



Transparency Data

Prison Education - Core Education Planned Delivery Volumes April 2025 – March 2027

Background

This document contains information relating to the level of Core Education commissioning under the previous and current Core Education contracts within prisons. These contracts provide prisoners with access to courses in English, Maths, and a variety of functional and vocational courses.

These data are being released to support an informed discourse of recent changes to the level of commission in prisons.

Context & Periods Covered

The Prisoner Education Service is delivered through a series of contracts, of which the Core Education contracts are the largest component. The new contracts came into effect on 1st October 2025 in 10 of the 11 regional lots that were tendered.

In the interests of transparency and informing discussion of changes to the levels of provision, we have published the hours of education commissioned in the final contract year of the Prisoner Education Framework (PEF), which lasted six months, and the initial two contract years of the Prisoner Education Service (PES), which will last six months and one year respectively.

The move from the PEF to PES in 2025 included fundamental changes to the structure of the contracts. In particular, the Core Education budget allocations no longer cover the costs of digital infrastructure, which is being delivered directly by the Ministry of Justice, and Careers Information, Advice and Guidance is now provided via a national contract rather than commissioned locally through the Prison Education Dynamic Purchasing System (PEDPS) that allows prisons to procure education services outside of the core contract. Therefore, unlike the hours data provided, year-on-year comparisons of budgets at prison level are not meaningful.

The data presented cover the planned hours of education planned between April 2025 – March 2027. This planning is completed via Annual Delivery Plans agreed

prior to each contract year. Plans can be refined during the contract year, the data presented are correct at the time of publishing. This covers three contract years, including two half-years under different contractual structures during 2025/26. These are:

- Prisoner Education Framework (PEF) Contract Year (CY) 7 – Apr 25-Sept 25
- Prisoner Education Service (PES) Contract Year (CY) 1 – Oct 25-Mar 26
- Prisoner Education Service (PES) Contract Year (CY) 2 – Apr 26-Mar 27

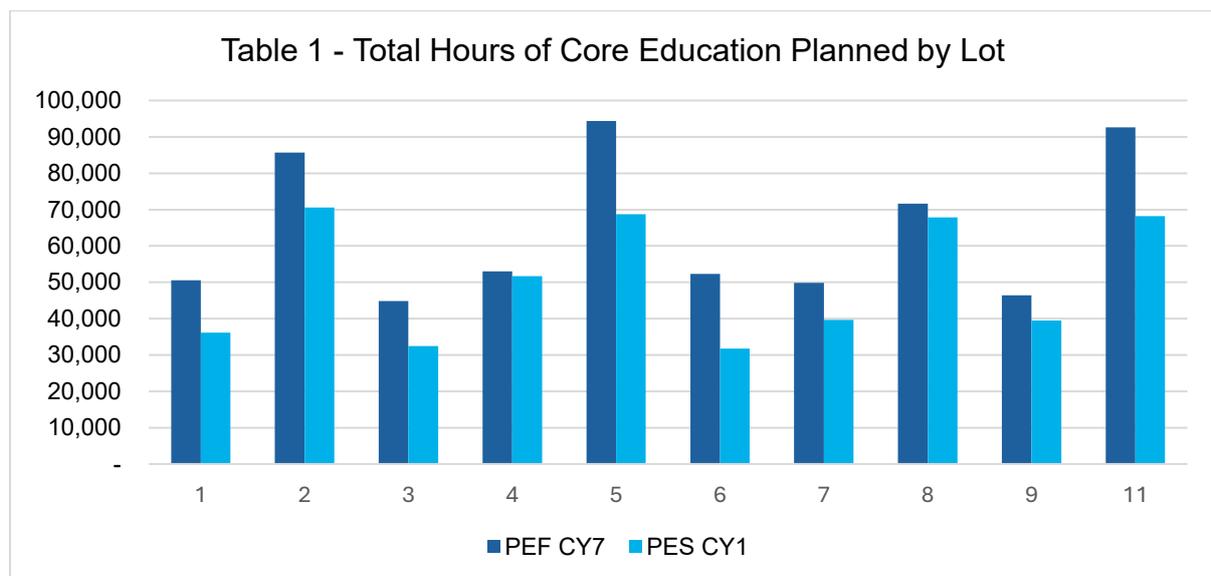
This covers the 94 prisons included in the Core Education contracts in PES lots 1-9 & 11. Lot 10 is excluded as the procurement is still ongoing at the time of publication.

