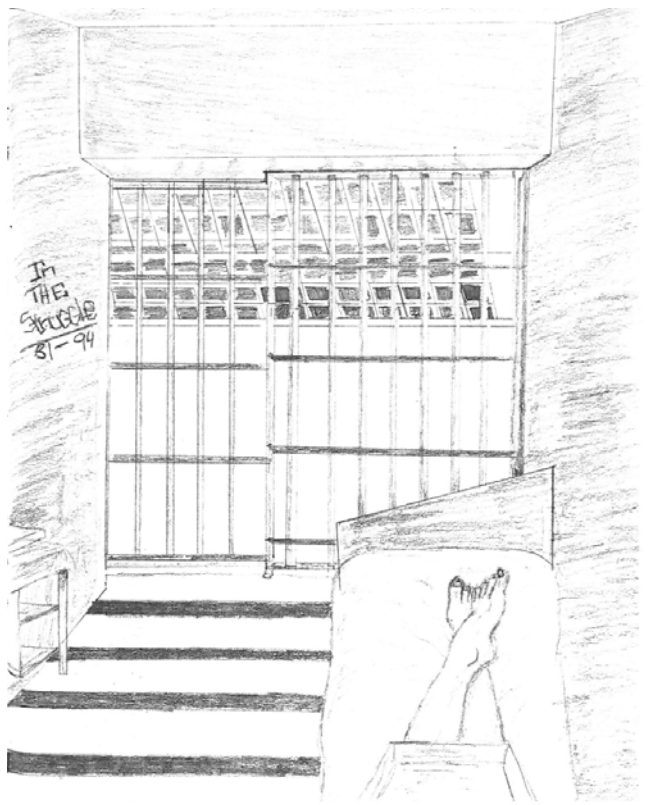




# Inside Education: The Aspirations and Realities of prison education for under 25s in the London area

A report for Sir John Cass's Foundation



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### **Sir John Cass's Foundation**

Sir John Cass's Foundation is a leading independent City of London based educational charity which promotes participation and achievement in education through funding to schools and organisations. It takes its name from Sir John Cass (1661-1718) who was a City of London politician and philanthropist.

The Foundation not only supports seven educational institutions in the nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, which bear the name of the Founder, but has also provided substantial assistance to a large number of major educational initiatives in London. This has included support for the Centre for Education in Criminal Justice System at the Institute of Education, as prisoner education programmes form part of the Foundation's Grants Strategy.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research/60128.html>

CONTENTS

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Summary ..... 2

Introduction..... 3

Background ..... 4

    The Prison Population..... 4

    Education Provision in Prisons ..... 5

Collecting the data..... 8

    Prisons Sampled ..... 8

    Data Collected ..... 8

    Good Practice ..... 8

    Confidentiality ..... 8

Findings ..... 9

    Educational Aims ..... 9

    Curriculum Offer ..... 10

    Organisational Perspectives ..... 21

    Pedagogical Issues ..... 23

Conclusions: Issues for the future and good practice ..... 28

Recommendations ..... 30

Appendices ..... 31

    Glossary ..... 31

    Adult Curriculum Levels ..... 32

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## SUMMARY

Education and training are acknowledged internationally as one method of reducing re-offending and social exclusion. This may be particularly true for young people and young adults where their peers are engaged in the serious business of gaining qualifications and work experience. However, the difficulties of providing education in prison contexts are well-documented. Funded by Sir John Cass's Foundation, this appreciative enquiry into the education for young people under the age of 25 in prisons in the London region was undertaken to document the characteristics of provision, to look for evidence of good practice and for areas that would benefit from future focus.

London, with around 7,000 people being held in custody at any one time, houses just under 10 per cent of the prison population of the UK. Around 1,000 of this group are held in Youth Offender Institutions or in an establishment for under 25s. A further, unspecified number of under 25s are held in adult prisons. The prison service does not normally recognise under 25s as a special group.

Educational aims are heavily influenced by targets set by the Education Funding Agency (under 18s) and the Skills Funding Agency (18+). At least 80 per cent of the budget is compulsorily allocated to hard-core targets that have qualifications up to Adult Literacy/Numeracy or Key Skills Level 2. Whilst this was seen by some as important to ensure a vigorous and focussed provision, there were questions raised as to whether more holistic educational provision was necessary.

Despite a range of upheavals (the summer riots of 2011 and re-bidding for education contracts) and the underlying difficulties of security issues and the short average lengths of stay (around eight weeks), a wide range of education and vocational training was offered, including a range of innovative projects to capture learners' imagination.

Qualifications achieved by learners were mainly at Entry Level 3 and Level 1. Although providing a valuable basis for progression, such levels are not sufficient in themselves to support reliable re-entry to employment. Assessment data demonstrated that learners were able to pursue higher level qualifications. This has implications for both prison provision and for progression on release.

Organisational challenges in prison education have been documented previously and were re-iterated in our enquiry: short lengths of stay, security issues, movement of prisoners, etc. Some prisons had developed techniques of minimising the effect of some of these realities.

Key themes that emerge for future practice include greater focus on taking account of prisoners' needs in terms of their age; their need for challenging programmes and; ensuring that education and training become core priorities in prisons.

## INTRODUCTION

This study was undertaken over a period of nine months to look for evidence of good practice in prison education and training in the London region and for areas that would benefit from future focus. It was funded by Sir John Cass's Foundation and, while it looks at the issues across the prison estate, holds to the specific focus of the Foundation which is to look at the issues which affect young people under the age of 25.

A great deal is expected from prison and its various departments. Society and government anticipate that a period of incarceration, treatment and intervention can turn prisoners, many of whom have negative or fragmented life histories, away from a life of crime. Because the expectations and investments are high, prisons are under constant pressure to raise standards, provide evidence, cope with ongoing cuts, while being subject to supervision and scrutiny from various inspectorates such as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and Ofsted. In addition, education providers must bid anew for their contracts in a competitive environment every three years. This can often lead to a feeling of being 'under siege'. Given these issues and concerns, this study was undertaken from a perspective of appreciative inquiry. The aim has been to document the positive achievements that are being made as well as being mindful of areas that might require additional support, development or improvement.

The focus on the under 25s reflects the contemporary status of young adults as taking longer to successfully negotiate the transition between childhood and adulthood. The collapse of the youth labour market and the expansion of the education system<sup>3</sup> mean that education and training are becoming increasingly important for young adults. Latest figures show that 42 per cent of this age group have enrolled in Higher Education alone.<sup>4</sup> Educational choices made during this period have a particularly critical role in determining future occupational outcomes.<sup>5</sup> Thus seeking to understand and contribute to the development of the education and training of this age group is important. It has to be said that this age group is not specifically catered for in prison. With the exception of one establishment (referred to later in the report), young people are divided into three categories under 18s (juveniles), 18 – 20 year olds, and adults. We therefore concluded that our range of prisons should include all three age groups.

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<sup>3</sup> Furlong and Cartmel, 2007. *Young people and social change: New perspectives*. Maidenhead: McGraw Hill; Symonds and Hagell, 2011. Adolescents and the organisation of their school time: changes over recent decades in England, *Educational Review*, 63, 291-312

<sup>4</sup> BIS, 2004. *Participation Rates in Higher Education: Academic Years 2006/2007 – 2009/2010*

<sup>5</sup> Bynner, J. (2004) Literacy, Numeracy and Employability: Evidence from the British birth cohort studies. *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, 13. 31-48; Schoon, I. (2003), *Teenage aspirations for education and work and long-term outcomes: Evidence from the 1958 National Child Development Study and the 1970 British Cohort Study*. Paper presented to the ESRC seminars on 'How to motivate (demotivated) 14-16 year old learners, with particular reference to work related education and training'; seminar held 16 May 2003 at CEP, London. Available online at <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/events/seminars/motivation/schoon.pdf> (accessed 13 June 2007), CEP, London.

