Ministry of Justice

Future Skills Programme

Process evaluation

Rachel Cordle and Abigail Ukbai

Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Justice Analytical Series

2026

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First published 2026



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ISBN 978 1 911763 47 5

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all participants who engaged in this research. We are extremely grateful to all the prison staff who helped coordinate this research, and to the prisoners, staff, suppliers and employers who shared their experiences and views on the Future Skills Programme. We would like to thank Lucy Williams (HMPPS), Ann-Marie Day (HMPPS), Kate Murray (HMPPS) and Phil Davenport (HMPPS) for their support throughout the research.

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1. Summary

The Future Skills Programme (FSP) aims to improve employment outcomes on release from custody. FSP adopted a 'test and learn' approach across 23 prisons, delivering short training courses through different suppliers. Despite variation in course type and length, all these prisons provided skills-based training in the pre-release period,[1] with a guaranteed job interview (or guaranteed job). Monitoring data collected between November 2023 and March 2026 show that overall, 756 job offers were accepted by participants completing FSP, representing just over a third (36%) of all participants allocated to the programme.

- There have been 2,103 participants allocated to FSP courses; 76% (1,589) have completed FSP and 24% (511) have withdrawn.[2]
- There have been 1,363 interview offers and 73% (999) of these have been successful (meaning that the prison leaver met the required standard even if they did not necessarily receive a job offer).
- There have been 862 job offers and 88% (756) of these have been accepted.

The FSP's test and learn approach enabled some supplier contracts to be extended, from April 2025 to March 2026, where courses were perceived to be working well. Some contracts ceased as performance did not meet expectations[3] and/or because wider systemic change was expected to affect future delivery (e.g. prisons re-rolling). Overall, monitoring data shows a higher proportion of positive outcomes (e.g., job offers and acceptances) after April 2025, which may be expected given contract extensions were made where FSP was perceived to be working most effectively. By April 2025, FSP also had been running at a steady state for a longer period.

Qualitative findings highlight where implementation of FSP is perceived to have worked well. The flexibility of FSP has, in some cases, allowed provision to adapt in ways that are

[1] Defined as the six-month period before release from custody.

[2] The number of completions and withdrawals do not sum exactly to the number of allocations as we have three not confirmed as either a completion or a withdrawal.

[3] Key performance expectations being that 100% of those who complete the course offered a job interview pre-release as part of the course delivery, alongside a minimum of 60% of participants that complete the course leaving custody with an offer of employment.

perceived to better meet the needs of prisoners. For example, one supplier adapted the content and delivery format to better suit women. Elsewhere, a supplier at a prison with a high remand population was able to put in place a pathway whereby employers' job offers had 12 months validity. Key challenges (across a range of courses) have included: adapting prisons' allocation processes to align with FSP criteria, maintaining participants on FSP's pathway to a potential job offer, and securing a suitable pipeline of employer engagement.

It is unclear how many FSP job offers have led to actual job starts and/or longer-term sustainable employment. FSP suppliers have provided some through-the-gate support into employment, though provision differs across suppliers. Qualitative findings highlight elements that are perceived to have worked (e.g., supplier providing prison leavers with a basic phone for contacting the supplier and new employer immediately post release, as well as the role that some suppliers have played in facilitating introduction to the new employer). An impact evaluation that assesses impact on reoffending is planned for a future publication.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

Offenders are less likely to be employed, both before and after a custodial/community sentence. Employment provides financial benefits, a sense of purpose, and a non-criminal social network. Cordle & Gale (2025) found mixed/promising evidence that interventions aiming to increase employment can reduce reoffending. Fox et al. (2021) found vocational training/employment programmes (delivered in prisons and based in the community) were associated with 9% fewer individuals reoffending, compared with those who did not take part. There are, however, substantial differences in the structure and delivery of interventions (whether they include elements such as training, job placements, prison-based work, income support guidance, etc.) and it is therefore difficult to identify which programmes are most effective.

FSP aims to provide training that links to employment on release from custody, helping to support prison leavers in rebuilding their lives and reduce reoffending.

FSP adopted a 'test and learn' approach across 23 prisons, delivering short training courses through different suppliers.[4] Despite variation in course type, length and accreditation, all these prisons provided skills-based training in the pre-release period, with a guaranteed job interview (or guaranteed job). There was a range of different courses (including scaffolding, warehousing, caseworker training and hospitality), with different course lengths (varying from one to eight weeks). Course delivery style was mixed, often including of classroom learning and practical delivery, varying between prisons. Eligibility criteria required participants to be within six months of release, with most courses having some offence exclusions (see Appendix A for more details).

FSP was delivered across two phases. The first (known as 'FSP 1.0') ran from November '23 to March '25. This was followed by 'FSP 2.0' (April '25 to March '26). Some FSP 1.0 contracts were extended into FSP 2.0, retaining largely the same implementation. Other

[4] A full list of FSP suppliers can be found on Contracts Finder.

FSP 1.0 contracts were not extended, for a range of reasons (including prison re-rolls due to prison capacity issues). There were no new suppliers at FSP 2.0, hence data collected during FSP 2.0 can be considered to reflect the performance of FSP at a steady state and when fully embedded.

2.2 Research aims and methodology

This report covers the **process evaluation,** which gathers multi-perspective qualitative findings on implementation and reports on the monitoring data collected. A subsequent **impact evaluation** will assess employment and reoffending outcomes, comparing those who completed FSP with a suitable control group who did not. Findings from the impact evaluation will be published once complete. The process evaluation aims to identify:

- How FSP was implemented, specifically what is perceived to have worked well to enable the smooth delivery of FSP (and what helped to progress prison leavers through FSP from allocation to a job acceptance);
- What the perceived challenges were and how they were addressed;
- What the perceived outcomes and impacts of FSP were (including any unintended consequences);
- Transferable learning for the delivery of future employment / sector-specific training programmes for prison leavers.

Sample and methodology – Qualitative fieldwork

Researchers conducted face-to-face qualitative interviews at four of the eleven prisons within FSP 2.0. It was not proportionate to conduct research in all eleven prisons due to researcher availability and time constraints. Interviews were conducted during a period of FSP delivery. Prisons were selected such that interviews spanned four of the five suppliers within FSP 2.0, with final selection of prisons dependent upon course delivery dates. Whilst at the prison, researchers conducted interviews with key members of staff delivering FSP (both prison and supplier staff) as well as prisoners. Researchers conducted additional interviews with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Headquarters (HQ) staff and a selection of employers using Microsoft Teams (henceforth 'Teams'). Most interviews were one-to-one, though in a few instances small focus groups

or paired interviews took place. One researcher and one note-taker attended all face-to-face interviews, one researcher attended the Teams interviews, and these were then transcribed. Interview notes and transcripts were coded and analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes. Researchers coded themes independently then compared and synthesised for the report. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the qualitative sample frame.

Table 2.1: Sample overview

Type of interview	Respondent group	Number of individuals interviewed	Participating prisons
Face-to-face in prisons	HMPPS staff supporting the delivery of FSP within prison	10	HMP Berwyn, HMP Low Newton, HMP Preston, HMP Stoke Heath
Face-to-face in prisons	Supplier staff supporting the delivery of FSP within prison	5	HMP Berwyn, HMP Low Newton, HMP Preston, HMP Stoke Heath
Face-to-face in prisons	Prisoners participating in the FSP	24	HMP Berwyn, HMP Low Newton, HMP Preston, HMP Stoke Heath
Remote via Teams	HMPPS HQ staff	4	N/A
Remote via Teams	Employers of prison leavers who completed FSP. Includes three agency employers and one employer who was also a supplier	7	N/A

Monitoring data

Analysis of monitoring data was conducted, covering the period November 2023 to the end of March 2026 (and reflects both FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0 performance). Data were captured via a bespoke monthly reporting process. Data included the numbers of allocations to FSP and completions, as well as withdrawals (with reason for withdrawal), and numbers of interviews, job offers and job acceptances. Prisoner numbers were collected for all participants, allowing analysts to source age and ethnicity data via the internal

administrative systems. Note that the monitoring data presented are drawn from dynamic operational datasets that may be subject to reporting errors.

Ethics

Research was conducted in line with Government Social Research (GSR) ethical principles and ethical approval was obtained through internal departmental processes before commencing fieldwork. Participants were given information sheets outlining that involvement was voluntary, their right to withdraw at any point, and that responses would be anonymous when reporting. Signed consent forms were obtained before interviews began. Attention was given to the ethical implications of conducting research in prisons including power dynamics, consent and safety of prisoners and staff. To minimise bias, researchers used a standardised topic guide with space to ask site specific questions where necessary. Throughout data collection and analysis, findings were discussed between researchers to challenge interpretations and reduce individual bias.

Research limitations

One limitation is that qualitative interviews were conducted with prisons and suppliers whose contracts continued into FSP 2.0, which may make findings more positive than if non-extended sites had been included. This is partly mitigated by monitoring data representative of FSP 1.0, the planned impact evaluation covering both phases, and interviews with HMPPS HQ staff overseeing delivery across both phases.

Prisoner interviews were conducted during FSP delivery, which was practical for exploring motivation and engagement, but meant those who had withdrawn were not interviewed. Prisoners were also not interviewed post release. This was partly mitigated through employer interviews, although employers sometimes referred to prison leavers who had not completed FSP, and those interviewed were likely to be more experienced in employing prison leavers. This may have enabled richer feedback but could also have made findings more positive than if less experienced employers had been included.

