



HM Government

Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment





Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment

Presented to Parliament by
the Secretary of State for Education and Skills
by Command of Her Majesty

December 2005

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Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment

Foreword

Stopping criminals re-offending is an important aim of any criminal justice system. We will always seek to punish offenders. Those who commit the most serious crimes, and pose the greatest risk to the public, must expect their punishment to be severe. But we cannot properly protect the public by focusing on punishment alone; we must also address the underlying causes of crime. We can best protect society by making a positive and lasting difference to individual offenders. To that end, the Government aims to help offenders become more productive members of society.

Since 1997 we have introduced:

- A clearer sentencing framework (through the Criminal Justice Act, 2003), with new flexibility to help judges and prisons and probation services protect the public and help offenders turn away from crime;
- A National Offender Management Service (NOMS), to ensure better management of offenders' sentences;
- More effective education and training through the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS).

These are substantial reforms that are already delivering results on the ground. We have come a long way, but our ambitions do not stop here. This strategy document sets out how we plan to build on these successes through concerted action to improve offenders' skills and job prospects. This will complement our national action plan to reduce re-offending.

As the document makes clear, this is a huge challenge, and there are no easy answers. But, if we can turn offenders away from crime and give them the tools to exercise better judgement and become more constructive and productive members of society, the rewards will be great. The first part of this paper sets out what has been achieved so far, the key challenges remaining, the opportunities presented by improved offender management, and a new role for mainstream agencies – the Learning and Skills Councils and Jobcentre Plus – in the task of reducing re-offending.

The second part of this paper outlines our strategy for building on that foundation. We want to build a modern correctional system, focused on rehabilitation, working in partnership with employers and those able to provide high-quality training. Key proposals include a stronger focus on jobs, with more relevant skills training, led by employer needs; a new 'employability contract' for offenders, with incentives for participation; and a 'campus' model for learning to ensure continuity of education from prisons into the community.

We welcome the widest possible discussion on these proposals. This is a challenge that will only be tackled successfully in partnership, and with the invaluable help and advice of all those with an involvement or interest.



Charles Clarke

Charles Clarke
Home Secretary



Ruth Kelly

Ruth Kelly
Secretary of State for
Education and Skills



John Hutton

John Hutton
Secretary of State for
Work and Pensions

Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment

Executive Summary

This Green Paper sets out how offenders can be better trained and helped to get jobs. These suggestions are offered for consultation, and we welcome views from all those with an interest.

Any strategy to reduce re-offending must have at its heart the obvious duty on the part of the Government to protect citizens from crime, and to act against those who break the law. Sentences must ensure that offenders are punished for their crimes. They must also be robust, and efficiently enforced, so that they deter would-be criminals.

However, punishment and deterrence are not enough in themselves. Government also has a role to play in addressing problems that can lead some people into crime. Alongside substance abuse, poor housing or broken relationships, low skills and lack of employment can be major obstacles to an offender living free of crime, and becoming a more productive member of society.

The Government will publish in the New Year a five-year strategy for reducing re-offending. To support that wider strategy, this Green Paper outlines the Government's vision for tackling poor skills and high levels of unemployment among offenders.

Raising skills and getting more offenders into jobs can help us tackle repeat offending....

Section 1 sets out **the challenge of reducing re-offending through skills and employment.**

We must tackle re-offending levels – the large numbers of people in prison and serving community sentences are a huge burden on the prison and probation services and the taxpayer. Released prisoners are more likely to re-offend than they are to avoid crime; nearly one in five crimes is committed by a former prisoner.

While many factors contribute to re-offending, offenders and ex-offenders tend to have skills levels well below those of the general population, and are much more likely to be unemployed. Yet sustained employment is a key to leading a crime-free life.

This section sets out the case for improving skills to help move offenders into jobs, and break the cycle of re-offending.

...and a lot has already been done...

Section 2 outlines **recent progress** in improving education and training for offenders, and in helping them find jobs. This includes:

- An increase in funding for offender learning, from £57 million in 2001-02 to £151 million in 2005-06;
- External inspection of prison education to the same tough standards as mainstream education and training;
- An impressive increase in basic skills qualifications achieved by offenders;
- Building training into the prison day, alongside activities such as prison industries, catering and physical exercise;
- More opportunities for offenders to take part in higher education;
- Support from jobcentres to help offenders find jobs;
- New research to measure the success of action to reduce re-offending.

...but a big challenge remains to improve training and help more offenders into jobs.

Section 3 outlines **the challenges that we now need to address to improve training and job opportunities for offenders.** These include better quality learning, tailored to individual needs, and more joined-up delivery. There is much to be done to improve training in the face of difficult operational challenges, such as high prisoner populations. If training for offenders is to lead to jobs, it must match employer needs and local job opportunities.

The foundations are already in place to build a more effective service. More flexible sentencing powers allow action to be tailored to the needs of individuals, and the seriousness of their crimes.

The National Offender Management Service will ensure that a single professional can oversee an offender's sentence, in prison and outside. The Learning and Skills Council is strengthening education and training, while jobcentres will have new incentives to help offenders into jobs.

To meet this challenge, the Government's strategy to improve offenders' skills and employment has four key aims...

...to focus strongly on jobs, with employers driving the design and delivery of programmes...

To get more offenders into jobs, we will ensure that training and qualifications for offenders are meaningful to employers, so that they can, in turn, offer job opportunities. We will develop new approaches to help offenders find work. We will consider:

- Strengthening and extending existing arrangements for assessing, training and placing offenders into jobs;
- Introducing a specific Job Developer within existing Employer Coalitions to work with local business to identify jobs suitable for offenders and the skills required for those jobs;
- Piloting a new job placement scheme and ensuring jobcentres focus on helping offenders into jobs rather than placing them on benefit; helping them find work in their last weeks in prison, with work-focused interviews and help to search for jobs on the Internet;
- Whether we can develop stronger incentives structures.

At the heart of the strategy will be new alliances with employers, targeting specific industrial sectors with labour shortages and work to develop mentoring and other support to help offenders get work and keep it.

...to ensure that training providers and colleges are better able to provide the skills offenders need to get a job...

We have improved education and training for offenders in recent years, but there is still some way to go to ensure that it is consistently high quality across the country, both within prisons and in the community. Our proposals in this area include:

- A new, integrated and higher quality offender learning and skills service in place from August 2006 in each English region;
- A strong focus on the skills to help more offenders into jobs;
- Offenders being, for the first time, a priority group in the plans of the LSC and other bodies such as the Quality Improvement Agency (which focuses on further education standards);
- Electronic transfer of individual learning records, to resolve a long-standing failing in the service;
- Inspection of all offender learning, to drive up quality;
- Piloting of a new model for delivery – the 'Offender Learner Campus' – to develop new centres of excellence and better links with mainstream education and training.

...to promote a new emphasis on skills and jobs for offenders across prisons and probation...

Past efforts to improve training and job opportunities for offenders have been hampered by a lack of continuity through the system, with some people 'falling through the net' on moving prison or on release. The Government will ensure that prison and probation services work together so that improving skills and helping more offenders get qualifications and jobs is seen by all as vital in reducing re-offending. New Regional Offender Managers, working with the LSC, will help match training to job openings.

Our proposals in this area include:

- Encouraging the full use of flexibility in sentencing powers to promote skills and employment within and alongside prison and community sentences;

- A new emphasis on skills and jobs, as the reduction of re-offending is placed at the heart of prison and probation services;
- Ensuring a single professional has responsibility for each offender throughout their sentence, managing education and employment provision as part of a wider sentence plan;
- Exploring ways to help more offenders improve their skills and get jobs through better design of the prison day and better use of prison facilities, with skills training built into other activities such as workshops;
- In probation services, using unpaid work in the community as an opportunity to improve skills for paid work;
- Exploiting opportunities to use the full range of programmes, such as those tackling offending behaviour, to develop job and life skills;
- Where possible, ensuring that offenders have controlled access to technology if this will improve their skills and find them work.

...to motivate and engage offenders, with the right balance of rights and responsibilities.

These reforms provide an opportunity to motivate more offenders to take the steps needed to improve their skills and job prospects, and improve their chances of living free of crime. We will aim to combine a range of incentives with other influences (such as sentencing powers), along with high quality training and other support to help more offenders into jobs. In order to find ways to motivate and engage offenders who may previously have had negative learning experiences:

- We will test a new 'employability contract' to motivate offenders;
- As well as being expected to find work, offenders will be helped to do so with a range of training and employment opportunities;
- Incentives could include guaranteed job interviews, and earned privileges in custody;

- Responsibilities, where appropriate, could be set out in sentence plans;
- We will look at issues facing minorities within the criminal justice system (women, disabled, or ethnic minority groups) and how these might be factored into the contract.

Alongside this, a strong emphasis on education and training for young offenders.

Evidence suggests that most young offenders recognise that qualifications, skills and jobs can help them lead useful and crime-free lives. The last section of the paper outlines work underway to support young offenders into training and employment, for example through the effective working of Youth Offending Teams in partnership with other services for children. Key proposals for strengthening this further include:

- Ensuring agencies work better together to find ways to draw young offenders back into training or work;
- A new curriculum, developed in line with 14-19 reforms, with a work focus designed to motivate disaffected young people;
- A review of the LSC funding system, to expand the range of opportunities on offer, particularly those delivered through the voluntary sector;
- More access to programmes that help ensure that offenders are ready to undertake a job, with a review of procedures for release on licence;
- Action to improve education for offenders below working age, with consultation on further proposals during 2006.

PLEASE NOTE THAT, EXCEPT WHERE STATED OTHERWISE, PROPOSALS IN THIS PAPER RELATE TO OFFENDERS IN ENGLAND. SEE PARAGRAPHS 87 – 89 FOR AN ACCOUNT OF THE WELSH ASSEMBLY AGENDA FOR OFFENDER LEARNING AND SKILLS.

Chapter 1

The Challenge of Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment

1. The Government is determined to place the reduction of re-offending at the heart of the work of prisons and probation services. An important part of this strategy is concerted action to transform the skills and employment prospects of offenders. This is an area of policy that has in the past had a low profile. The Government is keen for that to change. There is much to do, and the document sets out an ambitious plan of reform intended to build a service that does far better in improving skills and qualifications and getting offenders into sustainable employment. The whole community has an interest in tackling offenders' skill and job needs. If they can secure stable jobs they are less likely to re-offend.
 2. This document:
 - Explains the scale of the challenge, and the case for focusing effort on skills and employment as part of the reducing re-offending strategy;
 - Sets out the good progress that has been made in recent years; increased investment, together with better outputs, especially in the achievement of basic skills qualifications and the number of offenders going into jobs;
 - Explains that more now needs to be done to better meet the challenges involved in equipping offenders to become more productive members of society; and
 - Outlines for consultation the Government's vision for the coming years. Better management of offenders' sentences through the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), and improved delivery of a new learning and skills service, through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), offer an opportunity to push forward a more ambitious programme of reform, focused on four key areas:
 - **A strong focus on employment**, with employers leading the design and delivery of programmes;
 - **Ensuring that training providers and colleges are better able to provide the skills offenders need to get a job;**
 - **Greater coherence across the system**, with a new emphasis at the heart of prisons and probation services on helping offenders improve their skills and get jobs;
 - **Motivating and engaging offenders**, with a strong rights and responsibilities package tested in a new 'employability contract'.