Planned hours will differ from delivered hours due to operational factors. In the interests of ensuring that data are comparable across periods, the planned hours are used.

Changes in Core Education hours planned within 2025/26

Changes by Lot

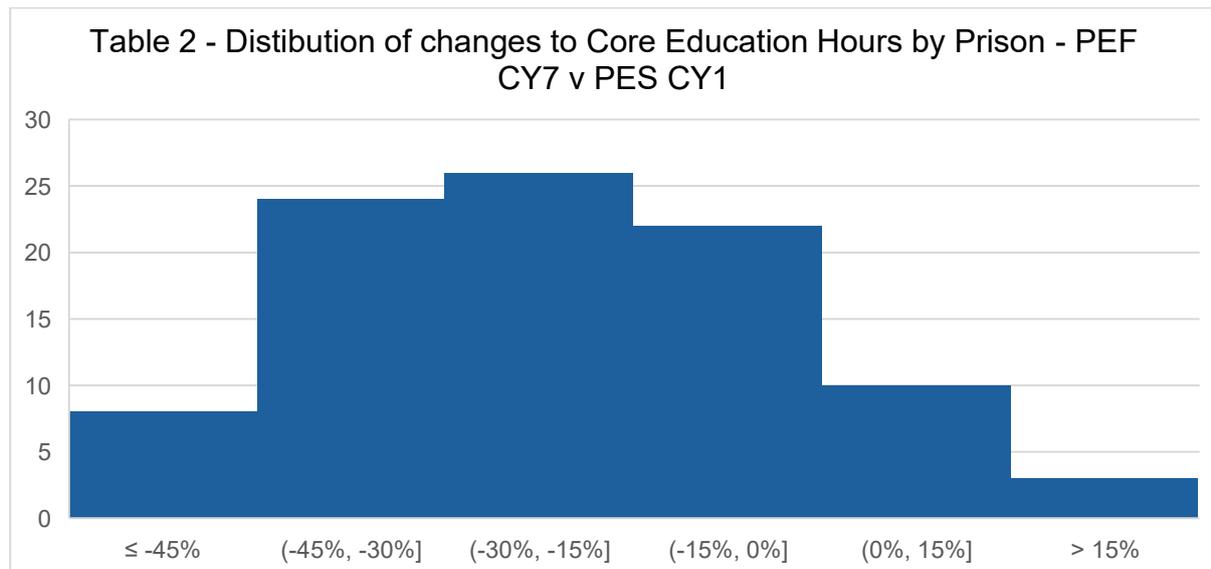
The overall change in each lot between the final 6 months of PEF and the first 6 months of PES is shown below:



The total reduction in hours across the 10 lots presented is 21%, with hours falling from 641,293.50 to 506,615.73. This is due to inflationary pressures in all the services funded through the Prison Education Budget.

The differences in the change in hours across lots are due to changes in the way that funding is allocated to prisons between PEF and PES. PES allocations are based on the actual cost of delivering education in each area with the aim of balancing purchasing power in each area.

Changes by Prison



The median average change in hours is -22% with half the prisons between -9% and -34%. The biggest fall in hours is HMP North Sea Camp at -58% and the biggest increase is HMP Coldingley at 49%.

Funding Allocation Changes

The variability of the change by prison is due mostly to a reset and significant update of the funding formula for prisoner education. This was implemented alongside the new PES Core Education contracts.

Budget allocations are done centrally according to prison size and function – many of which have changed since allocations were last set using a funding formula in 2019 – as well as cost in that region. The initial allocation is then split according to the proportion of spend that prison requested to be allocated to Core Education and the PEDPS. Following this, senior regional prison staff were given the option to move money within their lot.

Some of the differences in hours procured can also be explained by changes to course mix commissioned by prisons, as each course type has a different price, and changes in the proportion of budget requested for the PEDPS. These changes can influence the total hours procured in each prison in either direction.

Accompanying files

- Education Hours Data.xlsx

Contact

Press enquiries should be directed to the Ministry of Justice press office:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/about/media-enquiries>

Non-Press enquiries relating to this publication should be sent to: PES-BSU@justice.gov.uk. Education Hours Data

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