3. FSP Delivery

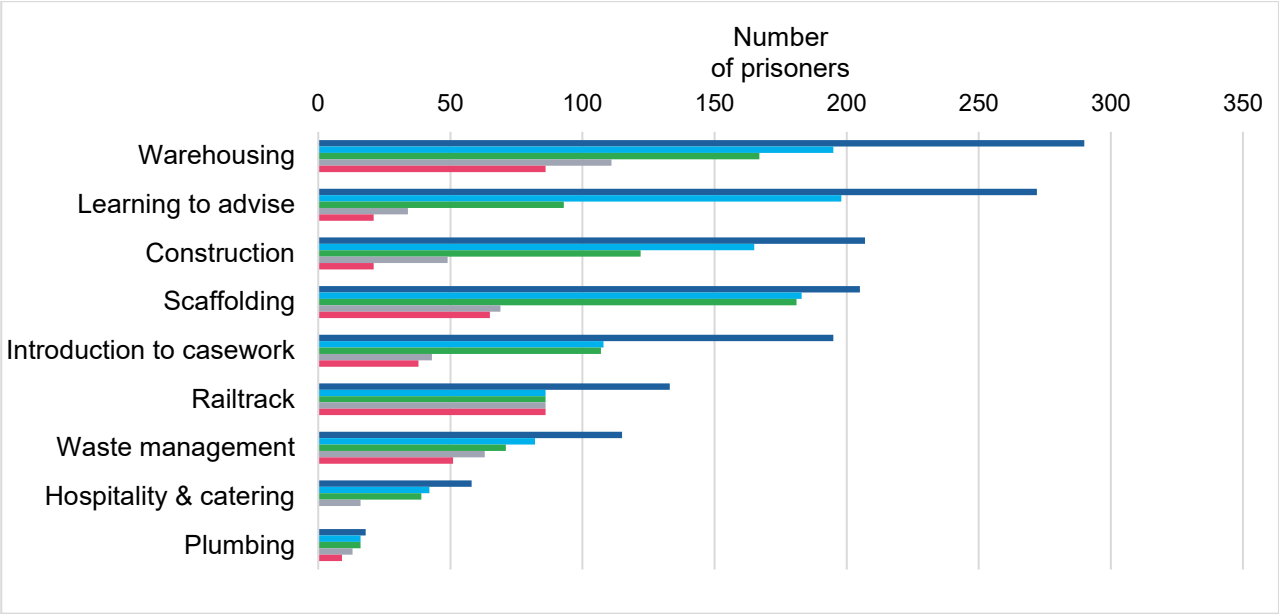
3.1 Attendance and completions, by course type and demographics

A total of 252 cohorts[5] took part in FSP during the monitoring period. Overall, 2,103 prisoners were allocated to FSP (across both FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0), with 1,589 (76%) completions. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 provide an overview of performance of FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0, by course type. In general, higher completion rates were achieved at FSP 2.0 (alongside improved job outcomes) as might be expected with course delivery becoming more embedded within the prison. Scaffolding courses achieved the highest completion rate at both FSP 1.0 (89%) and FSP 2.0 (97%). There were particularly low allocation and completion rates for some course types not continued at FSP 2.0 (manufacturing and utilities courses – these have been redacted from Figure 3.1 due to low numbers with a total of 23 prisoners allocated and seven completing them).

[5] Four of these cohorts were delivered as split-cohorts, meaning the FSP course ran on 256 occasions.

Figure 3.1: Overview of FSP 1.0 outcomes by course type (total allocations: 1,516)[6]

Within each course, bars are ordered from top to bottom: allocated, completed, offered interview, offered job, accepted job. The table below provides the corresponding values.

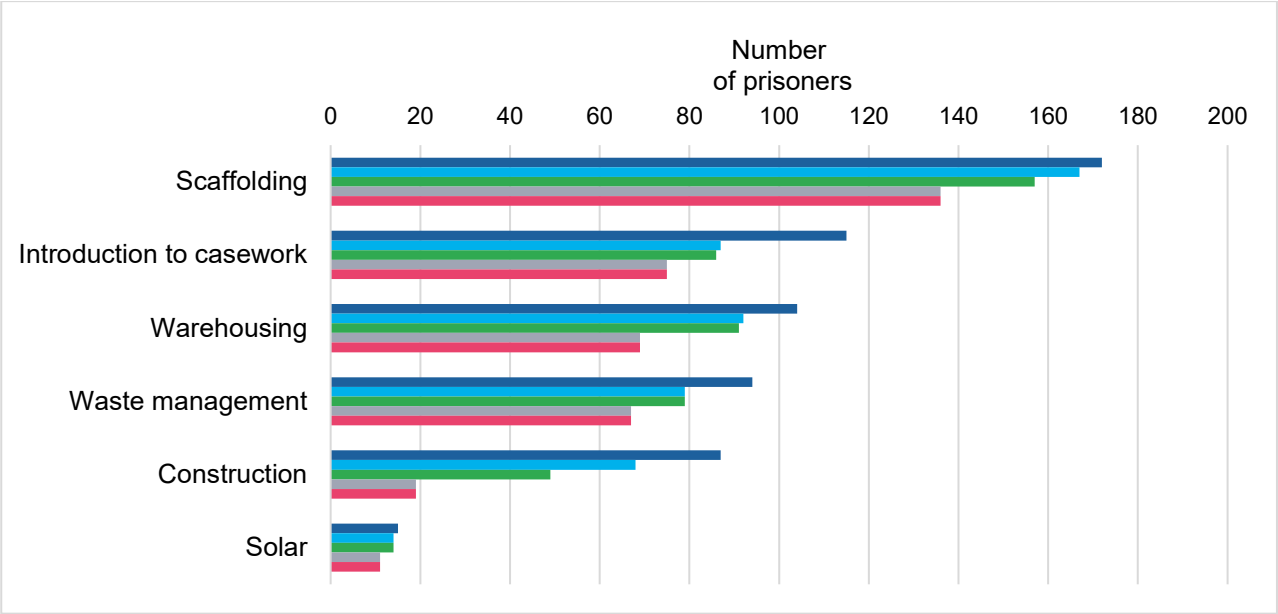


Course type	Allocated	Completed	Offered interview	Offered job	Accepted job
Warehousing	290	195	167	111	86
Learning to advise	272	198	93	34	21
Construction	207	165	122	49	21
Scaffolding	205	183	181	69	65
Introduction to casework	195	108	107	43	38
Railtrack	133	86	86	86	86
Waste management	115	82	71	63	51
Hospitality & catering	58	42	39	16	<5
Plumbing	18	16	16	13	9

[6] Count of job acceptances for Hospitality and Catering redacted due to low number.

Figure 3.2: Overview of FSP 2.0 outcomes by course type (total allocations: 587)

Within each course, bars are ordered from top to bottom: allocated, completed, offered interview, offered job, accepted job. The table below provides the corresponding values.



Course type	Allocated	Completed	Offered interview	Offered job	Accepted job
Scaffolding	172	167	157	136	136
Introduction to casework	115	87	86	75	75
Warehousing	104	92	91	69	69
Waste management	94	79	79	67	67
Construction	87	68	49	19	19
Solar	15	14	14	11	11

Table 3.1 shows completion rates at FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0, by sex,[7] ethnicity and age. At FSP 2.0, 13% of participants are female compared with 9% at FSP 1.0. At FSP 2.0, 80% of participants are White compared with 74% at FSP 1.0. Age distribution is very similar across FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0. Across all groups, completion rates are higher at FSP 2.0.

[7] FSP monitoring data does not include a record of the individual's gender identity or sex. The data shown in the chart counts the number of individuals allocated to/ completing FSP and classifies them as either male or female based on whether they have been allocated to a course that runs within a male or a female prison.

Table 3.1: Demographic overview of completion rates at FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0

Demographic	FSP 1.0 (n=1,529[8])	FSP 2.0 (n=587)
Sex	Male completion rate: 71% (992/1390) Female completion rate: 65% (90/139)	Male completion rate: 87% (443/511) Female completion rate: 84% (64/76)
Ethnicity	White completion rate: 70% (792/1134) Black/Black British completion rate: 79% (117/148) Asian or Asian British completion rate: 75% (65/87) Mixed completion rate: 65% (51/78) Other completion rate: 69% (11/16) Missing completion rate: 70% (46/66)	White completion rate: 85% (399/467) Black/Black British completion rate: 87% (27/31) Asian or Asian British completion rate: 89% (31/35) Mixed completion rate: 90% (18/20) Other completion rate: 100% (4/4) Missing[9] completion rate: 93% (28/30)
Age	<25 years old completion rate: 68% (173/253) 25-39 years completion rate: 70% (651/926) 40-59 years completion rate: 74% (252/341) >59 years completion rate: 67% (6/9)	<25 years old completion rate: 78% (68/87) 25-39 years completion rate: 88% (320/364) 40-59 years completion rate: 88% (119/136) >59 years completion rate: N/A

3.2 Motivations to complete FSP

A key motivation to complete courses was the link to employment opportunities post release. Guaranteed job interviews and the chance to meet employers while in custody

[8] Total number of allocations at FSP 1.0 was 1,516 as participants required their prisoner identification number to be added to the record to be counted as an allocation. 13 prisoners, however, were enrolled without their identification number added, and these additional 13 are included in these counts. Nine of those 13 completed FSP, although none received job offers.

[9] Includes one individual with ethnicity listed as 'Not Specified'.

was a strong incentive for many and provided a sense of “hope”. Some prisoners indicated that, had it not been for the job interview, they would not have enrolled onto the course. They felt they would be interviewed for a “real job”, reinforcing trust in the programme and increasing commitment to complete.

Participants were also motivated by the chance to develop skills and understand the available employment opportunities. For some, courses were viewed as an opportunity to diversify skills and pursue new career paths. The attainment of qualifications, especially the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card, was a strong motivator in doing the course given it is an industry recognised qualification. Several participants emphasised the value in gaining new technical knowledge and refreshing prior knowledge, in particular health and safety (which was perceived by prisoners as being a useful general course, regardless of specific sector they might end up in), with one prisoner noting that this would greatly benefit him returning to work as a chef post release.

The timing of the course was also noted as important, with it being delivered close to release and at a point where individuals were giving serious consideration to jobs post custody. Participants emphasised the importance of transitioning quickly into employment and that getting the support from staff to secure a job prior to release was helpful in reducing the risk of reoffending and the burden of having to find a job alone.

“Need to start the job within a week so that you get straight back into work to stop you going on a bender.” – Prisoner, M[10]

“Having links, if I can get a job, something to focus on and stay clean, make some money and save some money ready to go home.” – Prisoner, F

Participants valued staff and course providers who acted as intermediaries with employers, offering employment preparation support and helping overcome barriers linked to criminal records. In some cases, through-the-gate (TTG) support aided transition into employment and addressed wider resettlement needs, although provision was not standardised (see Perceptions of through-the-gate (TTG) support into employment). Other

[10] Quotes from prisoners are recorded as ‘M’ meaning that the quote is from a prisoner in the male estate or ‘F’ meaning that the quote is from a prisoner in the female estate.

motivations for participation included time out of cells, access to equipment, and engaging in purposeful activity before release. Participants also reported improved confidence, mindset, and work readiness. Peer relationships were particularly important for female prisoners, who valued the opportunity to build supportive connections and confidence through shared experiences.

“One of the ladies on the wing had found out about the course and done it, said how it builds your confidence on the go up to release and then I thought I’d like to do that.” – Prisoner, F

Many participants also shared how completing courses helped with the development of interpersonal skills necessary for employment. This included improved communication skills, being able to follow instructions, active listening, and learning how to better manage conflict and respond to challenges calmly. Some also reported gaining time management skills and a better understanding of workplace expectations. Having the opportunity to engage with people outside of the prison environment, through talking to employers, was seen as highly valuable in giving prisoners confidence and experience to do this post release.