The Government's Reducing Re-offending Strategy

3. Reducing re-offending is a central aim of the Government's national strategy against crime. Since 1997, the prison and probation services have undergone significant change to create a system better equipped to support the Government's emphasis on tackling crime and its causes. The National Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan, published by the Home Office in November 2005¹ sets out the key actions the Government intends to take over the next eighteen months towards delivery of its target to reduce re-offending by ten per cent by 2010. This work will be backed by regional reducing re-offending strategies, and reducing re-offending Alliances, established by the Home Office, with the corporate sector, the voluntary, community and faith sectors, and with local statutory services.
4. Work with offenders is also important in the context of other key government priorities. Offender learners already make a significant contribution to the national Skills for Life target for improvement of literacy, language and numeracy. Improving the effectiveness of offender education can also help us achieve the national target to cut the number of adults in the workforce who lack NVQ Level 2 or equivalent qualifications by 40 per cent by 2010.² Finally, placing offenders in work contributes to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Public Service Agreement to raise employment rates, and to the specific targets for jobs for the least qualified, most disadvantaged areas, and ethnic minority groups.
5. Released prisoners are more likely to continue to offend than they are to be rehabilitated. Of all offenders starting community sentences in the first quarter of 2001, 59 per cent were reconvicted within two years.³ It is estimated that former prisoners account for around 18 per cent of all crime.⁴ High levels of re-offending strain an already heavily burdened system. Prisons are

fuller than ever, with the prison population having risen by over 60 per cent in the last decade.⁵ In total, in 2003, around 135,000 offenders were sent to prison while over 130,000 started community sentences.⁶

6. Failure to stop re-offending carries a heavy financial and social cost. A former prisoner who re-offends costs the criminal justice system an average of £65,000 up to the point of re-imprisonment, and, after that, as much as £37,500 each year in prison.⁷ Re-offending also costs society dearly, the total cost of recorded crime committed by ex-prisoners is estimated at around £11 billion per year.⁸ As well as this – and often unquantifiable – are the personal costs of crime, especially the impact on victims. The families of offenders are also likely to be faced with considerable financial and personal consequences. We know, for example, that boys aged 12-17 with relations or friends who have been in trouble with the police are three times more likely than others to be offenders.⁹ Each year around 125,000 children see one of their parents sent to prison.¹⁰

The Cycle of Crime, and Importance of Early Interventions

7. The impact of these wider cycles of crime needs to be investigated further and addressed as part of the new approach to preventing crime. A tendency towards criminal activity can often show itself in early behaviour. Children who truant from school and are involved in anti-social behaviour are at greater risk of committing crimes.¹¹ One answer to this problem lies in good quality interventions to divert children at risk of offending. The Government's approach to this has been set out elsewhere, for example in **Every Child Matters: Change for Children**, and the **Youth Matters Green Paper**. We continue to work with schools and parents to emphasise the importance of good behaviour and the need to tackle such tendencies as early as possible.

8. An estimated 70,000 school-age offenders¹² enter the youth justice system each year. Keeping these young people engaged in education and learning is a critical part of helping them to stay away from crime¹³ and to thrive. Of those children aged 10-16 supervised by Youth Offending Teams (Yots), at least half are not engaged in full-time education.¹⁴ For those 900 or so young offenders¹⁵ under school-leaving age in custody at any one time, there are issues of concern. Although the education of young people in custody is delivered to a demanding specification set by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), evidence from Ofsted inspections and YJB monitoring reports suggests that delivery in Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) is patchy, particularly in respect of literacy and numeracy.¹⁶

9. For these children, we miss an opportunity to equip them for a crime-free adult life if we fail to provide the right education for them as part of a package of interventions. The Government takes very seriously the responsibility to improve outcomes for these young people. While this document's focus on employment makes it appropriate to confine the direct scope to offenders of working age (16 years and over), we are strongly committed to considering the issues affecting school-age offenders and their education as a key priority. We will involve relevant departments and agencies in developing a strategy for addressing the issues and publish proposals in the second half of 2006.

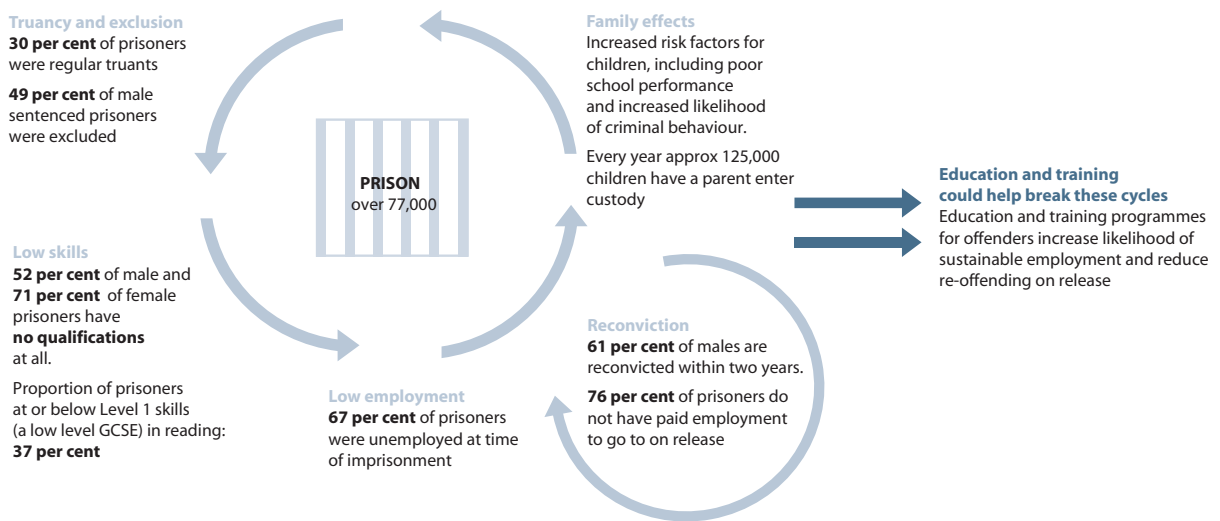
10. Similarly, support for the children and families of offenders is an important priority for Government. For many offenders, maintaining strong links with their families and communities is a key factor in enabling rehabilitation. Conversely, the breakdown of these links, and the ensuing isolation, can increase the risk of re-offending. While these children and families should benefit from the Every Child Matters reforms taking place in local authorities, there are still major challenges to delivering adequate specialist support to them in the local

community; understandably they will often not declare themselves as 'families of offenders'. In due course, there may be a case for addressing issues relating to the children and families of offenders, adding to the Change for Children agenda to maximise opportunities for partners and families to work with offenders towards rehabilitation.

11. Offenders are a varied group. While many are male, white and in their twenties or thirties, a large minority are not. The offender population includes women, people from black and minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, and older people. Better offender management offers the opportunity to address the needs and circumstances of minority groups of offenders. The challenge will be to focus on building our knowledge of the most successful interventions for these different groups.

The Importance of Skills and Employment for Reducing Re-offending

12. An important strand of the strategy to reduce re-offending is concerted action to transform the skills and employment prospects of offenders. The Government is committed to a strong programme to improve offenders' educational attainment, raise skill levels and secure better employment outcomes. Education has, for some years, played an important part in prison regimes. Providing opportunities for purposeful activity, for self-improvement and connection to the world beyond the prison walls, is a vital factor in running a humane and decent regime; and useful work forms an important element of community punishment.

Figure 1 Learning, skills and employment can help break the cycle of offending ¹⁷

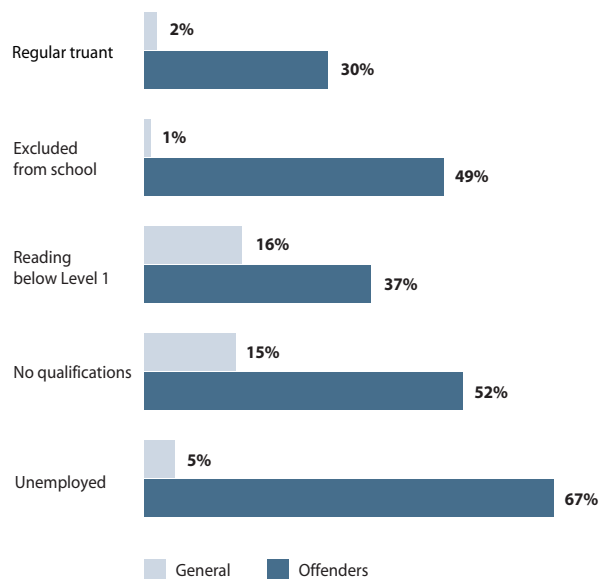
13. But the case for improving learning, skills and employment for offenders goes well beyond these specific benefits. As Figure 1 suggests, improving skills and employment for offenders can have a positive impact on the incidence of re-offending, to the benefit of individuals, their families and communities, and wider society.
14. The employment prospects of offenders are well below those of the community in general: 67 per cent of prisoners were not in work or training in the four weeks before going to prison and 76 per cent of prisoners do not have paid employment to go to on release. ¹⁸ These low rates of employment are damaging, to the individuals concerned and the economy and community more widely. Evidence suggests that employment and a reduction in re-offending are linked, ¹⁹ and that stability and quality of employment, along with the level of satisfaction expressed towards it, are key factors. ²⁰ The complexity of the multiple needs of offenders often make them extremely 'hard to help'. These additional barriers may relate to age, disability, or ethnicity. But there is a good case for investing in programmes to get more offenders into jobs, and for raising their skill levels to improve their chances of becoming more productive and successful in employment.
15. There is strong evidence that efforts to get more offenders into employment can pay off. Those with higher skills (for example with 'good' grades at GCSE – level 2 in the National Qualifications Framework) are more likely to be in employment than those without. ²¹ A recent research review found that interventions focused on employment can make a significant difference to the employment rates of offenders. In six out of seven intervention programmes identified by the review, offenders in the treatment group were significantly more likely to be employed at least six months after completion than those in the comparison groups. The review suggested that work in prisons, vocational training and community employment programmes can all have a positive impact on employment. ²²

16. Evidence suggests that a package of interventions and support both within prison and after release is likely to be most effective in reducing the likelihood of re-offending. Any specific intervention needs to be viewed in the broader context of the need for the offender to normalise their lifestyle and equip themselves with the necessary skills to function successfully in society and as an employee. This is one reason for the wider reforms of offender management. Done effectively in that broader framework, training to improve offenders' skills, combined with the right employment interventions, can improve post-release employment levels²³ and make a powerful contribution to reducing re-offending.

The Scale of the Challenge

17. The challenge is stark. As Figure 2 suggests, many offenders have had negative experiences of education and work. They may well be reluctant learners, often with behavioural problems, which create barriers to finding successful long-term employment. Thirty per cent of offenders were regular truants from school²⁴ (compared to two per cent of the general population)²⁵ and 49 per cent of male prisoners were excluded from school²⁶ (compared to less than one per cent of the general population).²⁷ Over half of prisoners have no qualifications at all.²⁸ It is important to be realistic: not every offender will benefit or benefit immediately. But the costs of re-offending are so high that even a marginal impact is worthwhile.

Figure 2 Offender Learning: the Challenge²⁹



Chapter 2

Progress to Date

18. In the face of this challenge, a great deal has already been achieved:

- Our commitment in 2001 to improve the quality and quantity of education for prisoners has resulted in a big increase in funding for offender learning in recent years (from £57 million in 2001-02 to £151 million in 2005-06). As well as increasing the volume and quality of learning available for prisoners, this increase has enabled significant improvements in capacity, for example through the creation of senior Head of Learning and Skills posts in prisons. The introduction of basic skills attainment targets, in both prison and probation settings, has raised the profile of offender learning needs.
- Other innovations, such as external inspection of prisons to the same demanding standards as for other education and training providers, are driving up quality. The Adult Learning Inspectorate's Chief Inspector's annual reports for the last three years show that the 'inadequacy' rate for learning and skills provision in prisons has fallen year-on-year since inspections began in 2002.
- NOMS has a strong focus on the importance of education and training for offenders. Figure 3 shows the good progress made since the commitment in 2001. Indeed, we have gone beyond prisons with a new focus on those under supervision by the Probation Service.

