

**DISTILLATION OF CALL FOR  
EVIDENCE RESPONSES**

Review of Offender Learning

MARCH 2011



Ministry of  
**JUSTICE**

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# Introduction

On 20<sup>th</sup> August 2010, the Government published its *Call for Evidence*, seeking evidence on offender learning and skills.

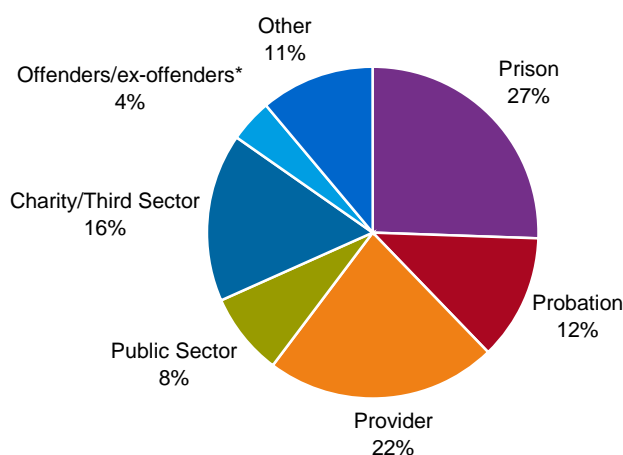
The *Call for Evidence* asked a number of questions that covered both strategic and operational aspects. Because of this, and together with a word limit imposed on responses, respondents were advised not to answer every single question but instead concentrate on those where they could add most value.

The *Call for Evidence* was made known to a range of groups including: prisons; probation areas; education providers; voluntary and charitable organisations and business and employer representative bodies. The *Call for Evidence* was published on the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills website on its consultations page.

To supplement the *Call for Evidence* from the learner's perspective, a number of facilitated focus groups were held with prisoners to collect their views.

## Call for evidence responses

The *Call for Evidence* closed on 24th September 2010. 98 responses were received. Of those, 76 respondents answered questions directly. The total number of responses recorded below against each question is the number of respondents who directly answered that particular question.



**Figure 1: Response by type**

\* Two responses in the 'Offenders/ex-offender' category were a collation of views captured by focus groups held with offenders.

This document represents a summary of the responses received. It should NOT be taken as a representation of HM Government's position.

The Government is grateful to everyone who responded to the *Call for Evidence*. The views expressed have helped inform the themes covered in the Government's Offender Learning Review published alongside this document.

## Summary of responses to the call for evidence questions

### 1. How well do offender learners achieve and enjoy their learning?

A total of 55 respondents answered this question directly.

Most respondents indicated that offender learners enjoyed their learning and achieved well. Respondents evidenced this with references to learner satisfaction surveys and improved achievement rates and inspection findings over time.

The collective responses suggested a particular path. Respondents commented that offenders have often had a poor educational history, which in itself may be because of having a learning difficulty or learning disability.

Many responses indicated that in order to overcome a poor, prior experience of learning – where because of this offenders would opt for other prison activities to avoid education and training altogether – offenders needed to be motivated and encouraged to learn. A significant number of responses felt that peer support or mentoring was fundamental in achieving this.

Responses highlighted the tangential benefits of learning that offenders experience - developing a passion for learning, increasing their self-esteem and confidence and having the opportunity to think about and work toward their future.

Some respondents suggested that achievement improves when provision is delivered in bite-sized chunks, where the learner can see results quickly and that they enjoy their learning, particularly where activities are practically based and relevant to their needs.

For offenders in the community, offenders achieve well if provision is available locally to them, or is delivered on probation premises, with start dates throughout the year. The need to provide support to the offender during their learning was also raised.

### 2. How well do offender learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?

A total of 52 respondents answered this question directly.

Most responses, evidenced in some cases, recorded that offender learners improve their economic and social well-being, with more respondents commenting that offenders improved their social well-being than their economic well-being.

On social well-being, most respondents commented that participation in learning raised self-esteem, confidence and the sense of worth in individuals. Several respondents noted that the acquisition of 'soft skills', things like communication, teamwork, time management and a positive work ethic, while of economic interest were equally, if not more, beneficial in terms of social well-being.

Several responses commented on the positive role learning has in maintaining relationships, particularly between parents and their children.

On economic well-being, respondents generally indicated that learning and development improved the prospects of those participating in learning and skills. However, a number of respondents noted that other, external factors acted as barriers.

Responses highlighted the need to manage expectations and offer provision that most realistically results in positive employment outcomes. Several respondents pointed toward provision that did not reflect the opportunities available in areas to which offenders were to be released.

Some respondents commented on the difficulties offenders had prior to release in securing employment. Lack of job searching facilities, inability to make links with employers and too few opportunities to undertake work experience were issues raised.

<b>3.</b>	<b>Should the delivery of offender learning focus more on outcomes than targets? How would success be measured?</b>
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A total of 62 respondents answered this question directly.

The majority of responses were in favour of an outcome-based focus on delivery. The tone of responses is perhaps best epitomised by an offender who said that *"Targets may appease those at management and political levels, but it is the outcomes, the effectiveness and usefulness, of what is being taught that matters most to those who desperately want to learn ..."*.

Many respondents, however, cautioned about the practicalities of implementing an outcome-based model, recognising that this is a new and radically different approach that does not currently exist in the wider further education sector. In this instance, most respondents advocated an approach to delivery that incorporated both targets and outcomes. Some respondents indicated that outcomes should recognise and link with other reducing re-offending pathways. Others indicated that targets drive quantity and not quality.