“A lot of it’s around communication and handling problems, I can have a bit of a fiery temper and problems with relationships. This has taught me good communication skills, getting your point across without losing your [rag] and communicating effectively with people.” – Prisoner, F

Prison staff observed noticeable changes in prisoners and clear increases in work skills and confidence over the duration of the course. One reflected:

“One prisoner who is usually in my workshop is quite shy, sticks to himself but I’ve watched him today changing quite quickly for the better. And watching him working with the lads, asking questions, talking with the other lads. I’m impressed with how he has progressed and its due to the course and what its involved.” - Staff[11]

[11] Quotes from HMPPS staff are labelled as ‘Staff’, whilst quotes from Supplier staff are labelled ‘Supplier’. Note, however, that on the supplier side there were a range of different staff interviewed (e.g. course trainer/tutor/assessor/manager).

For many, completing FSP provided a renewed sense of purpose and was also perceived as helping challenge feelings of stigma associated with imprisonment creating a stronger sense of self-belief and personal agency. For individuals on remand, engagement was sometimes influenced by a perception it may affect court outcomes with prisoners asking staff, “will this get me time off my sentence?”.

Participation was also seen as an opportunity for personal change with some prisoners describing a desire to move away from previous patterns of behaviour. The combination of employment support, personal development, and potential job opportunities made FSP an attractive route to greater stability after release.

Overall, employment-related incentives, supported by tailored guidance, employer engagement, and structured post release support, were the most significant motivators for course participation, while additional personal and contextual factors further reinforced engagement.

3.3 Withdrawals

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show how the proportion of course completers (and hence proportion of withdrawals) differed across the course types. Across both FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0, 24% of participants withdrew (511 in total; 431 (28%) at FSP 1.0 and 80 (14%) at FSP 2.0). Data were collected on the reasons for withdrawals (where reasons were recorded) and are shown in Table 3.2; the most common reason for withdrawal was the prisoner choosing to withdraw.

Table 3.2: Counts of the reasons recorded for prisoner withdrawals

Reason for withdrawal	FSP 1.0	FSP 2.0
Prison transfer	55	16
Early release scheme	44	<5
Released[12]	39	13

[12] ‘Released’ includes Automatic Release Date, Home Detention Curfew and Walk from court.

Reason for withdrawal	FSP 1.0	FSP 2.0
Prison withdrawal[13]	87	14
Self-withdrawal	134	27
Supplier withdrawal	28	8
Did not start	25	0
Other	16	<5

Reasons for withdrawal varied by sex. For males, prison withdrawal and self-withdrawal were most common, while for females the main reason was release. Withdrawal numbers were too small to assess differences by ethnicity (see Appendix B).

3.4 Perceived enablers to delivery

Table 3.3 shows how the overall flexibility of the test and learn approach has enabled delivery to evolve over time to suit individual prisons. By FSP 2.0, FSP's flexible approach has enabled most of the participating prisons to implement in a way that works well for them (as evidenced through the monitoring data and qualitative findings). For example, on course length specifically, there is no 'one size fits all'. Whilst it is acknowledged it may be easier to achieve completions with shorter courses (particularly given increases in remand prisoners and early releases), this is balanced against longer courses allowing more skills development (particularly where participants can gain an industry recognised qualification) and potentially being preferable for prisoners who like the course.

"I was a joiner for 18/19 years before [prison] and if anyone had come up to me and said they got a 4-day course it would put me off" – Staff

Ultimately, at a programme level, success on FSP was defined as the number progressing along the pathway to achieve a job offer.

[13] This means that prison staff withdrew an individual from the course (as opposed to supplier withdrawal, where the supplier decides to withdraw an individual from the course).

Not all factors that were perceived to support smooth delivery will be applicable to every FSP course, however, it is likely FSP courses with successful outcomes will have a selection of these factors in place.

Table 3.3: What is perceived to have facilitated successful delivery?

Key perspective: “Gives prisoners a tangible thing to attach to, I can get a job if I do this course.” – Staff

Detailed operational examples and supporting quotations are in Appendix C, Table 8.3.

What is perceived to have facilitated successful delivery?	Concise synthesis of findings
Local ownership and integration	Dedicated prison leadership, sufficient Prison Employment Lead (PEL) capacity, senior buy-in and integration of supplier staff supported suitable allocation, coordination and problem-solving. National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS) access for suppliers could streamline delivery.
Outcome-focused allocation and promotion	Allocation worked best when motivation, sector interest, release plans and readiness to take up work were considered. Supplier promotion, peer accounts and, in one prison, digital self-service allocation supported recruitment.
Practical, credible delivery	Hands-on learning, suitable space and equipment, patient trainers and supplier staff confident in prison settings supported engagement, skills and confidence. Relevant prison or lived experience could strengthen rapport.
Visible employment pathway	Guaranteed interviews and early employer contact gave participants a tangible employment goal, maintained momentum and allowed employers to meet potential applicants.
Flexible course design	Course length, format and content were adapted to local regimes and learner needs, including part-time delivery, support around appointments and more trauma-informed provision for women. Less suitable courses could be dropped.

3.5 Perceived barriers to delivery

Barriers identified by interviewees do not necessarily indicate unsuccessful implementation. Instead, they highlight considerations for the future design of prison employment interventions, recognising that no single approach will suit all prisons.

Table 3.4: What is perceived to have hindered delivery?

Key perspective: “It’s filling it with the right people that is the difficulty.” – Supplier

Detailed operational examples and supporting quotations are in Appendix C, Table 8.4.

Perceived barriers to delivery	Concise synthesis of findings
Allocation and associated communication	Targeted eligibility and employment requirements made allocation labour-intensive. Unsuitable referrals, unclear communication about the offer and gaps in PEL cover could increase non-attendance and withdrawal.
Supplier integration and staffing	New suppliers had to navigate different local prison processes. Turnover, cover, vetting, induction, access restrictions and unclear contacts could disrupt delivery.
Course fit and engagement	Classroom-heavy provision could reduce engagement, while practical or interactive delivery helped. Stringent sector requirements, including release timing and drug testing, narrowed eligible cohorts.
Prison regime and capacity pressures	Shutdowns, competing appointments, fixed timetables, equipment access, overcapacity and unexpected release or transfer disrupted delivery and progression.
Mobilisation, roles and associated communication	Rapid mobilisation and limited early prison involvement could weaken course-prison fit and buy-in. Responsibilities and communication across HQ, prisons and suppliers were not always clear.
Governance and supplier variation	Outcome-focused monitoring encouraged attention to interviews and offers but could be resource-intensive. Differences in systems access, supplier capability, commitment and equipment contributed to variation in delivery.

3.6 Conclusion

Overall, delivery was perceived to work best where prisons and suppliers had clear local ownership, participants were allocated with the employment outcome in mind, and practical training was linked visibly to employers. Flexibility allowed course content, length and format to respond to local regimes and learner needs. However, allocation complexity, supplier integration and staffing, prison logistics, communication and unexpected release or transfer created recurring challenges. Future delivery should retain local flexibility while setting clearer minimum expectations for mobilisation, roles, allocation, communication and employer involvement.

4. Job outcomes

4.1 Interview offers

Overall, 86% (1,363) of those completing FSP were offered an interview. At FSP 1.0, 84% (887) of completions were offered an interview. At FSP 2.0, 94% (476) of completions were offered an interview. Where prisoners were not offered an interview, data were collected on the reason why, and across FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0 there were a total of 192 records made. The most common reason was 'no job/employer available' (see table 4.1 for further information).

Table 4.1: Table to show counts of the recorded reasons why interviews were not offered at point of completing FSP

Reason why no interview offered	FSP 1.0 (n=162)	FSP 2.0 (n=30)
No employer/job available	79	18
Change in prisoner circumstances	52	<5
Employer will interview closer to release date	5	8
Prisoner refusal/declined	13	<5
Unsuitable allocation	7	<5
Unknown	<5	0
Other	<5	0

4.2 Successful interviews

Overall, 73% (999) of interviews were successful. A successful interview means that the interviewee met the employer's required standard but does not necessarily mean that a job offer is made. At FSP 1.0, 602 interviews were successful (68%). At FSP 2.0, 397 interviews (83%) were successful. Where interviews were unsuccessful, data were collected on the reason why, and across FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0 there were a total of 355 records made. The most common reason for an unsuccessful interview was the prisoner not attending the interview.

Table 4.2: Table to show counts of the recorded reasons why interviews were not successful

Reason why interview was not successful	FSP 1.0 (n=277)	FSP 2.0 (n= 78)
Did not attend the interview	76	35
Inadequate performance	42	19
Does not meet employer criteria	62	13
Change in personal circumstances	21	5
Not interested in job available	25	<5
Further interview required	20	<5
Unsuitable allocation	15	0
Requires sign-up to an agency on release	8	0
Requires release before opportunity can be offered	5	0
Lost contact	<5	0
Prisoner in establishment/ interview impractical	<5	0

4.3 Job offers

A total of 862 FSP job offers were made across FSP 1.0 (485) and FSP 2.0 (377). Overall, 86% of those who were successful at interview were offered a job. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 in section 3 illustrate how job offers differed across course type and across FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0. See Tables 5.1 and 5.2 for more information on what is perceived to have helped (or hindered) achieving job offers.

4.4 Job acceptances

A total of 756 job offers were accepted across FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0 (an 88% acceptance rate). At FSP 2.0, 100% of job offers were accepted (377 jobs). Figures 3.1 and 3.2 in

section 3 illustrate how job acceptances differed across course type and across FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0.

4.5 Conclusion

The monitoring data indicated stronger performance in FSP 2.0 than at FSP 1.0. Nevertheless, progression was not automatic. Employer availability, personal circumstances, non-attendance, employer criteria and unsuitable allocation all affected whether participants progressed.

5. Perceived impacts of FSP

An impact evaluation of FSP is planned that will assess the reoffending outcomes of FSP participants as compared with a matched control group. This process evaluation captures insight into how FSP is perceived to have had a positive impact on job outcomes (and why), as well as the perceived difficulties encountered in achieving job outcomes (and why).

Table 5.1: What is perceived to have helped achieve job offers?

Key perspective: “On paper, we wouldn’t have even considered him, but through having met him, we’ve given him that opportunity.” – Employer

Detailed operational examples and supporting quotations are retained in Appendix C, Table 8.5.