## BACKGROUND

### THE PRISON POPULATION

Adult prisons in England and Wales currently house around 87,870 people in 139 establishments, and young people under the age of 18 are held in either a Secure Children's Home (SCH), a Secure Training Centre (STC) or a Young Offender Institution (YOI).<sup>6</sup> The Youth Justice Board is responsible for placing young people in custody and typically those aged under 15 are held in an SCH and those over 15 are held in either a YOI or STC. Only 17-year-old female young people are normally placed in a YOI<sup>7</sup>. At December 2011 there were 1,444 juveniles in prison, 250 of whom were awaiting trial and 85 awaiting sentence. In addition to the juveniles in prison there were 268 12-15 year olds in privately run STCs and 158 in local authority SCHs. Young adult offenders are classed as aged between 18-20 and also held in YOIs. Of the 7,848 18-20 year olds in prison at December 2011, 1,643 were remand prisoners either awaiting trial or sentencing. One half of the prison population aged 18-20 are prisoners sentenced to more than one year's custody. Two main forms of crime are violence against the person and robbery. There are also a small number of specialist units which house 18–24 year olds. Women prisoners are in the minority in England and Wales, currently numbering around 4,200, 4.8% of the total population. The UK has the most privatised prison system in Europe. In England and Wales, approaching 10,000 prisoners (11.6% of the total prisoner population) are held in private prisons.<sup>8</sup>

In London the prison population is around 7,000, just under 10 per cent of the entire prison population of the UK, and the number of those under 20 in YOIs is approximately 750. A further 250 young adults aged between 18 and 24 are held in a training prison specifically designed to meet their training needs. Characteristics of the profile of the prison population in London reflect those in the rest of the country and include low attainment at school, poor self-image, a high level of mental health issues, and high level of drug addiction<sup>9</sup>. However, due to the cosmopolitan nature of the capital, the number of minority ethnic prisoners is significantly higher than in other parts of the country.

In August 2011, during the term of this project, the criminal justice system had to deal with pockets of civil unrest across major cities in England, including a substantial amount of criminal activity in the London area. According to the *Statistical bulletin on the public*

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<sup>6</sup> Prison population statistics (2012). SN/SG/4334. This is the source is used for the statistics referred to in this paragraph unless otherwise stated.

<sup>7</sup><http://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/types-of-offender/juveniles>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/ProjectsResearch/PrivateSectorPrisons>, accessed May 2012.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed description see [http://www.loncett.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc\\_198.pdf](http://www.loncett.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_198.pdf)

*disorder of 6th to 9th August 2011 – February 2012 update*<sup>10</sup> comparisons by age show that overall 27 per cent of those brought before the courts for offences relating to the public disorder were aged 10-17 (juveniles) and that a further 26 per cent were aged 18-20. Of the 1,896 brought before the courts in the London area, 25 per cent were juveniles.

The total number of under 25s sentenced was 1,116, with 662 being given a custodial sentence. This change in population resulted in a disruption to the everyday life of a number of prisons and contributed to a general atmosphere of instability for all prison staff, including education departments who were also undergoing the tendering process for the future provision of education in the prisons<sup>11</sup>. This feeling of instability and uncertainty is a recurrent and influential theme which we refer to later in this report.

## EDUCATION PROVISION IN PRISONS

In an overarching Recommendation, the Council of Europe (1989)<sup>12</sup> proposed that ‘the right to [prison] education is fundamental’. In England and Wales it is legislated that ‘Every prisoner able to profit from the education facilities provided at a prison shall be encouraged to do so’.<sup>13</sup> However, of the adult population in prison, only around 25 per cent will be receiving education of some kind. It is hoped that the implementation of new policy (BIS, 2011)<sup>14</sup> will provide greater incentives, opportunities, and a clearer vision of what prisoner learners can expect from the educational offer.

For young people in the juvenile estate, education and training are encompassed within an aspect of the regime focussing on ‘Reducing Offending’ which has a designated outcome ‘To deliver an education, training and employment programme which meets the needs of individuals and provides every young person involved in its activities with an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and timetable’.<sup>15</sup> They are expected to take part in 15 hours of education weekly, and a further ten hours weekly of purposeful activity. For those below school leaving age there is a mandatory requirement to provide at least 15 hours of education weekly.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/statistics/criminal-justice-stats/august-public-disorder-stats-bulletin-230212.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefing%20December%202011.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Council of Europe Recommendation No. R(89)12 Of The Committee Of Ministers To Member States On Education In Prison [http://www.epea.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=53&Itemid=66](http://www.epea.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=53&Itemid=66)

<sup>13</sup> The Prison Rules 1999, Rule 32. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/728/contents/made>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/m/11-828-making-prisons-work-skills-for-rehabilitation>

<sup>15</sup> PSI 28/2009 Care and Management of Young People MoJ/NOMS

<sup>16</sup> The Young Offender Institution Rules 2000, Rule 38. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2000/3371/contents/made>

Education departments in prison and YOIs are ultimately funded and overseen by the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS), with separate arms for juveniles and the adult prison population. The Young People's Learning Agency was responsible for the funding of education for young people in custody and as of April 2012 is part of the Education Funding Agency (EFA) under OLASS. More directly, education providers bid for the contract to manage education departments, currently on a three-yearly basis, frequently resulting in three-yearly changes in management and the employment conditions for teachers on the ground. OLASS providers range from FE Colleges to private organisations such as A4E and the stated aim is that:

offenders, in prisons and supervised in the community, according to need, should have access to learning and skills, which enables them to gain the skills and qualifications they need to hold down a job and have a positive role in society.<sup>17</sup>

In many cases, vocational training is the responsibility of the prison, not the education department. A report produced by LONCETT<sup>18</sup> described the situation:

...education and training classes in prisons are taught and delivered by a combination of teachers from the Lifelong Learning Sector and vocational instructors mainly employed by the Prison Service. These two main groups of teachers are employed under different conditions by different agencies, and according to anecdotal accounts, each may have allegiance to rather different kinds of culture, tradition and ethos regarding learning, teaching and training (2008, p.2).

Thus prison education is subject to a wide range of constraints of organisational and pedagogic nature. They include the attitude of the prison management and Governors, relationships between different agents within the institution, the state and age of the buildings, the education provider, the intake and size of the prison, the qualification and background of the teachers.

While multi-agency work is actively encouraged across the prison and juvenile estates, nevertheless, it is made complex by the different cultures and policy agendas involved. A further feature that is unique to prison education is its isolation. Not only is the provision isolated from the outside world in general, but teachers are also isolated from their colleagues in similar teaching and learning settings. As one might expect, the prison regime permeates though every part of the provision and most importantly, affects the identity of the learner as well: his/her identity is as prisoner as well as learner.

All education provision is subject to strict targets which delineate what is offered. For those aged 18 plus, targets are set by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). At least 80 per cent of the budget is compulsorily allocated to hard-core targets that have qualifications

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<sup>17</sup> The vision for the Offender Learning and Skill's Service, <http://olass.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/>

<sup>18</sup> Initial teacher training project for teachers and instructors in prison and offender education, LONCETT 2008.



up to Adult Literacy/Numeracy or Key Skills Level 2 (Level 2)<sup>19</sup> as an outcome and at most 20 per cent to soft skills such as self-awareness and assertiveness training. In the case of under 18s, the education programme must enable prisoners to achieve nationally accredited qualifications in key and basic skills up to Level 2, though delivery of education is prioritised for those with basic or key skills at Level 1 or below. The Offender's Learning Journey (both for adults and for young people) sets out quite clearly the basis for these targets and the aims of prison education more generally<sup>20</sup>.

