at the general conclusions we have drawn from the findings, as well as key considerations to inform the future policy around vocational training and employability skills in prisons.

The appendices include a list of reference documents, the Call for information and the Principle of Good Practice.

Methodology

The study employed a mixed methods approach of desk research, a call for information to prisons, YOIs and offender learning providers, case study visits to three prisons, and telephone interviews with a range of key stakeholders.

2.1 Desk research

The research was informed by a literature search of published material, including policy documents, research reports and project reports. This provided researchers with a grounding in the field and an understanding of current issues and developments. Its primary purpose was to identify principles of good practice for the delivery of vocational and employability skills provision in prisons. See Appendix 1 for a list of the literature consulted to inform the study. The principles of good practice, which were endorsed by respondents to the call for information, have also informed this report. These are also available in Appendix 3.

2.2 Call for information

The NIACE project manager attended the national Heads of Learning and Skills (HOLs) Forum in 2012 to introduce the work and encourage participation. The call for information (see Appendix 2) was then distributed to all HOLs via the HOLs co-ordinator. It was also sent out to OLASS 4 providers via the Skills Funding Agency.

The call for information included a set of general questions about vocational and employability skills provision in prisons and YOIs, and an invitation to put forward examples of good practice. The call included a list of the principles of good practice identified through the literature review. Respondents were asked to provide feedback on the principles; however it was not a requirement that any examples they put forward had to comply with all of these. Those who submitted good practice examples self-identified their provision as such and were asked to provide supporting evidence.

There were 17 responses to the call for information. One submission was from a female prison and therefore contributed to the Women in Prisons project that NIACE was undertaking for BIS at the same time as this piece of work. Responses were received from the following regions: Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands, East, West Midlands, South Central, North East and North West. Two responses were from Young Offender Institutions. Responses were received from each of the four prison categories but, perhaps not surprisingly given the focus of the study, the majority were from Category C and D establishments. Across the responses, 18 examples of good practice were put forward for consideration.

The response rate to the call for information was low. It is likely that the timing of the project did affect participation, as OLASS 4 arrangements were being introduced, leading to changes to provider contracts and some personnel changes. Some returns provided quite sparse information which signalled both an interest in the work but perhaps also a limited capacity to provide a detailed response in writing. It became apparent in later stages of the project that prisons and YOIs are (and need to be) very mindful about how they promote their work more widely (there were several examples given of encountering negative media portrayal of their work) and this may have also affected participation. It is clear from existing literature and from our knowledge of the field that there are further examples of good practice in operation.

2.3 Case study visits

We selected three prisons as case study sites. Two researchers visited each site. The purpose of the visits was to gain a detailed picture of the provision they had put forward as good practice, and also the wider context. Each visit lasted around four hours and interviews were carried out with a range of key stakeholders, including current learners on the programme.

The case studies were diverse in terms of type of programme, category of prison and prisoner cohort. Two case studies focused on OLASS provision and one was on non-OLASS activity.

Although we sought the involvement of all key stakeholders during the visit, this was not always possible or practical. We undertook some supplementary telephone interviews (detailed below) following the visits; however, it is a limitation of the project that we did not capture in more depth the views of staff with a resettlement brief.

Monitoring the progress of offenders through the gate is a significant challenge for many prisons and data on the outcomes from the programmes selected for case study is therefore not currently available.

2.4 Telephone interviews

In addition to the telephone interviews mentioned above, a further six in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with respondents to the call for information to find out about work in other prisons. Interviews tended to last around 45 minutes and questions were tailored for each organisation, linked to the information already supplied.

We were able to capture some rich data using this approach; however, we were not able to gather the same range of perspectives as was possible during the case study visits.

We also contacted the National Apprenticeships Service (NAS) and the DfE/BIS Joint Apprenticeships Unit by telephone (and also email) to raise awareness of the project and gather relevant details to inform the work.

Background and context

The prison population for England and Wales at the time of this report was just over 85,000 people and is overwhelmingly male². If current trends persist, a high proportion of these men will re-offend on release from prison and be reconvicted. Latest figures indicate that 47.5% of adults are reconvicted within one year of being released, and this increases to 57.6% for those serving sentences of less than 12 months³.

The Government is committed to reducing the high rate of re-offending. In setting out its programme of work back in May 2010, the Coalition referred to 'overhauling the system of rehabilitation to reduce reoffending'.⁴ Later that year, the Ministry of Justice issued a Green Paper⁵ setting out its plans to develop a new type of prison – the Working Prison:

'We want to see more prisons using the discipline and routine of regular working hours to instil an ethos of hard work into prisoners. Prison should be a place where work itself is central to the regime, where offenders learn vocational skills in environments organised to replicate, as far as practical and appropriate, real working conditions.' (p. 15)

'Making more offenders engage in hard work and reparation will help equip them with the skills they need to improve their prospects of paying their way, getting off benefits and into a job. Evidence shows that having a job is a major factor in preventing future offending.' (p. 32)

The Green Paper highlighted how the Ministry of Justice would work closely with other government departments to improve offenders' skills and their prospects of

² Prison Reform Trust (Nov 2012) Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile
www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/FactfileNov2012small.pdf

³ Prison Reform Trust (Nov 2012) Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile
www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/FactfileNov2012small.pdf

⁴ HM Government (May 2010) The Coalition: Our programme of work
www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_187876.pdf

⁵ Ministry of Justice (Dec 2010) *Breaking the Cycle: Effective punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing offenders*
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120119200607/http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/docs/breaking-the-cycle.pdf>

work and, as part of this, undertake a review of offender learning. In May 2011, BIS and the Ministry of Justice published its review⁶, setting out a reform programme for offender learning which has vocational and employability skills provision at its heart:

'We plan to place a much greater emphasis on developing the vocational and employability skills that offenders need to find and keep jobs and apprenticeships in the labour markets where they will be released. Apprenticeships – which are, of course, jobs with training – are an important opportunity to rehabilitate ex-offenders. The pre-apprenticeship training which we want to see routinely offered in prisons is the first step to economic, social and community re-engagement. That sits alongside the renewed focus on making prisons places of work. Providing the skills training needed for available work opportunities in prison will become a growing priority as work in prisons is made a reality for many more.' (p.7)

Latest figures from the Prison Reform Trust⁷ reveal that:

- 68% of prisoners thought that 'having a job' was important in stopping reoffending;
- 40% prisoners reported needing help to improve work-related skills; and
- 70% of respondents to a survey by the Prison Reform Trust said that 'improving employability' was a motivating factor in learning.

Evidence from prison inspections⁸ reveals 'a mixed picture' in terms of the current availability and quality of vocational training and work opportunities in prisons and YOIs:

'We often found insufficient vocational training opportunities... Even where provision had increased... it remained insufficient. We were concerned this year to see a number of prisons reducing their vocational training provision.... The range of available work varied... We found too many prisoners under-employed in low skill roles... While such work allowed prisoners to gain some skills, these were often unaccredited. We did see a few good examples of employability skills training' (p. 52)

⁶ BIS and Ministry of Justice (May 2011) *Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation*
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32330/11-828-making-prisons-work-skills-for-rehabilitation.pdf

⁷ Prison Reform Trust (Nov 2012) Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile
www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/FactfileNov2012small.pdf

⁸ HM Chief Inspectors of Prisons (Oct 2012) Annual Report 2011-12
www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc1213/hc06/0613/0613.pdf

In August 2012, following a procurement of OLASS provider contracts, the OLASS 4 programme was introduced, taking forward the offender learning review recommendations, including:

- a renewed focus on making prisons places of preparation for work;
- more vocational skills training taking place in the 12 months immediately before release;
- a greater role for Lead Governors and Heads of Learning and Skills in planning the curriculum, being able to meet local needs more effectively and understanding the local labour market into which prisoners are released; and
- the development of wider partnership arrangements to support employment.⁹

There is a planned move towards incentives payments focused on job outcomes and reducing re-offending.

The increased focus on vocational and employability skills provision within offender learning reflects developments in the wider skills system, as detailed in *Skills for Sustainable Growth*¹⁰ and more recently in *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills*:

'Getting our vocational and technical education system right is both socially and economically vital... To succeed as a nation strong vocational education is essential.' (p.4)¹¹

During the lifetime of this project, the Government commissioned the Richard Review into Apprenticeships¹² and is now consulting on the Future of

⁹ Skills Funding Agency (September 2012) Delivery of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service Phase 4. (OLASS 4) 2012/13

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/OLASS_Delivery_Guidance_Note_FINAL.pdf

¹⁰ BIS (2010) *Skills for Sustainable Growth*

www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/further-education-skills/docs/S/10-1274-skills-for-sustainable-growth-strategy.pdf

¹¹ BIS (April 2013) *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills*

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/186830/13-960-rigour-and-responsiveness-in-skills-amended.pdf

¹² Richard Review (November 2012) The Richard Review of Apprenticeships

www.schoolforstartups.co.uk/richard-review/richard-review-full.pdf

Apprenticeships in England.¹³ In addition, the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning was established and reported its findings, and a review of Adult Vocational Qualifications is now underway, led by the UKCES. Further information and guidance material relating to OLASS 4 has also been released. In March 2013, the Skills Funding Agency¹⁴ highlighted that work was underway by BIS, the Agency, the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to explore the policy and operational issues in relation to offenders and apprenticeships. We contacted NAS to find out more about this. They have established a Task and Finish group which meets quarterly and links closely with the BIS/DFE Joint Apprenticeship Unit. The group has prepared a paper exploring the possibilities and practicalities of delivering an apprenticeship programme for offenders in custody. The paper is due shortly.