What is perceived to have helped achieve job offers?	Concise synthesis of findings
Sector and course alignment	Offers were more achievable where short training provided recognised entry credentials, matched employer needs and operated in sectors with demand and fewer offence restrictions.
Employer involvement and networks	Employer input improved course relevance. Suppliers with established contacts could bring employers into prison, arrange interviews and source work near release locations; these networks appeared to strengthen during FSP 2.0.
Employment preparation and direct contact	Disclosure support, applications, mock interviews and employer contact helped participants navigate recruitment and allowed employers to assess candidates beyond written applications.
Flexible interview pathways	In-person, Teams and employment-specialist interviews offered different practical advantages. Interviewing during delivery reduced need for later coordination, while direct employer contact remained valuable.
Individualised matching and continuity	Release plans, location, motivation and wider needs shaped job matching. Individualised approaches were important for some women, and in some cases PEL links had potential to help maintain pathways across prison transfers.

What is perceived to have helped achieve job offers?	Concise synthesis of findings
Release status and flexible starts	Sentenced populations generally offered more predictable pathways. Strong support, flexible criteria, sectors with rolling recruitment and longer-validity job offers could accommodate some remand prisoners and uncertain release dates.
Learning and adaptation	Contract extension allowed stronger arrangements and employer networks to become more established, supporting improved outcomes in FSP 2.0.

Table 5.2: What is perceived to have hindered job offers?

Key perspective: “Those interviews weren’t coming to fruition, so a lot had to go out and build pipelines.” – Staff

Detailed operational examples and supporting quotations are retained in Appendix C, Table 8.6.

Perceived barriers to job offers	Concise synthesis of findings
Timing and release uncertainty	Release or transfer before interview, changing release dates and uncertain destinations made it difficult to align participants with live vacancies, especially in high-remand and female prisons.
Employer pipelines and vacancy clarity	Some suppliers had fewer ready employer contacts than expected. Where interviews were remote or mediated, staff sometimes questioned whether offers related to genuine vacancies, although the extent was unclear.
Participant, course and job fit	Some participants valued the qualification but preferred another sector. A few courses did not appear to meet employer need, and a small number of offers were insufficiently related to course content or suitable employment.
Eligibility and sector barriers	Employer criteria, offence exclusions and sector entry requirements restricted opportunities. Conviction-related barriers were perceived to complicate the selection of accessible sectors for women more so than men.

Perceived barriers to job offers	Concise synthesis of findings
Job-sourcing roles	Responsibilities across suppliers, prison staff and NFN[14] were not always clear; better coordination could widen access to employers already recruiting prison leavers.
Changing employer circumstances	Changes in employer contacts, interview methods, policies and recruitment demand could reduce opportunities after delivery began.

5.1 Conclusion

The qualitative evidence suggests that offers were more achievable where training provided a credible route into an accessible sector, aligned with employer demand and was supported by established employer networks. Employer involvement, employment preparation, appropriately timed interviews and flexible starts also supported progression. However, uncertain release dates and locations, weak or changing vacancy pipelines, participant preferences and eligibility restrictions could hinder offers. As the evaluation did not establish how many accepted offers led to job starts or sustained employment, these findings concern perceived mechanisms and implementation rather than definitive programme impact.

[14] New Futures Network (NFN) are a specialist part of HMPPS which attracts and supports employers to work with prisons in England and Wales.

6. Perceptions of through-the-gate (TTG) support into employment

Through-the-gate (TTG) support was offered by suppliers but was outside the scope of FSP's procurement and contract management processes. Different suppliers offered different TTG support, but all aimed to enable and improve attendance at work in the early days. Examples included practical help such as arranging travel to work, signposting access to work clothes, or help to liaise with their new employer ahead of their start date. TTG support was optional for prisoners and naturally not all opted in. In addition, some suppliers offered TTG support to all those completing FSP, regardless of whether they had secured a job via FSP. "It was our social value question [within procurement], which is why we've ended up with really a variety of different offers. For some it's very little other than maybe a couple of check-in calls whereas others are much more tangible practical things" – Staff. The evaluation has captured qualitative feedback on what is perceived to have worked well, and less well, to support FSP participants into jobs post release. Some prison staff are unclear what suppliers offer post release "I don't know what they do… it's a grey area for me" – Staff.

There was a view that TTG support is particularly important for releases from Category C prisons, as it is a different experience to being released from an open prison, and support needs may be higher. Findings are shown in tables 6.1 and 6.2. Note that findings are drawn from interviews with prison staff, suppliers and employers (a key limitation being that no interviews were conducted with prisoners after their release).

Table 6.1: What is perceived to have helped moving into/continuing employment post release?

Key perspective: “We help them get to the first day.” – Supplier

Detailed operational examples and supporting quotations are retained in Appendix C, Table 8.7.

What is perceived to have helped post release?	Concise synthesis of findings
Continuity of contact	Contact beginning in custody and continuing after release helped maintain engagement. Models included regular calls and continuity of employment specialists.
Digital and practical access	Phones, data, digital documents, travel, work clothes and onboarding help addressed immediate barriers to starting work.
Job brokerage and liaison	Suppliers continued to connect prison leavers with employers and could mediate with probation around licence conditions, shifts, absence or recall.
Tailored employment-focused support	Support with first-day attendance, workplace expectations and benefits information was most useful when tailored, employment-focused and empowering.
Supplier discretion and scope	Some suppliers provided substantial help beyond the contracted offer. This was perceived as beneficial but raised questions about consistency, safety and the appropriate scope of future provision.
Rapid starts and supportive employers	Early job starts, flexible employers, transport help, trials, wellbeing contact and ongoing supplier involvement could support adjustment and retention.
Motivation and wider support	Motivation for the specific role, stable accommodation and family or social support were perceived to strengthen employment continuity, while their absence increased barriers.

Table 6.2: What is perceived to have hindered moving into/continuing employment post release?

Key perspective: “An employer is waiting for a person to start but we don’t know where the prisoner is.” – Supplier

Detailed operational examples and supporting quotations are retained in Appendix C, Table 8.8.

Perceived barriers post release	Concise synthesis of findings
Maintaining contact	Suppliers could lose contact after release even where an employer was waiting for the person to start.
Probation alignment	Appointments, licence conditions and different priorities could conflict with work. Interviewees perceived value in earlier employment consideration and flexible coordination where risk allowed.
Travel and geography	Rural locations, limited public transport and work across changing sites could make jobs difficult to access.
Competing resettlement demands	Family responsibilities, accommodation, substance misuse and other immediate needs could conflict with work and affect continuity.
Recall	Recall interrupted employment and created administrative burdens. Repeated recalls could make employers unable to continue restarting employment, even after good performance.

6.1 Conclusion

Through-the-gate support was perceived to help bridge the transition from an accepted offer to starting and continuing work. Continuity of contact, digital access, practical help, job brokerage and liaison with employers and probation were recurring features of stronger support. However, provision varied and sometimes relied on substantial supplier discretion. Loss of contact, probation requirements, travel, competing resettlement needs and recall could disrupt employment. Future design should consider a clearer minimum employment-focused offer, with flexibility for individual needs and explicit links with probation and wider resettlement services.

7. Conclusions and considerations for future design

This process evaluation identified several factors for consideration in the future design of vocational training programmes intended to support prison leavers into employment. Staff buy-in and effective partnership working with suppliers have been important to FSP delivery. In practice, allocating prisoners to courses has also required consideration of their motivation not only to complete training, but to take up the associated employment after release. This may differ from traditional approaches to course allocation and should be considered carefully if the programme is scaled up.

Courses perceived as successful have often allowed some flexibility to adapt provision to the needs of individual prisons and their populations. This may be particularly important given wider pressures on prisons and changing population profiles. Conversely, stringent eligibility requirements can make courses difficult to fill, as seen with drug-testing requirements for the railtrack course. Alongside sector-specific skills, some courses were also perceived to develop wider employability or 'soft' skills, which may be particularly valuable in the female estate. Employer engagement was another important feature, especially where employers visited prisons and, where possible, interviewed prisoners before release. Early, supplier-supported contact appeared valuable for both prisoners and employers considering recruiting prison leavers.

Although through-the-gate support has varied across FSP, this evaluation identified potentially useful elements for both prison leavers, such as access to basic mobile phones, and employers, including ongoing supplier support. While transitional support is intended to remain employment-focused, links to wider needs, particularly accommodation, are also important. Future programme design should therefore consider a more consistent through-the-gate offer, with sufficient flexibility to tailor support to individual needs. A clearer overarching offer could also support contract management, communication with prisons and prisoners, and future evaluation.

8. Appendices

Appendix A - List of FSP courses

Table 8.1: Courses that ran during both FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0

Course overview	Course length	Prison (and number of cohorts run)	Supplier (and any offence exclusions applied)
Warehousing/logistics; Waste/recycling/green economy (tutor led classes and workshop sessions)	2 weeks	HMP Preston (21)	The Progress Group (no exclusions)
Warehousing/logistics; Waste/recycling/green economy (tutor led classes and workshop sessions)	6 weeks (changed to 2 weeks from FY 24/25)	HMP Lancaster Farms (25)[15]	The Progress Group (no exclusions)
Caseworker - local authority sector (tutor led and 1-2-1 sessions to acquire practical skills to support casework)	8 weeks (changed to 4 weeks from FY 25/26)	HMP Holme House (12)	BEAM (initially the requirement to pass a DBS check to work with vulnerable adults, though this was later relaxed following adaptation of course content)
Caseworker - local authority sector (tutor led and 1-2-1 sessions to acquire practical skills to support casework)	8 weeks (changed to 4 weeks from FY 25/26)	HMP Low Newton (14)[16]	BEAM (initially the requirement to pass a DBS check to work with vulnerable adults, though this was later relaxed following adaptation of course content)
Caseworker - local authority sector (tutor led and 1-2-1 sessions to acquire practical skills to support casework)	8 weeks (changed to 7 weeks from FY 25/26)	HMP New Hall (13)	BEAM (initially the requirement to pass a DBS check to work with vulnerable adults, though this was later relaxed following adaptation of course content)

[15] Two of these cohorts were run as split cohorts, i.e. the course ran a total of 27 times

[16] Two of these cohorts were run as split cohorts, i.e. the course ran a total of 16 times