Case Study

Quality improvement resulting from inspection

When Bullingdon Prison was first inspected in September 2002, its leadership and management and quality assurance were judged to be poor. Inspectors were particularly critical about the lack of a formal system for reporting on the effectiveness of training and the progress and achievements of learners. They noted that there was insufficient analysis of learner needs and of emerging trends that reveal the strengths and weaknesses of provision.

After the Head of Learning and Skills was appointed, he worked with education staff and external partners to develop a management information system that could deliver the robust data that underpins effective quality improvement. Prisoners' needs have been analysed using a questionnaire and, as a result, additional courses have been provided. Data from the initial assessments has been used to inform curriculum planning, and local labour market information has been used to inform the vocational training strategy. Data is also used to monitor equality of opportunity. On re-inspection, quality assurance was judged to be good, and Bullingdon was the first prison to be given a grade 2 for Leadership and Management.

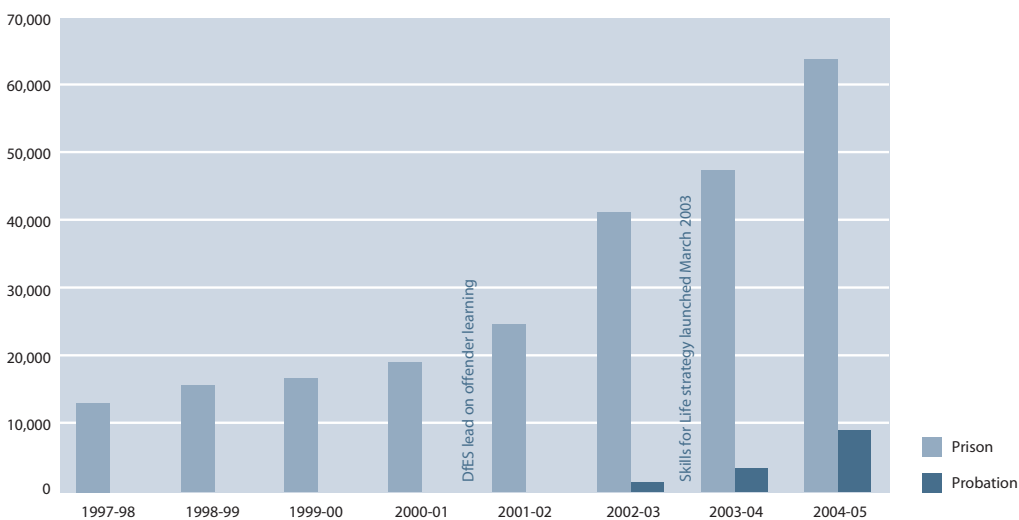
Since 2001, the number of basic skills awards achieved in prisons has doubled from 25,000³⁰ to over 63,000³¹ in 2004-05. In 2004-05, the National Probation Directorate(NPD), in partnership with the LSC, exceeded its annual target for basic skills awards with nearly 9,500 awards achieved against a target of 8,000. This is a big step forward since 2002-03, when there were only 848 awards.³²

- An increased emphasis has been placed on prisoner training linked to other regime activities, to enable training to be delivered in conjunction with real work in prison in areas such as catering, physical exercise and horticultural activities. This has been supported by investing more in capital modernisation: over £7 million spent on building 77 classrooms next to workshops and work areas to support training.

- Support for offenders taking higher education has increased significantly in recent years: the number of undergraduate opportunities rose from 450 in 2002-03 to 1,050 in 2005-06, in addition to 250 access courses.³⁴ Alongside this an increase of almost 70 per cent in library funding between 2004-05 and 2006-07 is supporting an enhanced and expanded library service in prisons.³⁵

- Good progress has been made in improving entry to employment. Jobcentre Plus offers support, and employment and training advice to prisoners through employment and benefit surgeries. This includes careers guidance to help offenders reach a realistic job goal which reflects the availability of jobs in the labour market in which the offender lives or into which they will be released. Supported by Prison Service investment of £14.5 million, in 2004-05 the Custody to Work initiative helped achieve 41,000 cases where offenders moved directly into employment, training or education on release, and over 66,000 into accommodation.

Figure 3 | Number of basic skills (Skills for Life) awards achieved³³



- The Home Office has developed a new longitudinal study – Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction – that will assess the impact of interventions, including education and employment-focused programmes. The survey will improve our knowledge of the effects of education and work on offenders and ex-offenders. But we recognise that there is still some way to go to ensure that we build stronger evidence, and one of our key objectives will be to draw on domestic and international evidence on education and employment-focused interventions.
- The voluntary and community sector (VCS) has an excellent track record in delivering public services and already undertakes invaluable work with offenders. The Government is committed to expanding that involvement. Work is underway across government departments to remove the barriers that deny the VCS a level playing field of competition, including ensuring that commissioning and procurement processes are properly open to the VCS, and building up VCS capacity to provide and compete.

Chapter 3

Looking Forward

19. The previous section set out an impressive set of achievements, all the more praiseworthy at a time when the correctional services and their partners have had to cope with other pressures, such as the growth in prison population. All those working in this field can be proud of progress in very challenging circumstances.
20. Nevertheless, significant challenges remain:
- Progress in delivering qualifications in literacy, numeracy and language has been impressive. But the external inspection of prisons has shown that the quality of learning and skills in prisons is often disappointing, with quality assurance causing particular concern. The 78 per cent inspection failure rate of prisons in 2002-03 improved to 55 per cent in 2004-05. In 2003-04, half of prisons passed re-inspection, while in 2004-05 the rate rose to two-thirds.³⁶ This is welcome progress, but the rate of failure clearly remains unacceptable. We will work with providers and inspectorates to identify the key levers to drive further rapid improvement.
 - Inspection evidence also tells us that the learning and skills service on offer is too often unresponsive to individual needs, and lacks coherence in assessment, planning and continuity between different settings, for example when prisoners are moved at short notice. Better integration between prisons and probation is urgently required so that prisoners who engage in learning or prepare for employment can build effectively on that activity when they are released. For offenders in the community, access to appropriate learning is often problematic.
 - We need to do far better in engaging and motivating offenders to improve their skills. This is a particular challenge in view of the difficult past experience of learning for many offenders.
 - Enhanced opportunities for education and training need to lead to skills and qualifications that are meaningful for employers and to stronger prospects of effective re-integration into society through work. Activity to improve individuals' employability while serving a sentence can be better connected to real job opportunities, with employers more involved in design and delivery of training.

- The increasing prison population, and frequent movement of prisoners between institutions, make it more difficult to deliver effective learning and skills.
 - The barriers faced by offenders in getting work need a multi-agency approach, integrated with other parts of the overall management of offenders. The transition of offenders between agencies needs to be better managed, with information shared effectively.
21. Building on the progress made so far, it is time to strengthen and refocus the way in which we educate and train offenders, and prepare them for employment, as part of the wider strategy to bear down on re-offending. The foundations of a more ambitious approach are already in place, including:
- **The 2003 Criminal Justice Act**, which creates a new sentencing framework that is central to reducing crime and re-offending. The Act increases the flexibility of community orders, and makes reform and rehabilitation one of the statutory purposes of sentencing. The new Community Sentence, and the short prison sentence, Custody Plus, when it is implemented, will offer a menu of interventions and levels of supervision that can be individually tailored to match risk, need and the seriousness of the offence. These 'requirements' may include compulsory activities aimed at rehabilitation (including education or training), and the offender may be sanctioned for not complying with them. The aim is to enable as many non-dangerous offenders as possible to be dealt with in the community – making it easier to retain links with employers and family.
 - **The introduction of the National Offender Management Service**, bringing with it end-to-end offender management, with the sentence management of offenders undertaken by a single offender manager. Regional Offender Managers (ROMs) are establishing regional strategies for reducing re-offending, creating regional and local alliances to help meet the needs of offenders. We now have, for the first time, the means to co-ordinate issues that previously fell between the remit of different agencies. This will increasingly enable the prison and probation elements of an offender's sentence to be managed as a whole. More coherent sentence planning and offender management provide an opportunity to plan interventions to improve skills and employability in the context of other support (for example, offending behaviour or drugs programmes). The changes also improve the capacity to ensure that rehabilitation work started in prison continues in the community after release.
 - **The Youth Justice Board (YJB)** oversees the youth justice system in England and Wales. It works to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people under the age of 18, and to ensure that custody for them is safe, secure, and addresses the causes of their offending behaviour. Specifically, the YJB monitors the performance of the youth justice system, identifies and promotes effective practice, and makes grants to local authorities or other bodies to support effective outcomes.
 - **Jobcentre Plus will now track offender outcomes.** Offenders, among other groups facing the most severe disadvantage, are now within the Jobcentre Plus target structure for 2006-07, providing greater incentives to advisers to help offenders find work. DWP is exploring further whether targets can better reflect the severe obstacles some individuals may face in finding work. An approach built around multiple disadvantage would cover most of those with criminal records. It would link more directly to targeted interventions, and match our understanding of the way that employment chances decrease with the number of barriers. This work is at an early stage but will be taken forward by DWP in 2006.
 - **Prisons already arrange Freshstart interviews with Jobcentre Plus**, which brings forward the date of claim for Jobseeker's Allowance, typically, to the day after release. We are committed to resolving the 'finance gap' between release from prison and the first

benefit payment. We will develop a way of bridging the gap to motivate offenders to engage with the requirement to seek work.

- **The development of a new Offender Learning and Skills Service**, planned and funded by the LSC, covers for the first time offenders in custody and in the community. This provides an important framework within which to raise and refocus standards in learning and skills. The service goes with the grain of offender management. A strong focus on early assessment of learning needs, and good planning in the context of the overall sentence plan, should support better educational outcomes and progression into other opportunities and employment.

Chapter 4

The Government's Vision for Change – Trained for Employment, Skilled for Life

22. The Government's future strategy for offender skills and employment comprises:

- An ambitious programme of reform during 2006-07: to build a higher quality, integrated learning and skills service, and to consolidate recent progress in creating a new focus on supporting more offenders into jobs; and
- Looking forward, an increasingly strong focus on employment: to build a robust programme to raise the skills and qualifications of offenders and – particularly through engagement with employers – help more offenders into sustainable employment. It is this forward phase of reform on which the Government particularly seeks views.

23. The reform strategy will focus on four key areas:

- a. **A strong focus on employment**, with employers leading the design and delivery of programmes.
- b. **Ensuring that training providers and colleges are better able to provide the skills offenders need to get a job.**
- c. **Greater coherence across the system**, with a new emphasis at the heart of prisons and probation services on helping offenders improve their skills and get jobs.
- d. **Motivating and engaging offenders**, with a strong package of rights and responsibilities including a new 'employability contract'.

A. A STRONG FOCUS ON EMPLOYMENT, WITH EMPLOYERS LEADING THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF PROGRAMMES

Key Points

We will develop new approaches to intensive work-focused support for offenders, building on our existing strategy and aiming to engage employers in designing and delivering programmes so that offenders gain skills and experience to meet employers' needs.

We will consider:

- Building on the current framework of support, with a Job Developer working as part of the existing Employer Coalition to work with local business to identify jobs and the skills required for those jobs;
- Piloting a new job placement scheme and ensure jobcentres focus on helping offenders into jobs rather than placing them on benefit; helping them find work in their last weeks in prison, with work-focused interviews and help to search for jobs on the Internet; and
- Whether we can develop stronger incentives structures.

We will then test one or some variation of these approaches through demonstration projects in major cities.

At the heart of the strategy will be new alliances with employers, targeting specific industrial sectors with labour shortages and work to develop mentoring and other support to help offenders get work and keep it.