Prisons generally are under tremendous pressure to deliver to a range of targets and it has been noted by HMIP that figures can be exaggerated or misrepresented in order to try and fulfil the various requirements of various Ministries.<sup>21</sup> Educational achievement data can take various forms. The disjointed nature of the system, with its ability to impose short sentences, move prisoners around at short notice, and the possibility of release on parole, has an impact on how achievement data might be presented and also on how many learners can access education. For example, the data may focus on a few learners undertaking several qualifications while some learners with a very short stay may not access education at all, but this kind of detail is not captured in standard reporting. There is, however, a much larger group who attend long enough to achieve, and a small number of offenders who aspire to Higher Education (HE) or work-related qualifications.

The emphasis on low-level qualifications may benefit from being considered in the wider context of the debate around the suitability of provision of education and training in the Further Education (FE) sector. The Wolf Report (2010)<sup>22</sup> states clearly that:

The staple offer for between a quarter and a third of the post-16 cohort is a diet of low-level vocational qualifications, most of which have little to no labour market value. (p.7)

If this is true of the offer of education and training for most 14-19 year olds in FE Colleges and schools, it is all the more true, as we show in later sections, for those in custody.

More generally, it has been argued that the focus of targets on qualifications as opposed to 'soft skills' defines the character of education provided. The question of what constitutes good practice in prison education has no unequivocal answer. However, it would seem that one cannot measure good practice simply by referring to achievement, although that is

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<sup>19</sup> Levels and Entry Levels in this report refer to Adult literacy/Numeracy and Key Skills Levels, see Appendix 7.2 for equivalent levels to National Curriculum and National Qualifications Framework.

<sup>20</sup> [The Offender's Learning Journey, Learning and skills provision for adult offenders in England](#), 2004, LSC (revised 2008)

[The Offender's Learning Journey, Learning and skills provision for juvenile offenders in England](#), 2004, LSC

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc0506/hc08/0883/0883.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Wolf, A. (2011). Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report. <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/The%20Wolf%20Report.pdf>. Accessed May 2012

clearly important. The opinions of the educators we surveyed are reported below under Educational Aims.

## COLLECTING THE DATA

A number of sources were used to gain an overview of the provision being offered to the under 25s prison population coming from the London area: interviews with education staff and with Heads of Learning and Skills, questionnaires circulated to education staff, seminars held for those involved in prison education, inspection reports, self-assessment reports (SARs) and achievement data.

## PRISONS SAMPLED

Three adult male prisons, all category B, were sampled, one women's prison for adult women and young offenders, one category C male prison for under 25s, and three YOIs for male prisoners.

## DATA COLLECTED

In each of the prisons education staff were interviewed, typically the Education Manager, and on occasion the Head of Learning and Skills also. They told us about their views in general of the aims of education and training, the range of provision they offered, the achievements of their learners, examples of good practice, gaps in provision and areas of concern, things they felt had a strong influence on what they could offer and about staff training. In some prisons a wider range of education staff also completed questionnaires covering the same issues.

Inspection Reports, Self-Assessment Reports (SARs) and Achievement Data were collected from each of the prisons.

These provided more detailed quantitative information of levels of provision offered, the extent to which learners completed courses and achieved qualifications and, in the case of the Inspection Reports, some interviews with prisoners. They also offered a different perspective, enabling a more nuanced overview of provision to be built up.

Two seminars were given, covering topics of interest to the prison educators who attended from a range of YOIs and adult prisons. During the seminars participants identified a range of examples of good practice and gaps in provision and also completed our questionnaire.

## GOOD PRACTICE

This study has identified aspects of good practice on which both teaching staff and more formal quality processes, including HMIP, agree. It is not possible to identify which of these practices has contributed most to outcomes beyond the prison gate, such as a reduction in re-offending or raised employability. Understandably, education providers focused their attention on their provision with relatively little, perhaps too little, feedback on their impact for prisoners on release.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

The prisons and staff who participated in this study are not named, to maintain confidentiality. For this reason, case studies and pictures are not attributed to a named institution.

## FINDINGS

The findings are presented under the headings of Educational Aims, Curriculum Offer, Organisational Perspectives and Pedagogical Issues. As will be seen, it is at times almost impossible to disentangle these strands fully, but generally they reflect the complexity of prison education. Where possible, explicit reference is made to the provision in YOIs, but given the overall percentage of under 25s that make up the prison population and the fact that approximately three quarters of under 25's are re-convicted within two years<sup>23</sup>, we can only assume that the adult provision includes a high percentage of learners between the ages of 20 and 25.

### EDUCATIONAL AIMS

Providing learners with the opportunity to gain qualifications, of any level, was seen as part of their core business by many of the prison education staff we questioned. Especially for young people the experience of success was seen as empowering and a necessary step to progression. Even getting young people to sit a qualification more or less on entry was a passage to studying a more challenging curriculum. However, most prison educators felt that, in addition to achievement, it was important to be able to develop the learning skills and self-image of those they worked with, neither of which gains explicit recognition. The 'holistic' learning approach was considered valuable for several reasons. Firstly, most prisoners, though not all, have a low level of educational attainment and many have retained a poor view of the statutory education they received. Changing this attitude is important for their future development. Learning takes place over a lifetime and changing people's views of learning, and themselves as learners, has been found to be as important as the specific subject matter of the lessons.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, a very high proportion of prisoners have mental and physical health issues and disabilities, often accompanied by low self-confidence and low self-esteem. Providing the context in a classroom in which a learner's self-esteem can be raised is a strand running through many of the responses that were provided by staff as to what they thought the point of education was. An adult who has low self-esteem and low self-confidence is unlikely to learn well and unlikely too to be able to perform well in the world of work after release. Art, drama and music were mentioned as very valuable in this context. Finally, some considered that they should aspire to more than providing skills and that education also provides the opportunity for enrichment.

Some teachers and managers commented that the current aim of education appears to be to up-skill a learner within a narrow skills-driven, employment-oriented curriculum. The arts are often seen either as a welcome distraction or a way in for learners to take more academic classes.

They also commented that a great deal of learning that takes place in prison is not captured by the statistics as achievement, simply because the learner has either been

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<sup>23</sup> Locked Up Potential: A Strategy for reforming prisons and rehabilitating prisoners  
<http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/client/downloads/CSJLockedUpPotentialFULLrEPORT.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Schuller, T. (2009) *Crime and Lifelong Learning*: IFLL Thematic Paper 5. <http://shop.niace.org.uk/ifll-crime-download.html>

released or moved on to another prison before their qualification can be completed. At times it appears there is a conflict between the need to ensure achievement, which is the criterion on which funding is allocated to prison education, and the ability to meet the learners' need to develop other skills and qualities which can subsequently form the base of a positive learning attitude. There is a need for a model for informal learning that could be used with consistency across all areas of purposeful activity, including education and training in prison. Little attention or kudos is given to the arts as providing a source of imagination, expression, confidence-building or as nurturing the soul<sup>25</sup> in its own right.

However, it was also argued that the current achievement target focus should be seen in the context of the journey prison education under OLASS and the LSC/SFA. For all their shortcomings, achievement targets have supported a greater focus on the learner's need to have a purposeful experience and an outcome they are aware of and has some meaning. One respondent remarked that:

Only three years ago there were no achievement targets in the contract, only delivery hours. Education then often had very little purpose, as there were no monitoring benchmarks, except the fact that a teacher was in room, and it had been like that for many years. Offenders could come into class for weeks or years with no measured progressed. Look at the National Audit Office report from about 5 years ago. One of the first teaching observations I did in OLASS was watching a class of adult offenders colour in cartoon characters photocopied from a children's book. Prison education nationally for all age groups before OLASS was over 80 per cent unsatisfactory.

From this perspective, the next stage is to refine targets and outcomes to achieve more purposeful results for the individuals.

## CURRICULUM OFFER

In prisons there are two estates: adult and juvenile. The under 25s bridge the two. YOIs are exclusively concerned with this age group, typically young people aged under 18. In the adult estate it is not possible to separate out the under 25s, with the exception of one purpose-built unit for the under 25 population. Originally there were moves to make the divisions under 18s, 18-24 and then adults but this did not come to fruition. The age ranges are important since they influence the curriculum offer.