Of respondents who commented on how success should be measured, most said that this should be based on distance-travelled toward employment or the reduction of re-offending (and not just on the qualification achieved), though other respondents commented that success can only be measured if the required outcome is known.

Some respondents commented negatively on the effectiveness that the acquisition of qualifications was as a target and advocated a move toward recognising softer skills, such as social development or teamwork.

Some respondents commented that the context of where an offender is serving their sentence should be considered when determining the appropriate success measures.

Respondents noted that, in the community, the tracking of outcomes or progress was difficult.

<b>4.</b>	<b>What is the role of the careers information and advice service in respect of offenders and how effective is it?</b>
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A total of 55 respondents answered this question directly.

Most respondents recognised the value of having a careers information and advice service, though there was a clear difference of opinion as to how effective this service was at present.

Respondents broadly understood the role of the careers information and advice service to be one which works with an offender, by providing information and guidance on learning and skills opportunities that are available in prison, to ascertain what they want and need in respect of their learning and employment outcomes on release and to refer them to appropriate provision to meet those needs.

Some respondents commented that the careers information and advice service should inform provision and not the other way around. In this regard, respondents noted that the service was being used by providers to back-fill places rather than meet the needs of individuals.

A few respondents commented on the separation of this service from the education provider and that the split has “*disrupted a prior system that was working effectively before*”. Additionally, as learning providers deliver these functions they lack strong links to employers.

Some comments were also made about ensuring that an offender’s expectations were managed in terms of their career aspirations, as some avenues may no longer be available to them due to their offending behaviour.

Information exchange was recognised as key by some respondents in regards to the quality of the careers information and advice service and its effectiveness in terms of achieving outcomes for offenders. Links with Jobcentre Plus and access to labour market data were considered significant in the service being able to support better targeting of resources for offenders.

An effective careers information and advice service was recognised by some as being vital in the context of the wider prison regime, in that it helped to underpin many aspects of the prison regime practicalities, such as allocating offenders to the range of available



interventions, supporting them with external college/training applications and being of value to offenders themselves.

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| <b>5.</b> | <b>To what extent has the introduction of the Learner Plan system (for transferring learning data as an offender moves into, through and out of custody) reduced the incidence of repeat assessment and the learner demotivation to which that leads?</b> |
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A total of 54 respondents answered this question directly.

Respondents displayed a varying degree of understanding of what the Learner Plan system is.

Discounting the responses of those who had other systems in mind, most remaining respondents agreed that the Learner Plan system's introduction had notably reduced the incidence of repeat assessment.

Several respondents offered the view that while the Learner Plan supported learning and skills activity that was delivered by OLASS providers effectively, its overall effectiveness was compromised by not including other learning and skills provision taking place in prisons and activity taking place in contracted-out prisons. For those returning to the community, the Learner Plan was criticised as individuals or probation staff were unable to access information. The Learner Plan, therefore, has had very little impact on improving the flow of information from custody to the community.

Some respondents countered that repeat assessments were still taking place, but that this was more to do with providers not trusting the assessments undertaken by others.

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| <b>6.</b> | <b>How effectively does the provision in both custody and the community meet the needs and interests of users?</b> |
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A total of 53 respondents answered this question directly.

While some respondents cited learner satisfaction surveys and Ofsted findings as a measure that provision in prison and the community met the needs and interests of offenders, the majority of respondents commented more negatively saying that it did not.

In general, respondents commented that when sustainable employment is secured for offenders then their needs have been met. In terms of interest, respondents noted that offenders in the main do not choose to undertake basic skills or lower level qualifications unless what they are achieving is immediately marketable. It is often more practical courses, such as construction, which are more popular with offenders.

Specifically on custodial provision, respondents commented that provision primarily met the needs of agencies rather than individuals. Examples of this included the NOMS' drive to engage offenders in purposeful activity and providers' pursuit of targets to meet contractual requirements. This, respondents commented, did not reflect the particular

learning needs of individuals and can result in offenders following inappropriate programmes simply to meet targets.

A number of respondents commented that the effectiveness of custodial provision would be greatly improved if the curriculum offer were determined at prison level, which set out to meet the specific needs of that prison's population.

On provision in the community, most respondents said that it did not meet the needs and interests of offenders. While some respondents recognised that there was an expectation that offenders in the community could access mainstream provision already available many believed this was unrealistic while current barriers existed. Respondents pointed to a lack of motivation, the need for large class sizes, the reluctance of learning providers to engage with this cohort, enrolments and course start dates as particular barriers. Some respondents expressed the hope that the Department for Work and Pensions' Work Programme would resolve some of those barriers.

The lack of any 'bridging provision' to help support offenders back into mainstream provision was also considered a barrier.

Some respondents thought that more could be done to motivate offenders to take up a learning offer and ensure that offenders attend provision.

<b>7.</b>	<b>How can we improve progression in the continuation of learning or in to employment post release?</b>
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A total of 58 respondents answered this question directly.

Respondents provided comments that could be grouped into three categories: what could be done pre-release, what should be done 'through the gate' and what could be done when offenders returned to the community. Several respondents observed that prisons in particular lacked systems to track resettlement outcomes and therefore a substantial evidence base of what works in terms of reducing re-offending was missing.