¹³ Department for Education and BIS (March 2013) *The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Next Steps from the Richard Review*

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190632/bis-13-577-the-future-of-apprenticeships-in-england-next-steps-from-the-richard-review.pdf

¹⁴ Skills Funding Agency (March 2013) *Funding Rules and Guidance 2012/13 for the Offenders Learning and Skills Service*, Version 2

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/FINAL_Funding_Rules_and_Guidance_2012_13_for_the_O.pdf

Part 1: Working in partnership

Central to the Government's reducing reoffending agenda is an increased focus on vocational and employability skills and making prisons places of work. There is a clear steer from the Government for prisons to establish, strengthen and maintain partnerships both internally and externally, as partnership working is crucial to this agenda. This is evident in the 2010 Green Paper *Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment*, where working in partnership is central to the discussion around key initiatives like making prisons places of meaningful work, integrated offender management and community payback schemes.

Respondents to the call for information reported that they are working collaboratively with internal departments as well as external partners to implement more comprehensive and, in some instances, tailored training and skills programmes for offenders.

At HMP Chelmsford, for example, the prison laundry works in partnership with the OLASS provider and the prison's education department to deliver vocational training and employability skills.

HMP Chelmsford

HMP Chelmsford is a local prison, serving the courts; it has a high turnover of prisoners, with the average stay being around 56 days.

Vocational learning and skills development

Chelmsford offers a range of OLASS and non-OLASS provision to prepare prisoners for work. The provision includes embedded Functional Skills, training for specific vocations and general employability and personal development courses, for example:

- Construction (Bricklaying, Plumbing and Painting & Decorating) accredited through City and Guilds (C&G) 6218, mostly Level 1; fully unitised to suit high turnover;
- Cleaning, accredited through C&G 7648, Level 1;
- Barbering, accredited through C&G 3002, Level 2;
- ICT accredited through OCR Levels 1 and 2 and recent development of City and Guilds ICT functional skills;
- a range of laundry skills accredited through NVQ in Laundry Services; and
- the development of wide ranging generic employability skills and attributes accredited through C&G 7546 Employability & Personal Development, Levels 1 and 2.

Additionally, the prison conducts regular analysis of the learning and skills needs of offenders and works with employers to look at labour market information and develop vocational provision. Engagement with employers through the bi-monthly employer forum and hosting several employer engagement events has been successful in getting employers engaged and securing work placements for prisoners on Release on Temporary Licence.

'The stuff we do here should lay the foundations for addressing offending behaviour. Good learning and skills addresses attitudes.'

Sue Saxton – Cluster HOLS

Delivering a service

Men who work in the laundry have to be thoroughly vetted and formally interviewed before they start working. The tutor will first seek references from staff working on the wings and will speak to other colleagues supporting the offender. The length of sentence at Chelmsford will also be considered, as the full course qualification can take up to eight months to complete. Offenders have to agree to complete the qualifications whilst working.

Working in the laundry gives the men an opportunity to get meaningful employment and acquire vocational skills and qualifications. They can develop a real work ethic and current work experience and skills, including working with others, following instructions, working to deadlines, punctuality, regular attendance, multi tasking and interpersonal skills.

The men work through the core prison week, from Monday to Friday, and are responsible for the laundry requirements of the whole prison. This includes washing, ironing/pressing and distributing all of the prison uniforms and kit for members of staff, prisoners and new arrivals. The men work in groups, on a busy schedule to ensure they meet the prison's laundry service requirements each week.

Learning at work

There are eight units available at Level 2 leading to a full Technician's Award. Accreditation is through City & Guilds Laundry Services accessible up to NVQ Level 2. Learners develop a range of employability skills, including health and safety, and Employability and Personal Development Award 7546 is also available at Level 2. All qualifications are unitised, allowing prisoners to gain a range of wider skills, and this can be seen in the men's portfolios which reflect achievement and progress in more areas of learning than is required for the City and Guilds qualification. Each learning plan is individualised to the needs of the learner and delivered at a pace convenient for them. Learners who require additional support have access to a range of functional skills through the Education Department and, where needed, are supported by learning support assistants on a one-to-one basis.

On the job learning allows the men to work as they learn, with some time given where needed to complete folders and required paper work or access support. The course tutor has been key to the development and tailoring of the course; having completed the course himself and progressed on to become a qualified assessor. He works closely with the internal verifier to align learning plans with course requirements and, where possible, with the learners to develop new resources or ways of working.

The learning provision in the Laundry was graded as outstanding by Ofsted in 2011 and has a good track record of achieving good outputs for learners. Through regular feedback these learners report that they feel they have benefited from access to learning at work, through gaining new skills and being part of a real working environment. Moreover, staff report positively on the progress of the men working in the Laundry.

'The standard of quality of offender learning is special. Learning and skills is not the primary purpose of the prison system and we are working with some of the most disadvantaged people and we still see quality. This is not always recognised by people outside of offender learning.'

Sue Saxton – Cluster HOLS

Benefits and impact taken from interviewees and respondents to the call for information

Benefits and impact for the prison

The laundry provides a good quality, crucial service for the departments across the whole prison.

The prison incurs cost savings where prisoners provide the workforce for services delivered in house.

The provision has been recognised by Ofsted as outstanding.

Benefits and impact for learners

Provision set aside for vulnerable prisoners ensures that they too have access to constructive and purposeful activity during their sentence.

Learners gain a range of vocational skills, employability training and work experience.

The generic qualifications like health and safety are relevant to a wide range of jobs.

Learners can build their self esteem and develop a sense of responsibility.

'Makes me feel more responsible.'

Learner

'It's helpful outside of prison, even if you don't work in a laundry.'

Learner

Issues and challenges

Retention can sometimes be an issue in a local prison with a high turnover of prisoners. To limit this, the tutor looks at length of stay as part of the vetting process.

Other prisons may not have similar provision and learners may not be able to complete or continue in this field when they are moved. Unitisation of courses means that qualifications are more portable.

The way the prison has been built and the site it is on do not allow for the expansion of the laundry and this limits potential business opportunities like providing laundry services for other prisons.

Sustainability / Next steps

Fully embedding functional skills in non-OLASS provision.

Implementing the Local Offender Partnership Forum's communications strategy, using champions to engage a broader range of employers.

Working with employers

In Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation, effective partnership is described as:

'the key to making local arrangements operate well, with the effective engagement of employers as critical.'

Our research into vocational training and employability skills affirms that several prisons are already working in partnership with or developing good links with employers. However there remains a dilemma for those prisons who are unlikely to release their prisoners locally; they will be supporting offenders to develop relevant vocational skills that will secure Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) locally whilst simultaneously aiming to meet the vocational needs of employers in the areas to which the offenders will eventually be released.

Open prisons and prisons which cater for ROTL such as HMP Spring Hill have secured a wide range of community placements for their offenders by networking and working in partnership with local employers and community organisations. These placements are reported to be crucial to the resettlement process.

'The vocational offer at HMP Spring Hill is tailored to the local job market. The Level 3 Sustainable Construction course, for example, replaced the Bricklaying qualification as a result of the Eco Town project which has recently started in Bicester. The prison is working with the companies responsible for the Eco Town to ensure that prisoners who have achieved this qualification while on full-time work or after release, get employment at the Eco Town.'

OLASS Manager, HMP Spring Hill

Several prisons and education providers have employed employer engagement workers, as in the HMP Wealstun example below. These staff are responsible for community outreach and developing partnerships between local employers and the prison. This resource is key to developing and maintaining effective partnerships with employers.

Increasingly, prisons are hosting Employer Engagement Days onsite to encourage greater partnership working. At these events prisons can showcase their training resources and facilities for learners and answer any question employers may have about providing placements for offenders. Employers are encouraged by the opportunity to give something back to the community as part of their social corporate responsibility, but may need assurances about vetting and security concerns.