For those up to 18 years of age education is mandated, but although almost every young person goes to education, the curriculum offered is narrower than that possible in a school, partly because of the relatively small numbers, partly because of the average lengths of stay and also because of security issues. Participation rates in education or training for those on remand was much lower, at round 40%.

In adult prisons the curriculum offer is centred on functional skills, education and vocational training. Educational provision is offered part-time often with the number of

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<sup>25</sup> Coffield

places split between morning and afternoon. Vocational provision is sometimes offered on a full-time basis. In contrast to young people, adults in prison may work full-time within the prison. For these adults there is a lack of education provision during the evenings or at weekends to support their development. It is worth emphasising that education departments did not report making any distinction based on the age of prisoners. Those under 25 were not prioritised for example and there were no official records of the age ranges of learners. Overall, the rates of those participating in education averaged around 27 per cent and in vocational training at around 10 per cent. As the focus of this study is on provision for those under 25s within the London area, a case study has been included on a purpose-built institution that seeks to address the needs of the under 25 population. Participation rates in education and training in this specialised facility were far higher than in the adult prisons surveyed.



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<sup>26</sup> © L Pickersgill

<sup>27</sup> © details with the authors

### **Case Study: Purpose-built unit for the under 25s**

Similar to all adult prisons and YOIs the curriculum on offer supports academic achievement, vocational training, interventions and PE activities. Provision includes mechanics (motorbike repair), construction activity, waste management, bicycle repair, barbering and wellbeing, catering, media and reprographics, broadcasting and media studies, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), job related studies and offending behaviour interventions.

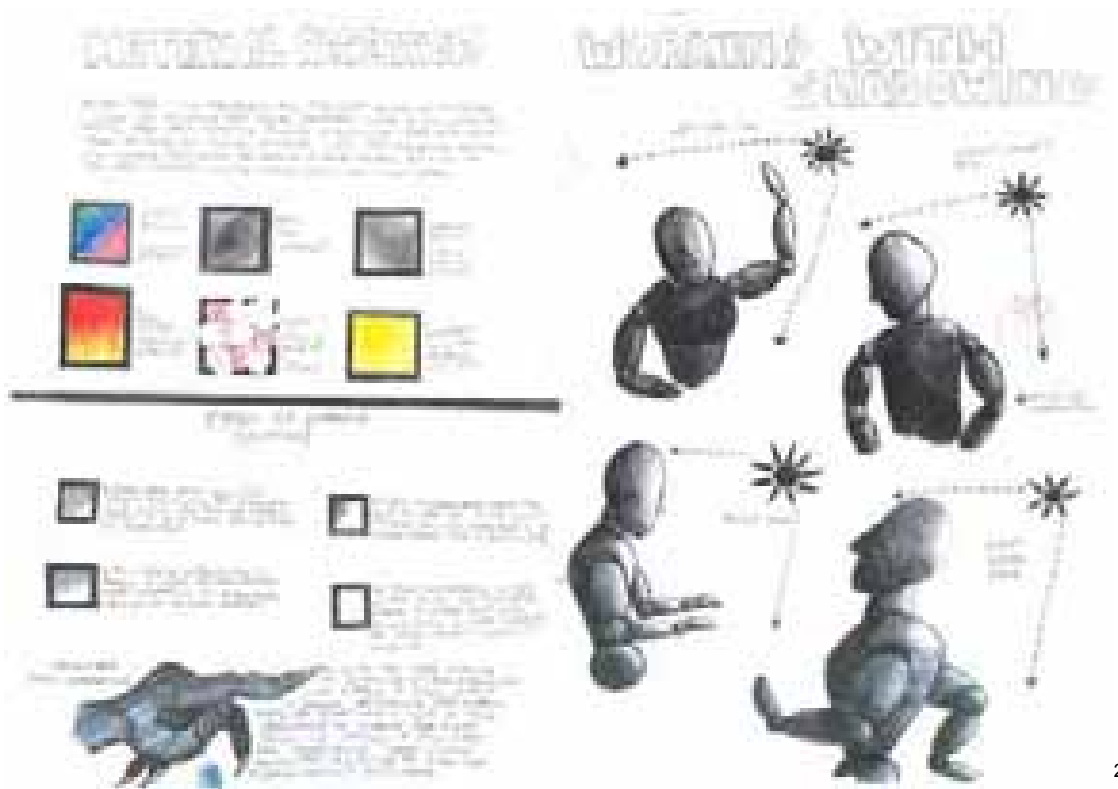
All education programmes were offered on a part-time basis, with sufficient places for 65% of all inmates at any one time and an additional 20% of full-time places in the vocational workshops. This represented substantially more education or training placements than were available in the adult prisons surveyed. Subjects offered included information and communications technology (ICT), art, graphic design, media, personal and social development, and business enterprise. Most prisoners started at Level 1, some progressed to Level 2, and in a few cases Level 3. Basic English, mathematics and ESOL were offered from Entry Level to Level 2. A Level mathematics had been introduced in response to requests by prisoners. All programmes led to national qualifications.

Prisoners' achievements were good and in some instances excellent, with 100 per cent gaining a qualification. Similar to the findings in other provision, too much of the curriculum offer was completed at Level 1, which was often insufficiently challenging. The NVQ in hospitality and catering, for instance, was only available at Level 1. Prisoners made good progress in developing their self-confidence and skills. In ICT, for example, they built on their prior experience in using the internet to populate spreadsheets, databases and develop more complex skills in word processing and developing presentations. There was good development of technical skills and concepts in art, and prisoners said that art projects had helped them to change direction and helped them in their personal lives.

As is apparent throughout this report, there were issues in relation to the progression for learners. Thus while Ofsted found that tutors used individual learning plans well to develop clear and realistic targets, they did not use the outcomes of careers information and advice well enough. Few long-term and medium-term goals were linked to learners' progression routes or plans for resettlement. Learning activities and discussion did not relate sufficiently to learners' plans for future courses, training programmes or work, to help prepare them for their future learning or resettlement.



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<sup>28</sup> © NRDC

<sup>29</sup> © details with the authors

In the majority of YOIs involved in the study, violent behaviour and conflict between gangs were a problem, especially where youngsters were being held from the local area. This impinged on the education offer that could be made: some types of courses were restricted because of the danger presented by using particular resources that could be used as weapons, and in other cases learners could not be put into the same group as another learner if they had issues around gang membership. Behaviour management was much less of an issue where the teaching approach was based on participation and interaction. It was also deemed important that staff should be prepared to deal with manipulation, and in the case of female staff, to set very clear boundaries with male learners.

Issues arising from security concerns restricted the range of subjects offered and also restricted access to provision. Science, for instance, was not offered. Internet access is unavailable to learners across the prison system. In one YOI perhaps as many as 50 per cent of the boys were not allowed to receive vocational training because of security risks. In this provision project-based learning was developed to support those young people not eligible for vocational work (see Case Study). In general, project work in YOIs was seen as useful and interesting, and enabled the teaching and learning to be related to learners' lives after release and to offer them the opportunity to acquire skills to raise their employability, as well as being useful in everyday life. Project work often had the added benefits of being practical and 'hands on'. Projects that focussed on interior design and DIY could integrate functional skills in a realistic manner and offered a work skills qualification to the learners.

#### **Case Study: Provision for young people not eligible for vocational work**

The project-based learning, developed with the Local Authority (LA) quality improvement team, was first offered in June 2011. The intention was to offer students excluded from vocational training something more practical than the more formal English and Maths. A range of topics was covered, such as house of the future and job of the future, offering scope for creativity and imagination in an area of interest to students and opportunities for embedded learning of functional skills. For example, for house of the future, students designed their own house, using Edexcel work skills and IT. Design would involve measuring, costing and writing, as well as creative design. Students would design rooms one at a time, e.g. kitchen, bathroom or games room, but this tended to become rather mechanical and repetitive, so teachers developed the activities to open up possibilities, with themes like save the planet, houses of the past and the future, mood boards, style of living. They made 3D models of houses and interiors. However, there were restrictions on what could be attempted for security reasons (e.g. having to use safety scissors, which don't cut much, or not being able to use materials such as Latex, because they can cause allergic reactions and therefore cannot be used).