Course overview	Course length	Prison (and number of cohorts run)	Supplier (and any offence exclusions applied)
Hospitality – Level 2 Construction - Level 1 Warehousing and storage - Level 2	4 weeks initially (Construction changed to 3 weeks and Warehousing 2 weeks)	HMP Leeds (8)	Learning Curve (excludes sexual offences and theft)
Warehousing and storage – Level 2	3 weeks (changed to 4 weeks part-time)	HMP Humber (12)	Learning Curve (excludes sexual offences and theft)
Hospitality; Construction; Logistics / transport (blended learning, in-person and online)	6 weeks initially (changed to 4 weeks early in 2024)	HMP Stoke Heath (12)	RMF Construction Training Academy (no exclusions)
Hospitality; Construction; Logistics / transport (blended learning, in-person and online)	6 weeks initially (changed to 4 weeks early in 2024)	HMP Brinsford (10)	RMF Construction Training Academy (no exclusions)
Construction operative training – Scaffolding (hands-on learning package including industry recognised tickets to work as scaffolder on release)	1 week	HMP Berwyn (24)	Fulcrum Scaffolding (excludes sexual offences and arson)
Construction operative training – Scaffolding (hands-on learning package including industry recognised tickets to work as scaffolder on release)	1 week	HMP Cardiff (13)	Fulcrum Scaffolding (excludes sexual offences and arson)

Table 8.2: Courses that ran during FSP 1.0 only

Course overview	Course length	Prison (and number of cohorts run)	Supplier (and any offence exclusions applied)
Caseworker - voluntary sector (tutor led and 1-2-1 support, offer of peer support)	3 weeks	HMP Brixton (11)	St Giles Trust (excludes sexual offences)
Caseworker - voluntary sector (tutor led and 1-2-1 support, offer of peer support)	5 weeks	HMP Oakwood (18)	St Giles Trust (excludes sexual offences)
Railtrack (skilled track operative training with guaranteed job on release). Domestic electrics (training to acquire skills to work in domestic electrics on release)	5 weeks (railtrack); 4 weeks (domestic electrics)	HMP Onley (5)	City & Guilds (excludes sexual offences, terrorism, arson, offences against a child). Additionally, requires level 3 Maths and English and to be drug and alcohol free.
Railtrack (skilled track operative training with guaranteed job on release). Domestic electrics (training to acquire skills to work in domestic electrics on release)	5 weeks (railtrack); 4 weeks (domestic electrics)	HMP Liverpool (5)	City & Guilds (excludes sexual offences, terrorism, arson, offences against a child). Additionally, requires level 3 Maths and English and to be drug and alcohol free.
Railtrack (skilled track operative training with guaranteed job on release). Domestic electrics (training to acquire skills to work in domestic electrics on release)	5 weeks (railtrack); 4 weeks (domestic electrics)	HMP Risley (3)	City & Guilds (excludes sexual offences, terrorism, arson, offences against a child). Additionally, requires level 3 Maths and English and to be drug and alcohol free.
Railtrack (skilled track operative training with guaranteed job on release). Domestic electrics (training to acquire skills to work in	5 weeks (railtrack); 4 weeks (domestic electrics)	HMP Doncaster (4)	City & Guilds (excludes sexual offences, terrorism, arson, offences against a child). Additionally, requires level 3 Maths and English

Course overview	Course length	Prison (and number of cohorts run)	Supplier (and any offence exclusions applied)
domestic electrics on release)			and to be drug and alcohol free.
Logistics and warehousing (practical and theory sessions)	4 weeks (extended to 6 weeks in Year 2)	HMP Portland (6)	Weston College (excludes sexual offences, terrorism, arson, offences against a child)
Civil/water engineer (practical and theory sessions)	4 weeks (extended to 6 weeks in Year 2)	HMP Guys Marsh (2)	Weston College (excludes sexual offences, terrorism, arson, offences against a child)
Hospitality and food hygiene (practical and theory sessions)	4 weeks (extended to 6 weeks in Year 2)	HMP Exeter (7)	Weston College (excludes sexual offences, terrorism, arson, offences against a child)
Construction; Warehousing / logistics; Plumbing; Engineering (tutor-led and workshop sessions)	4 weeks	HMP The Mount (11)	Business2Business (excludes terrorism, MAPPA, handling weapons)
Construction; Warehousing / logistics; Manufacturing (tutor-led and workshop sessions)	4 weeks	HMP Bedford (8)	Business2Business (excludes terrorism, MAPPA, handling weapons)
Warehousing / logistics; Catering / hospitality (tutor-led and workshop sessions)	4 weeks	HMP Norwich (10)	Business2Business (excludes terrorism, MAPPA, handling weapons)

Appendix B - Withdrawal data

Table 8.3: Counts of reasons for withdrawal from FSP: Breakdown by sex (data covers both FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0)

Reason for withdrawal	Female	Male
Did not start	0	25
Early release scheme	6	39
Other	<5	14
Prison Transfer	10	61
Prison Withdrawal	11	90
Released / ARD. HDC. Walk from Court	21	31
Self-withdrawal	7	154
Supplier withdrawal	<5	33

Non-zero counts <5 have been redacted

Table 8.4: Counts of reasons for withdrawal from FSP: Breakdown by ethnicity (data covers both FSP 1.0 and FSP 2.0)

Reason for withdrawal	White	Black or Black British	Mixed race	Asian or Asian British	Other
Did not start	22	<5	<5	<5	0
Early release scheme	36	<5	<5	<5	0
Other	13	<5	<5	0	0
Prison Transfer	50	8	5	5	<5
Prison Withdrawal	74	10	6	<5	<5
Released / ARD. HDC. Walk from Court	43	<5	<5	<5	0
Self-withdrawal	125	10	11	8	<5
Supplier withdrawal	29	<5	<5	<5	0

Non-zero counts <5 have been redacted

Appendix C - Detailed qualitative evidence supporting the synthesis tables

This appendix retains the operational detail and illustrative quotations from the qualitative data that underlies the concise syntheses of findings tables in the main report. It should be read alongside the concise synthesis tables in the main report. The separation allows the main findings to be identified quickly while preserving information about what was delivered, how implementation varied, and the contexts in which facilitators and barriers were reported.

Table 8.5: Detailed evidence on perceived facilitators to successful delivery

What is perceived to have facilitated successful delivery?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
A dedicated member of prison staff with the time/capacity to help embed FSP course and maximise delivery	Support, usually provided by the Prison Employment Lead (PEL), was key to achieving suitable allocations into FSP. There is a perception this was best achieved where there was early recognition from prison staff (particularly the Governor) that the supplier was fulfilling a need for the prison (providing purposeful activity places and supporting job outcomes), despite the resource required to support FSP. There was a perception FSP was more easily embedded where supplier staff could access the National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS, described as a 'pre-requisite' to streamline delivery/reduce demands on prison staff).
Prison staff actively welcome supplier staff into the prison (as they would a new colleague)	An open welcome avoids the risk of suppliers feeling isolated, especially if they have not worked in prisons before. One example is the PEL inviting the supplier to team meetings, helping them feel more connected. This was perceived to have raised awareness of FSP amongst Education, Skills and Work (ESW) staff within the prison, supporting allocations and informing sequencing.
Dedicated spaces for delivery, with access for specialist equipment	Some courses are largely classroom based; others require extra space. E.g., the scaffolding course which also required resource to address the initial associated security considerations of bringing in construction equipment.
Supplier-led promotion	One example is 'coffee mornings', allowing suppliers to find out which prisoners appear most highly motivated. Perception this works best

What is perceived to have facilitated successful delivery?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
activity to support allocations	with oversight from the PEL. “The PEL knows who has turned up for a biscuit and who wants to do FSP” - Staff
PEL retains oversight of the allocations process	At one prison, the PEL ‘interviews’ prisoners interested in FSP to build a waiting list of those whom they think are most likely to complete FSP and accept a role. In one prison, the PEL checks previous completions of other prison courses, allowing access onto FSP if they have previously completed at least one course. “The PEL is focused on [recruiting prisoners to] a job rather than [filling a] skills course in prison, so [can] 'recruit backwards' onto FSP. Typically, in a prison it’s ‘I've got five spaces I need to fill on this particular course’ rather than ‘Hey Billy, do you want to be a scaffolder? Yes, you do? OK, let's pop you on this course’” – Staff “The most important thing is putting the right people in… getting the right people in is what has supported delivery” – Staff “Ask questions on what their plan is for when they go out? If they are in an [Approved Premises] they are not going to work for 8 weeks, so the course may not be suitable for them” - Staff One prison has achieved good outcomes without a high level of PEL oversight. This is a large prison using a digital allocations system. (It is also the shortest course at one-week, which may have further supported completions). “Holds 2,000 plus people in a variety of different categories and they also have a digital allocation system. So, it's almost like self-service, you apply to do whatever you want to do in the prison and then that gets filtered through.” - Staff
Previous FSP participants talk to prospective FSP participants	At one prison, previous FSP participants (i.e. on recall) have spoken with prospective FSP participants, as prisoners can identify with the ‘real-life’ accounts of peers. “We like to get past learners involved [although] they aren’t a typical success story they can reflect on what they’ve done wrong, a lot of time they didn’t turn up to the job or contact the employer” - Supplier

What is perceived to have facilitated successful delivery?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
Practical, hands-on course delivery	"Practical delivery has gone down really well, more appealing to prisoners than classroom-based training. And it's the practical elements that employers want as well, the tickets that get them onto a construction site.... essentially the course sells itself." – Staff Prisoners gain confidence through practical delivery: "[Prisoners] feel like they're workmen, they're employees, which is how I like my workshops. Feel like employees, not being made to be there" - Supplier
Engaging, patient trainers support attendance and provide positive role models	"Some of the tutors along the way, they're teaching behaviours subtly, it's not part of the course, but having a great tutor really makes the difference. Some of the feedback from prison staff is men would after four weeks be walking out with their shoulders held in different ways, they were calmer and they deemed that down to the tutor because of the respect they had for him" – Staff "The instructor is good, he explains a lot and in his own words, I understand what he says but if you don't he can explain in a different way" – Prisoner, M There are some examples of supplier staff with lived experience which is beneficial. "[Prisoners] look up to the way [the tutor is] really open with people and is an ex-user, seeing how [their] life is now" – Staff
Supplier confidence in teaching prisoners	"Sometimes [prisoners might talk about] their criminal backgrounds, see it as a bit of bravado and you have to police that a bit" – Supplier Some supplier staff have prior experience in prisons, for example one course tutor was previously a prison officer which was helpful in understanding and building rapport with prisoners.
Awareness of the guaranteed interview /contact with employers	Contact between potential employers and prison leavers motivates, maintains course momentum and instils confidence in the potential for a real job on release. "Gives [prisoners] a bit of hope – see them get excited when the employers come in" – Supplier "Gives prisoners a tangible thing to attach to, I can get a job if I do this course." – Staff