In addition, prisons are opening up their facilities to provide services to members of the public, such as catering for prison staff and visitors to the prison, and these ventures provide another opportunity for offenders to get real work experience. As shown in the case studies, HMPs Spring Hill and Thorn Cross both employ offenders in the Officers' Mess and provide catering for prisoners.

The example below from HMP Hewell shows how the prison is working in partnership with local employers to support vocational opportunities for offenders.

HMP Hewell

HMP Hewell is a merged prison with two Categories; a Category B facility and, on the same site, the Grange Resettlement Centre, which is a Category D establishment.

Staff in education work together with staff in the prison kitchens to deliver vocational qualifications and employability skills to prisoners working in the kitchens or servery. Additionally, in the Category D facility, the prison offers a range of vocational qualifications in Construction, Catering, Industrial Cleaning, Cycle Maintenance and Fork Lift Truck Driving. The prison also delivers a range of farm and horticulture courses, as well as employability training for those prisoners preparing for release.

Links with local employers are developed through the prison's employer engagement manager and through their membership and participation in the West Midlands Learning Consortium. This group includes the West Midlands cluster of prisons working collaboratively with local organisations and employers to engage prisoners and ex-offenders in employment.

Provision at the resettlement centre is also linked to the community outreach programme, where prisoners are supported through the gate and into employment. Through this programme, ex-offenders who have successfully secured employment received one-to-one support from the prison to help them complete qualifications and settle into work.

Information, advice and guidance

Progress and achievement in vocational training and employability skills depends in part on access to good and timely information, advice and guidance (IAG).

Therefore, IAG advisers and peer mentors are key to helping offenders make informed choices about their training and employment pathways. It is important that they are adequately trained and experienced in working with offenders; relevant and appropriate IAG on vocational training and employability skills must reflect the individual circumstance of the offender in terms of skills, experience, aspirations and realistic opportunities available upon release.

Individual learning plans

Providers are encouraging and supporting the use of individual learning plans (ILPs) to map clear progression pathways for offenders. ILPs set out a learning journey for prisoners based on their skills, experience and aspirations and should lead to realistic outcomes for the individual. Offenders are encouraged and supported to take responsibility for their own ILP but the success of this approach is also dependent on collaborative working where all partners will refer to the plan to monitor progress and record achievement.

Some prisons are including the ILP as part of the sentence plan to encourage offenders and the staff supporting them to prioritise learning and progression throughout the custodial sentence.

'Offenders at HMP Lindholme have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) which indicates to the learner where his areas of development are. He owns this document and buys into the process of targets and achievement which leads to raising his self esteem.'

OLASS Manager, HMP Lindholme

Part 2: Vocational training

Access to real work environments

Vocational training programmes which include access to work placements are giving offenders the opportunity to better prepare for work by practising skills gained in a real work environment.

Offenders are incentivised by vocational training programmes which are stimulating (physically and mentally) and where there are links to real jobs. The example below shows how HMP Spring Hill is using the Officers' Mess to provide a real work environment and training for offenders in catering and customer services.

HMP Spring Hill

Based in a rural location, HMP Spring Hill is a Category D prison, situated on the same site as HMP Grendon. The two prisons are separate establishments; however, they share a management team and education staff work across the two sites.

A few men transfer to Spring Hill from Grendon, but a high proportion of men arrive from another Category B prison in the locality. They serve out the remainder of their sentence at Spring Hill prior to resettlement in the local community. The prison also accommodates some men who are serving very short sentences. Men can spend a few months at the prison or up to two years. During their time at Spring Hill they will undertake community work (up to four months) and may progress to paid work if they can secure it. The prison has its own employment agency on site, and men have access to the phone and internet (via the Virtual Campus) to support their job searches.

Milton Keynes College is the learning and skills provider at Spring Hill, employing around 35 teaching staff (ten full time or on substantial contracts) to deliver a variety of learning opportunities. Current vocational courses, informed by the local labour market, include Professional Catering (NVQ Level 2), Barista training (Level 2), an award in Food Safety, Customer Service (Level 2), Sustainable Construction (Level 3), CISCO IT Essentials and CISCO CCNA. In addition, a certificate in Personal Development and Employability is being introduced which offers a wide range of units. Arrangements for OLASS 4 delivery are currently in development and will build on the existing offer.

Non-OLASS provision includes a Gym Instructors award at Level 2, distance learning programmes, and qualifications in land-based studies and horticulture.

How it works

Inspired by similar initiatives in other prisons, The Springs Training Restaurant was established in June 2011 and is based on a partnership between the prison and Milton Keynes College. The prison supported the setting up of the restaurant and covers the running costs. Milton Keynes College provides trainers who deliver qualifications in Professional Catering, Customer Service and Barista to the men who staff the restaurant and kitchen.

The restaurant is open on week days and serves prison staff and visitors. It caters for 40 to 100 paying customers each day. Trainees undertaking the Professional Catering qualification prepare and cook a lunchtime menu. Trainees on the Customer Service and Barista courses work front-of-house. In addition to the restaurant, there is a take-away option (salad bar) and a coffee delivery service.

Men find out about the training restaurant as soon as they arrive at the prison as part of the induction process. They meet with education staff to discuss their interests and goals. All men with an interest in the catering industry are eligible to apply for roles in the training restaurant. The courses are over-subscribed and attract men of all ages. Some men have prior work experience in the industry and others are newcomers.

A full-time tutor runs the kitchen and delivers the Level 2 NVQ Professional Catering course, which takes around eight months to complete in full. Up to five men are training in the kitchen at any one time. Two part-time trainers deliver the customer service and barista training. The NVQ in Customer Service takes approximately four months to complete. Both NVQ programmes are unitised and trainers support learners on a one-to-one basis and, where appropriate, encourage them to access additional support (e.g. with literacy and numeracy).

Benefits and impact taken from interviewees and respondents to the call for information

Reported benefits for learners are numerous and vary depending on individual starting points. For learners with prior work experience in hospitality and catering, the training restaurant provides a return to something they enjoy doing. It gives them an opportunity to use their existing skills and 'the confidence to know I have still got it.' They can also update their skills and develop new ones. Sometimes men have relevant work experience but no formal qualifications. The courses can help them to evidence their skills to employers: 'the courses gave me something on paper'. For those new to this type of work, their training can result in a new interest as well as new knowledge and skills. The men also gain valuable work experience in a 'real life' restaurant serving paying customers. For all the learners, it offers them a productive way to spend their time in prison and acts as an incentive for good behaviour. Some learners go on to become mentors to other men undertaking their training and there is interest for higher level learning.

I thought it would be interesting and one of the better jobs to have in the prison. They use my expertise and I will get a qualification.'

Learner

Staff put forward examples of former trainees who have secured job interviews for paid work and gained employment in the industry.

Sometimes men can already have their own business within the industry which they will return to on release. As employers themselves, undertaking the training gives them useful knowledge regarding staff development and recruitment matters. There was also reference to being willing to offer placements to offenders and ex-offenders as a result of their own experiences in prison.

There are benefits too for staff and visitors, for example in being able to access refreshments on site.

Strengths and success factors

Word of mouth is very important in promoting the course. Achievement rates on the courses are high and learners are able to work at their own pace. Men gain a combination of skills in a real life work setting (e.g. customer service and barista training). These skills are valued by employers. For younger men in particular, it can provide them with their first experience of work.

The induction process at the prison is helping to ensure that those who participate in the programmes are the most suitable candidates. A key lesson learned has been ensuring that participants have a genuine interest in the restaurant and are prepared to work hard on both the practical and theoretical components of the course.

Learner mentors provide important support to the trainers in helping to deliver the training and develop the service. Good team working amongst participants is critical.

The training is delivered by experienced and committed staff. It was noted that staff had been able to work with, and progress, some men who had been taken off other learning/work opportunities at the prison: 'Tutors are very skilled at reading personalities.' Learners spoke positively about the trainers, and one trainer felt s/he had the respect of prisoners; this was attributed in part to being a member of college staff and therefore seen by the men as external to the prison.

The importance of an experienced Head of Learning and Skills at the prison was highlighted by staff as a critical success factor.

Issues and challenges

Some operational issues / restrictions were noted, including a perceived reduction in use of the restaurant by prison staff, challenges in securing payment from all customers, and the need to comply with prison regimes which place restrictions on the amount of contact time trainers have available.

During their time at the prison, men become eligible for community work. This can cause interruptions to their learning; however, some learners do return to finish their course at a later date and the prison has supported some prisoners to complete their qualification post release.

Although there are some community work placements that relate to catering, these are limited and not always available to the men. However the training they do receive allows offenders to develop and refine generic employability skills which are transferable to a range of work settings. Securing paid work can be hampered by the rural location of the prison and a lack of transport. Risk assessments can also take time, which can result in a work opportunity being lost. Establishing stronger links between the employment agency and education staff at the prison may help address some of these difficulties.

