Ministry of Justice

Guide to Prison Education and Accredited Programme Statistics 2024-25

Ministry of Justice

Official Statistics Bulletin

25 September 2025

Contents

Introduction

Prison Education and Accredited Programmes Statistics, April 2024 to March 2025 provides data on prisoner participation in education, and accredited programmes developed to target the offender risks and needs for different types of offending.

In 2016, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) took over responsibility for the budget used to commission most prison education in England from the Department for Education (DfE). In April 2019, the MoJ established new education contracts. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) also commission a range of accredited programmes[1] that vary in length, complexity, and mode of delivery.

This document provides a technical guide and glossary to accompany the statistics presented in the report.

Data sources

Education data have been drawn from an administrative IT system called CURIOUS. Although care is taken when processing and analysing the data, the level of detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system.

Accredited programmes data is collected monthly from each prison establishment and collated centrally on the HMPPS Performance Hub[2].

Details of all administrative data sources used in the production of this release can be found in the Ministry of Justice Statement of Administrative Sources[3].

Coverage

Data in this report is presented in financial years, that is, April 2024 through to March 2025 inclusive.

Education Statistics

The CURIOUS system covers public, private, Welsh and youth establishments. However, this publication includes only CURIOUS data for those **aged 18 and above** in **adult prisons** in **England**. This is because:

- Education in Wales is a devolved matter.
- The youth estate is covered by separate education contracts / services.

Accredited Programmes

Coverage for prison accredited programmes data includes adult prisoners in public and private establishments across England and Wales. Some programme types are for male prisoners only, particularly domestic violence, sexual offending treatment programmes and some general offending and violence programmes. Non-accredited programmes, and programmes delivered within the community are out of scope.

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[1]A list of accredited programmes can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hmpps-accredited-programmes

[2] The HMPPS Performance Hub is an internal management information system.

[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ministry-of-justice-statistics-policy-and-procedures

HMPPS is also in the process of rolling out a new accredited programme for male and female offenders named 'Building Choices' (BC). Building Choices adopts learning from previous programmes and has been designed with a person-first approach at its core, recognising and addressing the individual needs of participants in order to address both offence-specific and wider offending behaviour risks and needs to target the versatility of offending behaviour.

Quality

Education Statistics

Education commissioned through the Prison Education Framework (PEF) delivers a core curriculum of English, maths, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), digital skills and a range of relevant vocational training. **PEF-commissioned education is included on CURIOUS**.

In prisons that deliver PEF education, Governors can also choose to purchase additional specialist provision to meet learner needs via use of the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). The amount of funding a Governor chooses to allocate to education procurement through DPS varies by prison. While information on DPS is sometimes recorded on CURIOUS, this is not mandated and therefore **not all DPS data is included in this publication**. Similarly, for prisons that also deliver education through alternative funding routes, this may also not be included on CURIOUS and therefore not included in this publication. **The data presented in this publication is therefore a likely underestimate of all education provided and received in prisons.**

All **public** prisons deliver PEF-commissioned education and are therefore required to record this data on CURIOUS as a mandatory requirement. For **private** prisons:

- Four private prisons deliver education commissioned under PEF, and therefore reporting on CURIOUS is mandatory.
- Mandatory reporting on CURIOUS for the remaining private prisons with non-PEF contracts was gradually phased in from 2021, with this data being assured from mid-2024, meaning that **volumes may be underestimated prior to this point**.

Due to the data quality of non-PEF private prisons only being assured since mid-2024, no commentary has been provided in the report for private prison education.

Data presented in the publication cover those prisoners who self-select into education. Self-selection into education is problematic because no information is gathered on those who do not participate. Data on both participants and non-participants would be required to provide more insight into both who receives education and why prisoners participate in education.

Information is only entered on CURIOUS once a prisoner has gone through an education induction or enrolled on a course. **CURIOUS does not capture information on all prisoners.**

Accredited Programmes

The accuracy of the data is assessed to be good where published, as it is based on direct administrative records maintained by prison staff and programme administrators. However, occasional manual data entry errors or misreporting by prisons might affect the precision of some variables, particularly those related to programme completion. Error-checking processes, including cross-validation with prisoners' records and regular audits, help mitigate these risks. The data are collected on a rolling monthly basis, and updates can be made to existing records where warranted. Standardised reporting templates are used across all establishments.