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## FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

All adult prisons offered courses in literacy, numeracy and ICT from pre-entry to Level 2. ESOL courses were more varied: in one case there were too few courses at pre-entry Level and prisoners were enrolled on courses at too high a level. In another there were insufficient ESOL courses running.

Similarly all YOIs offered basic English and mathematics, beginning at Entry Level to Level 2. In some cases young people could also access Level 3 qualifications but not in all. ESOL was not offered in all YOIs. Where it was available there were instances where it was offered at Entry Level only.

Overall young people sitting literacy and numeracy tests were successful. They received good support for the transition from multiple choice exams to functional skills, with good pass rates. The majority of qualifications were at Entry Level 3 or Level 1. Concern was expressed that too few learners were progressing to Level 2. For example in one institution sampled, around 35 per cent of young people were at Level 1 at Initial Assessment, and around 25 per cent at Level 2 or above. Typically only about 10 per cent of qualifications achieved were at Level 2 or above.



30

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Vocational training courses were offered in a range of areas. In one prison training was available in ICT, Prisons Information Communication Technology Academy (PICTA), barbering, bricklaying and multi-construction skills, catering, shoe repairs, watch and jewellery repairs, motorcycle repairs, store control, recycling, industrial cleaning and broadcasting. Training facilities were reported as being outstanding in many areas, with an excellent range of modern vehicles and tools. The award winning Radio Wanno was a particularly good facility for prisoners to develop useful broadcasting and communication skills, making radio programmes that linked into everyday life in the prison. However, variation was apparent in the range or amount of vocational training on offer. In one prison too few prisoners accessed vocational training and some training workshops operated well below capacity. In another the number of vocational places had expanded but was still insufficient.

In the YOIs these included barbering, brickwork, carpentry, catering, computer workshop, construction, gardening, hospitality, motorcycle maintenance, motor vehicle work, multi-skills, painting and decorating, performing arts, radio production and multimedia, waste management and recycling. The extent of the provision varied across the YOIs. In some instances there were too few places to meet demand and courses had long waiting lists whereas in others there were more than sufficient places to meet the needs of the population. The range of options was restricted compared to those available in mainstream colleges.

As was the case with Functional Skills, throughout there was a concern that too much provision was completed at Level 1 and was not sufficiently challenging. In one YOI in brickwork, young people developed good skills and produced some complex structures, but these were not accredited above Level 1. By contrast in another YOI there were opportunities for the more advanced learners to practise high level skills in brickwork and painting and decorating.

### **Case Study: Developing employability skills**

Prisoners could follow courses in textiles, graphic design and screen printing, radio production and starting up a business, for which there were 80 places available each day. These courses offered training in employability in specific skills. The graphic design workshop offered training in silk screen printing and T-shirt production. The textile workshop produced bags for sale in charity shops and enabled prisoners to acquire a variety of machining skills. The radio production workshop offered courses leading to a certificate recognised as sufficient to be considered for employment in the national prison radio that operated from the prison. All these courses, including business start-up, enabled prisoners to develop various other employability skills, such as team working, punctuality and communication skills.

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## RANGE OF EDUCATION

All prisons offered literacy, numeracy, ESOL and personal and social development. Additional elements of the curriculum offered varied: in one prison other courses included art, cookery, creative writing and journalism; in another, courses included business studies, art, cookery, music, creative writing, counselling, Toe by Toe mentor training and Storybook Dads.

Levels of provision and access to education varied across the adult prisons. For instance, in one prison more education places were required and potential learners were turned away because the classes were full. In another prison, although the 240 part-time places offered were divided equally between morning and afternoon sessions, they were not sufficient to meet demand and at the time of the inspection there were long waiting lists for literacy and numeracy classes.

In YOIs subjects offered included ICT, art, graphic design, media, personal and social development, and business enterprise. Most started at Level 1 with progression to Level 2. However, the proportion of those taking Level 2 qualifications was relatively small. In some cases Level 3 was offered – but not in all. This meant that in some instances there was little opportunity for young people to establish clear progression routes. GCSE courses were offered in English, mathematics and history, together with a small number of AS Level courses, but these were taken by only a very few. As with adult prisons Open University courses were offered within YOIs.

Across both estates provision was often made for prisoners to complete units of qualifications when the short sentence meant that there was insufficient time to complete the whole course. More unusual was the provision of integrated pathways. For instance in one YOI integrated pathways included business, radio and music production and art, as well as the vocational areas of painting and decorating, DIY and brickwork: these were supplemented by lessons in literacy and numeracy.

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## CURRICULUM PROVISION FOR VULNERABLE PRISONERS

Within any prison or YOI there will be a number of segregated and vulnerable prisoners who receive in-cell education. The level of provision varied across both estates. In one prison a good programme of outreach provision included literacy, numeracy and ESOL support in workshops and on the wings. In another, tutorial support was insufficient to cope with demand. In the YOIs the young people who did not attend mainstream education for a variety of reasons received some individual work on the units. In one YOI, where there was consensus across the prison and the education regime that education should be a priority, individual work was reliably provided. In another, this was very limited and insufficient to enable young people to make progress in the key areas of literacy and numeracy, as the time the teacher had to spend with them was simply not enough to allow for consolidation of learning.

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## ACHIEVEMENT

Within this study, levels of achievement were variable, across subjects, at the level of the individual and across institutions, for a variety of reasons. However, one of the most prominent issues is linked to the length of stay, since often many young people and adults remain in prison for insufficient time to achieve the target qualification. An average length of stay of around eight weeks was not uncommon. Although some prisoners stayed much longer, the short stay of many had a defining influence on the way provision was organised.

It is important to appreciate that the achievement data considered below may focus on a few learners undertaking several qualifications. The reality is that some learners with a very short stay may not access education at all. There is, however, a much larger group who attend long enough to achieve, and finally a small number of offenders who are on longer sentences and who aspire to Higher Education (HE) or work-related qualifications.

Achievement rates varied across both estates. In some cases pass rates were 100 per cent: this across adult prisons and YOIs. In one prison for instance, the pass rates for health and safety, catering and the construction skills certificate scheme award in 2009-10 were 100 per cent. Pass rates for industrial cleaning, multi-skills, bricklaying and carpentry qualifications were also high: over 90 per cent. Most prisoners who stayed on their course of study achieved a qualification.

However, this level of success masked variability across different subject areas. In one prison achievement of qualifications was perceived as good, with high pass rates in cookery, functional English, Skills for Life literacy Level 1 and 2, ESOL, preparation for work, understanding counselling theories, and personal and social development programmes. However, in art the level of achievement was poor: of the 135 learners who started the programme in the year ending August 2010 none achieved the full qualification. Only 31 learners achieved units. In another adult prison educational achievements were satisfactory in music technology and journalism, but low in other subject areas. Similarly in another prison pass rates were high in literacy, English and ESOL, satisfactory in mathematics and employability skills, but low in personal and social development courses.

Similar variation was seen across the YOIs. In one YOI 97 per cent of young people, whose length of stay allowed, left with at least one nationally recognised qualification and many with more. By contrast in another YOI levels of accreditation achieved by young people were poor: they did not achieve the number, and in some cases the levels, of qualifications of which they were capable. Even within this context variation was present, since some young people gained more substantial qualifications which could be of value to them when they returned to education, training or employment on discharge to the community. Variation was also evident across subjects. For instance, in one YOI, over 200 City & Guilds qualifications were gained in construction in the nine months prior to the inspection and over 50 more in engineering and manufacturing technology. However, in horticulture and industrial cleaning the achievement rate was low. In one YOI standards of work were significantly better in vocational areas than in academic subjects.