24. Employment is a key factor in reducing re-offending. Increasing the employment rate of offenders can also contribute to the Government's aim to promote both economic growth and social inclusion. There is evidence that unemployment is high among offenders, with some 67 per cent being unemployed before their sentence and 76 per cent not having a job to go to on release. However, at present, we have no robust data on employment rates. As part of our wider strategy we intend to improve our knowledge about the offender employment rate, with an aspiration over time to increase it.
25. Offenders will only gain, and progress in, employment if employers see advantage in recruiting, training and retaining them. In the White Paper **Getting on in Business, Getting on at Work**³⁷ we made a commitment to employers that publicly-funded training and qualifications will be designed and delivered in a way that is directly led by their needs and meets their skills priorities. An employer-led, demand-driven system is essential if we are to increase the number of job opportunities for offenders. That is why we propose to increase the emphasis on improving employability in education and skills for offenders, with employers leading the design of the curriculum and programmes on offer.
26. Many employers are already directly involved at local and regional level with approximately 1,500 prisoners released on temporary licence to undertake paid work in the community and some 500 companies already providing paid work for prisoners. The Offender Training and Employment Programme, led by National Grid, has trained and employed over 200 offenders to date. The scheme is working with 15 prisons and other major companies from five industrial sectors. It is on target to train and employ 1,000 offenders by the end of 2007³⁸. In addition, a significant number of prison industries are undertaking work for, and in partnership with, the private and voluntary sectors.

27. Work is already underway to engage employers in the design of programmes, to encourage them to consider ex-offenders as potential recruits, and to support individual offenders in improving their skills. Examples are:

■ **The Reducing Re-offending Employer**

Alliance, launched in November 2005, aims to open up a dialogue with businesses at all levels about how correctional services can work with them on employability and training, and how we can use their professional skills to help us improve job chances for offenders. Bringing together employers in these alliances will improve our understanding of the barriers to employing ex-offenders;

■ **The Prison Service Plus 2 programme**

will help 48,000 prisoners by December 2006. It works one-to-one with offenders, and is a flexible programme that can help offenders overcome barriers to work while developing their skills to increase employability. It can also broker job opportunities on release.

Case Study

'John' – Gas Network Operative ³⁹

'John', now aged 23, was serving his third prison sentence when he applied and was selected for the gas network operative (GNO) training led by National Grid. He gained his NVQ GNO level 1 qualification in July 2004 and on his release a month later, started work in the gas industry.

John was a prolific offender and spent most of his teenage years in and out of trouble. He was nearing the end of a three and half year sentence when he heard about the National Grid scheme that offered training, mentoring and a guaranteed job on release. After a rigorous selection process, John was accepted for the thirteen-week course, which, because it is approved by the company offering employment, gives successful candidates the basic level entry into the gas industry.

The course, funded by National Grid and delivered by a gas industry registered trainer, included five weeks' classroom-based training

and eight weeks at a work placement with one of National Grid's contractors. This gave John the opportunity to put into practice skills learnt in the classroom.

John did not want to return to his home area so moved into rented accommodation in a different town. National Grid worked with the prison resettlement team, to find a property that was near to where John was going to work and funded the required deposit.

Moving to a new area and a new job was a challenge and the 24-hour 7-days-a-week mentoring support National Grid provide helped John through opening a bank account, understanding and paying council tax, and registering with a doctor. With National Grid's support, he took driving lessons and passed his driving test.

John said, "I've learnt a new trade and am still learning every day. I can see myself in this career for life. This chance has given me my life back."

Case Study

NHS Employability Scheme

This scheme gives disadvantaged groups, including offenders in the community, the opportunity to gain valuable work experience within West Yorkshire Hospitals, in non-clinical support roles, such as porters, cleaners, catering and administration workers.

The scheme offers taster days and weeks, shadowing, voluntary work, work placements, 'buddying' and mentoring, to see if individuals are suited to the work available. If the taster period has been successful, when a job vacancy becomes available they will be put forward and given help and support in preparing their job application form and for their interview. Criminal Records Bureau and occupational health checks will be carried out on everyone who is interested in the scheme.

'Daniel' was sentenced in June 2005 and was placed on a Community Punishment and

Rehabilitation Order for 18 months, with a requirement to perform 70 hours of unpaid work. He has no formal qualifications.

Daniel asked whether he could be referred for the Employability Scheme. He attended a joint meeting with both his case manager and the Employer Liaison Officer to discuss the requirements and opportunities. He was able to provide an employment reference, and his application was forwarded. The case manager also referred Daniel for advice on interview techniques and how best to disclose his convictions to an employer.

The case manager kept Daniel informed about the progress of his application to the scheme, and, in turn, talked to the Employer Liaison Officer. In due course, Daniel was asked to complete an occupational health questionnaire, and attended an interview at the local hospital. It took around two months for final confirmation, but Daniel was offered a job at the local hospital as a porter.

A Stronger Focus on Employment

28. Building on this work we need a strong programme of action to identify and address barriers to employment which particularly affect offenders. This will link learning and skills programmes to labour-market needs and, where possible, establish more direct pathways into jobs. Reducing unemployment in cities will be central to the Government's long-term aim of a national employment rate equivalent to 80 per cent of the working-age population. The National Employment Panel (NEP) ⁴⁰ recommended a more integrated approach to providing job-search skills and other support necessary to increase employment for disadvantaged residents, and contribute to wider economic and social regeneration. Through negotiation of local area agreements, for example, many city partnerships are looking to increase the number of people moving into work from disadvantaged groups and areas.

29. We want to learn from and build on experience, for example through more effective ways of understanding and meeting employers' needs, simplifying targets and funding arrangements wherever possible, and by providing more opportunity for local areas to decide local solutions for local problems. Offenders and ex-offenders are among the most educationally disadvantaged people and NOMS will need to work closely with other agencies, including Jobcentre Plus and the LSC, to ensure that developments are responsive to offenders' needs and potential.

30. We are committed to exploring new approaches to intensive work-focused support for offenders so that they increasingly gain the skills that employers need to fill their vacancies. One promising approach would be to build on the current framework of support by introducing a Job Developer working as part of the existing NEP Employer Coalitions. Working together with

offender managers and existing jobcentre support, they would work with local business to identify jobs and the skills they demand. Regional Skills Partnerships would help ensure that action matched the economic, social, employment and skill needs of a region. This is a promising way forward, on which we would welcome views.

31. We are also considering whether we can develop alternative or supplementary approaches. For example, moving away from the idea of Government prescribing how to strengthen work-focused support to focus instead on developing stronger incentives. One particular option we will consider will be exploring the potential for performance-based financial incentives in contracts. Such an approach will be considered within the context of the introduction of an overall strategy for introducing commissioning and contestability within NOMS. The forthcoming five year strategy for reducing re-offending being developed by the National Offender Management Service, offers an opportunity to consider how best we can move forward, working in partnership to give offenders the skills they need. We will then test one or some variation of both of these approaches with demonstration projects in major cities.
32. Employer Coalitions would:
 - Organise sector-based employer groups;
 - Advise on marketing and communication strategies to the local employers and employer organisations;
 - Enhance the labour-market knowledge of the National Offender Management Service and Jobcentre Plus staff and advise on employment-related activity with offenders;
 - Promote job opportunities for ex-offenders within their area; and
 - Provide feedback on the performance of providers in preparing ex-offenders for work.
33. The Jobcentre Plus employment and benefit surgery service in prisons would be developed in a demonstration project area to allow advisers to place a greater emphasis on improving the employability of an offender, rather than just closing benefit claims. Advisers would identify those prisoners with benefits issues that need addressing, but the focus of the support they provide would shift from benefits to work, with more support for job-search activity in the final weeks of a prison sentence. This will include attendance at a work-focused interview.
34. Jobcentre Plus support in these areas would, wherever practical, also include access to the Jobcentre Plus job-search website. We will pilot a scheme to make controlled Internet access available to risk-assessed prisoners approaching release, so that they can take advantage of Internet job-search and other possible sources of information regarding job opportunities in the area in which they will be resettled. Jobcentre Plus will place these 'job points' in some prisons to make vacancy searching easier for prisoners prior to release.
35. Critical to the promotion of the employment of offenders is recognition of the employer as a customer, and an understanding of the local labour market and skills needs. As part of our strategy to engage employers, we are already targeting specific sectors known to have labour shortages. Several prisons and probation areas are focusing training on the development of skills required by these sectors.
36. Job Developers would provide a crucial link between all those engaged in supporting offenders, using their knowledge and expertise to support Jobcentre Plus in identifying potential employees with the skills needed by employers. They may also choose to work with any local social enterprises which are known to train and provide jobs for ex-offenders. And they would work with the offender manager and with the Employer Coalitions themselves to develop training in specific skills that could begin in prison – for example, welding, carpentry, metal work or fork-lift truck driving.

37. This training could continue post-release, and result in a job with an employer or in skills that were transferable to any organisation within that sector. For example, a construction company might work within the prison to teach bricklaying – both in the classroom and in a practical setting. This course would be employer-designed, and could be developed in partnership with a local training provider. Although there might not be a guaranteed job placement at the end of the course, the individual would have a marketable skill that could significantly increase his or her attractiveness to other employers and ability to compete successfully for jobs.
38. Through regular contact, the Job Developer and offender manager would support the individual and employer in continued training and successful retention in the job. And they would work with the offender manager to test alternative mentoring and support for the continued development of ex-offenders in employment.
39. With a demonstration project on this model we would also consider piloting a new job-placement scheme, where individuals would begin work in the week they were released. The costs and risks of employment for the individual could be offset in one of three main ways. The ex-offender could:
- Be employed directly in full or part-time employment;
 - Be taken on under a ‘job trial’ arrangement for two weeks; or
 - Be employed with training offset through the **Train to Gain** programme, a flexible programme of skills training, responsive to employer and employee needs.
40. In cases where none of these options was successful, offenders could be employed under the subsidised employment option in the New Deal.
41. Subject to consultation, the Government would welcome further ideas, supported by employers, on ways in which offenders could start work quickly after leaving prison.
42. The effectiveness of any package of intensive work-focused support will hinge crucially on ensuring sufficient continuity of support for offenders during their sentence. The National Offender Management Service aims to hold prisoners close to their homes whenever possible. Considerable emphasis is placed on encouraging prisoners to maintain family ties, and existing guidance requires prison governors to consider family contact issues before moving prisoners to another prison. Maintaining family ties helps with the transition from imprisonment to resettlement and is an important factor in reducing the likelihood of re-offending. The intention is also to avoid moving prisoners if it disrupts their participation in educational courses, training courses or treatment programmes.
43. As another way of supporting this continuity, we will explore the scope of a ‘skills passport’ for offenders that records skills and qualifications already held, and reflects any skills acquired or credits gained towards a qualification. Once in employment, this approach might continue to be built upon to secure a first full level 2 qualification under **Train to Gain**. It will allow for an ‘assess-train-assess’ approach, where an employee’s current skills are assessed in relation to a relevant level 2 qualification. Free training is then provided to fill any gaps, and is followed by a final assessment.
44. As the nation’s largest employer, the public sector also has an important part to play. The Government encourages all central and local government to find ways to support this agenda and investigate the real and perceived barriers to the sustainable employment of offenders. Some examples of local public-sector initiatives already exist. For example, one element of London’s Resettlement Strategy is action to develop opportunities for the public sector to employ more ex-offenders. The LSC has been exploring opportunities for closer links with employers in health and care, local and national government and education. Building on this, the DfES and the Home Office will review their own practice to ensure that they are able to give a lead within central government in offering fair opportunities for ex-offenders to gain employment. They will also work closely with other government departments to support the development of policies to ensure that ex-offenders are

not unfairly discriminated against in their recruitment.

45. We will also look at what other services might be helpful to employers considering employing ex-offenders. It is understandable that employers should seek to avoid unnecessary risks, particularly when there may be other highly motivated workers available. We shall consider what measures might reduce the risks to employers. One approach might be to offer a direct advice facility if any difficulties occur on the job, including an offer by Jobcentre Plus to help the individual find alternative employment if things do not work out. We would welcome views on the nature of support employers need and want, and how it could best be delivered.