Further information on the measures included in this report and metadata details can be found in the accredited programmes glossary below.

Disclosure policy

It is MoJ policy to assess the risk of disclosure of sensitive information about identifiable individuals and the consequent harm that disclosure could cause. This risk is then balanced against the loss of utility of any statistics that may be suppressed.

Sensitive information includes protected characteristics such as race, disability, sexuality or religion of the individuals, or incidents that happen to staff that could cause distress to the individual or their family if they were disclosed.

The level of suppression required in this publication to ensure confidentiality is determined according to Government Statistical Service (GSS) guidance[4]. The suppression rules for this are outlined under the "symbols and conventions" section below.

Revisions

In accordance with Principle 2 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, the Ministry of Justice is required to publish transparent guidance on its policy for revisions. A copy of this statement can be found at:

http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/statistics/mojstats/statistics-revisions-policy.pdf

The reasons for statistics needing to be revised fall into three main categories. Each of these and their specific relevance to the Prison Education and Accredited Programme Statistics 2024 - 2025 are addressed below:

1. Changes in source of administrative systems or methodology

There are no changes in the source of administrative systems or methodology to report.

2. Receipt of subsequent information:

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[4] GSS Disclosure control for tables produced from administrative sources: https://analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/gssgsr-disclosure-control-guidance-for-tables-produced-from-administrative-sources/

The nature of any administrative system is that there may be time lags between when data is recorded and when it is available for analysis. This means that any revisions or additions may not be captured in time to be included in the subsequent publication.

3. Errors in statistical systems and processes:

Occasionally errors can occur in statistical processes; procedures are constantly reviewed to minimise this risk. Should a significant error be found, the publication on the website will be updated and an errata published documenting the revision.

Symbols and conventions

..	Not available
0	Nil
-	Not applicable, or unreliable (less than 30 observations – used when calculating rates/percentages).
~	Denotes suppressed values of 2 or fewer, where deemed appropriate, or other values which would allow values of 2 or fewer to be derived by subtraction. Low numbers are suppressed to prevent disclosure in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation. The level of suppression required is determined according to the Government Statistical Service (GSS) methodology guidance.
(p)	Provisional data
(r)	Revised data

Prison Education Glossary

Initial assessments

All prisoners who enter custody are required to undertake an initial educational assessment. There are initial assessments for maths and English, with most prisoners sitting both. These assessments are designed to assess a prisoner's level of knowledge in these subjects. Once a prisoner has undertaken an initial assessment in English or maths, this assessment should follow them across establishments. If a prisoner is released and then re-enters custody, and the assessment is outdated (over 12 months old), the prisoner can take another initial assessment.

CURIOUS data count the number of people that received each grade at initial assessment for English and maths. This means that prisoners taking more than one initial assessment will be counted once in the sub totals if the results are at the same grade or twice in the sub totals if the results are at different grades across the maths and English tests. The only deviation from this is if a learner has multiple tests listed for the same day, then the lowest grade is chosen.

Learning Difficulty and/or Disability

Prisoners can receive both a rapid and in-depth screener for Learning Difficulty and/or Disability (LDD). Prisoners receive a rapid screener when they enter custody and an in-depth screener is only completed if the prisoner meets criteria based off the rapid screener, and then enrols onto an education course.

Across a year, prisoners may have multiple entries for their LDD data, and their most recent entry is used. LDD screening is only repeated when something significant has changed or where it's deemed necessary.

How LDD has been defined can be seen in the table below:

LDD Grouping	Primary Health Problem listed on CURIOUS
Learning Difficulty and/or Disability (LDD)	"Mental health difficulty" "Social and emotional difficulties" "Disability affecting mobility" "Other learning difficulty" "Moderate learning difficulty" "Dyslexia" "Hearing impairment" "Dyscalculia" "Visual impairment" "Other medical condition (for example epilepsy, asthma, diabetes)" "Other specific learning difficulty (e.g. Dyspraxia)" "Speech, Language and Communication Needs" "Autism spectrum disorder" "Severe learning difficulty" "Other disability" "Other physical disability" "Asperger's syndrome"

	• "Profound complex disabilities"
No Learning Difficulty and/or Disability (No LDD)	• "Temporary disability after illness (for example post-viral) or accident" • "No need"
Not Known	• "Not provided" • "Prefer not to say" • Missing data

As LDD status uses enrolment data, LDD status can only be determined for prisoners who have enrolled on a course. In other instances, prisoners are given the LDD status "Did not enrol on a course in the last financial year".