On pre-release, respondents commented on the need to put in place and improve existing in-reach and employer-engagement activities that would bring in, and open up a dialogue with, agencies and employers that are able to give offenders jobs or work placement opportunities.

Respondents noted that learning in custody must mirror, wherever possible, the skills system in the wider community. In doing this, offender learners would be more able to continue with their learning on release, as the same courses would be available there. Some respondents commented that provision should be drawn from the Qualifications and Curriculum Framework because bite-sized units of learning suited learning and skills activity in custody.

On 'through the gate' transition, some respondents commented that there was a role for individuals in supporting the transition from custody back in to the community. Of those respondents that commented on this point, most thought that offenders/ex-offenders themselves, acting as peer mentors, had a part to play. Respondents considered that this

should be a role for dedicated, employed personnel within the criminal justice system or that parts of the third sector could deliver this.

A number of respondents commented that in order to be effective in improving the continuation of learning from custody to the community, systems to facilitate the sharing of information across agencies were vital. It was felt that while data sharing between providers had improved significantly in custody, the same could not be said when those in custody returned to the community.

Once back in the community, respondents commented that there were a number of barriers in place that prevented the continuation of learning. Some of these barriers included inflexible start dates for courses, reluctance of providers to engage with offenders in the community – and conversely reluctance of offenders to engage with providers – as well as the existence of other criminogenic needs offenders may have.

Greater engagement with Jobcentre Plus was also raised in terms of employment opportunities and understanding the current conflict around benefits and learning (in that if offenders undertake some learning then they are not seen to be available for work and so could lose benefits).

A number of respondents talked about the lack of incentives or need to put in place incentives for providers and employers that would encourage them to include offenders in their provision or business.

<b>8.</b>	<b>How effectively does the provider use partnerships to develop its provision to meet learners' needs?</b>
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A total of 53 respondents answered this question directly.

Many respondents recognised that partnerships were key to successful, effective provision. However, while a number of respondents stated that providers were effective at using partnerships, an equal number said they were ineffective.

Where respondents commented that providers were effective, most put this down to the efforts of individuals driving this through and a culture within an establishment that promoted this type of working rather than a requirement or a framework that enabled effective partnership to happen.

Effective partnerships, particularly at a local level, were ones that were defined by partners understanding the roles and responsibilities of each other (including those of other departments in a prison), working toward a common outcome and working strategically together to seek continuous improvement.

Where respondents commented that providers were ineffective at using partnerships, and in addition to the opposites of factors mentioned above, this was characterised by confusion amongst partners about what the role of a prison was, working in silos, and the lack of skills amongst partners to pursue genuine partnership working to its fullest effect.

A few respondents commented that there is no incentive to work in partnership and some respondents considered partnerships with Third Sector agencies to be particularly under threat.

<b>9.</b>	<b>What further actions should be taken to target resources in order to have the greatest impact on reducing re-offending by equipping offenders with the skills and qualifications they need to secure and sustain employment?</b>
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A total of 58 respondents answered this question directly.

Respondents commented that labour market information in the areas to which offenders would be released and for those serving their sentences in the community should be used much more effectively to determine what provision is available. Respondents felt that, rather than offering a core curriculum, each prison should be free to decide what provision suited its population. Respondents further noted that a redistribution of resources should take account of the type of institution and the purpose of education and training that takes place there.

A number of respondents commented on the need for a more targeted approach to working with those offenders who are committed to employment and are willing to engage in provision that has the potential to get them in to jobs on release. However, some respondents urged caution: we must ensure such targeting does not skew services toward offenders at lower risk of re-offending at the expense of more prolific offenders.

Some respondents commented that there are too many organisations delivering education and skills in prisons (from the public, private and third sector). Those respondents felt this led to organisations that should be working collaboratively toward the same outcome being in competition with one another to ensure that offenders enrol on to their provision.

There were differences of opinion expressed by respondents on how best to overcome this particular issue. Comments of respondents reflected elsewhere in this document, however, suggest that provision should be determined at a local level within a wider strategic partnership, and involving providers from all sectors, to achieve a collective, shared outcome.

<b>10.</b>	<b>What factors do we need to take into account in redistributing resources so that the right provision reaches the most appropriate groups of learners in custodial or community settings?</b>
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A total of 47 respondents answered this question directly.

Several respondents noted that the current funding distribution for OLASS is one that was inherited from the Prison Service, and that it did not properly reflect the number of learners, profile of the prison population or the type of prison where provision is offered. Respondents thought that all of these factors should be taken in to consideration should a redistribution of funds exercise be carried out.

A number of respondents commented on the amount of education that was available to those who will remain fundamentally unemployable in the UK either because they were serving life sentences, or sentences that would not see them return to the community aged younger than retirement age, or those who would be deported once their sentence was served. Respondents also questioned whether resources should focus entirely on sentenced offenders and not those on remand or who are unsentenced as these individuals are likely to be moved. A few respondents commented on whether provision should be available to those already above a certain attainment level.

Some respondents commented that specific spending on offender learning in the community was sparse, untargeted, and that funds should be available for the probation service to administer and manage. It is assumed that those in the community will access what is available in the mainstream with no additional support. However, others commented that offenders in the community could access existing programmes for the unemployed without specific, ring-fenced funding needing to be in place.

A number of respondents suggested that prisoners used in peer learning and support programmes should be fully supervised, supported and given the opportunity to complete relevant qualifications.