46. We also recognise that, for some offenders, self-employment may be the most practical way into the labour market. It may also help to avoid the discrimination that can be faced by offenders applying for jobs. There are already initiatives underway to help offenders and ex-offenders enter self-employment:

- **The Business in Prisons Initiative**, for example, supported from the Small Business Service's Phoenix Development Fund (PDF), which aims to help offenders and ex-offenders develop the skills required to start their own businesses on release;

- The PDF has also supported the development of a self-employment, enterprise and entrepreneurship education programme at NVQ levels 2 and 3 for offenders, which would be fully transferable. Individuals would be able to continue to follow the programme in the event of them moving from one prison to another; and

- At Wandsworth Prison, the **Learn2Earn** project is delivering much closer links with the Jobcentre Plus New Deal for Self Employment. Ultimately, the offender produces a Self Employment Action Plan in conjunction with local business, who mentor and assess those graduating from Wandsworth's business courses. We shall explore ways in which this project's objectives can be promoted elsewhere, and how self-employment can be better integrated into the curriculum and programmes on offer across the estate. Self-employment should be presented as a real option, in addition to other employment programmes. There may be scope for other agencies such as libraries to provide specific kinds of support to the new arrangements.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS:

- What are the best ways to engage employers in opening up job opportunities to offenders, and what are the issues that arise?
- What support would be most helpful to employers considering recruiting offenders, and how might it be provided?

B. A BETTER QUALITY AND INCREASINGLY EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND SKILLS SERVICE

Key Points

- A new, integrated and higher quality learning and skills service in place from August 2006 in each English region;
- A strong focus on the skills to help more offenders into jobs;
- Offenders being, for the first time, a priority group in the plans of the LSC and other bodies, such as the Quality Improvement Agency (which focuses on further education standards);
- Electronic transfer of individual learning records, to resolve a long-standing failing in the service;
- Inspection of all offender learning, to drive up quality;
- Piloting of a new model for delivery – the ‘Offender Learner Campus’ – to develop new centres of excellence and better links with mainstream education and training.

47. This section outlines plans to reform the education and training of offenders. The new Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) will be planned and funded by the LSC, the national body responsible for learning and skills post-16. The section also sets out for consultation proposals to pilot an even more integrated approach – the ‘campus model’ – which, if successful, might be developed as the delivery model after the first OLASS contracts come to an end in July 2009.

48. Alongside the development of NOMS, these changes will deliver a higher-quality service, year on year, with better skills for offenders in prison and in the community, leading to jobs. The new service has already started in three development regions (the North East, North West and South West). Building on this, the LSC will introduce the new arrangements across the rest of England from 31 July 2006. Different arrangements will be put in place in Wales, as the remit of the LSC and DfES does not extend to Wales (see paragraphs 87 – 89).

49. With education and training for all offenders brought within the responsibility of the LSC, this reform will drive significant improvements in quality and delivery, underpinned by:

- **Better Assessment and Planning:** an early, intense focus on assessing individual learners’ needs, providing advice and guidance (for example on entitlement to free tuition when training towards a first full level 2 qualification), and the development of an individual learning plan, within the wider sentence plan. LSC planning will ensure that training fits the needs of the labour market within which offenders serve their sentence or, if in prison, to which they will be released. Training will also be tailored to the physical environment in a particular prison and more closely related to the specific needs of a prison population – for example, in women’s or juvenile prisons;
- **A wider curriculum choice:** the **Offender’s Learning Journey** supports progression, for example on transfer from prison to probation and into mainstream learning. It has clear quality requirements and a strong focus on learning needs that will help more offenders into suitable and sustained jobs. A juvenile version of the **Offender’s Learning Journey** acknowledges the specific needs of younger learners;
- **More accurate and up-to-date data:** too much time is taken up at present in repeatedly assessing an individual’s learning needs, with learning records often not effectively passed between prisons, or prison to probation. Accurate learner data must be quickly available to NOMS officials, those involved in the management of juveniles’ sentences, and all those involved in the delivery of learning. Transfer of learner records is accordingly a key area for improvement. New arrangements, applying in the three OLASS development regions from January and across the country during 2006, will ensure that a record of an individual’s skills, learning plan and achievements accompanies him or her throughout the length of the sentence, and helps the transition into

mainstream programmes in the community. We anticipate being able to provide very quickly for exchange of data with the new NOMS offender management ICT system;

- **Mainstreamed delivery of offender learning:** offender education has, to some extent, been seen as a Cinderella service. We want to see a set of learning providers, operating within the framework of mainstream post-16 learning, offering offenders better access to a broad range of mainstream provision. The LSC has designated offender learners as a priority group, enabling them to benefit from the Skills Strategy policy of targeting resources on those most in need, in order to make them employable. The LSC will produce guidance on integrating offender learners into their existing provision. Offenders can also benefit from the planned overhaul of the National Qualifications Framework, to create a new Framework for Achievement by 2010. The new arrangements will increase flexibility, and offer better opportunities for learners to build credit towards qualifications. The Framework for Achievement will also allow proper accreditation of offender learning programmes outside the existing qualifications framework;
- **Regional Offender Learning Partnership Boards:** powerful alliances are forming at the regional level between the groups of key stakeholders coming together to oversee the education, training and employment strand of the regional reducing re-offending strategy. The combined power of the commissioning roles of the Regional Offender Managers (ROMs) and the LSC will play a critical role in the planning and management of the new OLASS delivery arrangements. A new accountabilities framework will support these regional partnerships;

- **Progressive development of the offender learning and correctional services workforces:** to be successful, learners need good teachers. As resources allow, the Government intends to place a new emphasis on the development of the offender education workforce. Those working with offenders in education programmes, vocational training, industrial workshops, prison regime activities and offending behaviour programmes need support to build in opportunities to gain skills and qualifications. They also need to benefit from a regular inspection regime and national initiatives. We expect an important part to be played by Lifelong Learning UK, the Centre for Excellence in Leadership, and Skills for Justice. The existing Success for All programme is already having an impact on offender learning. Prison education services have helped test teaching and learning resources developed for key subject areas such as construction, and prison tutors are joining their colleagues across the sector in the coaching programmes and subject networks associated with these resources;
- Other prison and probation staff also have an important role to play. The structural changes that will flow from commissioning and contestability will give prisons and probation workforces a wider and more flexible range of skills. They will work side by side with the education workforce to encourage and support the learning programmes in which offenders are engaged;
- **Strengthened and refocused external inspection arrangements:** inspection of prison education has had a powerful effect. In future, all offender education and training, in prisons and community, will be inspected to the same standards as other adult learning. To achieve this, the inspectorates will work in partnership with key organisations and agencies, at both the national level and within an appropriate geographical area. Equally importantly, we recognise the urgent need to sustain the improvement seen in the gradings for prison inspections in recent years.

Case Study

DfES has funded Strode College and the University of Plymouth to develop a specialised, accredited module for staff working with offenders in custody or in the community. Offender-specific modules are available as options at all levels of teacher training, pre-service and in-service, at all levels from level 2 support through to Masters degrees.

Supporting the good work that prison and probation officers have already taken upon themselves has great potential. It can enrich the learning experiences of individual offenders, and help to foster a culture of learning that continues outside of the classroom or workshop. Enhancements to Probation Service initial training are building on the basic skills awareness training already delivered. A groundbreaking adult-learner support module, accredited at level 2, is currently being delivered to 100 Probation Service officers and ten prison officers as part of their initial training. An accredited training module designed to raise awareness of offenders' learning needs has been trialled with Yorkshire Probation Area, with a 100 per cent success rate for the officers involved. A further pilot is scheduled to take place in the Midlands.

CONSULTATION ISSUE: Strengthening the partnership to develop offender skills – a 'campus' approach

50. We have set out our plans to improve the learning and skills service offered to offenders. These changes will achieve a great deal. But the delivery of education to offenders will still take place largely through a set of separate and time-bound contracts with a minority of providers who have chosen to work in the field. This is important in the short-term, to ensure we continue to provide a secure service; but for the longer term it may limit the flexibility of the delivery process. Contracts are expensive to remove and change and the mix of providers may be more difficult to alter as the needs of the population change.
51. We want to consider a much more radical change, by creating a new alliance of providers, whose contribution can develop as our evidence about what works improves. We want to develop centres of excellence in offender learning, which should, over time, produce a much more effective service. Accordingly, we aim to test the scope for a model based on the notion of serving the needs of a 'campus of offender learners'.

Figure 4 The Offender Learner Campus

52. An offender learner 'campus' could be based on a criminal justice area, linking prisons and probation services, or another relevant grouping of offenders within a region. The key features of such a model are set out in Figure 4. They could include:

- **An alliance between a range of training providers**, based on the needs of the offender learners on the campus; and publishing the offer through a prospectus. The alliance could include institutions from the further and higher education sectors, as well as voluntary, community and employer-based providers coming together under the direction of a Campus Director;
- **Creating new centres of excellence** in understanding the needs of offenders and developing the most effective methods of delivery, to increase the contribution education can make to reducing re-offending in the context of other interventions for offender management;
- **A strong focus on social inclusion**, to overcome offenders' barriers to employment, as well as employing strategies to motivate and encourage participation and minimise 'drop-out';

- **A focus on jobs** as a key way to reduce re-offending, by including employers and Jobcentre Plus in the campus offer;

- **Involving staff from mainstream providers** in delivering learning and skills to offenders. This would support offenders in maintaining relationships with teachers and others, whether in prison or outside. This should increase their motivation and encourage them to continue participating as they make critical transitions in their sentence and resettlement;

- **Additional support for offenders in transition** between institutions, or between custody and community to support their resettlement.

53. The campus could be delivered using the existing planning and funding responsibilities of the further and higher education sectors, rather than procuring separate, and short-term solutions through one-off exercises. The role of the Campus Director, in conjunction with NOMS, the LSC and the Higher Education Funding Council for England, would be to ensure that the most appropriate mix of provision was available. The campus model should enable more flexibility in changing that mix, as the needs of offenders changed and as we got better at understanding the most effective practice for delivery. Some providers would be those located close to the

campus, while some might operate more virtually to provide services outside the immediate locality, if the needs of the population demanded it. A specific focus of the campus would be to encourage the use of e-learning and other ICT opportunities for flexible and cost-effective delivery.

54. This new model could offer the opportunity to develop the role of prisons whose main focus was on a resettlement regime, driven by improving the employability of prisoners. It could offer more opportunity for offenders to maintain relationships with the same staff in

prison and on release. Stability in key relationships can be critical in supporting offenders through transitions in their sentence, and back into a life free from crime. The campus would be accessible by employers, and we would encourage the development of corporate alliances; indeed, some learning could be delivered by employers. The Campus Director and providers would be responsible for building relationships with employers to secure the most successful job outcomes for offenders.

55. This model depends on effective partnerships. All those engaged would need strong, shared organisational objectives within the overall aim

Illustration: How the Campus Might Work

Richard has just been given an 18-month sentence for a drugs-related offence. He is 24, and, although he had a promising career at school early on, he lost interest when he was 16 and started work as a DJ, leaving school with only two GCSEs.

He has been allocated a prison close to his local community, and, as part of an initial needs assessment, a drugs programme has been identified as part of his sentence plan. His offender manager, Chris, is responsible for his sentence plan and making sure that the needs identified in it are met in the correct sequence and that delivery is monitored. The initial assessment also identifies skills Richard needs for employment, and signs him up to the new 'contract'.

Richard's sentence starts with attendance at an offending behaviour programme, delivered in the prison, and linked to improving his basic skills to encourage him to think about gaining other skills and qualifications. Following Richard's successful completion of the programme, Chris introduces him to the potential learning opportunities offered through the new learner campus in the local area. The incentive for Richard is that, through his behaviour, he can improve his chance of release on temporary licence to continue his studies externally, subject to a rigorous risk assessment.