Matching education data to prisoner characteristics

Prisoner characteristics were primarily generated from NOMIS data, where their most recent entry was used. NOMIS was used to find prisoner sex, ethnicity, and date of birth.
There are a small number of records in the CURIOUS system that do not match to any known record in the NOMIS system, and these records were removed from the publication.

Ethnicity

Where ethnicity was missing from NOMIS, CURIOUS ethnicity data was used. This only applies to course participation/achievement data, as ethnicity data was not available for initial assessments on CURIOUS.

Age Group

Age was calculated using the date of the assessment or course start, as applicable.

Prisoners under 18 at this point have been excluded from the analysis presented in this publication. Remaining prisoners have been divided into three age group categories

- 18 – 24 years
- 25 – 49 years
- 50 and over

Courses in CURIOUS

Course data on CURIOUS includes both accredited and unaccredited education courses. To obtain information on course levels, CURIOUS course data for accredited courses is matched to the Learning Aim Reference Service (LARS)[5]. Overall total course volumes therefore include all courses, whereas breakdowns by course level only cover accredited courses.

The enrolment data on CURIOUS includes both courses with multiple units and stand-alone course units. Both have been included in this publication as "courses".

Participation in courses

A prisoner counts as participating in a course when they have registered to attend, and the course has a start date between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025.

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[5] LARS learning aims. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/learning-aim-reference-service-lars

When considering the number of prisoners participating in courses by level of course, each prisoner is counted once at each level. For example, if a prisoner participates in two Level 1 courses, they count as one prisoner taking a Level 1 course. However, if a prisoner participates in one Level 1 course and one Level 2 course, then they count as one prisoner participating at each level.

Achievement

An individual may achieve in a course, partially achieve in a course, or withdraw from a course:

- Achieving a course – the prisoner has completed all the work and has been awarded a grade or level;
- Partially achieving a course - the prisoner has completed all work required for the course to date, but is awaiting a final exam or coursework;
- Withdrawal from a course – the prisoner stopped taking the course at that prison.

Statistics in the publication are based on number of prisoners achieving a course. As with participation, each prisoner is counted once at each level when considering the number of prisoners achieving a course by level of the course.

Functional Skills Courses

Functional skills courses are offered as part of the core curriculum. Functional skills courses include accredited English, maths, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. These provide the fundamental skills that people need for their working and personal lives. Prisoners study for the qualifications in practical ways and apply core skills to real-life situations. A functional skills level 2 is equivalent to a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Other examples of equivalent qualifications can be seen in the table below.

Initial Assessment / Course Level	Example
Entry level 1,2 and 3	Entry level functional skills Entry level English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
Level 1	GCSE - grades 3, 2, 1 or grades D, E, F, G Level 1 functional skills Level 1 ESOL
Level 2	GCSE - grades 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 or grades A*, A, B, C Level 2 functional skills Level 2 ESOL
Level 3	A level (Advanced Level) Level 3 ESOL Level 3 NVQ (National Vocational Qualification)
Levels 4 - 8	All higher-level courses

A complete list of levels and examples can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels

Accredited Programmes Glossary

Offending behaviour programme (OBP) completion volumes:

Rationale	The purpose of this measure is to monitor the number of accredited programmes as per manual guidance, the appropriate allocation of potential participants to accredited programmes, and to monitor the completion rates of accredited programmes.
Technical description	OBPs are rehabilitation programmes designed to encourage participants to develop self-awareness in recognising risk and success/ protective factors and developing skills in how to manage and build them more effectively. The ethos is built on a strengths-based focus, giving status to existing skills, and providing opportunity to develop 'new me' skills. These programmes are fully or provisionally accredited by the Correctional Services Accreditation and Advisory Panel (CSAAP). In custody they are known as Living Skills programmes.
	For monitoring purposes, OBPs in custody include general offending, domestic violence, extremism, mixed cohorts, and violence programme completions, but exclude sexual offender treatment and substance misuse programmes, which are reported separately. Building Choices programmes are also excluded from this category until full rollout is complete.
Data source	Monthly data from prison establishments collated in central performance systems.
Calculation (volumes)	This indicator is a simple count of the number of OBP completions.
	A completion is counted when a participant completes an accredited programme and all appropriate reports and documents are completed and returned where required, and recorded as such on the appropriate systems.