What is perceived to have facilitated successful delivery?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
	"We've been in and delivered a session as part of the training to make participants aware of what it's like working in a real waste management company, what we actually do, the different processes and specifically the types of jobs that we have…gives us the opportunity to meet the potential applicants face to face to get a feel for them, see how engaged they are" – Employer
Flexibility to change course length if needed to support better engagement.	At one prison, FSP was shortened to retain more individuals, as more women were being released sooner than expected. Courses were unaccredited, which facilitated this flexibility. At another prison, course length was extended as it was agreed it would be better delivered on a part-time basis due to the amount of classroom work involved. The course duration was doubled to ensure the guided learning hours were still achieved. Each cohort was split into two so class sizes were smaller with an AM and a PM session Learners attended the prisons warehousing workshop part-time alongside FSP, providing some practical experience in the subject matter.
Flexibility to adapt content, tailoring to learner needs and/or interests	At one prison, content was adapted for female prisoners, placing more focus on building confidence, self-esteem and family relationships alongside addressing employment needs. *"*We made [the content] more women specific…a lot more trauma informed than it was. There's [still] the option of caseworker jobs, but that's not really what's offered, we sell it more as a pre-release programme, helps you stay out of prison, through the gate support with an employment focus. If anyone doesn't want a job, they shouldn't be on it" – Supplier "We have a lot of work [on] building relationships, one which is about storytelling and how we story tell the history of what's happened to us in relation to how we then use it to help other people, and we kind of take control of that journey." – Supplier At another prison, FSP's test and learn approach meant courses with less appeal were dropped: "From memory, two construction, two warehousing and two hospitality courses…. But after we did the hospitality, I think we only did one of

What is perceived to have facilitated successful delivery?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
	them...[then we] only did construction because there was no appetite for warehousing or hospitality" - Staff
Flexibility to adapt to individuals' needs to support completions	Aside from flexibility to alter the course delivery for whole cohorts, some suppliers have accommodated individual needs. E.g., allowing a learner to be part-time on FSP whilst completing other activities/ appointments. This has been possible on some unaccredited courses.

Table 8.6: Detailed evidence on perceived barriers to delivery

Perceived barriers to delivery	Examples of why/where this barrier was particularly challenging
Allocation is more complex than usual (e.g., prison leavers who want to work in a specific sector and will accept a job offer)	"[HQ] asked them [prisons] to allocate in a completely different way to the way they would typically allocate people to a course so it can be quite labour intensive for prisons, depending on how many people they have that are suitable for a particular course. For example [the rail course] had very strict allocation criteria on top of the allocation criteria we'd include" – Staff In some cases, prisoners attending FSP are not felt to be suitable, leading to them withdrawing from the course. "There's always interest…the big machines, the orange jackets. It's filling it with the right people that is the difficulty." – Supplier Where PELs lead on allocation, it is challenging when they are absent. "I was off sick and the activities hub have just looked at the unemployed list [which led to more withdrawals]" - Staff
Misunderstandings affecting attendance (e.g. prisoners not aware they were allocated onto the FSP)	In one prison, the PEL addressed this by taking a leading role in communications with prospective FSP participants, speaking with them directly so all know where they are meant to be when. Other misunderstandings included: • Whether FSP was a job or a course, "I got a job as a cleaner then they asked last week if I wanted to do it this week. I thought I was doing the practical waste management job rather than the course" – Prisoner, M • Whether attending FSP affects ability to return to a previous prison job (particularly if they like their other job and/or it pays more)

Perceived barriers to delivery	Examples of why/where this barrier was particularly challenging
Issues around how the supplier adapts/is supported working within the prison	For example, perception may affect ability to navigate their role within the prison and potentially individuals' confidence in dealing with learners (particularly where they encounter challenging behaviour). "You could be working in two prisons, but each runs very differently, even if on paper they should run the same, like what you need to do to move prisoners and how they allocate. [New suppliers could become] very isolated and it's knowing who to go to for different things in the prison. In theory, it'd be the same job titles in every prison, but unfortunately that isn't always the case" – Staff
Supplier staff challenges (with new supplier staff requiring vetting and induction)	Suppliers have had staff turnover (or on occasion had to provide 'cover'). This is particularly challenging where course dates have already been agreed. New staff must attend the prison's induction, which was an extra cost to the supplier. "It is a challenge in the prison when you've only got space for [course starts on] certain dates and then they get new tutors that have got to be vetted. It's a logistical nightmare to be quite honest, like a game of Jenga." - Staff There was one example of an ongoing issue perceived by the supplier to have affected outcomes (a staff member's lived experience meant they were unable to access one of the supplier's two prisons in delivery).
Some courses not sufficiently engaging (often due to its similarity to classroom-based learning)	There is a perception classroom delivery has led to some participants disengaging. In one example, the course is delivered using PowerPoint. Although prisoners report there is too much PowerPoint, this was partly mitigated by the well-liked course tutor who was actively including more interactive elements. "The PowerPoints are long, sitting looking at the screen, I want to be doing proper work" – Prisoner, M Elsewhere, classroom delivery is required on the first day, but this is followed by practical work, so the focus is maintaining engagement on day one. "Monday (classroom day) doesn't usually go so well – that's where you usually see the dropouts" - Supplier In another example in the female estate, a full week in the classroom was not working (and the course was run over a series of weeks). As

Perceived barriers to delivery	Examples of why/where this barrier was particularly challenging
	the course was non-accredited, it was adapted to offer three days in the classroom and two days in-cell learning. (This course additionally involves in-depth discussion described as 'intense' at times, and the supplier and women felt that the days in-cell also provided space for women to process content covered.)
Stringent course requirements (affecting allocations and delivery)	In some cases, requirements could not be rescoped (e.g., due to logistical or contractual requirements) and courses stopped. For example, one course was achieving good outcomes. It could only run with sentenced prisoners, however, as jobs had to start within 6 weeks of the course ending. It was becoming harder to allocate as the remand population was increasing. In addition, participants were required to pass a drugs test. "A lot were on methadone because they were users when they came in, but if they fail the drugs test they can't work in the rail industry for 5 years" - Staff If developing similar programmes in the future, it would be helpful to have earlier insight into prison cohorts. "Just because a prison has 1,000 prisoners doesn't mean it will necessarily be suitable for FSP, it depends on the cohort" – Staff
The prison regime and associated logistics	Examples of the ways in which the regime can affect delivery include difficulties maintaining learner engagement given fixed teaching/ break times; challenges providing support to those who miss content due to competing appointments; dealing with shutdowns (and impact on delivery given tight timelines); co-ordinating between prisons/ suppliers/ HQ staff to agree dates for courses to run; getting access into the prison for any specialist equipment required. "I'm working with adults twice my age and [I feel bad I can't offer them] a coffee break and they feel like they're back in school. The time goes really slowly, you feel that in here" – Supplier "Since August, we've had so many regime shutdowns… it inhibits learning engagement" - Staff "If the prison doesn't come back quickly with dates to run the course, [we] can't run a course because it is a business" – Supplier
Lack of clarity as to the roles of prison staff as	For example, where supplier and prison staff work together to allocate individuals to the next course, if participants drop out before the course starts who is responsible for replacing them? Supplier

Perceived barriers to delivery	Examples of why/where this barrier was particularly challenging
compared with the supplier staff	staff will likely not be on site regularly between course deliveries (as they are also required to work elsewhere) meaning successful re-allocation may depend upon PEL capacity.
Early contract mobilisation was challenging	There was reference to mobilisation and its effect on subsequent delivery, with the procurement period described as 'politically turbulent'. Combined with commercial sensitivities and the design requirement to test a variety of courses in different prisons, HQ staff were unable to involve prisons as much as they would have liked in decisions as to which prison ran which course. This may have led to lower initial buy-in at some prisons. "[Sometimes] what [the supplier] was offering wasn't a good fit because the prison didn't think they needed it necessarily, [so] not to say that supplier and that course wasn't good and it probably would have worked really well in another site" – Staff Some courses required more set-up work within the prison, with security considerations (e.g. scaffolding, rail track). "Ideally the mobilisation would have been staggered across different sites, but it ended up being a Big Bang and everybody had to go live within a couple of weeks, which was really hard work to be honest." – Staff HQ staff report strong early focus on achieving outcomes, in the form of interviews and job offers. There is a sense suppliers focused more on achieving stable delivery (as might more typically happen with an education contract). "We hammered the suppliers pretty hard and quick" – Staff
Communication challenges between staff across HMPPS HQ, the prison and suppliers	For example, on occasion HQ staff found it challenging to offer support in real-time, e.g., if a member of the supplier's staff is absent from the prison. "We don't observe it [as we are based in HQ]; we only get told" – Staff Staff at one prison report more general communication issues with their supplier (though noting that, at the time of fieldwork, there had been some staff churn on the supplier side).

Perceived barriers to delivery	Examples of why/where this barrier was particularly challenging
	"We've never known who the lead is and who to go to, it's just been a nightmare. I don't know whether we're going to have employers for this cohort… I've had no feedback from [supplier]" – Staff
Governance has perhaps (at times) been disproportionate to the contract value	Robust performance monitoring was in place, with focus on outcomes. There is a perception this required suppliers to change mindset to focus on outcomes as opposed to delivery. Supplier willingness to engage with governance was key. Some prisons were able to provide suppliers with access to the internal prison database (NOMIS), which streamlined certain elements of the contract management/governance, though not all prisons were able to provide access to NOMIS for security reasons.
Variation in supplier values led to inconsistent quality of delivery	"Some were very money orientated and not really too worried about who was on the course, whereas others were driven by desire, passion and values." – Staff
Perception some prisoners may have been put off FSP by perceived poor quality of equipment	In one prison, participants were required to share hard hats and boots with prisoners engaged in a different activity (though this issue was not raised by prisoners interviewed). "It's not very nice, if I was a prisoner experiencing it, I don't want to put someone else's sweaty boots on…hopefully they pass the test [but if they] go back to wing and tell prisoners they had to wear someone else's boots, [that remark could] put 20 other prisoners off doing the course" - Staff
Systemic effects of prison overcapacity	Individuals released earlier than expected (either ahead of course completion or ahead of interview), affecting outcomes.