<b>11.</b>	<b>Are there aspects of learning for which the current arrangements over provide – or aspects where a different mix of provision is needed?</b>
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A total of 45 respondents answered this question directly.

The majority of respondents commented that there was an over-emphasis on basic skills provision, with some commenting further that there is a sizeable demand and need for higher-level provision amongst offenders.

While commenting on a perceived over-emphasis on lower level basic skills, respondents recognised that there is also a high incidence of people with learning difficulties and disabilities in the criminal justice system that shouldn't be forgotten.

On vocational skills, some respondents commented on the need for higher level vocational training as this would help to offset the criminal history of an individual to a prospective employer recruiting in a competitive labour market.

A number of respondents suggested that vocational training should only be resourced when there is clear evidence that an outcome would be achieved, in terms of either employment or further training on release.

<b>12.</b>	<b>How might we achieve better value for money through redistribution of resources? How can we best allocate resources to meet the needs of offenders seeking higher education and distance learning options?</b>
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A total of 58 respondents answered this question directly.

Many respondents pointed to distance learning and e-learning (particularly through the virtual campus) as factors that could offer efficiency savings to both prisons and providers. Some respondents called for the virtual campus to be extended in to the community so that offenders could continue learning they may have started while in custody or new learners could engage in learning in approved premises.

A few respondents commented that the recent Prison Service Instruction on Open University and distance learning has complicated a previously workable procedure and because of that Open University and distance learning access by offenders was at risk.

A number of respondents commented that additional resources were not required for higher education or distance learning, saying too that the aspiration of the majority of offenders is probably not to undertake such provision. Respondents felt that funding for higher education and distance learning should be linked solely to employability and not necessarily for personal development.

On redistribution of resources more generally, respondents felt that a proper needs analysis for each establishment should take place to determine the scale of need. Some respondents commented that resources needed to be distributed so they mostly sit with Category B and C prisons with funds to support 'through the gate' provision. Additionally, respondents noted that suitably qualified volunteer learning mentors could provide good value for money both in terms of supporting learning in classes and improving retention rates.

13.	<b>How should we go about ensuring localism and the Big Society agenda is taken in to account in the arrangements for determining the offender learning offer, especially for offenders in the community who will largely access mainstream learning services?</b>
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A total of 42 respondents answered this question directly.

A few respondents commented that localism in respect of the custodial estate was a misnomer, as offenders are not released to the local area but instead are released to areas some distance away. A number of respondents felt that there was a need to raise the awareness and public perception of offender learning needs within those communities to which offenders return on release or within which they are serving their sentence, influencing local education providers there to integrate offenders into mainstream provision.

A number of respondents commented that the learning offer to offenders in the community should be tied to the required criminal justice outcomes demanded locally.

Several respondents felt that volunteering could be encouraged amongst offenders in the community and that volunteering activities in themselves provided something back to society and had a positive, social impact on individuals that resonated with the Big Society agenda. Some respondents felt that creating and supporting a local volunteer, mentor, employer and community network to better integrate offenders was worthwhile.



Several respondents commented that probation should have some influence in determining the local education provision demanded by a community. However, respondents recognised that challenges existed in trying to achieve this.

<b>14.</b>	<b>How well do offender learners make a positive contribution to the community?</b>
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A total of 41 respondents answered this question directly.

Many respondents noted that offenders can, and already do, make a positive contribution to the community.

Several respondents commented that offenders in custody make a valid contribution to the prison community, particularly in peer mentoring and tutoring roles. Respondents commented too that these roles improved behaviour and understanding of actions, as well as developing skills in offenders that carried out these roles that had a value on release in the wider community.

A number of respondents commented that offenders can make a positive contribution to the community particularly in terms of volunteering and support for local charities. Some respondents commented that, given the right support (including learning and skills provision and peer support), a large proportion of offenders and ex-offenders develop an eagerness to make positive contributions voluntarily in addition to those made through compulsory schemes that are part of their sentence.

It was recognised by some that engagement in voluntary activity in the community helped offenders to acquire skills and move in to paid employment, where their contribution to the community was even more positive.

<b>15.</b>	<b>How well have partnerships between learning providers, prison staff and other agencies evolved to the benefit of offender learners? Where partnerships are proven to be ineffective, how can that be addressed?</b>
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A total of 54 respondents answered this question directly.

The consensus amongst respondents is that partnerships have evolved but there is an inconsistency across the estate about how effective these partnerships are.

Some respondents commented that there are different agendas amongst those in a partnership and this acted as a barrier to effective working. When partnerships worked toward a common outcome, they were at their most effective.

Several respondents commented that it is the culture of an establishment that has the most bearing on whether partnerships are effective. If the culture of a prison values education and training then agencies work together more to provide a more integrated service.

The introduction of OLASS was seen as having had an extremely positive impact on the development of more consistent approaches to offender learning. However, the way in which the partnerships between OLASS-funded providers and the prison worked was considered inconsistent across the estate. Where it was ineffective, respondents largely put this down to providers seeing themselves as being more accountable to the Skills Funding Agency than the prison and disregarding what the prison felt should be delivered to its population.

Several respondents commented particularly on prison staff. While it was recognised that prison staff have a lot to offer – with some third sector respondents commenting about how supportive prison staff can be in respect of their work – it was felt that some prison staff are not fully aware or supportive of education and training and the importance it has within the remit of reducing re-offending.

In the community, respondents noted that offender learners benefited most when education providers liaised with offender managers.