Sustainability / Next steps

The Springs Training Restaurant is being promoted as a model of good practice to other prisons in the cluster.

In recognition of the value of peer support, work is underway to develop education champions within the prison to support the induction process. To date, two prisoners have been recruited and are starting to meet men on their arrival at the prison and introduce them to the learning opportunities available. The education champions have also helped to establish a working group made up of prisoners (engaged in a variety of learning and work opportunities) to help develop a three year strategic plan for education at Spring Hill.

Access to apprenticeships

Setting up apprenticeships within prisons has not been possible under the new definitions set out by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. However, a few prisons have set up successful access to apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship courses for offenders in custody. At HMP North Sea Camp vocational training is linked to pre-apprenticeship courses.

HMP North Sea Camp

Located in a very rural area, HMP North Sea Camp is a Category D open prison housing 420 prisoners aged 21 and over. The majority of the men are nearing the completion of a long sentence, and around 70 to 75 are indeterminate or lifer prisoners. It is one of two Category D prisons which accommodate sex offenders.

Men arrive at North Sea Camp from prisons throughout England and the average length of stay is 18 months. The prison has some links with employers, including Timpson's, and every day around 90 men go out into the local community to undertake volunteering placements. Ten men are in paid work. Men are released to locations across the country.

The learning and skills provider delivers a range of accredited vocational courses including Bricklaying (Levels 1-3), Painting and Decorating (Levels 1 and 2), Customer Service (Levels 1 and 2), Business Start Up (Levels 1 and 2), Forklift and IT (Levels 1-3). An employability course (Level 2) is also available, as well as discrete maths and English classes. Many of these opportunities are run as short courses in order to maximise the funding available.

How it works

Painting and Decorating and Bricklaying courses are well-established at HMP North Sea Camp. There is a full-time tutor for each subject and courses are run on a roll on roll off basis.

Around 18 months ago, Access to Apprenticeship pathways were introduced, enabling learners to complete all aspects of an apprenticeship apart from the NVQ component (i.e. technical certificate, Functional Skills qualifications and Employer Rights and Responsibilities certificate). Some preliminary research by the learning provider suggested that engaging employers for the NVQ component would not be problematic.

'The NVQ bit is the bit the guys like best because it's hands on. It's the technical certificate and functional skills that people are failing more.'

Member of staff

As part of the delivery of the technical certificate in Painting and Decorating it was decided to trial embedding IT in to the course. The awarding body, Construction Skills, had no set portfolios for learners to complete to evidence their work so it was decided to introduce e-portfolios, with support from an IT tutor. By creating e-portfolios, men would have the opportunity to learn and develop their practical IT skills and by using the project-based ITQ qualifications they would be able to use their Painting and Decorating portfolio to gain an IT qualification to complement their skills and enhance their prospects of finding employment on release.

Six months ago, a similar approach was adopted in the bricklaying course.

Benefits and impact taken from interviewees and respondents to the call for information

The courses are always full and completion rates are high. All learners engage in creating the e-portfolios (it is a course requirement) and 80% gain an IT qualification from the work that they produce.

Some men are complete beginners to using computers and the courses offer them an introduction to IT. Computers are no longer 'alien' to them and they gain a basic understanding of how to operate them and a Level 1 qualification.

'Some of them have never turned on a computer before and you'd probably never get them to other than the fact that they really want to be a painter and decorator' (Member of staff)

There are learners who go on to complete higher level IT qualifications.

'We've had a few guys who've wanted to do Level 3 Databases but because they have to think of their own idea they can't. We've only really had the two guys do it through painting and decorating because the course gave them the idea. I think it makes doing the ITQ that way easier.'

Member of staff

One of the learners taking part in the Painting and Decorating Course when e-portfolios were piloted is now out of prison and employing people as a painter and decorator. He continues to use the logo he created in the IT class for his business. When first told he would have to use a computer as part of the course, he 'marched out the class and was never coming back'. However, he went on to achieve a Level 2 IT certificate and produce a 'fantastic' portfolio. He continues to act as a positive role model for others who are reluctant to engage with IT or struggle to see the value of it.

The range of skills that learners gain through taking part in the vocational courses, including functional skills, makes them more attractive to potential employers.

In addition to positive feedback from learners, the provision has received endorsements through various quality assurance mechanisms. Construction Skills have been very complimentary about the e-portfolio approach.

If e-portfolios (instead of paper portfolios) were to be used more widely across the prison estate, it would make it easier to share information should prisoners be transferred and enable tutors to better assess the quality and authenticity of work already completed.

Strengths and success factors

Members of staff involved in delivering the provision are critical to its success. The vocational lecturers have embraced the embedding of functional skills and use of e-portfolios. The IT teacher has worked closely with the vocational tutors to develop the approach, ensuring that it meets the criteria of the qualifications and also accommodates learners' individual needs.

'Delivery in this style is transferable to other establishments if the vocational lecturers are open minded about how these qualifications can be delivered and the IT lecturers are committed to delivering IT in a practical style'. (Member of staff)

Vocational lecturers are former tradesmen, which gives them credibility with learners. Examples were given of former learners contacting the prison after release to ask tutors for practical advice on particular tasks. Generally speaking, tracking progression is difficult for staff; however, the prison has found that vocational learners are more likely than other learners to keep in contact for this reason.

Ensuring that all men wishing to participate in the course have a thorough understanding of what is involved in the course and appreciate the value of IT skills has also been key. This is done by promoting the journeys of past learners and ensuring staff across the prison are knowledgeable about the course.

'Nobody gets any false expectations about what they're going to.' (Member of staff)

The regime at the prison means there are very few interruptions to learning and the '30 hour week' means that more substantial qualifications can be undertaken and completed in a relatively short time period.

Issues and challenges

The education team at the prison is very small and there are capacity issues. Embedding IT into vocational courses has created more work for tutors; for example, in terms of marking work. This is an ongoing challenge.

'It's a lot more time consuming but so much more effective.' (Member of staff)

Similarly, engaging employers to take learners on for work experience and as apprentices also requires time.

'Because we're the education, we try but it's extra to what we should do. We try but we can't commit loads of time to it. We just haven't got it. Which is a real shame because it's only the lads who really suffer.' (Member of staff)

Although the prison has good ROTL (release on temporary licence) processes in place, securing relevant work placements for the men is proving a major challenge.

'I've written to around 60 companies and got one response.' (Member of staff)

Support has been sought from the National Apprenticeship Service, and the team is working with the prison to establish a resettlement team (made up of serving prisoners, following an example in another prison) but this is in its infancy.

Employers that have visited the prison to find out about the provision gain an insight into how the qualifications are taught (i.e. it is not the same as college delivery and involves practical experience) and have been 'amazed' by the standard of work produced by the men. In addition, the education team take work out to show employers when they can. The importance of raising awareness about the courses (both internally and externally) is known but has resource implications.

'Maybe they've not been out on site but ...our guys are in the workshop five days a week. It's different [to college] but I think it's trying to get that over to people...it's difficult to always get across to employers unless you can show them.' (Member of staff)

Additional issues that affect all types of provision include the remoteness of the prison (there are no FE colleges nearby, for example) and, linked to location, no access to the Virtual Campus. There is currently no broadband access in the area; however, the local authority is working closely with the prison and using it as a test bed site.

Sustainability / Next steps

Other prisons (within the cluster and further afield) have visited the prison to find out more about the e-portfolios and the access to apprenticeships pathways.

The prison would like to offer Level 3 Painting and Decorating but this requires additional machinery and funding is proving prohibitive. There is also some concern about the funding cap per learner and what this may mean for the existing offer.

The Manchester College already delivers an Access to Apprenticeship course at HMP Thorn Cross and has recently been successful in securing full apprenticeships for offenders released on temporary licence but in custody. As the programme is in its infancy, there were no completers at the time of this report; however, the example below captures how the project was set up.

Thorn Cross – Offenders into apprenticeships

The Manchester College (TMC) has been able to secure real apprenticeships for offenders in custody. This exciting and innovative project has been successful because of outstanding partnership working, led by TMC, involving a number of organisations working at Thorn Cross.

Thorn Cross was formerly a Young Offender establishment but now caters for a wider age group. The length of time offenders that are resident at the prison varies from three weeks to three months, with some offenders serving indeterminate sentences. A primary focus of the prison is on supporting offenders into work whilst in custody.

As the OLASS provider, TMC has developed this programme from a platform of excellent learning and skills delivery. The curriculum is focused on enabling offenders to secure the skills they need to get the jobs that could transform their lives and reduce re-offending.

Recently this has seen the development of pre-apprenticeship programmes to support the ambition of full apprenticeships once released on temporary licence.

The Thorn Cross rail industry apprenticeship

The Manchester College and AmberTrain have developed a strong and effective partnership delivering rail track training to young offenders at Thorn Cross with the objective of them securing sustainable employment on release.