A particular issue related to those young people transferring in to YOIs with GCSEs ongoing. There was variation across establishments in the level of support provided and in achievement. For example, in one YOI with a roll of around 240 juveniles, 91 GCSEs were

achieved in one year, including a number with high grades. In another YOI with around 130 on roll, only 21 GCSEs were achieved in the same period. Enabling students to complete GCSEs is perhaps the most viable solution to the issues of short stay in the YOI and the general low level of qualifications achieved whilst in custody.

Many learners, although gaining success, were only able to take units of qualifications rather than the full qualification. This was particularly the case for those learners who spent short amounts of time in prison. This raises an important issue about how these learners can then progress to gain full meaningful qualifications on release.

Levels of achievement also varied in relation to whether prisoners were involved in full-time work and for those for whom English was an additional language. In one prison pass rates in ESOL, functional skills, English and mathematics were very low, as were pass rates on most personal and social development courses. In some cases this was further exacerbated by the short time that some adults spent in prison. For instance, in one prison few women achieved formal ESOL qualifications.

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#### LEVEL OF QUALIFICATIONS AND PROGRESSION

Most qualifications offered were from Entry Level to Level 2, although most were at Entry Level 3 or Level 1, which impacted on the progression that the learners could make. For example, in one institution there was an insufficient range of courses at Level 2 or above to meet the needs of the 25 to 30 per cent of prisoners whose numeracy and literacy Levels were assessed at above Level 1. In one YOI some qualifications were offered from Entry Level to Level 2 but there was scope to develop courses at higher levels in all areas to provide clear progression routes for young people with longer sentences. Examples of where there were good opportunities for longer-term prisoners to achieve qualifications up to Level 3 and beyond were rare. Indeed, there was evidence that some young people repeated courses because there were no higher level courses available in particular areas. In some instances there appeared to have been a change of emphasis in vocational training to providing qualifications that could be achieved quickly rather than offering learners a wider range and depth of qualifications.

It appeared to be hard for most YOIs to be able to deliver GCSE qualifications. If an offender transferred in during the GCSE process, then efforts would be made to support them as much as possible. In some cases, the YOI enabled a learner to sit a GCSE exam but without receiving full tuition in that subject. Where possible, provision for study at A levels was made. While dedicated staff try their hardest to accommodate learners wishing to take GCSEs, given that most emphasis is placed on those prisoner learners with perceived skills deficits and that the required level of achievement is Level 2, it is hardly surprising that most time, energy and resources should be taken up with mandated provision rather than the needs of a small minority. The practical difficulties of finding study space, accessing exam papers, and setting aside sufficient time within the prison regime all stand in the way of study designed for the individual rather than the group. The impact

of incarceration on the pre-existent education and training of young people has already been well documented.<sup>31</sup>

However, for offenders who have higher levels of prior education there are some opportunities, at the discretion of the Governor, to study at the Open University.<sup>32</sup> The Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) provides support in accessing Open University provision for adult learners. PET also provides some access to GCSE subjects and other qualifications not funded by the Prison Education Service for those in YOIs. The National Extension College offers students the option of self-study courses, a measure which helps broaden the offer, since it can include subjects such as modern languages, astronomy, law, alternative medicine, science, accounts, bookkeeping, counselling and psychology. The number of learners who can be funded to undertake these courses remains very low.

In this study relatively few learners were studying higher level courses through the Open University. In one institution approximately three per cent of prisoners were engaged in Open University or distance learning programmes and in another almost five per cent were on Open University courses. During the interviews more than one prison remarked on the importance of supporting learners at higher levels more effectively. They were trying to be responsive to the learner population profile, but there were substantial financial issues involved which made it hard for most places to meet all learners' needs. The recent increase in university fees will exacerbate this situation.

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## OUTSIDE AGENCIES

There was evidence of many initiatives being taken by outside agencies to fund specific courses that are immensely valuable in motivating learners. Staff in YOIs felt that working with Local Authorities had much potential. The case study of Project Based Learning provides one illustration of possibilities. They also mentioned that such collaboration would be helpful for young people re-entering the community. The fact that education contracts are held outwith the LA was seen as a barrier to this kind of collaboration.

Third sector organisations were highly valued. For example, one prison mentioned that:

Over the last two to three years we have also worked with a number of other organisations to deliver short projects, including Not Shut Up (providing creative writing sessions), Taking Liberties (British Library), Anne Frank exhibition (Anne Frank Trust) and Dose (Wellcome Trust).

Other organisations offered work in drama, personal skills and some vocational areas. A greater degree of interaction between the OLASS provision and these schemes would be useful to the learners, as would the possibility of making some of these schemes less short-lived and more integrated into the long-term provision. In isolated cases there was

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<sup>31</sup> Wilson A (2009) Interrupted Education: The criminal justice system as a interruptive force on the educational progress of young people [www.prisonethnographer.com](http://www.prisonethnographer.com)

<sup>32</sup> 'Studying with the OU: A Guide for prisoners 2010/2011'  
[http://labspace.open.ac.uk/file.php/3427/Studying\\_with\\_the\\_OU\\_-\\_a\\_guide\\_for\\_learners\\_in\\_prison.pdf](http://labspace.open.ac.uk/file.php/3427/Studying_with_the_OU_-_a_guide_for_learners_in_prison.pdf)

evidence that some of these initiatives were continued by the learner upon release. This enrichment was particularly valuable in addressing the more holistic aims of education.

## ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

From an organisational perspective, education and training in prisons is complex. The courses are run by Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS) and OLASS, which lets education contracts to providers on a three yearly basis.

The setting within which prison education takes place is influenced by the prison routine, security constraints and the relationship between the Prison Service and the education provider. The ways in which these different interests are dealt with have an impact on the provision. One of the main criticisms of provision at present is that the offer of education and training is still too narrow and the provision too small in numbers. There is a view, expressed by many managers we spoke to, that prisons should maximise opportunities for offenders to receive employment-linked training, even apprenticeships, that will be useful to them on release. Some prisons manage the issues around security so effectively that qualifications such as barbering are possible. However, security issues as well as simple factors such as lack of space are the reasons why some establishments shy away from the development of more vocational opportunities. Some education departments reported asking their learners what they would like to have on the curriculum and then striving to provide it within the very narrow funding constraints.

Opportunities for establishments to share expertise in how to negotiate these difficult issues provides insight into the value of 'good practice'. Such an 'evidence base' has the advantage of being tailored to the particularities of these special contexts, having available experts and giving people confidence that surmounting difficulties is possible.

### **Good Practice: An educating prison**

In one YOI where the prison and education staff worked together to prioritise attendance in classes, achievement was high. This was attained by focussing on fully integrated timetables, to which two staff are dedicated, and by prioritising the way in which allocation to courses takes place, which involves four members of staff. Additionally, in this case, there is a prison-wide ethos that everyone takes responsibility for ensuring that education, training and purposeful activity are given a high status. The ethos is 'don't exclude', so that even if a prisoner is sick or confined to the wing the teachers must supply work to be done. Attendance in the library is closely monitored. One of the factors that enable this to happen is the close relationship between the Head of Learning and Skills and the Education Manager who work together on a daily basis.

This example of good practice is in marked contrast to other establishments where one of the main difficulties that education staff have to work with is the 'churn' and the unpredictable attendance of prisoners, who are dependent on the prison officers for being unlocked and accompanied from the wing to education. It would seem then that where

effort is expended between prison and education staff to understand each other's culture, positive results are achieved.