Some respondents commented that partnerships are less effective in some prisons as the OLASS provider is remote from the service delivery. The quality of OLASS provision is not easily managed due to their size and continuity of learning from prison in to the community has not been as effective as it should be.

<b>16.</b>	<b>Do these factors bear more significantly on the public sector, or are private sector or third sector organisations most affected?</b>
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A total of 27 respondents answered this question directly.

A number of respondents commented that it is often the public sector that is most affected because they are usually the main provider, however many respondents recognised that there was a symbiotic relationship between the public, private and third sectors.

Some respondents commented that the public sector should be obliged or incentivised to work in partnership, or to sub-contract more, with the private and third sectors as in doing so it can add significant value to offender learning provision.

Private sector partnerships were considered to be the least developed and yet most likely to result in positive outcomes.

Respondents commented that opportunities should be identified across all three sectors in order to give offenders the most appropriate provision to meet their needs.

<b>17.</b>	<b>Have you examples of similar collaborative working, perhaps involving local strategic direction-setting, which have worked well or been ineffective? What were the key factors in determining success or failure?</b>
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A total of 34 respondents answered this question directly.



Respondents were considerably more willing to provide positive examples of collaborative, partnership working than negative ones. Positive examples include the CAMPUS Model in the North East, which significantly improved partnership working at a local level, the multi-skill workshop at HMP Wandsworth, a partnership between the prison, the education provider and private sector employer who recruit ex-offenders on release and the integration of Jobcentre Plus provision at HMP Bullingdon and HMP Elmley which has helped to deliver interventions as part of the exit strategy.

Where examples were considered successful, respondents mostly attributed this to agencies working to achieve the same, shared outcome, having an open partnership that drew on the strengths of each partner and clear direction of what was expected as a partnership.

Only a few respondents suggested what the key factors of failure to working in a collaborative way might be. Respondents pointed toward a conflicting understanding of what the partnership was intending to do, unwillingness within the partnership to share information with one another, partners pursuing different targets that, in some cases, contradicted targets pursued by others and lack of engagement of one, or sometimes more, key partners.

<b>18.</b>	<b>How might prison learning providers, and those who provide careers information and advice to prisoners, support prison colleagues in developing prison regimes progressively so that they become more realistic workplaces with training to support employment on release?</b>
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A total of 44 respondents answered this question directly.

A number of respondents commented that the scope for realistic workplaces within prisons was limited by the prison regime and, accordingly, was outside the control of learning and careers information and advice providers. Respondents felt, however, that when providers were involved in supporting prisoners for prison work they were effective in doing so.

Respondents felt that the core day in prison should mirror more closely that which exists in industry. A number of respondents pointed to long sessions often interrupted by appointments and attendance at other activities and a long lunch break in between sessions as being particularly contrary to a real work experience.

Some respondents felt that many people working in prison held wide-ranging views on what the role of prison was, that the pursuit of targets by different providers in a prison was of more interest or benefit to the providers than offenders and that a better understanding and appreciation of what was being delivered in a prison was called for in order to make best use of resources to maximise positive outcomes for offenders.

<b>19.</b>	<b>What, if any, are the key issues that frustrate this ambition at present?</b>
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A total of 34 respondents answered this question directly.

A number of respondents commented on the need for prison and provider staff to have a greater appreciation of each other's work. It was felt by some respondents that there was a perceived lack of understanding by prison staff of the importance and benefits of learning and skills, particularly its contribution to a reduction in re-offending, and that learning and skills was not fully supported or appreciated by prison management. Respondents commented that this created issues that included insufficient work or staffing issues in prisons to keep workshops open, poor allocation systems, little or no consideration of offenders' learning and skills commitments when transferring offenders to other prisons and offenders being kept on wings.

A number of respondents commented that the variety of existing performance management arrangements applying to providers operating in a prison was a particular frustration. Respondents pointed toward an unhealthy competition for prisoners amongst providers in order to meet their own targets. This was seen to be detrimental to the offenders themselves.

It was also felt by some respondents that there was an insufficiently objective view of what was being delivered by several providers from the public, private and third sector, at a local level, resulting in duplication. Such duplication was seen as a waste of time, money and resources.

<b>20.</b>	<b>What other avenues ought we to pursue in order to engage employers in the delivery of learning and skills training that will prepare offenders for employment on release?</b>
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A total of 40 respondents answered this question directly.

Respondents felt that there were too many different agencies and individuals approaching, in some case the same, employers to secure job outcomes for offenders. Several respondents recognised that this was a waste of employers' time and likely to turn them off the idea of recruiting offenders.

A number of respondents commented that there was a need for dedicated staff to carry out employer engagement work, both at a local level with small and medium enterprises and at a national level with large, nationwide employers.

Several respondents thought that incentivising employers was perhaps necessary to engage them. Respondents offered a number of examples of what these incentives might look like including funding training that was specific to the employer, paying employer costs associated with an apprenticeship and providing a bursary to an employer for employing an ex-offender for a given period. Respondents additionally noted, however, that incentives were possibly open to abuse and perhaps unworkable because of that.

A number of respondents commented on bringing employers in to prisons. Respondents were wide-ranging in describing how this might take place. Some respondents felt that open days helped to raise the awareness amongst employers about the level of vocational training that takes place in prison and enabled employers to see that, with the benefit of such training, offenders had the potential to be a valuable and already skilled addition to their workforce. Other respondents felt that employers could play more of a role in

workshops, either by sponsoring them, turning them in to satellite sites for the production and processing of commercial services or ensuring that they mirrored more closely workshops that existed in the community.