The programme has run over a number of years but all parties were aware that a sustainable model was needed in order to deliver the course in the future. The ambition of OLASS following the Offender Learning Review and the strong focus on apprenticeships for offenders has meant that TMC has been able to work with AmberTrain in order to develop a pre-apprenticeship programme enabling progression onto full apprenticeships.

The course includes theoretical and practical components and is open to learners who meet the qualifying criteria and are enthusiastic about working in the rail industry. The prison, TMC and AmberTrain conduct the recruitment and selection process, ensuring that learners have the level of commitment to participate actively for the full ten weeks of pre-apprenticeship delivery and that they are eligible to participate in ROTL, enabling access to the full apprenticeship.

Delivery, management, quality and contractual compliance for both elements of the programme are delivered for AmberTrain and TMC by tutors, teachers, assessors and internal verifiers, all of whom have many years' experience, including delivery specific to the rail industry. The Manchester College also provides specialist support to learners with additional needs.

AmberTrain and TMC have been able to identify the appropriate apprenticeship framework and funding in order to develop a sustainable and long-term funding envelope. The framework includes track maintenance, underpinning track knowledge and functional skills.

Outcomes

The first cohort has recently being enrolled on the full apprenticeship with AmberTrain, TMC and four employers. Six learners will be supported through the programme and future cohorts will be entering the programme at regular intervals now that a long-term funding strategy has been established.

The programme up to now has not had the benefit of full apprenticeship funding but has none the less been very successful, as follows:

- There are high achievement rates; in 2011-12, 54 of the 60 starters achieved the full qualification.
- There is high demand for the course (60 applicants for 12 places on one course this year) and positive feedback from those who take part. Offenders develop a wide range of vocational and 'softer' skills. Learners often give feedback related to how they enjoy working as part of a team and undertaking practical outdoor learning. They highlight how the course provides them with a focus, keeps them physically fit and occupied and is mentally stimulating too.
- For some participants, this course provides them with their first qualification and/or their first experience of work. It also gives participants a sense of direction for the future and confidence to apply for jobs in the industry:
- Previous programmes demonstrate that 67% of those who complete the course gained employment on release as a direct result of the good links the provider and Amber Train have with local employers as well as the availability of work in this industry in the North West and areas to which prisoners are released. AmberTrain are able to track and support the progression of learners throughout their apprenticeship, as well as co-ordinate their employment during their journey. Employers are also supported by AmberTrain during the apprenticeship.
- Learners noted the wider benefits to their family and local community of them securing employment on release; for example, by acting as a positive role model for their children or reducing their family's anxiety that they may reoffend. They also refer to promoting work in the rail industry to others in the community, thereby potentially reducing their risk of committing crime.
- The prison has demonstrated great flexibility and innovation in developing RoTL processes that recognise that most railway repair work tends to take place overnight.

The model developed at Thorn Cross is a fantastic example of joint partnership working that seizes opportunities and enables excellent outcomes for learners that transform lives and reduce re-offending.

Quotes from offenders

'I would like to thank you for giving me a brilliant career on the railway. Thanks to you, and the way you taught me, I am progressing, just as you said I would. The qualifications the course gave me have helped a lot. I started on a day a week, but worked hard and I am now on five days a week. I couldn't have asked for any more. It gave me the boost I needed on release from prison.'

'Someone like me can make career for myself.'

'Won't get [another] job on the out that pays these wages.'

'Not many other courses that will help me get work.'

Part 3: Employability

Employability programmes in prisons cover topics such as job search, applying for jobs, interview techniques, communication skills and making disclosures. These programmes are proving effective, especially for a significant number of prisoners who have had little or no employment history as well as those who have served long sentences and therefore have no current and/or relevant employment histories. Specific employability courses like the ones delivered in the following examples are useful in supporting offenders in improving their skills and securing jobs on release.

HMP Lindholme, South Yorkshire

HMP Lindholme has a split site consisting of a Category C and D Prison. The prison offers Functional Skills at all levels as well as a range of Level 1 and Level 2 courses in 17 vocational areas. Vocational programme placements are structured towards the end of a prisoner's sentence and there are opportunities of for 'real' work placements onsite through the bakery and the catering and hospitality suite which both service the catering for the prison. Other opportunities for work in the community are also available for prisoners on RoTL.

All courses include employability skills which are transferable skills across the whole provision and, indeed, on release in a work place. Lindholme has a specific pre-release course which concentrates purely on the preparation of offenders for work on release. This course is called 'Beyond the Gate' and deals with CV writing, applications, interviews, organisational skills, communication and attitudes which are acceptable/not acceptable in a work environment.

'Education has given me the skills to 'get a job'. I needed to learn to read and write properly and then what I was going to do when I got out. So I looked for something I felt I could work in, this was VT Catering.'

Learner

The case study below looks at how HMP Bullwood Hall successfully implemented the City and Guilds Employability and Personal Development Framework.

Bullwood Hall

Since 2006, the prison has been a Category C trainer prison for foreign nationals. The 228 men currently held at the prison are serving sentences of four years or less, and are within the last two years of their sentence. The average length of stay at Bullwood Hall is around 12 weeks.

Bullwood Hall Prison closed in March 2013; this case study was submitted before this date

It is a high performing prison, receiving good grades in recent inspections conducted by Ofsted and the Chief Inspector of Prisons. Generally speaking, about 95% of the population are engaged in some form of learning activity at any one time. All provision is accredited and modularised. Vocational learning opportunities are on offer in plumbing, bricklaying and ICT.

How it works

The Employability and Personal Development framework is embedded across all aspects of prison life. It is open to all learners who wish to take part. The framework contains hundreds of units which help develop the generic employability skills that employers are actively seeking.

Men complete an induction programme on arrival at the prison. Following this they can undertake a five session employability course (delivered over one week). During the course men carry out a self-assessment of their employability skills, attitudes and thinking skills which may have impacted on their ability to keep employment in the past. Supported by staff, they develop an action plan for improvement which goes with them in to work or education. Each participant is assigned a personal tutor who visits them on a regular basis and speaks to relevant members of staff to find out about their progress against targets set in their action plan. Relevant staff also give written feedback on an individual's performance.

'If they have got in to trouble they would take them through, what did they do, what did they need to do to change, improve and take ownership.'

An alternative approach is adopted for men who are unable to read and write and 'often have totally disengaged from education'. They are usually assigned to work straightaway and receive support in their place of work from an ESOL tutor, who will gradually encourage them to attend classes.

Initially D did not want to engage in the employability award. He found it difficult to make eye contact. With small steps, his personal tutor identified that he felt he was not able to develop or learn anymore. Working with his personal tutor, D started to develop strategies for learning new words which helped him to complete his plumbing course (his literacy ability was Entry Level 2). He looked forward to reviewing his progress with staff and set himself a goal to get a job as an apprentice plumber. He completed his plumbing course and the employability award and left prison keen to continue his learning and progress in a trade.

P left school with good GCSEs and went on to achieve several AS Levels and a BTEC qualification. Struggling to find work, he started to take and sell drugs. During his first custodial sentence, P had no interest in engaging in education or work. He is now serving a second custodial sentence and is accessing a range of services. He has completed an NVQ Level 1 City and Guilds in Plumbing, Electrics and Painting and Decorating and is working towards a certificate or diploma in Employability and Personal Development. P's behaviour at times has been erratic; however, with focused and structured support from his personal tutor, he is starting to change his behaviour, identify areas for improvement and work towards his self-identified goals.

Some learners who were reasonably difficult prisoners at the start of the programme have gone on to gain trusted roles and orderly roles in the prison supporting others.

There is also some evidence of the positive impact of the programme for prisoners post release.

'We have some fantastic examples of where men have written in and said as a result of what we've done here they've now secured work or they're going to college or their life has turned around.'

Member of staff

In a recent inspection by Ofsted, the provision received a 'Good' grade. It also was nominated for the Prison Action Net Awards and received a commendation.

Strengths and success factors

The staff were highly motivated. Sometimes the work involved in delivering the framework programme can go beyond what a tutor's duties, however they showed a high level of commitment because they saw the importance and value of it for learners. The ESOL tutor was 'passionate' about the Employability and Personal Development framework and actively promoted it to lower level learners and supported their engagement.

'Generally they would then pursue other classes because they realised they could actually do it. They were being treated like adults and because it was about their needs and what they identified they needed to do it wasn't just teaching them maths and English.'

Member of staff

Effective partnership work took place. The framework operates across the regime and is dependent on buy-in and collaboration from all prison staff and external partners including chaplaincy, PE, residential discipline staff, the National Careers Service, Library, and Drugs Services.