Table 8.7: Detailed evidence on factors perceived to support job offers

What is perceived to have helped achieve job offers?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
Courses in sectors where it is possible for a short training course to provide	Scaffolding is a good example; the course delivers initial basic training to an industry recognised standard despite being a short course. "[After completing FSP they have] a safety card to allow them on site. And that, to be honest, that's all you really need within the scaffolding

What is perceived to have helped achieve job offers?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
sufficient grounding to work to a required level	industry. It's quite basic for me but it'd be a bit of a nightmare if I'm trying to get that training itself. And 9 times out of 10, the people when they get released, they can't go and get it done themselves... [that] they can go straight on to site [on release]. It's just a massive plus" - Employer
Courses in sectors with skills shortages	There are currently skills-shortages in the scaffolding industry. "For me, it's giving people a chance. If they take it, they take it. If they don't, they don't. There's a shortage of scaffolders within the industry now. So, we always keep our eyes open, and we try and give everyone a chance." - Employer
Courses in sectors less affected by offence exclusions	For example, sectors such as construction where there is no requirement to work face to face with members of the public.
Employer engagement with the supplier in relation to the course design	There was an example of a waste management course incorporating biohazard training following employer feedback, which is perceived to be aligning provision to local employment need.
Supplier with ready employer contacts to bring in to meet prisoners	Employers see the practical work prisoners are completing, and prisoners value meeting potential employers. "What I find is when you actually go into prison, you can see [prisoners'] enthusiasm, because they can see [there are] potential employers when they come out." – Employer "Once [the supplier] is happy with the people on that course, they invite people like myself to have a one-day visit while they're on their course. We go around and introduce ourselves, watch them on the course. I have a brief 10-15-minute conversation with the prisoners, then nine times out of 10 and they're going to be released within two to six months [and then nearer their release the supplier contacts me again to see if I have suitable work]" - Employer In some cases, relationships between suppliers and employers are perceived to have improved at FSP 2.0.

What is perceived to have helped achieve job offers?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
	"The suppliers have had an opportunity to build those employer networks and build confidence amongst those employers…a more stable picture than it was at the beginning, where there was a lot of delivery happening, but those backend processes maybe weren't yet in place" – Staff
Prisoners putting into practice the steps towards employment (including practical support with talking to employers)	Perceived to increase prison leavers' confidence as well as their understanding of how to find employment. There is also a sense that prisoners can find the prospect of interacting with employers daunting and appreciate how course tutors support with preparing for an interview/ help mediate early contact with employers. "It gets you used to knowing how to get a job, in here they 'bring it to you', outside you don't know who to talk to" – Prisoner, M "I like that the course works with the employers directly"- Prisoner, M "A lot haven't heard of a disclosure letter, cover letter, star technique...[I] get dead proud of them when they use the techniques"- Supplier "Mock interviews help prisoners 'sell themselves', so it might [just be] understanding 'you are a parent, so you can already juggle XYZ'" - Staff
Where possible, bringing employers into the prison to conduct interviews directly	Valuable from an employer perspective. "On paper, we wouldn't have even considered him, but through having met him, we've given him that opportunity, and it absolutely changed his life around. He came off probation last September, and he's not re-offended, and when he's got that prolific re-offending pattern to his life, that's amazing." – Employer "A lot of prisoners when it comes to interviews get nervous but it's a nice interview, the way employers come in and mingle, and have a coffee with them" - Staff
Supplier's employment specialists conduct interviews then	The employment specialist approach was used at HMP Preston (the only Category B) with a perception this worked to conduct interviews without bringing multiple employers through security. The employment specialist did not meet prisoners ahead of interview, to keep the interview more 'realistic'. Some prisoners who had met the

What is perceived to have helped achieve job offers?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
connect prison leavers with employers OR interviews conducted on Teams	employment specialist provided positive feedback that they secured a job (although they were still in prison at the point of interview). Teams interviews were used elsewhere, with the suggestion this is now standard for many interviews. There remains the view, however, that in-person interviews can be particularly valuable for employers. “When my team have gone into prisons and they've met people in prison, they come out of a prison [wanting] to help these people. And when we get businesses into prison, they come up with a view of ‘these are incredible people’…the more people you can get in front of these cohorts, the more you will dispel the myths around prisons and people leaving prison and actually help them.” - Supplier
For women, individualised approaches may be particularly important	“We had these overarching goals of a couple of employers coming into each cohort and meeting the women and doing interviews and offering them a job. What we found is that a more individualised process is more successful because everybody's needs and views are different. Some are very happy to take any opportunity that you give me, whereas others have much more specialised needs and particularly in a place like County Durham [with poor public transport]” – Supplier. This approach focuses on individual needs post release (such as routine and structure in their lives, rebuilding relationships, alongside earning some money but perhaps just part-time). “We focus on the ‘job before the job’” “I ruined the career I had before, [now I need to develop] a positive mindset, work out where I fit in the world... [Once I am released the tutor] can be my case worker, help me find a role” – Prisoner, F
Conducting interviews before the end of the course	Enables participants to be interviewed within the main course delivery phase, avoiding the need to co-ordinate interviews for individual prisoners later.
PEL actively supporting where needed	For example, at one FSP prison, the PEL actively links with their counterpart in another FSP prison, aiming to keep transferring individuals on FSP pathway towards a job outcome wherever possible. “Now I am sentenced I might get transferred but they offer this course in Lancaster Farms and I’m hoping to go there” – Prisoner, M

What is perceived to have helped achieve job offers?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
Prisoners helped to understand, through course participation, the difference being in employment can make to their daily lives (short term and future potential)	This is perceived as particularly useful where an individual's preferred job may not be feasible immediately post release. "X has been a big employer for us. I worked with a lady in a prison on her first day of the course openly mocking people working in X. By the last day of the course, she told me she was desperate to work at X. And often it's because they've never been on that journey, never considered 'What would it be like to work at X? What would it be like to earn an extra £150 a week? What would my life look like if I had that extra money? What friends might I make? What are the other supplemental benefits?" – Supplier "We aren't just giving people jobs. I know that that was the overarching goal. But to me, it's when I see a mum having their kids back or a dad starting a job saying 'Now I can buy my kids a birthday present, or I can be present in my kids' life'." - Supplier
Allocations from the sentenced population	At FSP 2.0, FSP was successfully implemented for the remand population at one prison. Staff, however, warn that it is likely to be easier to achieve positive outcomes working with the sentenced population. "It'd be nice to if we could put [FSP] in more prisons and concentrate it on the ones where we are going to realistically get the outcomes. I think it's nice to offer it to [the remand population] but I think [although it works] fantastic at Preston, [it hasn't worked at other prisons with remand populations] for various reasons. So in terms of value for money, it needs to be where you've got sentenced prisoners". – Staff Specific enablers at HMP Preston included a high level of support from staff and the supplier combined with flexible course criteria and the suggestion that ongoing/ 'rolling' recruitment may be particularly suited to local employer requirements.
Employers who can offer jobs with flexible start dates	At one prison, flexible start dates were particularly helpful to allow those on remand to access job offers. The supplier worked with employers who engage in rolling recruitment (due to the nature of their sector) to offer job offers with start dates valid for 12 months. There is a perception this worked well. The extent to which prison leavers have been able to take up these jobs later, however, is unclear; this is also the case for other FSP job offers, i.e. it is unclear what proportion of job acceptances overall result in job starts.

What is perceived to have helped achieve job offers?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
	At another prison, where employers have already met prisoners during course delivery, the supplier contacts potential employers at the point of release. At this stage, with a clear release date/ location, the supplier asks employers if they have work in X area from X date.
Having the opportunity to extend FSP contracts created a decision point that supported overall positive outcomes	"Contracts that were working well could be extended" – Staff "That's where we've seen at FSP 2.0 the value for money and maximising the outcomes. Because we took the [prisons] who bought into it and the suppliers who were delivering. And with the suppliers early on, the majority were on performance plans" - Staff

Table 8.8: Detailed evidence on factors perceived to hinder job offers

Perceived barriers to job offers	Examples of why/where this barrier was particularly challenging
FSP delivery dates not aligning with release timelines	Some prisoners participated in FSP but were released and/or transferred ahead of interview. There was more disruption to FSP pathways at prisons with high remand populations and at both female prisons where the most common reason for withdrawal was 'Released (including automatic release date, home detention curfew and walk from court').
Unpredictable release locations and dates	It was challenging aligning release dates/locations with employer requirements, particularly through SDS40[17]. Employers' recruitment pipelines are changeable and subject to factors outside of the scope of FSP (e.g. economic conditions).
Suppliers without ready employer contacts to offer interview/ jobs	In some cases, suppliers have not generated the consistent employer engagement staff expected. "I think in the [procurement suppliers may] have spoken to employers who said in principle, yeah, of course we'll work with you, we'll offer interviews…But the reality was when they were ringing up saying 'right, we've got 10 prisoners for you to interview', unfortunately, those interviews weren't coming to fruition, so a lot had to go out and build pipelines…And I think it was a lot more work [than envisaged as] some

[17] Standard Determinate Sentences 40 allows certain prisoners serving a 'standard determinate sentence' (with a 50% conditional release point) to be released at the 40% point of their sentence, subject to eligibility criteria.

Perceived barriers to job offers	Examples of why/where this barrier was particularly challenging
	[suppliers] had to employ employment specialists because it's quite a niche area" – Staff
Sometimes a lack of clarity over how many genuine vacancies exist at the point of interview	This may be an issue where interviews take place via Teams or where an employment specialist completes interviews (i.e. where employers are not on-site conducting interviews themselves). It is unclear how widespread this issue is (and must be placed in context of the evidenced job offers achieved). "Someone came in, but it was not someone from recruitment. They said 'Out of the 10, I would only give 7 a job', but what does this mean...saying they are job ready, but not having a job available for them?" – Staff "It's not an actual job… it's a 'we may have a job for you'…. [I'm] not surprised at the high number of job offers because they are just ticking a box and saying that they would give them a job" – Staff "Do employers have enough vacancies to offer roles? If companies recruit off live vacancies, [perhaps they] can't offer [jobs to] a full cohort [even if they interview successfully]" – Supplier
Some prisoners may change their mind about wanting to work in the sector	Despite the best efforts at point of allocation to FSP, "places are being filled because people want to do the dumper roller course and get the CSCS card. They are not doing it because they want a job in the area" – Staff. Some prisoners may view an FSP job offer as their 'backstop'. Although they want to complete FSP and are motivated to secure work post release, they have a preference to be in a different sector/area if possible.
Some courses may not meet employer need	There is the example of the barista course (which was discontinued): 'Starbucks can do this [training] in a couple of days, so is a 4-week course needed? – Staff
Some job offers unsuitable	There was an example of jobs offered not sufficiently linked to the course content. It is unclear how widespread this issue was, but FSP was designed to be sector-specific training. "The employer fixed air conditioning units, nothing to do with construction" – Staff. There was another instance where zero-hours contracts were offered (though these were reportedly stopped).