Career guidance, behaviour management and resettlement provision in YOIs and adult prisons is provided by different agencies. In some cases there is inadequate communication between these and the education provision, through which valuable information and support for the offenders are lost. This frequently implies that on release, prisoners are unable to identify progression routes to raise the relatively low level of qualifications they have obtained to a level that would enhance their chances of employment. There is also a lack of consistency with changes in both the provider of careers advice and the various nomenclatures (IAG, CIAS, National Careers Service). This washes back to education provision making it difficult to address longer term goals and encourages compartmentalising of prisoners' learning experiences.

The library is important as an opportunity for independent learning and reading is a lot more optimistic a way to spend your spare time than the Jeremy Kyle show. Some institutions put concerted effort into developing this resource, encouraging and monitoring its use. This resulted in a good proportion of prisoners reading and discussing a wide range of material.



33



## PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES

Where the ethos of the institution was positive towards education, there was good cooperation between education and the prison. Where this relationship was poor and the prison staff did not appear to be fully supportive of educational initiatives, prisoners' attendance rates at classes suffered, disrupting teaching and learning in a number of ways. It is clear that this kind of organisational issue affects learners' perception of the education they receive as well as making it far harder for the teaching to be cohesive.

When an offender arrives in prison, they are assessed for the purposes of education. Educational assessment of the learner is by no means uniform and can vary from one morning to a week-long induction programme. There is generally a positive response to the latter, which allows for an assessment to take place on a number of levels rather than limiting this to their competencies in literacy and numeracy. There is a national system of transfers which is an improvement on past practice but still rather unreliable, even with the allocation of Unique Learner Numbers (ULN) and a centralised system of recording a prisoner's progress (MIAP). Most learners are assessed according to their literacy and numeracy levels but these results are often skewed depending on at which point this happens and how many times a prisoner has already been assessed. The outcomes of the assessment are then used to produce an Individual Learning Plan (ILP), which sets agreed educational targets for the learner. A high proportion of prison learners have recognised special needs (e.g. one YOI estimated 70 per cent) and generic programmes do not work well for them. ILPs are recognised as the best way to address these special needs but the trouble is that the time involved is often not factored in to the timetable. In one example of good practice teachers were given three hours non-contact time per week to update the ILPs on classroom PCs. The funding regime limits the provision of tutorial time for staff, as frequently there is none at all, much as it would enhance the quality of teaching and learning. In some cases, monthly reviews have been established that go some way towards filling this gap.

The procedure for choosing what kind of education the learner wishes to attend in adult prisons also varies. Access to education varies from recruitment on the wing to classes being undersubscribed. In general it appears to work best when learners are able to make a selection after induction and assessment and then are told clearly if they have a place or not. In some cases they are encouraged to take up a balanced programme that incorporates Personal and Social Development, vocational courses and functional skills but with one to three main learning aims. Some provision has waiting lists which work well and enable learners to slot in, thereby avoiding disappointment. However, the ever-changing attendance in education that results from outside factors (such as lack of prison escort, visits, attendance at release boards, movement to another prison) makes this process hard to manage.

In some YOIs the curriculum is offered in relatively short time units, i.e. six to seven weeks. This takes account of the learners' length of stay, which can vary from days to an average of twelve weeks, and facilitates accreditation.

Where the curriculum is able to incorporate the interests of the learners, there is a very positive response. Examples of this in the adult estate include radio and business enterprise,

where the outcomes were correspondingly high. For example, the figures from one such class were that 80 per cent achieved accreditation. Approximately 90 per cent found employment after release and the remaining 10 per cent were continuing their studies.

#### **Good Practice: radio and business enterprise**

The success of such courses is attributed to a number of factors:

- The course has concrete targets that the learner can relate to and the content has cultural links with the learner's own background.
- They provide skills to be used in an industry (here the music industry or business) which offers freelance work and self-employment.
- The course is intensive and full-time, not roll-on/roll-off, which means that learners are motivated sufficiently to give up their free association time.
- Employability skills are integrated into the course.
- The work gains accreditation towards other courses so that these can be used post-release to continue further study.

Teachers thought that the fact that the course took account of learners' skills and attitudes such as enterprise, smart thinking and risk-taking, and transposed them into positives for the world of work, contributed to its success.

The same can be applied to young offenders' education. Where a project draws on the age-related interests and the culture of young men, positive results are more likely.

### Good Practice: Raptor project

The Raptor project started at one YOI in response to a request from the Governor for ideas to get prison staff and young people talking. One of the prison staff with love and knowledge about birds of prey came up with the idea of rearing and displaying raptors. Boys were involved in the full range of activities from the outset, preparing the site for the birds, building the sheds, laying paths. They had to read up on how to rear the birds, learn how to care for them and how to fly them. Taking them out to display them to the general public involved another set of skills and responsibility and gave boys the opportunity to perform for their families too. All this learning was in an interesting and exciting context. One boy who had not handled birds of prey before remarked 'I was scared of the birds at first. But once you get bitten by one you soon get used to it.' He hand reared a kestrel to which he was much attached. 'It sits on my shoulder.' Another young man, recently released, wants to work with birds, and his YOT are helping to apply to a zoo. Of course most will not want to take this up as a career, but they can learn a lot of useful skills and have fun along the way. It has also been observed to improve the behaviour of those involved.

Not every prison will find it effective to put on a Raptor project, but this is an example of how the strengths and skills of prison staff can be grasped to offer enrichment to young people and how a wide range of possibilities can open up through such innovation. It is dependent on close work between prison staff and all those involved in education and training to make somebody's good idea open up into a rich programme.



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It would seem that giving learners some degree of independent initiative can enhance motivation as well. An example of this is an innovative Enterprise Zone where learners work individually with staff tutorials and take responsibility for their own studies, which is an excellent way of mirroring the real world of employability. Recognition from outside bodies for work achieved, such as the Koestler Trust, external exhibitions of work, football competitions, debating and the production of computer games, all act as motivating factors for the learner.

Staff were on the whole in agreement that literacy and numeracy were unpopular when taught divorced from a vocational subject, but where functional skills were embedded, learning was more effective. Young offenders, like their adult counterparts, often have an unrealistic approach to functional skills. As one teacher said: "They want to become a plumber, but can't see the relevance of numeracy." Similarly, in YOIs where ESOL has been integrated into mainstream teaching, with specialist staff supporting the ESOL learner, as in the statutory sector, ESOL learners are less isolated and make more progress.

Most prisons in the study stated that they now have good ICT resources in the classroom. Interactive whiteboards are available in most classrooms, and some prisons have separate IT suites that the learners can access, including good resources for digital and, in some cases, sound imaging. The internet is not available for reasons of security. Some establishments have found ways round this by providing an intranet or a Moodle that can be accessed with pre-loaded resources. Such intranet facilities enable learners and teachers to access and share a bank of useful material and can to some degree simulate an internet experience. Others are starting to make use of the possibilities that the Virtual Campus offers. It was generally felt though, that the effective use of all these ICT resources was dependent on staff having been trained in their use. In addition, staff said that they would benefit from being able to use a bank of resources tailor-made for prison education.

All education departments were confident that their staff were appropriately qualified, and staff with specialist qualifications in literacy, numeracy, ESOL and IT were particularly valued for their contributions to the quality of the service. In addition, managers quite frequently said that it was the personal qualities and attitudes of staff that were important. By this they often meant the capacity an individual has for relating to the 'difficult learner', which was a quality that some felt could not be taught. Another aspect of good practice, one that it would appear can be taught as opposed to being inherent in the teacher's personal approach, is the ability to structure sessions (which are often three hours long, especially in YOIs) in a way that chunks time, taking account of learners' concentration span. It is difficult to keep any learner motivated during long teaching sessions and this is particularly true in prison, where learners are more likely to have difficulty sustaining concentration on repetitive tasks. The ability to structure sessions with interactive and participative teaching and learning activities raises motivation and reduces drop out. Staff who are appropriately qualified to offer Additional Learning Support for those with learning difficulties were identified as raising the quality of the provision.