There was a focus on continuous reflection and development. There are a variety of learner feedback mechanisms in place, and input is constantly sought due to an ever-changing population at the prison. Peer mentoring is in operation and men are also supported to become learner observers in order to inform the development of provision to best reflect learners' needs.

'Good was never good enough and what is good today is only satisfactory tomorrow. That was the real ethos ...No matter how good we were we were always looking at ways to improve it.'

Issues and challenges

Concerns were raised about the impact of payment by results on this type of provision:

'We wanted to get away from just churning out certificates... This type of framework is essential to ensure the men are supported to take ownership of the changes in attitude that they need to make and then to know how to do this. For some learners this is a long process but can achieve significant results. The emphasis on funding by results, some of the depth that is required will be lost.'

Dianne Koppit, Education Manager

Linked to funding arrangements, at certain times of the year there can be limited staff capacity which can mean participants have less one-to-one support from their personal tutor.

Tracking the longer-term impact of the programme on participants is difficult for a number of reasons, and to try and support the process the Ministry of Justice has introduced the Justice Data Lab where organisations working with offenders, can access re-offending data. This data will provide vital information to organisations supporting the rehabilitation of offenders and help them assess the impact of their work on reducing re-offending.

Sustainability/ Next steps

Information about the framework is available on the Excellence Gateway website, and both the current and former provider of learning and skills provision at the prison are seeking to embed the framework in other establishments.

'It's holistic and I think that takes quite a lot of mindset, quite a lot of organisation, quite a lot of support for staff. So it is without a doubt 100% transferable but it's only as good as it is applied. Start small, grow bigger.'

Dianne Koppit, Education Manager

The following case study shows how a prison is supporting offenders to develop a healthy work ethic, build on their confidence and self esteem, learn to follow instructions, and learn about appropriate behaviour in the workplace and how to work in teams. The providers we spoke to noted that a significant number of offenders did not have these skills, which would allow them to secure and maintain employment.

HMP Wealstun

Wealstun prison is a Category C Trainer Prison. The prison is located in the Yorkshire and Humber region, and around 12 miles from Leeds. It currently accommodates 816 men and has a maximum capacity of 832. The majority of men will stay at Wealstun for at least a year; however there are a significant number of short-term prisoners who will reside at the prison for no more than six months. Men tend to arrive at Wealstun from other prisons in the region.

The Manchester College has been delivering learning and skills provision at the prison since 1999. Up until five years ago, the prison was a Category C and Category D establishment. In 2008, when the open prison was closed, some changes were made to the existing learning offer linked to the prison population and local labour market opportunities. Level 2 qualifications were introduced at the prison.

The current vocational learning offer includes BTEC Computer Engineering and Level 2 diplomas in a wide range of construction trades including Plastering, Fitted Interiors and Wall and Floor Tiling. The prison has a staff bistro which is run by men completing a Level 2 NVQ in Professional Cookery.

How it works

The NCFE Level 1 Employability Course ran for the first time at Wealstun in May 2012. The Manchester College was delivering the provision in other prisons and settings, and adapted it to the local context.

The course is open to all men at the prison; however, the priority group is prisoners on short-term sentences (under 12 months). They find out about the course through the induction process. The course is voluntary; however, the College has established a relationship with the offender management/sentence planning team who encourage their clients to participate and may include it as a sentence plan target.

‘What someone needs and what they want are not always the same.’ **Member of staff**

The purpose of the course is to give the men the skills to compete for jobs and to help them to recognise their abilities and attributes. It covers a range of topics, including application forms, CVs and interview techniques. The course is run continuously, with a new intake of eight to ten men every three weeks. Men attend every week day for three weeks to complete the award, and there is the option to stay on for a further two weeks to achieve the certificate.

Benefits and impact taken from interviewees and respondents to the call for information

Retention and completion rates for the course are high, at over 80%. Feedback from learners indicates that they see the value of the course and find the content rewarding. Some men who take part because the course is a sentence-planning target begin to see how the course can support their transfer to a Category D prison or to secure parole.

The College is not able to track outcomes of learners post release, but men are referred to a range of external agencies that can provide support.

Strengths and success factors

High retention and completion rates are attributed to a combination of factors, including a very experienced tutor delivering a course to learners who see the relevance and value of it.

A recent moderator's report assessed all aspects of the course as 'excellent'.

Learner feedback on the course is actively sought. In light of recent comments, the course provider is exploring whether the amount of writing involved could be reduced.

Issues and challenges

There can be interruptions to learning. Men can be engaged with a range of services at the same point in their sentence, which can have a negative impact on their learning. There are financial implications for the provider when a learner does not complete their course within the set number of guided learning hours. The college works with other service providers on a case-by-case basis to try to minimise disruption and is encouraging the prison to look at sequencing activities.

The Virtual Campus is proving useful for CV writing; however, there are issues with the job search facility and this element is currently under review.

Sustainability / Next steps

Discussions are underway with the prison on how to combine the course (which is currently classroom-based delivery) with a workshop. This will enable learners to undertake real life work experience, which will add to their skills, help them to achieve some units and make them more attractive to employers. At present, learners on the course can be reliant on their employment history prior to prison. This development will enable them to draw on current experiences.

The potential benefits of engaging employers in the course (for example, to carry out mock interviews) are noted, including the possibility of leading to real job outcomes for some learners. The Manchester College has recently appointed an employment broker to work across a number of prisons and help develop and strengthen links with employers.

Embedding Functional Skills

Providers are responding positively to the embedding of Functional Skills into vocational training programmes and have reported that this approach has improved provision and has engaged offenders in English, maths and information communications and technology, who might not have been reached if Functional Skills were delivered separately.

The examples below from HMPs Wakefield and Hollesley Bay show their approach to embedding Functional Skills, English and maths.

HMP Wakefield

Wakefield is a Category A (high security) prison with vocational and employability training available in specific areas, primarily Catering and Business Administration or through the work available in the prison industries. Functional skills are embedded throughout the provision and courses are accessible up to Level 3.

Tutors provide contextualised learning within prison industries on a one-to-one basis to help learners who are in the separation unit and/or those who struggle with functional skills or have additional learning needs. This type of support is proven to be less disruptive to the prison day and effective at engaging those furthest away from learning and skills.

HMP YOI Hollesley Bay

At Hollesley Bay, functional skills are delivered as part of the vocational workshops curriculum. Embedding functional skills in this way has encouraged reluctant learners to engage with maths and English and to work towards pre-apprenticeships and to progress from Entry Level through to Level 2 in Functional Skills, English and maths.

For example, the education provider offers the Construction Awards Alliance (CAA) Level 2 Diploma in Plastering and CAA Level 2 Diploma in Bricklaying delivered alongside embedded Functional Skills, English and maths; these qualifications provide learners with the skills necessary to gain an apprenticeship or work on release.

Progression routes

The unitisation of qualifications is allowing more offenders to complete individual modules and build up a portfolio of learning. Added to this, some prisons are already working together to co-ordinate learning pathways which support progression and achievement. The examples below from HMPs Reading and Brinsford are cases in point.

HMP YOI Reading

HMP&YOI Reading is predominantly a remand prison for offenders between the ages of 18 and 21. The prison delivers a programme of basic construction skills in painting and decorating, to provide young people with a taste of the trade, which can then be used to enhance their own living environment or as a stepping stone to further training and/or employment opportunities.

Vocational trainers work in partnership with education colleagues to support learners either in small classes or through one-to-one support. Additionally, the programme has clear progression routes at forwarding establishments where learners can access qualifications in Construction at higher levels.

HMP YOI Brinsford

Brinsford is a male Young Offender Institute and a remand centre for young adult prisoners between the ages of 18 and 21.

The curriculum at Brinsford sets out clear learning pathways for learners to follow which are linked to a specific vocational outcome. Pathways are developed with the learners and will include functional skills and vocational and employability training. This approach has improved retention and success rates of vocational training at Brinsford.

Learning facilities

Prisons and education providers are updating their facilities and resources to meet industry requirements and to match what is available from providers and employers outside of prison. This is making it easier for learners to progress in a particular field of learning or into employment on release

HMP Northumberland

Northumberland offers a broad vocational curriculum, delivering nationally industry-recognised qualifications and using up-to-date facilities. The aim is to equip learners with the skills and qualifications that would enable them to compete with the employment market upon release.

Need analysis

Prisons and education providers are analysing the needs of offenders to inform offender vocational training and employability programmes and to tailor their services to better meet the needs of offenders. We know from previous research¹⁵ that this is taking place through initial and ongoing assessments, as well as through learner feedback collected through forums, feedback forms, surveys and discussions with offenders. HMPs Bullwood Hall, Everthorpe, Hewell and Northumberland all reported through the call for information that they use learner feedback to evidence progress and achievement. Other prisons, such as HMPs Onley and Reading, conduct learner voice surveys to inform their provision and HMP North Sea Camp facilitates learner focus groups.