A few respondents commented that any arrangement with an employer should not wholly be of benefit to the employer, in terms of cheap labour and reduced overheads, but instead benefit the employer, the offender and society with outcomes clearly defined and understood.

<b>21.</b>	<b>To what extent is the delivery of apprenticeships in prisons possible? What barriers need to be considered and how can the support of employers be secured?</b>
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A total of 31 respondents answered this question directly.

The majority of respondents commented that the delivery of apprenticeships in prisons was not possible. Several respondents specifically made the point that offenders cannot be officially employed while serving their sentence in custody, considered an essential requirement in becoming an apprentice.

While the employment status of an offender was considered to be ultimately limiting, respondents also noted that employers who are willing to sponsor an offender through an apprenticeship programme effectively while in custody and then employ them on release would be few and far between.

A number of respondents commented that the level at which offenders worked in prisons (in areas such as catering, laundry and prison industries) was akin to that of apprenticeships, and that delivering components similar, if not the same in some cases, to those in an apprenticeship framework was entirely achievable.

Respondents maintained their keenness to explore apprenticeship opportunities in the future. Several respondents considered that skills developed through work undertaken in a prison match those that prospective employers would want people to have in the context of being an apprentice. Others considered the possibility of opportunities for those offenders released on temporary licence and working in the community.

Few respondents particularly commented on the barriers to be considered or necessary support for employers in respect of apprenticeships. Of those that did, the majority thought that the employment status of an offender and insufficient employer engagement strategies in place were the two biggest barriers. Without being specific, respondents noted that there was a long way to go before apprenticeships were possible, let alone commonplace, in the offender learning landscape.

<b>22.</b>	<b>How might we increase the use of technology in offender learning to make effective use of recent developments?</b>
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A total of 49 respondents answered this question directly.

Most respondents recognised and welcomed the recent implementation of the virtual campus and saw it as a cost-effective and powerful enabler of e-learning provision in prison. A number of respondents commented that the continuation of e-learning (specifically that which was undertaken on the virtual campus while in custody) would be greatly improved if the virtual campus model was extended to approved probation settings.

Respondents also noted that the virtual campus had a potential application to support other interventions particularly in terms of housing, substance misuse, other health issues and maintaining links with families. Respondents also noted that access to material via the virtual campus in custodial settings could potentially improve learning, provide greater peer mentoring opportunities, promote participation in education and training and improve access to learning while in cell, at weekends and evenings.

A number of respondents commented that access to ICT was particularly beneficial to foreign nationals with language needs and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities for whom learning was perceived to be more expensive than for other provision.

A number of respondents commented on the systems that underpinned education delivery. Respondents felt that technology could be used to improve data transfer, allow for a single, common learning plan (for all learning not just for OLASS) and provide real-time management information that would improve the quality of learning provision taking place.

Respondents also commented on the use of technology (including the provision of laptop computers) to support out-reach work, applicable both to offenders in custody and in the community.

<b>23.</b>	<b>Now that a second generation of offender learning provision is in place, with new careers information and advice providers in operation too, how should the role of heads of learning and skills evolve?</b>
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A total of 41 respondents answered this question directly.

Most respondents considered that the role of heads of learning and skills in prisons was a vital one and should continue. The majority of those that said the role should continue also commented that it should be re-affirmed as a specialist learning and skills post.

A number of respondents commented that heads of learning and skills should be entirely focussed on educational matters and not be diverted on to operational activities that were never part of their original remit. Several respondents said that heads of learning and skills should have more, if not overall, responsibility for resettlement.

It was felt by some respondents that heads of learning and skills should be more externally focussed, particularly in arranging, or facilitating the continuation of, learning programmes for offenders returning to the community. Respondents noted that, as strategic managers, heads of learning and skills had a pivotal role to play in developing, encouraging and maintaining partnerships across a range of providers and agencies.

A number of respondents commented that heads of learning and skills should regain a level of autonomy within their own prison by being free to determine the type of provision that existed there and which provider, or mix of providers, should deliver it.

Some respondents commented on the need for the role of heads of learning and skills to be consistent, with respondents pointing to significant differences in what heads of learning and skills were being asked to do from prison to prison. Respondents noted too that in some cases the learning and skills remit was being fulfilled by individuals with no background or experience in education delivery. Consequently, respondents noted that there were significant differences in quality of leadership and management.

A few respondents pointed toward a restructure of the head of learning and skills function, pointing to either having fewer heads of learning and skills each responsible for a number or cluster of prisons or creating another tier within the profession, perhaps at regional level.

<b>24.</b>	<b>In considering the evolution of the role, how should the aspirations of postholders for career progression, and for continuing professional development, best be met?</b>
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A total of 22 respondents answered this question directly.

Most respondents advocated a well-organised continuous professional development programme, in addition to a common job description for the role.

Many respondents also commented on the need for career progression to be introduced, either to prison governor status or within the head of learning and skills profession to a position at a regional level.

Peer mentoring, particularly in respect of ‘buddying up’ a newly appointed head of learning and skills with one with more experience during a period of induction was considered important. Sharing best practice across the prison estate was considered as being essential and necessary.

<b>25.</b>	<b>How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition in the workforce?</b>
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A total of 18 respondents answered this question directly.