Perceived barriers to job offers	Examples of why/where this barrier was particularly challenging
Women may find chosen sectors are less easily accessible	This was problematic in relation to the caseworker course. “If you look at the top male dominated job sectors in the UK, it's construction, engineering, very practical skills-based work, none of which really have a barrier to entry because of a criminal conviction. For women, the top three female dominated industries are nursing, education and care, all of which you can't enter with a criminal conviction.” – Supplier
Lack of clarity as to the roles of the supplier, prison staff and New Futures Network (NFN)[18] in sourcing FSP jobs	There is an expectation jobs can come from various sources and better partnership working may improve outcomes. “Nationally if NFN are looking for 20 prisoners and there’s 10 people who are on FSP, NFN’s still got 10 vacancies. Why would we not let our cohort interview for that too? it's not saying to our supplier, don't bother getting any employers. But it's exploring if they've got vacancies and they're used to taking on people leaving prison, let's link in with that as well”- Staff “We would love more employer engagement, FSP and NFN should be more linked up” - Supplier “It’s down to having a better ongoing partnership, knowing you’ve got someone lined up for that cohort. People do come in [but it depends] which company it is and how far away they are” – Supplier
Changes to employers’ personnel /policies	In one example, changes are perceived to have affected job offers. “[Employer] used to come in face to face, and it worked really well, a really good employer. [Then] interviews went online and they changed the eligibility criteria and the [new contact] is quite strict, a lot of crime is shop lifting so those are barred and a methadone script is a firm no, so less and less people are [interviewed]” – Supplier

Table 8.9: Detailed evidence on factors supporting move into (and continuation of) employment

What is perceived to have helped post release?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
Contact ahead of release continuing	Cordle & Gale’s (2025) evidence review highlights the value of transitional support initiated whilst the individual is in prison.

[18] New Futures Network (NFN) are a specialist part of HMPPS which attracts and supports employers to work with prisons in England and Wales.

What is perceived to have helped post release?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
through transition into the community	At one FSP prison, there are delivery gaps between cohorts and the course tutor provides TTG support in that gap, working in the community instead of the prison. At another prison, the employment specialist conducting interviews in the prison is the same person who later provides TTG support. Elsewhere, there is regular phone contact with the prisoner pre-release. “If a prisoner has X number of weeks left on sentence, he will have X amount of phone calls with us. It is paramount to have this in place…If they can’t have the phone calls and they get released; we have lost them” – Supplier
Supplier facilitates digital contact	Some prison leavers are given basic phones with sufficient credit for contact with the employer (and supplier). This means the supplier can prompt the prison leaver when they need to complete onboarding tasks and/or engage with their new employer via the phone. There is a sense this is important as increasingly digital recruitment and/or onboarding processes are used which may overwhelm prison leavers. “They might think they have done it all before because they have a CV, but I help them get a digital copy onto a phone”– Supplier
Supplier continues to facilitate linking the prison leaver with a job	At one prison, employers have already met prison leavers when visiting during FSP delivery. This supplier is well-connected and trusted within their sector, and in some cases, the employer asks the supplier to complete the interview and recommend a prison leaver. “Some employers will ask us for the best people” - Supplier “[Supplier] automatically vets them, he gets all the details for me, and makes sure they're decent guys and they're suitable for the role” – Employer
Supplier support tailored to individual needs	Perception works well where support is tailored but maintains a strong focus on employment-related needs. For example, accompanying the prison leaver on day 1 or linking them with relevant organisations if they need work clothes. “We help them get to the first day, for example accessing Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) flexible funds to get a bus pass, and help them understand expectations in work, i.e. you can't just call in sick on Day 2 because you feel very tired after Day 1…And it’s all the interconnecting bits to get them to that first day that makes things

What is perceived to have helped post release?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
	really, really challenging. We had a guy very recently, very motivated to work, willing to travel 90 minutes to work on 3 buses. He just didn't have the money to get a bus pass. He'd left a message for his work coach but the work coach was off. So we bought him a bus pass, solved his problem and got him to work." - Supplier Also potentially supporting with benefits claims. "The other thing that's good is if they've already started the benefits claim…informing benefits if their hours go up, so they don't end up getting done for benefit fraud. But other than that, [suppliers] shouldn't really be touching housing, mental health or substance misuse. The reality is maybe just offering help to work out how to get to an appointment." – Staff One supplier highlights support should be empowering: "Encourage [prison leavers] to be active participants…people in prison are treated like children" - Supplier
Suppliers liaise between employers and probation to support jobs	There is one example where the supplier liaised between probation and the employer so shift start/finish times could be accommodated within licence conditions. In other cases, the supplier is a contact point for the employer if there are wider concerns. "We normally speak to [supplier] and say, 'Dave's not been in for a couple of days'. Typically, if somebody's been recalled, you don't really find out about it, they just don't turn in for work. So then you'd speak to [the supplier] and they would [speak to] their contacts and [then you hear] unfortunately he's been recalled, but he'll be back out in X weeks" - Employer
Suppliers with intrinsic motivation to help prison leavers	Although paid for evidenced job offers, some suppliers are highly motivated to support prison leavers beyond that point. "If I never got into [this] industry, I would never have had all the opportunities I have now" – Supplier Some suppliers have provided exceptional levels of support post release. Examples include speaking by phone outside of office hours; driving prison leavers to work; helping repair a bike to get to work; driving 200 miles to take someone to an interview; visiting them in hospital.

What is perceived to have helped post release?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
	"We picked her up from prison, we gave her a little phone with a SIM with six months of calls and texts and internet. We took her to the rehab and she did her 12 steps…she went on to work in the cafe, which we were very proud and become a volunteer facilitator and now she is a full-time paid member of staff" – Supplier Overall, the level of support offered is perceived as beneficial, but future procurement should consider defining the scope of appropriate support. "[Supplier] has actually ended up paying for hotels for people, which is at their cost and that's their decision. But they've got to be very careful then because people have restrictions on them. [It's] been quite difficult at times to say, 'look, you're doing this with the best will in the world and it's honourable, but you've got to be really careful because by default you could be putting people in a more vulnerable position'." - Staff
Jobs starting as soon as possible	Both staff and prisoners feel it is important to start work very soon after release.
Supportive employers who can offer flexibility	"FSP needs employers who buy into it. We work with a demolition company who know the hours prisoners work in prison aren't very long compared to work on the outside [and can be a bit flexible at the start]" - Supplier "[One of our FSP successes] he doesn't drive, he went to prison for driving offences and had his licence taken off him. So, we pick him up every day, we take him to work. And then if we can't pick him up, he catches a bus or a train." - Employer "We've had some family situations or mental health struggles and, we've said 'take your time, seek the advice you need, get yourself sorted and keep us up to date'. I think they appreciate that little bit of flexibility but it's nothing that we wouldn't do with a normal employee" – Employer "We set up a six-week paid work trial through our social enterprise. That gives both us and them the opportunity to see whether the job's right for them, whether they're a good fit, whether they think it's sustainable before we launch into a permanent contract with them. I do well-being check-ins a couple of times a week, but it's also been really beneficial for us having [the supplier] still there as part of the ongoing

What is perceived to have helped post release?	Example(s) of why this element was important, and/or examples of where it was perceived to have worked well
	contact because they have all the knowledge of the prison services, the probation services, what community services can support the guys. So it's very much a three-way – us, the supplier and the individual all working together to try and make this sustainable" - Employer
Supportive family/friends	"Often, honestly, the people it is easier to keep in employment are people who have family support, i.e. they've got a family to return to, maybe a home to return to, they've got that scaffolding around their lives. Those who are released homeless or into Approved Premises, it's much, much harder to overcome barriers because actually their life is very often better in prison" - Supplier
Prison leaver motivated to work in that specific role	Individual motivation is key to starting (and continuing) in any role. "We employed three. One chose to move on of their own free will. She is doing a different job now, just because she wanted to, no ill will. One was very much not suitable. She fell quite quickly back into addiction. She isn't back in prison, which is good, but she's no longer working for us. And then one is still working for us. She's a member of my team, she's fantastic, actually" - Employer

Table 8.10: Detailed evidence on factors hindering move into (and continuation of) employment

Perceived barriers post release	Examples of why/where this barrier was particularly challenging
Challenges maintaining contact between the prison leaver and the supplier	"Could be a case where an employer is waiting for a person to start but we don't know where the prisoner is" – Supplier
Perception FSP's TTG focus on employment is not sufficiently aligned with the probation service	From an employer perspective, there is a suggestion the probation service could be more flexible with prison leavers. "Every morning he got up, he got two buses to us, was never late, got two buses home again, and then probation, unfortunately, put his probation meetings 2 hours away in the other direction! Despite us saying to them, any chance he can move his probation meetings [nearer] or could we do them on Teams? We will be there to verify that he's there, but total refusal. That made things very, very difficult, but he did it and after four weeks, we agreed to give him a permanent contract." – Employer

Perceived barriers post release	Examples of why/where this barrier was particularly challenging
	"Probation doesn't speak about employment straight away, more concerned about risk, but you end up reducing risk by giving people a job, so that needs to be an early part of the conversation" - Staff "There's a big preconception from probation that if they're in the Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 (CAS3), they can't work because they would have to pay full rent. That's not actually the case [though] they do have to contribute [some earnings] if they are working" – Staff
Employers may require geographical mobility	Particularly challenging in more rural areas, if prison leavers need to travel further to work and are dependent on public transport. In some sectors (e.g. construction), employers may have work in different areas at different times. "If they live in Cardiff or Swansea, it's easy to get them to and from work. But if someone lives in Cardiff and I've got work in Bristol, there's a struggle to get to work" – Employer
Competing demands on prison leavers' post release	For example, one employer reports a prison leaver experiencing difficulties with maintaining their job due to having a young family and needing to be home by a certain time.
Recalls	Very challenging from an employer perspective. Even where an individual is an excellent employee, there is an admin burden attached to restarting employment. "We've had one person that has been recalled a couple of times. We've said, when you get released, engage and we can restart your employment, which we've done twice with this one person. And then they got recalled again, we just had to say, it's been one too many times... if you need a reference, we can confirm when you've worked and you've been very good, but we just can't keep [employing you]" - Employer
Wider post release support needs	E.g. factors outside the scope of FSP, such as accommodation, substance misuse needs etc.

Appendix D- References

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