Sexual offending treatment programme (SOTP) completion volumes:

Rationale	The purpose of this measure is to monitor the completion of sexual offending treatment programmes (SOTPs) and to make sure participants are appropriately allocated to and supported to complete SOTPs.
Technical description	Sexual offending treatment programmes are designed to encourage participants to develop self-awareness in recognising risk and success/ protective factors and developing skills in how to manage and build them more effectively. They aim to reduce reoffending by men who have been convicted of sexual offences. A range of programmes is available to this cohort according to the level of risk and need of the offender.

Data source:	Monthly data from prison establishments collated in central performance systems.
Calculation (volumes)	This indicator is a simple count of the number of SOTP completions. A completion is counted when a participant completes an accredited programme and all appropriate reports and documents are completed and returned, where required, and recorded as such on the appropriate system.

Substance Misuse programme (SMP) completion volumes:

Rationale	The purpose of this measure is to monitor the completion of substance misuse programmes (SMPs) and to make sure participants are appropriately allocated to and supported to complete SMPs.
Technical description	Substance misuse programmes are designed to target the underlying psychological and lifestyle difficulties behind alcohol/ drug use and offending behaviour. Responsibility for running substance misuse accredited programmes has shifted from HMPPS to the National Health Service (NHS), however, HMPPS continues to run the 12-session Pillars of Recovery programme within Wales.
Data source	Monthly data from prison establishments collated in central performance systems.
Calculation (volumes)	This indicator is a simple count of the number of SMP completions. A completion is counted when a participant completes an accredited programme and all appropriate reports and documents are completed and returned, where required, and recorded as such on the appropriate system.

Accreditation Process

HMPPS has a range of accredited programmes, varying in length, complexity, and mode of delivery. Programmes have been developed to target the risks and needs for different types of offending behaviour. To achieve accreditation, programmes must be assessed to make sure they are targeting the right people, focusing on the right things, and being delivered in a way that is most likely to reduce reoffending. All HMPPS accredited programmes are monitored to give programme integrity.

All the interventions included within this publication are accredited via CSAAP[6]. It includes programmes that have been designed and developed by HMPPS and programmes designed by external providers such as Delight Services (COVAID) and Kainos Community (Challenge to Change).

Accredited programmes are routinely reviewed as part of the CSAAP process for accreditation. CSAAP can grant accreditation for a period of up to five years, at which point a programme must be resubmitted. The accreditation process includes reviewing the latest theory and evidence that underpins a programme to ensure that they are as effective as possible in reducing reoffending. This can result in minor changes being required to a programme, or an entirely new programme being developed. Re-accreditation may also not be sought if there has been a substantial drop in the need for a programme. Due to this review process, many of the programmes in this publication which were delivered in previous years, have been replaced or are no longer delivered.

It is important to note there are also numerous non-accredited group-based interventions targeted at a range of criminogenic needs which are delivered within the criminal justice system. Data for non-accredited programmes are currently not available.

Categories of Accredited Programmes

In this publication, programmes are grouped into one of eight categories:

- *Domestic Violence programmes* are targeted at males who have offended against an intimate partner within the context of a heterosexual relationship. The aim is to reduce violent behaviour in heterosexual intimate relationships.

- *Extremism programmes*, including Healthy Identity Intervention (HII), are designed for those who have been convicted of extremist offences. They aim to support desistance and disengagement from extremism. They are designed to encourage stronger positive and pro-social aspects of identity, to help individuals develop resilience and to support them to identify ways of meeting their identity needs. For example, the need for belonging or recognition, without involvement in extremism.