The majority of respondents commented that leaders and managers were effective at raising the expectations and ambition of the workforce. Some respondents noted that inspection evidence illustrated this.

A number of respondents commented that leaders and managers were responsible for instilling a culture of continuous improvement and working to achieve the same outcomes across an establishment. Where this happened, the workforce, and those they were delivering provision to, was more positive.

Respondents commented that great strides had been made since the introduction of OLASS in terms of establishing career progression opportunities and setting out standard terms and conditions for staff. Respondents now saw offender learning as a career.

<b>26.</b>	<b>How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?</b>
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A total of 23 respondents answered this question directly.

Most respondents identified the learner voice as being vital in influencing and developing the learning and skills programmes available to offenders but acknowledged that in too many instances the prison, probation trust or provider wasn't capturing this.

Respondents felt that where the offender learner voice was being heard, it wasn't being acted upon. Particularly, learner voice data was not being used to improve the learning and skills provision.

<b>27.</b>	<b>How well do leaders and managers secure value for money and in the current economic climate what is their capacity to do more for less?</b>
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A total of 30 respondents answered this question directly.

While respondents were clear elsewhere that a move toward a more flexible, locally-determined learning and skills offer was desirable, they recognised here that in terms of value for money, the buying power of a national organisation, such as the Skills Funding Agency, or under the banner of a national service, such as the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service, was much more potent than what could be achieved by individual establishments.

A number of respondents commented that peer learning and support programmes offered exceptional value for money, were often an underutilised resource and should be supported more. Furthermore, where the possibility of using prisoners to help educate other prisoners existed, as classroom assistants for instance, these should be pursued (with appropriate supervision).

Some respondents commented that in trying to secure value for money, there were implications for the quality of provision.

A few respondents commented that employers or other providers could, perhaps, be incentivised to provide learning and skills opportunities in prisons through reduced overheads, as employers and other providers would not need to pay for accommodation and other associated fixed cost resources. Respondents were keen to emphasise that any such arrangement with employers in particular should be mutually beneficial and lead to positive outcomes for offenders, rather than serving as workshops that gave the sole benefit to the employer. Respondents considered the third sector to be more responsive and willing to utilise vacant classrooms to deliver their provision, but this would need to be supported by the prison.



<b>28.</b>	<b>Has the perceived gap of professionalism between the teaching workforce in offender learning compared with those in other settings narrowed, and to what extent might this be further improved?</b>
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A total of 35 respondents answered this question directly.

A number of respondents commented that teaching in offender learning was more challenging than in other settings and required an additional subset of skills from teaching alone to engage and motivate offenders in the first place.

While the majority of respondents felt that the gap between teaching workforces of different settings had narrowed, and attributed this to a concerted effort to ensure teaching staff had appropriate teacher training qualifications, they acknowledged that there were still too many without qualifications and that this exacerbated existing inconsistencies in terms of the quality of teaching staff in prisons.

A number of respondents commented that while the pay gap had also narrowed it was still lower than in other settings and was considered a major issue. Respondents commented that the lower pay acted as a disincentive toward attracting higher quality staff in to working in places that were more remote with poorer surroundings, and which didn't reflect the additional skills respondents said were needed to teach offenders.

In order to improve things further, respondents felt that more could be done to align the professional developmental opportunities of the offender learning workforce with those in other settings. A number of respondents felt that, comparatively speaking, less funding and time was accessible to the offender learning workforce to support progression and access external courses that improved staff development opportunities.

<b>29.</b>	<b>How has the alignment of offender learning within similar learning in mainstream colleges benefited learners?</b>
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A total of 32 respondents answered this question directly.

Most respondents said that learning provision in prison still wasn't mainstreamed and that significant gaps remained between the two types of provision. According to respondents, such gaps included the quality of learning resources and equipment, specialist staff expertise and inferior ICT resources, particularly the lack of internet access.

Respondents noted that mainstream colleges were more likely to benefit from additional funding, for instance, to support learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Some respondents commented that an alignment of offender learning within similar learning in mainstream colleges had benefited learners. Respondents noted that a much greater proportion of provision delivered in prisons was on the Qualifications and Credit Framework and that this offered particular continuity of learning when offenders engaged with mainstream provision on release. Respondents also noted that the provision

offenders in custody experienced was much more like that which was available in mainstream colleges, and that this too supported continuity of learning.

In the community, it was noted that many offenders were reluctant to attend mainstream providers or engage with mainstream delivery. Some respondents highlighted the need for delivery off site (away from the college) or on probation premises in order to engage offenders in learning.

<b>30.</b>	<b>How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?</b>
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A total of 27 respondents answered this question directly.

The majority of respondents commented that teaching, training and assessment was very effective at supporting learning and development, pointing to inspection results as evidence of that.

Some respondents noted that observations of teaching and learning in custodial settings were much more commonplace and more effective working between providers and prisons contributed greatly to efficiency as far as assessments were concerned. Both of which played a part in improving the quality of teaching, training and assessment.

A few respondents commented that where teaching, training and assessment were less effective at supporting learning and development this indicated a need to have in place more consistent workforce development for the teaching staff that covered both OLASS and non-OLASS provision.

<b>31.</b>	<b>How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to attain their learning goals?</b>
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A total of 32 respondents answered this question directly.

The majority of respondents commented that the care, guidance and support that education and careers information and advice providers give to learners is mostly effective in helping learners achieve their learning goals.