The new campus offers high-quality programmes in a wide range of vocational and academic subjects. It is delivered through a partnership between a

college and university in the area, along with a voluntary organisation, an e-learning provider and a group of local employers, who offer work experience and training as well as permanent jobs. Through the campus prospectus, Richard decides to work on his ICT skills by signing up to an ICT competency qualification, the European Computer Driving Licence, delivered in co-operation with the local further education college, and supported by e-learning. Louise is his new tutor from the college and, working with Chris, will support Richard in his studies, particularly in making the transition from activities in the prison to those in the community.

As planned, Richard's new ambitions to boost his employability result in him achieving the ICT qualification. Having demonstrated his commitment, he is released on temporary licence and Louise introduces him to the college premises. During the review of his individual learning plan, Richard realises that he has potential to progress further and signs up to a new course in ICT at level 3. At the same time, Louise arranges a work placement with a local employer.

Through the continued support available, and his commitment to leading a drug-free life by attending counselling, Richard sees a range of new opportunities opening up for him when he is released into the supervision of Chris. He is now on course to achieve his level 3 qualification; Louise is getting him information on access to higher education courses; and Richard is considering a new career in ICT in a different locality, as part of his journey away from his old lifestyle.

of reducing re-offending. It could work well with the proposed employability contract for offenders, alongside reforms in the prison and probation services through NOMS, but would need to be tested rigorously, perhaps as part of a regional pilot.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS:

- What are the key considerations in constructing a campus model, and its links to more effective outcomes for skills and employment alongside a new contract model?
- How can we build this into the design of new services implied by the Home Secretary's speech on penal reform? ⁴¹
- Building on the foundations of the new OLASS regime, how can we most rapidly and effectively improve quality and effectiveness of the offender learner service, and strengthen the offender learning and correctional services workforces?

C. GREATER COHERENCE ACROSS THE SYSTEM

Key Points

- Encouraging the full use of flexibility in sentencing powers to promote skills and employment within and alongside prison and community sentences;
- A new emphasis on skills and jobs, as the reduction of re-offending is placed at the heart of prison and probation services;
- Ensuring a single professional has responsibility for each offender throughout his or her sentence, managing education and employment provision as part of a wider sentence plan;
- Exploring ways to help more offenders improve their skills and get jobs through better design of the prison day and better use of prison facilities, with skills training built into other activities such as workshops;
- In probation services, using unpaid work in the community as an opportunity to improve skills for paid work;
- Exploiting opportunities to use the full range of programmes, such as those tackling offending behaviour, to develop job and life skills;
- Where possible, ensuring that offenders have controlled access to technology if this will improve their skills and find them work.

56. The development of NOMS is a significant opportunity to improve skills and employment outcomes for offenders. A clear focus on sentence management and reduced re-offending, and the NOMS partnership with the LSC, will foster prison regimes that balance the need for offenders to be purposefully occupied with the imperative to focus learning and skills resources on skills leading to better chances of employment. For offenders in the community, the new arrangements, coupled with the LSC's designation of offenders as a new priority, will engage mainstream post-16 education providers with their needs.

57. The NOMS reforms will ensure each offender has a single person – the offender manager – to take responsibility for them throughout their sentence, in custody or the community. The offender manager will assess the needs of the offender, and the need to protect the individual and the public by reducing the risk of re-offending. The job of the offender manager is to address these issues in individual sentence plans, working with providers of a range of interventions. At a regional level, the Regional Offender Managers (ROMs) are building alliances around the main areas of need, for example with housing providers, with drug action teams, and with learning and skills councils. And at the national level, the National Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan sets out the Government's approach to cutting re-offending through greater strategic direction and joined-up working.

58. Against that background, this section sets out proposals for a stronger emphasis, within the correctional services, on support for positive skills and employment outcomes. As we drive forward reform of offender management, we shall actively seek opportunities for education, training and job preparation to be delivered as part of, or alongside, the sentence.

59. As regards the use of formal sentencing powers, these might include:

- **Encouraging sentencers to take advantage of opportunities within the Criminal Justice Act (2003) to promote education and employment** as key objectives of custodial and community penalties. This would build on the Probation Service guidance on the use of education, training and employment conditions as an 'Activity Requirement' under the Act. Criminal Justice agencies in a region would need to be closely involved in developing guidance. It would, of course, need to be accompanied by a prospectus for offender learners and managers that set out the opportunities for education and training, so that sentencers and others could be assured that suitable programmes were available;

- **Exploring ways in which Home Detention Curfew might be used to support training and employment;**

- **Ensuring that arrangements for release on temporary licence** support, as far as possible, opportunities for training and employment, including mainstream education provision. This is a development we would expect to explore through the piloting of the campus model outlined above.

60. As regards the wider range of prison or probation operations, the Regional Offender Manager's new commissioning role offers opportunities to tailor delivery of learning to the situation of the offender, to the available facilities and to employment opportunities. We are here seeking views on options for this strategy, which could include:

- **Using the physical estate better to support learning.** The Home Office is currently reviewing the prison estate with a focus on maintaining links with the community. Possibilities could include using remand wings for assessment and initial support, and creating training prisons leading on vocational specialisms. This could assist with the targeting of limited resources to improve facilities in vocational areas. We will also seek to support more partnerships between prisons and commercial organisations, to equip workshops with industry standard facilities. The partnership between HMYOI Aylesbury and Toyota Motor Company (below) is an example of what is possible.

- **Greater influence of learning and skills practitioners on other aspects of regimes,** ensuring that staff are increasingly committed to the skills and employment agenda, and the contribution it can make to reduced re-offending. We will ensure, as far as is practicable, that the learning and employability needs of an offender are explicitly part of the allocation process that determines where an offender will serve his or her prison sentence. In the community, we envisage using the Criminal Justice Act and offender managers to ensure that appropriate

Case Study

HMYOI Aylesbury/Toyota Motor Company.

HMYOI Aylesbury has had great success in establishing a partnership between the prison and Toyota, the car manufacturer.

Previously at Aylesbury, learners in motor vehicle engineering worked on old cars and trained in poor facilities, and few of them went into related work after leaving prison. The head of the motor-vehicle training section helped the prison to secure substantial funding from Toyota to convert the existing workshop facilities into a modern, fully equipped training garage. New tools, testing equipment, cars and training materials provided by Toyota allowed the staff to develop a training programme that matched the technician training programme delivered by Toyota for its own staff. Toyota's own modern-apprenticeship-training resource material includes tutor notes, videos and learning support material that covers every aspect of the qualification requirements. Most of the learners needed help with numeracy, and about half with literacy and to develop better social skills.

Instructors receive a two-week skills annual updating course by the manufacturer. A representative from Toyota visits the prison every two or three months to review the course and learners' portfolios of evidence. The prison also receives an annual sponsorship of £30,000 from Toyota to maintain the facilities and resources.

Staff organise car dealership open days to help offenders develop job-search skills. A high proportion of learners on these regimes achieve early parole and enhanced privileges for good behaviour. Job prospects in the industry are good and many learners go straight into paid apprenticeships with Toyota and other dealerships. Eighteen learners have been released directly from HMYOI Aylesbury, of whom ten have entered employment.⁴²

learning is delivered both within and alongside the sentence. We will also look at further ways in which work in prison and unpaid work in the community can result in learning outcomes including qualifications, and lead to real jobs. An example is the Teesside 'Community Payback' scheme in Hartlepool, where offenders completing the programme have received guaranteed job interviews with the local authority.

■ Flexible and inventive ways of embedding learning and skills into other aspects of work with offenders.

– In prisons, all staff, and especially the Head of Learning and Skills, can be actively encouraged to seek out ways for learning, and preparation for work to be fitted into the prison day. Examples of this could (and in some prisons already do) include:

- **Flexibility about the delivery of education**, for example providing education on the wing, and providing short education sessions in the workplace during workshops;
- **Involving education in other activities**, for example building numeracy skills in the kitchen or in the gym;
- **Developing workplace skills by engaging with others** and taking on responsibility, including involvement in existing prison schemes, such as Listeners, a peer support scheme, and Toe-by-Toe, a literacy scheme;
- **Increasing physical provision**, by opening up more rooms, or by greater utilisation of existing accommodation and in-cell learning.

– Within probation, possibilities could include:

- **Using literacy, numeracy and communication skills** as part of other work, for example in unpaid work projects, finance and debt counselling, and behavioural programmes;

- **Using a buddy when an offender has poor reading and writing skills** – this already happens in the behaviour programmes, and in some mentoring schemes;
 - **Encouraging staff to role-model positive behaviour**, to help offenders improve life skills.
- **Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT):** ICT is a potentially powerful tool for distance learning in secure environments, and can be very motivating. It is increasingly important to underpin the larger numbers of offenders studying in custody for Open University qualifications. Prisons have been cautious about opening up access to e-learning facilities, but the Government is keen to make more progress in this area. The LSC will work with Learndirect to ensure that, where appropriate, offenders have access to the same mainstream opportunities as other learners. Building on a pilot of secure web access for e-learning at Leyhill prison, the Prison Service will run a new project to identify how best to provide secure web access to prisoners in a way that balances usability with security and the risk of misuse.
- **Consideration of ways in which the prison day can provide better access to education**, subject to security, healthcare and population considerations. The day-to-day running of prisons should support individuals involved in education and encourage others to become involved, by ensuring that time spent on learning, or other preparation for employment, does not come at the cost of other activities. This means that all activities should be available to those prisoners who are engaged in education, in order to ensure that prisoners do not miss out by taking part. In addition, prison pay regimes should ensure that there are no barriers to involvement and prisons should look at ways of rewarding prisoners for taking part in activities that prepare them for employment.
- **Ensure that activities offered by correctional services are, as far as possible, relevant to employment, and provide opportunities to achieve qualifications.** In prison, this should mean that, wherever practicable, workshop activities are selected for their development and training prospects, and their suitability as preparation for working life. This is not to say that work that is profitable or useful for the institution cannot be done, but it should be developmental for the worker. This is already underway in some prisons: for example, over 80 prison kitchens both supply the prisons and offer NVQs in catering skills to make offenders more employable on release. Similarly, unpaid work in the community, while fulfilling the obligation to punish the offender and make some reparation to society, should develop the skills of offenders and prepare them to contribute more to society. For instance, there are many good examples where the projects include elements of work experience, which can lead to employment, or at least an interview or consideration for employment. This would also serve as an incentive to complete the order.
- **Development of workplace skills.** Employers say that one of the most important skills is the ability to perform properly in the workplace: arriving on time, getting along with colleagues, working as part of a team, acting on instructions, and accepting criticism. Some prisons are able to offer work that is useful, provides industry-focused training, and develops workplace skills. Offending-behaviour programmes available both in prison and in the community can help to develop these life skills. But life in prison may not naturally foster these skills, leaving individuals with little sense of responsibility for their day-to-day behaviour and actions. We are seeking views on how the working day in prison might develop general workplace skills. For example, a greater focus on teamwork and on delivering a product to a deadline, and ways in which prisoners can develop skills that are transferable to the workplace. There may also be scope for making the working day in prisons and on community sentences more like mainstream working life.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS:

- What sentencing measures could motivate more offenders to engage in education and training? Is there scope for incentives such as earlier release for those that make positive steps towards improving their skills, finding a job or setting up a business?
- How might skills and employment become more mainstreamed into prison life, making the best use of opportunities for offenders to develop relevant, up to date, marketable skills to support progression to employment?
- Similarly in the community, are there opportunities to use unpaid work and other community-sentence requirements more productively to reduce repeat offending?
- How might Regional Offender Managers best use their commissioning role to drive this agenda forward?