In line with the Government's focus on local influence and accountability as described in *Making Prisons Work*, local labour market information is also being used to develop programmes that can equip offenders with skills which will make them more attractive to employers in the areas to which they are released. Through partnership working, prisons are able to align their provision to meet the market needs identified by employers. In the example from HMP Ranby the prison works closely with employers to secure jobs for offenders on release.

¹⁵ NIACE (July 2012) Understanding and analysing the benefits of the prison induction programmes developed and delivered by Careers Information and Advice Service (CIAS) providers

HMP Ranby

HMP Ranby delivers an NVQ Level 2 in Railway Maintenance and Repair, which is one of the more popular vocational training courses on offer at HMP Ranby. The project targets prisoners with less than 12 months remaining on their sentence and forms part of their resettlement plan.

Prisoners on the course learn about maintaining railways and receive help with securing related employment on release. The project has been running for five years, in partnership with prison staff from Learning and Skills and Resettlement, with the OLASS 4 provider and with Trackwork Ltd. Approximately 35 per cent of the learners on this course have successfully got a job on the railways on their release.

Peer mentoring

Mentoring and peer support programmes are providing an invaluable resource for vocational training and employability skills programmes by supporting learners on the wings as well as in classes and workshops. Offenders who have received training to become mentors can deliver high quality information, advice and guidance.

Mentors and peers are helping to engage prisoners who are farthest away from the (learning/labour) market, including those with low levels of numeracy and literacy, those with learning difficulties and disabilities, vulnerable prisoners and those experiencing mental health difficulties. At HMP Chelmsford mentors are supporting both the delivery of laundry qualifications as well as the service delivered by the laundry.

HMP Chelmsford

There are currently two mentors supporting the tutor in the laundry; both have completed the Technician's Award and as well as the Listener's course which teaches mentoring and support skills. The mentors support the offenders on the course with completing the paperwork required for their portfolios and also at work, supervising groups of workers. Mentors also support the learners on the wing. With limited resources staff, this additional support has been welcomed and has improved the quality of learning and work in the laundry.

Targeted provision

Within the population of offenders, there are some groups and individuals who are more disadvantaged than others; this includes: those with learning difficulties and

disabilities, those experiencing mental health difficulties and those who are considered vulnerable within the prison.

These prisoners require additional and/or specialist support in terms of accessing learning and skills provision and, in some instances, provision has to be developed separately from mainstream provision to accommodate the needs of these prisoners. At HMP Chelmsford the laundry has been reserved to deliver learning, skills and work for vulnerable prisoners.

The example below highlights how provision for offenders with learning difficulties and disabilities at HMP Everthorpe is being delivered.

HMP Everthorpe

HMP Everthorpe has a successful programme of support for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities (LLDD), in particular those with a literacy or numeracy level below Entry Level 2. These learners are generally identified shortly after reception using available data and through initial assessments including, where appropriate, a hidden difficulties questionnaire (HDQ).

The HDQ is used to identify the kind of difficulty or disability and then specialist LLDD staff work alongside peer supporters and prison staff to encourage and help the individual to access appropriate learning and support.

A variety of engagement options are available for the learner either one to one, in small groups, classroom based or embedded in a vocational workshop. The wider support needs of prisoners are also discussed at the strategic pathways board. All prison departments are represented on the board and support each other's work in meeting the needs of offenders at Everthorpe.

For the majority of offenders at Everthorpe below Entry Level 2 who take advantage of the programme, it has been successful in helping a significant number of them to progress on to further learning and skills development.

Part 4: Cross-cutting themes: Addressing challenges

Providers of vocational training and employability skills face several challenges in delivering an effective service. It is encouraging that the research has identified several prisons which are confidently addressing many of these challenges; however, there are structural barriers within prisons which continue to be difficult to overcome. The following text outlines the main issues that providers are faced with, as identified through the desk research and by respondents to the call for information.

Leadership

Respondents have indicated that one of their biggest challenges to implementing new initiatives or ways of working is getting buy in from senior staff. Many reported that change is often slow within the prison environment but this lack of pace can be compounded where managers are inflexible and unsupportive of new ways of working. This can stifle creativity and innovation and can de-motivate staff.

Where progress is being made, respondents to the call for information have reported that it comes as a result of support and commitment from senior staff.

Staff

The recent reforms within prisons and the changes associated with OLASS 4 have, in some cases, led to a high turnover of staff and consequent disruptions to course delivery. As the new programmes become more established, providers should be better able to resource provision adequately and consistently.

Sequencing of activities

The regimes within prisons, particularly high-security prisons, are continually cited as disruptive to course delivery. This is often compounded by a lack of sequencing of activities, so that learners are regularly removed from classes to attend appointments and/or other activities. Frameworks for effective sequencing are being developed in some prisons to help alleviate this problem.

Developing effective partnerships and links with employers

Establishing effective partnerships is generally difficult – but not impossible – and partnerships between prisons, providers and employers are no exception. These partnerships take a long time and a lot of negotiation to set up and therefore require considerable staff resource and commitment from senior managers.

Engaging with employers in particular can be difficult as employers can be wary of being associated with offenders. This is, in part, due to the perceived risks involved

with employing offenders, as well as the impact of the negative press stories which imply that offenders are taking jobs away from other people. The section below on key success factors includes some examples of successful partnership working, including working with employers.

Inappropriate allocations

Offenders are being allocated to courses and pathways of learning which are not appropriate or relevant to the offender's chances of progression and/or achievement. Providers have informed us that improved assessments and individual learning plans (ILPs) are supporting them and offenders to map realistic pathways. In addition, prisons are increasingly linking provision with identified skills gaps in the areas where their offenders are being released, again giving offenders more realistic opportunities to secure employment on release.

Poor progression routes

Provision available in one prison may not be available in another prison; so when prisoners transfer between prisons they may not be able to access the same or similar provision. This is particularly concerning when offenders are transferred nearing the end of a course of learning. The prison clusters around which the new OLASS 4 contracts are based have been designed to counter this, in order that there will be more coherence of provision between (transferring) establishments.

Progression is also hampered by a lack of available funding for qualifications at Level 3 or above. Further Education loans will be available to offenders but prison staff will need some training and /or guidance on how to administer these for offenders. In addition, OLASS 4 contractors are developing better progression routes both within and between prisons. They are also working closer with local organisations and employers to support progression into employment and further training.

Tracking offenders

Monitoring the progress of offenders once through the gate presents another challenge. Once released offenders rarely stay in touch with the establishment and the research did not identify any mechanisms for tracking ex-offenders. Where ex-offenders are being tracked, as in the Thorn Cross case study above, it is the employers who for their own purposes of health and safety are tracking their workers.

The current policy is encouraging better links between probation and prisons to track that cohort of offenders. At the time of this report there was no evidence of how these partnerships are developing.

Physical environment

Some prisons do not have the additional space to expand or convert their facilities, and therefore the range of provision available within a prison can be limited. Space is not always available to deliver classes and available space is not always suitable as a learning environment.

The Virtual Campus has the potential to provide a broader curriculum within limited spaces, but providers and staff will require additional support in using and tailoring it.

Current job markets

The current economic climate and subsequent rise in unemployment has led to a significant rise in the number of skilled, educated and experienced people looking for jobs, making it a highly competitive job market, especially for ex-offenders. Not only are they limited by the range of jobs they can apply for (due to their offence, skills and experience), but there are also many employers who are not willing to employ ex-offenders.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) estimates that almost one-third of JSA claimants have a criminal record and, two years after release from prison, are still on benefits, therefore forming a significant part of the UK's total long-term unemployed numbers.¹⁶

Skill supply, as measured by the highest formal qualifications held by those economically active, is rising rapidly in the UK. Many more young people in particular have been encouraged to stay on in education longer and to acquire more qualifications at a higher level. The recession reinforced this pattern, as job opportunities for young people dried up. In addition, the demand for skills as measured by occupation and qualification is projected to rise. The number of jobs in occupations typically requiring a degree continues to grow while the graduate intensity of many other jobs is rising steadily. How much this reflects demand as opposed to supply trends is open to debate.

Some prisons are working to align the vocational training and employability offer to match the training requirements in sectors where there is a skills shortage and available jobs. This has worked extremely well in the Thorn Cross example shown above, where offenders are trained in rail maintenance whilst in custody and, through the partnership with the training provider and rail track employers, can access jobs on release.

¹⁶ Unlock, www.unlock.org.uk/staticpage.aspx?pid=101 (accessed April 2013).

Part 5: Conclusions

Prisons faced a busy time during 2012 as they implemented the changes set out in Making Prisons Work, including a greater focus on skills development and routes to employment, in particular for prisoners nearing the end of their sentence; a revision of funding with a focus on outcomes (enrolments, achievements/success rates and progression); establishing the new enhanced roles of lead governors and planning curricula informed by local labour market needs.