Respondents gave much of the credit for this to staff that genuinely care about progress made by offenders and take pride in providing high quality guidance and support to them.

A number of respondents noted that prisoners are often well-trained as peer mentors and they, themselves, can provide excellent support to other offenders, particularly in the capacity of learning support assistants.

Where respondents commented on ineffective support, most commented particularly on a distinct lack of support given to distance learners and that gaps existed in the support for offenders with learning difficulties and/or learning disabilities.



A few respondents noted that the provision of additional learning support has been reduced and, in some cases, stopped altogether.

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| <b>32.</b> | <b>What are the critical issues in ensuring the education arrangements are as effective as possible for those offenders who, having been in the youth justice system, enter the adult criminal justice system? Do those critical issues vary if an offender transitions without leaving custody as compared with one who, having experienced youth detention and release, enters adult detention some time later?</b> |
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A total of 15 respondents answered this question directly.

A number of respondents felt that the most critical issue was the transfer of an offender's educational history from the youth estate or the community to the adult estate. A number of respondents noted that the transfer of records at the point of any transition has been historically poor. Several respondents also raised concerns in respect of the timeliness of this information transfer, particularly so because of the move of responsibility to Local Authorities brought about by the implementation of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act.

A number of respondents commented on the high incidence of young offenders with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as undetected communication needs. Such needs meant that they were unable to benefit from verbally mediated interventions such as education and offender behaviour programmes and consequently this contributed to their re-offending. Respondents felt that a clear, uniform system for assessing and recording learning needs of offenders when they enter custody was necessary, and that the identified needs should, in some way, inform how provision was delivered and what learning support should be in place to achieve the best outcomes.

A few respondents noted that young offenders moving to the adult estate would be in danger of discontinuing their learning as the learning and skills offer could be quite different to what they have experienced so far.

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| <b>33.</b> | <b>What can be learned from the way in which other sectors work which could be transferred to the offender learning system?</b> |
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A total of 19 respondents answered this question directly.

Most respondents who commented did so from the perspective of the health sector. In this regard, respondents felt that the health sector did not discriminate between offenders and other citizens, with a primary care trust being responsible for all people within a locality, drawing provision from a supply chain of local, specialist and third sector sub-contractors to meet the needs of its population. Additionally, respondents felt that the health sector worked on a more one-to-one basis to assess and meet the needs of individuals.

A few respondents commented on DWP's Flexible New Deal/Work Programme delivery models, particularly its single case management approach to provide end-to-end support to individuals.

<b>34.</b>	<b>How efficiently and effectively do the providers and the prison and probation service use their available resources to secure value for money?</b>
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A total of 29 respondents answered this question directly.

As many respondents commented that providers and the prison and probation services were good at efficiently and effectively using their resources to secure value for money as said they were poor at doing so.

Where respondents felt that providers and the prison and probation services were good at utilising resources efficiently and effectively, they attributed this to close partnership working, a collaborative approach to target setting and data collection, good communication between partners and the particular efforts of good, experienced staff.

Where respondents felt that providers and the prison and probation services were poor at utilising resources effectively, they attributed this to uncoordinated management information systems, a lack of formal (or even informal) service level agreements between partners and an inability to influence what was delivered at a local level.

<b>35.</b>	<b>Do you know of any good and innovative practice in the UK that the review should consider?</b>
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A total of 26 respondents answered this question directly.

A number of respondents gave examples of peer advice/support activity either taking place within a prison or 'through the gate'. In prison, peer support examples included providing information and advice to others on a range of areas, encouraging people in to learning, supporting learning being undertaken in education departments and teaching literacy to those unable to **read** but who were unwilling to undertake formal training in the education department. 'Through the gate' peer advice/support examples included providing information on a range of areas including housing and dealing with substance misuse and ensuring that people made it to places they were either required or needed to be at, for instance reporting to a probation office or getting to work.

Respondents noted that where peer advice/support was taking place, this was often underpinned with suitable qualifications.

Other examples put forward by respondents included a course that helped prisoners to re-connect with their families and improve their parenting skills, a prison managing transition to the community by enabling employers to provide support through some form of in-reach work and a college delivering taster courses, starting in probation and progressing in to college, hand-holding learners along the way.

<b>36.</b>	<b>Is there anything we can learn from international examples? Is there anything we can particularly share internationally?</b>
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A total of 11 respondents answered this question directly.

Few respondents commented on what the UK could share internationally. Those that did gave examples of family learning and the pride of those delivering in learning and skills in the UK, particularly the dedication of staff working to support offenders in their learning and holistic development.

A number of respondents commented that there was a marked difference between the levels of responsibility afforded to offenders in other countries than here, describing the UK prison system as being very parental in that prisoners have little or no responsibility. This was contrasted against a number of examples from Norway, Spain and the United States.

<b>37.</b>	<b>What question would you have liked us to ask that we haven't posed and what would your response be?</b>
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A total of 23 respondents answered this question directly.

Respondents provided a diverse range of questions and corresponding answers to this particular question. Broadly speaking the themes respondents drew to our attention were ownership and responsibility of the offender learning budget, more responsive allocation of resources to meet changes in prison population (both of which were also covered by respondents in answering earlier questions) and revision of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to:

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills  
1 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0ET  
Tel: 020 7215 5000

If you require this publication in an alternative format, email [enquiries@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@bis.gsi.gov.uk), or call 020 7215 5000.

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