D. MOTIVATING AND ENGAGING OFFENDERS – INCLUDING A NEW 'CONTRACT' FOR OFFENDERS

Key Points

- We will test a new 'employability contract' to motivate offenders;
- As well as being expected to find work, offenders will be helped to do so with a range of training and employment opportunities;
- Incentives could include guaranteed job interviews, and earned privileges in custody;
- Their responsibilities, where appropriate, could be set out in sentence plans;
- We will also look at the particular issues facing minorities within the criminal justice system (women, disabled, ethnic minority, juvenile or young-adult offenders) and how these might be factored into the 'contract'.

61. Offender management reforms and a clearer and more flexible sentencing structure, combined with a new focus on skills and employment, offer an important opportunity to motivate more offenders to take positive steps to improve their employability, and to increase their chances of living crime-free. There is an opportunity to combine a range of incentives and other influencing factors (for example, sentencing requirements) with a high quality, work-focused programme of options intended to offer pathways into employment, with skills training.

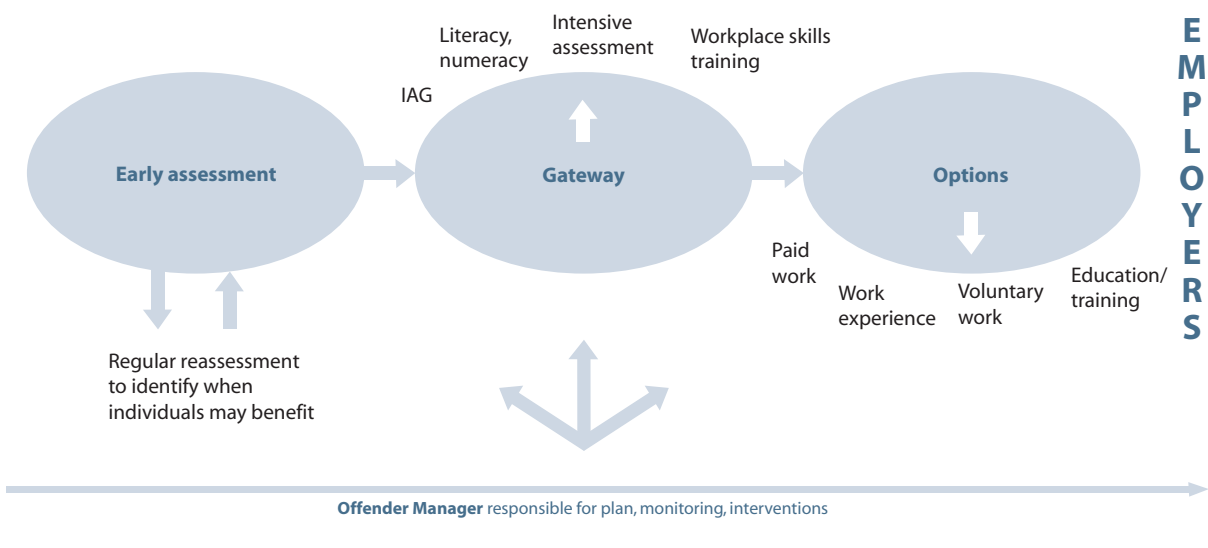
62. We aim to test the scope for building a new employability contract for offenders. This new 'rights and responsibilities' package will offer offenders a menu of options for training and skills support leading to a specific employment goal. In return, offenders will be expected to engage positively with the offer and meet clear performance criteria. This package could be put to the offender as part of the sentence plan.

Alternatively, according to an individual's circumstances, it might be offered later in the sentence, when other issues had been tackled, such as drug problems or children and family concerns. For offenders in the community, it could form part of the Community Order. Offenders would have an opportunity to comment on their needs, and would understand that their Community Order was a form of contract with which they would need to comply, and which would offer a chance to improve skills and employability.

■ Offender managers would make an initial assessment of the range of an individual's needs, priorities, and barriers to learning. Wherever possible, this would be conducted before sentencing, so that the outline sentence plan could be put before the court, discussed with the offender, and then reflected, where appropriate, in conditions attached to the sentence. This is usually done as part of the pre-sentence report. Where an offender had a sentence plan that did not require custody and allowed access to working-age benefits, the offender manager would consider the impact on continued entitlement to benefit. This would require closer working and exchange of information with Jobcentre Plus sites.

63. Figure 5 below sets out what such a contract for offenders might look like. The Government is keen to invite views on how best to make such an approach work, but in essence:

Figure 5 | The Contract Model



- Offender managers would select individuals who appeared likely to benefit from an intensive programme focused on employability.
 - Individuals would have access to Jobcentre Plus employment and benefit surgeries in prison, where they would receive advice and guidance. Where individuals wished to claim Jobseeker's Allowance, they would have access to the Freshstart process, giving them the opportunity of a new jobseeker's interview on release from custody. Other offenders in the community might be referred straight to Jobcentre Plus. Those with other needs, such as a continuing addiction problem, or who would be homeless on release, would also be referred on to the appropriate agency – but with the offender manager taking a co-ordinating role.
 - Where employability was identified as a significant issue, and early attention to it was appropriate, the individual could be referred to the 'Gateway', an intensive period of advice, attitudinal and behavioural skills training, and perhaps some specific learning to address literacy, language and numeracy needs. We shall consider how such activity fits with the requirements of entitlement to working age benefits. Although we would normally expect engagement with the 'contract' programme to be encouraged mainly by incentives to individuals, it may be appropriate, in some cases, for elements of the 'Gateway' programme to be specified by the court as part of the requirement of an order.
 - During the Gateway period, employment advice would be offered to help identify a realistic employment goal, if it was not clear already, and a learning and employment plan agreed, aimed at the needs of the labour market into which the offender was to be released.
 - From the Gateway process, the aim would be to move individuals on to one of a range of options, leading to the employment goal. These could include:
 - Paid employment, including tailored skills training on and off the job;
 - Work experience with skills training (with an employer or possibly in an intermediate labour market);
 - Voluntary work with skills training;
 - Full time education or training to a first full level 2 qualification.
- For those offenders receiving working-age benefits, participation in an employment-related course would be approved by a Jobcentre Plus adviser prior to the start. Similarly, participation in full-time training and education would need to be approved by Jobcentre Plus, with, in some cases, a training allowance agreed.
64. Where an individual was reasonably job ready, they would not need to be directed towards an option such as training or work experience, but, sentence permitting, could be diverted towards job-search. Equally, an individual might be a long way from job readiness, perhaps because other pressing issues needed to be addressed first. In such cases, an offender manager would want to deploy other interventions, perhaps reserving action on skills and employability for later in the sentence.
65. For those in prison, the incentives for participation should be flexible and focused on individuals' own motivations. They could include the opportunity to be housed on an enhanced wing or an area specifically for prisoners on this scheme, or more time out of cell. The privileges could be linked to the Incentive and Earned Privileges schemes already operating in prisons, which are largely driven by prisoners' participation in their sentence plans. These privileges might be focused on education or employment (for example, work on interview techniques or writing a CV) or more tangible rewards (such as access to more highly paid work or additional visiting hours). There are already examples of this type of reward system for educational achievement in some prisons, for example prisoners gaining a financial bonus for achieving a qualification. For those in

the community, the package could offer work experience or support in gaining employment or qualifications, in exchange for keeping to the terms of the community sentence and regular attendance. Other incentives might include guaranteed interviews with employers, and support and advice to help the offender pursue the job goal. In common with provision to other jobseekers, it may also be possible to offer training allowances for participation on programmes.

66. On the 'responsibilities' side, if an individual were assessed with an employability need, their sentence plan might include requirements such as compulsory participation in the Gateway process. We would generally expect participation in options beyond the Gateway to be by agreement, not least because individuals would be less attractive to an employer filling a vacancy if they were not there by choice. We will, however, consider how far some options, for example to undertake voluntary work, might be underpinned by the possibility of sanctions for non-attendance or poor behaviour. In prison, penalties for not meeting the terms of the sentence plan could include loss of privileges, such as lower paid work or extended visiting hours. In the community, the aim would be, so far as possible, to encourage engagement through positive motivation and incentives; but failure to meet requirements laid down by a court in a community sentence, or set out in conditions of a licence, may, of course, lead to an offender being sent to prison.
67. Naturally, we must be sure that privileges provided under this scheme do not give offenders benefits greater than could be accessed by all in the community.
68. Where an individual offender did not enter the employability contract scheme early in their sentence, periodic reassessment would offer the opportunity to engage later, when they were more likely to benefit. In a community setting, later participation would most likely be on a voluntary basis, since the requirements of a community order, or Custody Plus order, would have been set earlier. Participation might, however, be viewed favourably as indicating a willingness to reform.
69. Key factors in the success of such an approach would be the offer of real job opportunities by employers, and the extent to which the correctional services were able to organise around the support of individuals' employability aims. This paper has already outlined proposals to do more in both these areas. As part of the consultation on the overall strategy, we intend to consider the systems and structures necessary to engage employers, both on a geographical and employment-sector basis.
70. The contract proposal focuses firmly on employability. This is because evidence suggests that employment is a key factor in reducing re-offending. Accordingly, for many offenders in the community, and for those in custody looking ahead to resettlement, action to improve the chances of securing and thriving in employment will be important. But other offenders will be far from job ready. This may be because they lack skills or qualifications, because other factors such as health or family concerns loom larger than work, or because their attitude may be extremely disengaged from the concerns of the workplace, or from learning. This does not make a focus on skills and employment outcomes any less important; it does, however, point to a need for flexibility in engaging with individuals who may have very varied needs.
71. In the new learning and skills service, for example, it is right to expect all learners to aim for qualification outcomes. But it is also necessary to recognise that some individuals start a long way back in terms of motivation and readiness to learn. The service, accordingly, needs to find ways of engaging and motivating reluctant learners. Activities such as Family Learning courses can act as a 'hook' to get reluctant learners involved in education, and the 'contract' could be the means of engaging those

with the furthest to travel. The incentive for the offender in delivering their part of the contract is the opportunity to maintain and enhance links with their children, and contribute to their learning and development. Anecdotal evidence suggests that very reluctant learners with strong negative attitudes towards classroom-based learning can become enthusiastic participants when they recognise the benefit to their children. Other activities, for example music, drama and the arts, can also be a powerful means of engaging disaffected individuals with learning, bolstering self-esteem and broadening horizons.

72. We appreciate that the contract model will not be the right approach for everyone. We also appreciate that, for those offenders who could benefit, it would not be appropriate at some points in their sentence. The assessment must therefore take into account conflicting priorities where they occur, but retain the potential for later engagement when the time is right.
73. We also need flexible approaches when looking at the barriers to participation for particular groups of offenders. We know that specific groups of offenders – for example, women, disabled, ethnic minority, juvenile and young adult offenders – may feel unwilling or unable to participate in learning or preparation for work at times. The reasons for this may include unhappy previous experiences of education or employment; problems with access, due to a learning difficulty or disability; issues with a traditional classroom-style delivery; or competing personal priorities. Barriers may also include maturity and behavioural issues, which may need to be partially overcome in the first instance, and tackled in more depth as part of the package of learning and skills during the Gateway.
74. We welcome views on how to overcome barriers to successful engagement in learning and employment for particular groups, including:

- **Women:** female offenders account for around six per cent of the prisoner population.⁴³ Specific characteristics include the fact that women achieve slightly better results in literacy and numeracy screening;⁴⁴ are more likely to have no qualifications (about 70 per cent as opposed to 50 per cent of men) or to be unemployed at the time of conviction; are more affected by substance abuse and ill-health;⁴⁵ and are more often the primary carer for children. We need to ensure that the higher probability that female offenders will be focused on family responsibilities does not result in their exclusion from qualification and work-focused interventions.
- **Older offenders** (this will include those reaching retirement age on release): over 4,500 offenders aged over 50 were supervised by the Probation Service in 2003. The number sent to prison for this age group was just over 3,300⁴⁶ in the same year. Greater maturity is the most effective factor in reducing re-offending⁴⁷ and there is some evidence that offenders over 26 are more likely to respond to employment-focused interventions. However, in terms of employer engagement, offenders past the traditional 'apprentice' age may encounter additional difficulties, due to prevailing employer attitudes to recruiting older workers.
- **Black and minority ethnic (BME) offenders:** BME offenders are over-represented in the criminal justice system. In 2003, 25 per cent of the prison population was from a minority ethnic group.⁴⁸ More specifically, black and Asian prisoners are more likely to attend education and training in prisons than white prisoners.⁴⁹ But with unemployment around twice as likely in black and ethnic minority communities,⁵⁰ BME offenders may face additional hurdles in obtaining and retaining employment. The proposals in this document to improve the qualifications, skills and ultimately employment of all offenders may, accordingly, be of particular importance to minority groups.