We have found that programmes which prepare prisoners for work on release are concentrated on Category C and D Prisons with open facilities, including the use of ROTL. There are a number of challenges to be overcome before we see any wholesale improvements in training and skills across the prison service. Many prisons are restricted by their physical settings and the necessary priority being given to regimes. Provision is also being hampered by a lack of sequencing, inappropriate allocations, limited resources and poor progression routes.

Despite the many challenges confronting them, providers are delivering successful vocational training, employability skills and pre-apprenticeships for offenders. A number of themes have been identified as contributing to effective provision; our research suggests that a combination of factors, such as working with partners, links with local employers, good quality provision and support, are important to getting offenders into jobs and/or apprenticeships in the community. For example, partners are piloting a pre-apprenticeship programme in track maintenance at HMP Thorn Cross and have just signed up the first six (ex-offender) apprentices.

Other OLASS 4 providers are testing new approaches across offender learning but at the time of this report it was too early for prisons to demonstrate any progress with these approaches.

Providers consistently voiced concerns about getting jobs for offenders or ex-offenders in the current market where unemployment figures are high and competition for jobs is fierce. Moreover, a significant proportion of offenders require a considerable amount of support before they are job ready and many offenders have limited vocational choices as a result of the nature of their convictions. The current focus on outcomes threatens to encourage providers to target those offenders who are easiest to engage.

The findings in the report reflect, for the most part, provision established under OLASS 3; it is anticipated that the good practice will be maintained under OLASS 4 where appropriate. As the new arrangements take shape the leadership of senior managers, as well as the dedication of experienced and passionate staff, is proving crucial to developing effective high quality vocational training and employability skills

for offenders. Over the coming months providers will start to report on their progress against the new targets and will be able to provide data on what kind of provision is effective so far under OLASS 4 and where better practice, resource and/or support is needed.

Key considerations

There is clearly more work to be done in supporting prisons to deliver pre-apprenticeship programmes and full apprenticeships for those prisoners released on temporary licence. The research has identified one current example of apprenticeships for offenders but, as this is in its infancy, **further research is necessary to monitor, track and document its development and to capture key features which could inform future initiatives.**

Working with employers is key to vocational training and employability skills in terms of:

- aligning provision to relevant skills gaps and growth industries;
- securing work placements for offenders accessing vocational opportunities in the community; and
- sharing good practice and developing effective partnerships.

However, it is an issue which some prisons are still struggling with. **A national employer engagement forum, made up of representatives from prison education, OLASS 4 providers and employers would support a co-ordinated approach to engaging a wider range of employers.**

OLASS 4 presents a new way of working for providers and practitioners in prisons but there is no evidence yet of how effective it is at engaging or progressing offenders. **The sector would benefit from support in measuring the impact and effectiveness of the new arrangements.**

The findings and examples of good practice highlighted in this report will be of interest and use to practitioners working in offender learning. **An abridged version for practitioners would be helpful in sharing good practice.**

APPENDIX 1

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APPENDIX 2



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Email: enquiries@niace.org.uk
Website: www.niace.org.uk

Date

Dear colleague,

Vocational Learning and Employability Skills Provision in Prisons and Young Offender Institutions (YOI)

A call for information

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is working with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) on an exciting new project. We are writing to tell you about this work and to ask for your support.

Project aim

The aim of the project is to identify good practice approaches in the delivery of vocational learning and employability skills to offenders in prisons and Young Offender Institutions. The Department's interest in this area was highlighted last year in the policy document: Making Prisons Work 2011 -

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/m/11-828-making-prisons-work-skills-for-rehabilitation>

The project is interested in the broad spectrum of vocational learning and employability skills provision in custodial settings. This encompasses learning opportunities funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and also other provision.

We are excluding examples from women's prisons as research into learning and skills provision in female prisons is being conducted by a parallel BIS funded NIACE project. For further information on this project please contact ama.dixon@niace.org.uk.

Project methodology

The research consists of three parts:

- desk-top study of policy documentation and other relevant literature, primarily to inform the development of criteria for good practice;
- this call for information to Heads of Learning in prison and YOI estates, which includes an invitation to nominate examples of good practice;
- up to eight in-depth case studies of good practice, comprising face-to-face interviews with key stakeholders including learners.

The project will complete in March 2012.

The Research team at NIACE is:

Ama Dixon, Project Manager
Lorraine Casey, Research Officer
Gill Aird, Project Administrator

How can you help?

We would be very grateful if you/ a colleague could spare some time to complete the call for information enclosed. The call invites you to nominate examples of effective practice. The responses we receive will inform our selection of case studies.

Please return the completed pro-forma by Monday 3rd December 2012 to ama.dixon@niace.org.uk

Thank you for your time. I do hope we can work together. If you have any queries about the project or require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Ama Dixon
Project Manager
Tel: 0116 2859672
Mobile: 0782 6952274
Email: ama.dixon@niace.org.uk

Call for information

Vocational Learning and Employability Skills Provision

Name	
Job Title	
Email	
Telephone	
Prison	
Category	

1. Please can you provide brief details of the vocational learning and employability skills offer available across the prison/s in which you work

2. Could you tell us what you consider to be working well within the existing provision?

3. What are the key factors which support the delivery of good provision?

4. What factors make it difficult to deliver good provision?

5. Please comment on the principles of good practice that we have developed and tell us:

- Do you agree with them in general?
- Are there any you would delete? (please explain your answer)
- Is there anything missing from the list?
- How do you define good practice?

6. What would you find most helpful in taking forward your work in this area?

7. Can you tell us of any access to apprenticeship programmes for offenders being delivered in prisons/ YOIs?

Examples of good practice

We are seeking examples of promising/ good provision in the delivery of vocational learning and employability skills in prisons and YOIs. Examples can include specific learning courses/ opportunities or prison-wide strategies.

We will select a range of examples from the submissions to be developed into case studies. This will include a visit to the prison/YOI and interviews with key stakeholders including learners.

We anticipate the visits would take place between 22 November and 6 December 2012 and we will require your support to arrange the visits.

Example 1:

Name	
Job Title	
Email	
Telephone	

Please provide a brief description of the good practice including aims and objectives.

What is the overall aim of the provision/ practice?

How long has it been in place?

Who is involved in its delivery, and supporting delivery?

Who are the target group of learners, and how are they engaged?

What evidence do you have that this provision is 'good'? Please include details of your monitoring and evaluation processes.

What are the key factors in promoting success?

What difficulties have you encountered? Please note any existing challenges.

To what extent is this good practice transferable to other prisons and YOIs?

Example 2:

If you wish to tell us about other examples of good practice please use additional sheets.

Thank you for your participation

APPENDIX 3

Draft principles of good practice in the provision of vocational training and employability skills provision

Leadership

- Strong leadership and commitment from senior management team are crucial in shaping the culture of learning and skills provision in prisons.

Assessment, planning and delivery

- Good quality initial and ongoing information, advice and guidance should encourage coherence between the courses that learners undertake and ensure that their achievements enable them to progress towards a career of their choice or to higher levels of learning and skills.
- Assessments should recognise previous achievement, skills and experiences, as well as future aspirations.
- Provision of vocational training and employability skills should be flexible and tailored to meet a range of individual needs.
- Vocational training should support learners to make a successful and positive transition from prison to their resettlement in the community and individual learning plans should play a key part of sentence and resettlement plans.
- Provision of vocational training and employability skills in prisons and for offenders in the community should be comparable with mainstream curricula and qualifications frameworks.

- Provision should accommodate learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who require language support, including access to appropriate facilities and resources.
- Where peer mentors are used to enhance the training offer, they should receive appropriate training.

Life skills (maths, English, health, digital technology, personal finance, civic participation)

- There should be access to pre-vocational provision which gives learners the tools they need to take control of their lives. Learners should have the opportunity to develop life skills and capabilities in health, digital technology, personal finance and civic participation.
- The provision of vocational training and employability skills should include embedded maths and English support.

Supporting employability and effective transition

- Vocational training provision should be designed to match the needs of the local labour market as well as the needs and interests of offenders.
- Vocational provision should include employability skills which can be transferred across a range of employment settings, including skills for job-seeking and writing applications; interview skills; team work, organisational, communication and inter-personal skills; and support with disclosure of convictions.
- Records of achievement should follow learners as they move between prisons and into the community.

- Where possible, vocational training and employability skills should be complemented by practical work experience, including work opportunities available in prison.
- The vocational offer should include access to apprenticeship opportunities for offenders who can undertake paid employment through release on temporary license (ROTL).
- Learning and training opportunities can be enhanced through effective collaboration with partners in the community, including employers, voluntary sector organisations and learning providers.



Working for more and different adult learners

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