- *General Offending programmes* consist of a range of interventions based on life skills acquisition and cognitive behavioural theory. They are designed to address the link between thinking, attitudes, beliefs and offending. Participants are encouraged to learn and practice life skills, such as problem solving, social skills, self-control and positive relationships, that will help them on their journey towards desistence from offending.

- *Mixed Cohort programmes* include Becoming New Me Plus (BNM+) or New Me Strengths (NMS). These programmes may be delivered as a single strand approach for those with general violence, general offending, interpersonal violence, or sexual offending. If delivered to a single cohort, they are reported under the relevant offence cohort. However, the Mixed Cohort BNM+ and NMS are delivered to a group of individuals with a mix of offence-based needs, where suitable.

- *Next Generation programmes* - The Next Generation of Accredited Programmes (Next Gen) is a change programme that seeks to reform Interventions Services' (IS) current suite of accredited programmes to deliver a more streamlined and coherent service, supporting front line delivery and realising important benefits across the

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[6] More information on the accreditation process can be found here:
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/offending-behaviour-programmes-and-interventions

system. It is informed by the latest international evidence about what works to reduce reoffending, engagement with colleagues and stakeholders, and learns from and builds upon the existing accredited programmes offer designed and managed by IS.

- o As part of the Next Generation of Accredited Programmes, IS has developed a new programme: **Building Choices**. The Building Choices programme has been designed with a person-first approach at its core, recognising and addressing the individual needs of participants in order to address both offence-specific and wider offending behaviour risks and needs to target the versatility of offending behaviour for both male and female offenders. Building Choices is offered in two "pathways": Moderate and High Intensity. The moderate intensity pathway targets those who are assessed as medium risk of reoffending and medium need, while the High Intensity pathway targets those who are assessed as medium and above risk of reoffending and high need. Adapted versions of both pathways will be available for those with Learning Disabilities and Challenges (LDC) through the '**Building Choices Plus**' offer.

- o Building Choices is succeeding the majority of the legacy accredited programmes offered by Interventions Services' except for the Healthy Identity Intervention (HII) and the Healthy Sex Programme (HSP), which will be retained and join Building Choices as part of the Next Gen offer. HII and HSP are designed to target the rehabilitative needs of very specific cohorts of offenders, which can be best met and addressed with the specialist input from HII and HSP.

- o Following completion of a Design Test phase and awarding of accreditation in November 2024, Building Choices (BC) is being rolled out in phases across the prison estate. Rollout is scheduled to complete by the end of 2025.

- *Sexual Offending programmes (SOTPs)* aim to reduce offending by men convicted of sexual offences. Sexual offending does not have a single cause, and so treatment needs to address a range of risk factors. HMPPS provides accredited programmes which may be suitable for those convicted of sexual offences according to the level of risk and needs of the offender. A treatment pathway for males with learning disabilities is also available.

- *Accredited substance misuse programmes[7]* are recovery focused, and based on life skills acquisition, cognitive behavioural theory, and a programme which combines cognitive behavioural and educational approaches. All the programmes are designed to address the link between substance misuse and offending. It should be noted that the HMPPS suite uses the umbrella term of 'substance misuse interventions' which covers both alcohol and drug treatment, with some programmes addressing both.

- *HMPPS Violence programmes* expanded from moderate dose cognitive skills and anger management programmes to more specialised and high intensity programmes for high risk and personality disordered males and women. The programmes also target associated and contributory risk factors including weapons and peer/gang related behaviours as well as work on identity.

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[7] NHS have now assumed responsibility for accredited substance misuse programmes, with just one contracted prison retaining delivery in Wales.

Programme starts and completions

For the purposes of this publication, a programme start is counted as attendance at the first session of the programme and a programme completion is counted on generally as attendance at the last session of the programme or disclosure of post programme report where relevant.

Programmes may also have other components which do not form part of these statistics, for example, pre- and post-evaluation measures, post-programme reports and pre- and/or post-programme sessions with the Offender Manager.

This data should not be used for the purposes of attempting to calculate completion rates. Starts from one year may complete in a subsequent year, and completions in one year may have started in a previous year.

Programme milestones

Milestones are how the set target will be expected to be delivered to make up the overall target by the end of the year, whereby the target is completions.