- **Disabled offenders:** Of sentenced prisoners, 46 per cent of males aged 18-49 have a longstanding illness or disability,⁵¹ around 70 per cent of both males and females suffer two or more mental health disorders,⁵² and just over ten per cent of one sample of those leaving prison applied for Incapacity Benefit immediately on release. A focus on employment as a means of reducing re-offending may be irrelevant to some offenders with disabilities – although, of course, not all. We welcome views on devising a targeting strategy to take this into account when designing interventions for those who may not realistically gain employment.
- **Young Adult Offenders (YAOs) (ages 18-20):** After juveniles, YAOs have the highest levels of re-offending. Compared to offenders generally, YAOs have higher incidences of poor basic skills, education and training needs, mental health problems, and unemployment both pre- and post-release. For example, over 60 per cent were unemployed on arrest.⁵³ They lead the most chaotic lifestyles, with many not having the coping skills that older adults have acquired.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS:

- How might the contract proposal be best used to support better outcomes in terms of skills and employment? What are the issues arising from this?
- Would there be a case for going further than the process described above, in terms of requirements and incentives? If so, what other approaches might strengthen the contract?
- What other measures might be considered in order to engage and motivate more offenders in positive action to improve their employability and readiness for resettlement and avoidance of offending? (We would especially welcome specific and separate comment on issues relating to particular groups of offenders; for example, young adults, women, disabled and offenders from ethnic minority groups.)

Chapter 5

Youth Justice: 16 and 17-Year Old Offenders

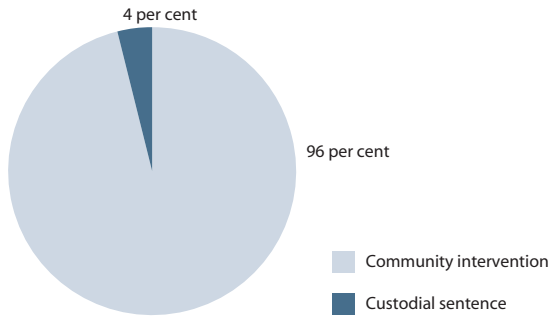
Key Points

- Youth Offending Teams (Yots) are playing a key part in 'Change for Children' reforms, by working effectively in partnership with other services, through Children's Trusts' arrangements to improve outcomes for children;
- Ensuring agencies work better together to find ways to draw young offenders back into training or work;
- A new curriculum, developed in line with 14-19 reforms, with a work focus designed to motivate disaffected young people;
- A review of the LSC funding system, to expand the range of opportunities on offer, particularly those delivered through the voluntary sector;
- More access to programmes that help ensure that offenders are ready to undertake a job on release, with a review of procedures for release on licence;
- Action to improve education for offenders below working age, with consultation on further proposals during 2006.

75. This section highlights issues that apply only to 16 and 17-year olds. However, it is essential that these are considered as part of the document as a whole, as the wider issues raised elsewhere apply to all offenders.
76. The youth justice system is overseen by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), which has a statutory aim to prevent children and young people offending. The structure is closely aligned to statutory children's services, in particular education, through the multi-agency structure of Yots, and covers young offenders between ten and 17-years old.
77. The vast majority of young offenders are dealt with using community interventions, as illustrated in Figure 6.

Young offender characteristics and educational attainment

Figure 6 Young Offender Sentences ⁵⁴



Average length of stay in custody is four months

Figure 7: Young offender characteristics and education attainment ⁵⁵

78. Figure 7 illustrates that, even at this young age, the cohort in the youth justice system faces multiple barriers to participating in a life free of crime.

79. Despite these barriers, there is good evidence that the majority of young offenders recognise that qualifications and skills are key to their leading useful and crime-free lives, and that a job will help them to break the cycle. ⁵⁶

80. Education and training are actively promoted, with an employment goal in mind. But for the majority of young offenders there is a significant distance to travel towards employability, owing to a range of factors including levels of maturity, behavioural issues and education and qualification deficits.

Education in custody

81. The YJB has been able to raise the quality and quantity of learning and skills for young people. Since 2002, the annual spend on education in juvenile YOIs has quadrupled. ⁵⁷

82. The implementation, in 2002, of the YJB's National Specification for Learning and Skills placed new requirements on the Prison Service to deliver a more individual, full-time offer. These reforms have been consolidated into the new Juvenile Offender's Learning Journey. Elements exclusive to young offenders include:

- A more individualised offer, supported by special needs and literacy and numeracy co-ordinators where appropriate; and
- Post-release support provided by YOT supervising officers and Connexions personal advisers.

Figure 7a Young offender characteristics ⁵⁵

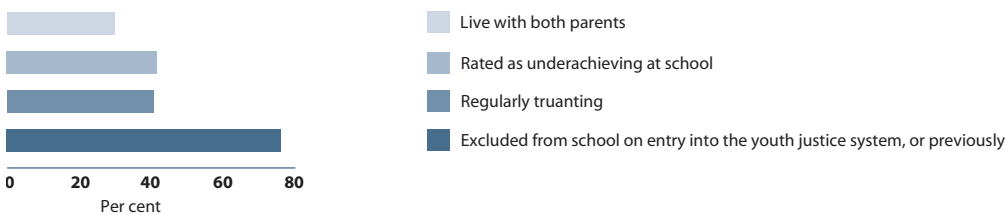
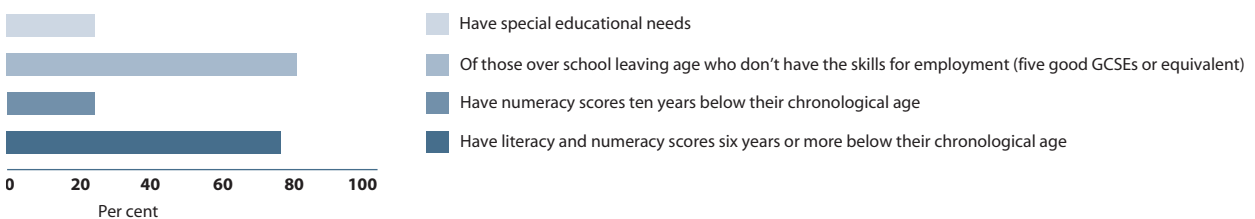


Figure 7b Educational factors



Education in the community

83. A significant challenge remains to re-engage increasing numbers of young offenders in the community. Currently 75 per cent of young offenders are in full-time education, training or employment by the end of their sentences, up from 64 per cent in 2002 and against a YOT target of 90 per cent. However, this drops below 57 per cent for those leaving custody. Ways to increase the engagement of reluctant offender learners are, therefore, particularly important.⁵⁸

Looking forward

84. There are a number of challenges in delivering learning and skills to offenders. For example, competing regime demands in custody, inflexible start dates that may not coincide with a learner's readiness to enrol on courses in the community, and high staff turnover and the inability to attract and retain good teachers generally. But there are important developments from which they can benefit:

- **14-19 curriculum reforms:** Work is underway to develop a new curriculum with a choice of learning routes. These will have a greater vocational emphasis to increase the engagement of the least academically inclined and prepare them better for employment. The new specialised Diplomas will be at the heart of this. Employers will lead in designing the Diplomas, which will offer different ways of learning and allow young people to progress on to higher education and employment. The first five Diplomas will be available from September 2008. Another key priority is that education should put a greater focus on the basics needed for life and work. Through the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), we are developing a framework of personal, employability, thinking and learning skills, which can be embedded in the curriculum.

- **Contribution of the voluntary and community sector (VCS):** The campus model, described earlier, and the LSC Agenda for Change proposals, which will overhaul the funding system, should provide greater opportunities for the VCS to compete for and sustain delivery of services for young offenders.

- **The changing landscape of children's services:** The Change for Children reforms will introduce major changes to the structure of children's services. The proposed development of a new youth support service will bring together relevant agencies dealing with troubled young people with complex needs. Yots will play a key part in these reforms. Other relevant proposals set out in the **Youth Matters** consultation document include effective information, advice and guidance, and the use of Opportunity Cards to encourage participation in satisfying and rewarding activities. In the 2005 Budget, the Chancellor announced resources to fund personally negotiated agreements for 16 and 17-year olds not in employment, education or training. Peer Mentoring can be a particularly powerful tool in motivating young people, and the case study sets out an example of a successful approach.

85. Other initiatives that might have a positive impact on the behaviours and outcomes for younger offenders include:

- Reviewing the Juvenile Offender's Learning Journey in line with the 14-19 curriculum developments, to improve work readiness. This should take more account of what can be delivered within custody, with appropriate focus on progression;
- Action to ensure that, under the new delivery arrangements for the Connexions Service, the particular needs of this socially excluded group of learners are adequately recognised by treating them as a priority group whether in a custodial or community setting;

- Development of the PLUS strategy to provide an emphasis on embedding literacy and numeracy skills into vocational programmes;
- Wider use of community-supervision programmes such as the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme, where evaluation proves that higher levels of engagement in education, training and employment are achieved during a six-month intervention;
- A new targets regime for the 14-19 year old offenders in custody and the community, with performance indicators to support an approach based on progression and 'distance travelled';
- Reviewing YOI procedures for release on licence, with a view to maximising work and training placements for young people in custody;
- Greater access to Entry to Employment programmes and apprenticeships.

86. In the context of the proposals in this paper, the Government seeks views on the best way of improving engagement of younger offenders, and supporting a step change in learning and skills, and job outcomes for them.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS:

- How can we best ensure that any new learning offer, developed in line with 14-19 reforms, increases motivation and engagement?
- What more needs to be done for young adults to prevent loss of momentum when they move to adult prisons?
- What changes to the sentencing structure and supervision arrangements for juvenile offenders might improve their chances of achieving the skills and aptitudes for employment?

The Welsh Assembly Government

87. The Welsh Assembly Government acknowledges that reducing re-offending through skills and employment is one of the most effective means of combating crime. It also has a significant contribution to make to the learning and employment agenda in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government is working in partnership with the National Offender Management Service in Wales and other key partners to integrate learning and skills across policies and programmes, to support offenders in achieving sustainable employment prospects.

88. The Assembly Government's Basic Skills Strategy – Words Talk, Numbers Count – identifies offenders and ex-offenders as a priority group and sets out an approach based on co-ordinated multi-agency working.

The Basic Skills Agency, as the key partner in delivering the Strategy, is establishing a National Support Project to provide additional support. The Welsh Assembly Government will continue to work with UK government departments, especially the Department for Work and Pensions, and Jobcentre Plus Wales, to support the range of initiatives to raise levels of employment and economic activity amongst offenders. Jobcentre Plus Wales is already involved with the Basic Skills Agency working toward this end.

89. The Welsh Assembly Government will liaise with the Department for Education and Skills on the offender learning consultation, and will review how these findings may feed into the Assembly's own strategies for learning, skills and employment in Wales.

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