Most managers thought that their staff formed a dedicated team, many of whom worked well beyond the hours required. At the same time there was recognition of the fact that some staff

had become very set in their ways and institutionalised in such a way that they were opposed to any form of change. Their isolation from other teachers could exacerbate this.

The way the teacher is perceived is important, and younger learners especially need to be able to identify with their teachers as role models. As one manager said:

They don't want to be taught by their aunts or well-meaning older adults. They want to be able to relate to young men, and preferably to young black men with whom they share an understanding of a culture.

This is a point which has not received a great deal of attention so far. The Bromley Briefings (2012) state that:

In June 2010 just under 26% of the prison population, 21,878 prisoners, was from a minority ethnic group. This compares to one in 10 of the general population. Out of the British national prison population, 11% are black and 5% are Asian. For black Britons this is significantly higher than the 2.8% of the general population they represent. Overall, black prisoners account for the largest number of minority ethnic prisoners (53%).

These facts would suggest that in many prisons black teaching staff should be more highly represented if offenders are to be given more positive role models. This is particularly true in some of the London prisons, due to the higher proportion of ethnic minority prisoners.

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## STAFF TRAINING

The use of annual appraisal as a means of identifying staff training needs was patchy, but both staff and their managers appeared to be able to identify training needs, partly as a result of observation. However, the multi-agency factor can mean that sometimes staff are observed using a scheme devised for observing staff in FE colleges and this needs to be contextualised for the prison. This is also the case for other staff training which needs to take account of the specific requirements of prison education. Most providers allow for four staff training days a year, especially if they are part of the FE system, but where there is a lack of understanding from the prison regime, this can limit the educational focus. Most education departments do not deliver education on Friday afternoons and this can be effectively used for regular, tailored staff training. The staff training budget was mentioned as a restriction: "we always overspend our budget". Of course budgetary constraints are universal, but within the closed prison environment the need to bring in ideas from outside is perhaps more pressing.

In YOIs it is often particularly difficult to arrange staff training, because of the statutory requirements concerning hours. This is sometimes circumnavigated by internal workshops in the lunch break. In some cases regional meetings between prison education departments are organised which allow for best practice to be shared between colleagues.

Many staff mentioned the need for focussed training on the embedding of functional skills and in those cases where they have been embedded into vocational courses, achievement is higher. However, it was remarked that traditional training alone will not change delivery. LLU+<sup>34</sup> worked in London prisons to design and deliver tailored support, and training on the embedding of functional skills. This alone did not change practice. A manager suggested that staff also need to be supported to be more flexible and to change their mind set to acknowledge the need for educational experiences for learners that are not solely classroom based.

The recent addition of more useful ICT infrastructure in prisons has made a positive difference to teaching and learning, but most staff felt that they need more training on using the Virtual Campus.

## CONCLUSIONS: ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE AND GOOD PRACTICE

There are two over-riding issues which have become apparent during the course of this study. One, rarely referenced, relates to the 'age and stage' of prisoners. The other, constantly reiterated, related to the prevailing 'atmosphere' across the prison estate.

The concept of 'young people' appears to be limited, in Prison Service terms, to a somewhat inflexible age-specific model which fails to recognise the wide range of development of young people between the ages of 15 and 25, or the appropriateness of its various interventions, including education. Adolescence is a life stage notorious for its fluidity with its own specific norms of physical, sexual and mental development but which seem not to be recognised or addressed in prison after the age of 18. Younger people are part of a wider culture to which most of them will return. In that wider community, amongst under 25s, education, training and work experience are becoming the norm. Those who cannot demonstrate their inclusion in this rite of passage are likely to be shunted into the ranks of the unemployed or of a casual and vulnerable workforce. A more concerted effort to include young prisoners in an enabled group is both good social sense as a means of reducing reoffending and social justice in the sense that many prisoners have special needs and require support as well as punishment. Much has been done over the last 20 years to prioritise education and training for prisoners aged under 18. This effort needs to be extended to include young adults, in keeping with shifting cultural norms.

'Atmosphere' is more difficult to define, but nevertheless much good work seems to be done in an atmosphere of good will and co-operation, often in spite or rather than because of prevailing regimes, working conditions or budget. The barriers to good practice are well known: prison churn, uncertainty of funding and contracts, day to day operational dissonance between departments, dislocation from mainstream provision and practice,

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<sup>34</sup> LLU+, based at London South Bank University, is a national consultancy and professional development centre for staff working in the areas of literacy, numeracy, dyslexia, family learning and English for Speakers of Other Languages.

and the general problems of daily prison life. Below we review some examples of these barriers being successfully tackled.

In terms of issues for the future therefore, the key emerging themes from our work relate to a greater focus on the age-related needs of prisoners and the need to encourage education and training as core priorities within prisons.

As stated in the Introduction this report prefers to take a stance of appreciative inquiry and focus on the aspects of good practice which have been become apparent. Good practice provides examples of approaches or strategies judged by teachers to have worked well. Its particular value is that it comes from these special contexts and has credibility with those in similar situations. It should not be viewed as definitive evidence of the effectiveness of a particular approach, this is to misunderstand its role. Its purpose is to provide practitioners with new ideas about coping with common issues.

Rather than reiterate specific projects we offer some points for consideration.

*Good practice is mindful of its learners.*

Throughout this study we were made aware of strategies that had been put in place to make sure that learners felt they had a safe learning environment, such as making sure that students felt safe, that anti-bullying strategies were in place, that learners were identified and supported with any learning difficulties they had.

*Good practice is mindful of difference in terms of culture and ability.* We found evidence of good practice which addressed issues of difference, such as curriculum content planning which encouraged learners to have an understanding and respect for difference. In other instances, a dyslexia screening tool was in operation as part of the induction process to help identify and meet the needs of low achievers.

*Good practice is less about funding and more about co-operation.* Prisons which had a good working relationship between personnel at management level were able to offer mutual support and encouragement to make things happen.

*Good practice can occur at the individual as well as the group or team level.* A number of initiatives were made possible by the efforts of single people who continued to persevere in their efforts to offer a positive learning experience for their students and to maintain that interest into the outside world.

*Good practice exists despite a constantly changing educational landscape.* During this study, the profile of the prison population changed dramatically after the incidences of civil unrest. London prisons are also caught up in the re-tendering process for the provision of education and training, and a new working document has been launched which devolves more responsibility and accountability for education and training to local level.<sup>35</sup> Prison education contexts are subject to an unusual level of upheaval.

Good practice supports a prison-wide remit to ensure support for prisoners as

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<sup>35</sup> Making Prisons Work- Skills for Rehabilitation  
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they progress towards release and

resettlement.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study we have listened to the views of many professionals involved in the education and training of learners in prison. These collected views have been further supported by various reports and policy documents. The recommendations that we offer are a result of a bringing together of these various opinions and observations:

1. Education and training should be prioritised within prison regimes for the under 25s. Attendance at education or training should be disrupted as little as possible for this age group and movement between prisons should also be seen as a last resort.
2. There should be greater collaboration and communication between the various agencies that provide education and training within prisons and with these that can support progression on release. This includes not only that between providers of education and providers of training, but also between these departments and careers guidance and resettlement.
3. Good practice across prison education should be shared between staff from different establishments through regular meetings and liaisons with Local Authorities should also be developed.
4. The curriculum offer should provide relevant qualifications at a level that allows progression within prison and on release. In particular the opportunity to gain qualifications at Level 2 and above should be increased.
5. The possibilities that currently exist for providing a broad and enriching approach to education should not be relinquished in favour of an overly narrow skills training.
6. Opportunities for embedding learning in practical, meaningful activities should be consistently developed across all areas of purposeful activity, including education and training. This should be mindful of learners' interests, culture and aspirations.
7. Outreach to non-attendees should be provided so that progress is not affected by unavoidable absence.
8. Where possible, education staff should reflect the wide diversity of the prison population; with younger learners in particularly benefiting from having teachers they can identify with as positive role models.



## APPENDICES

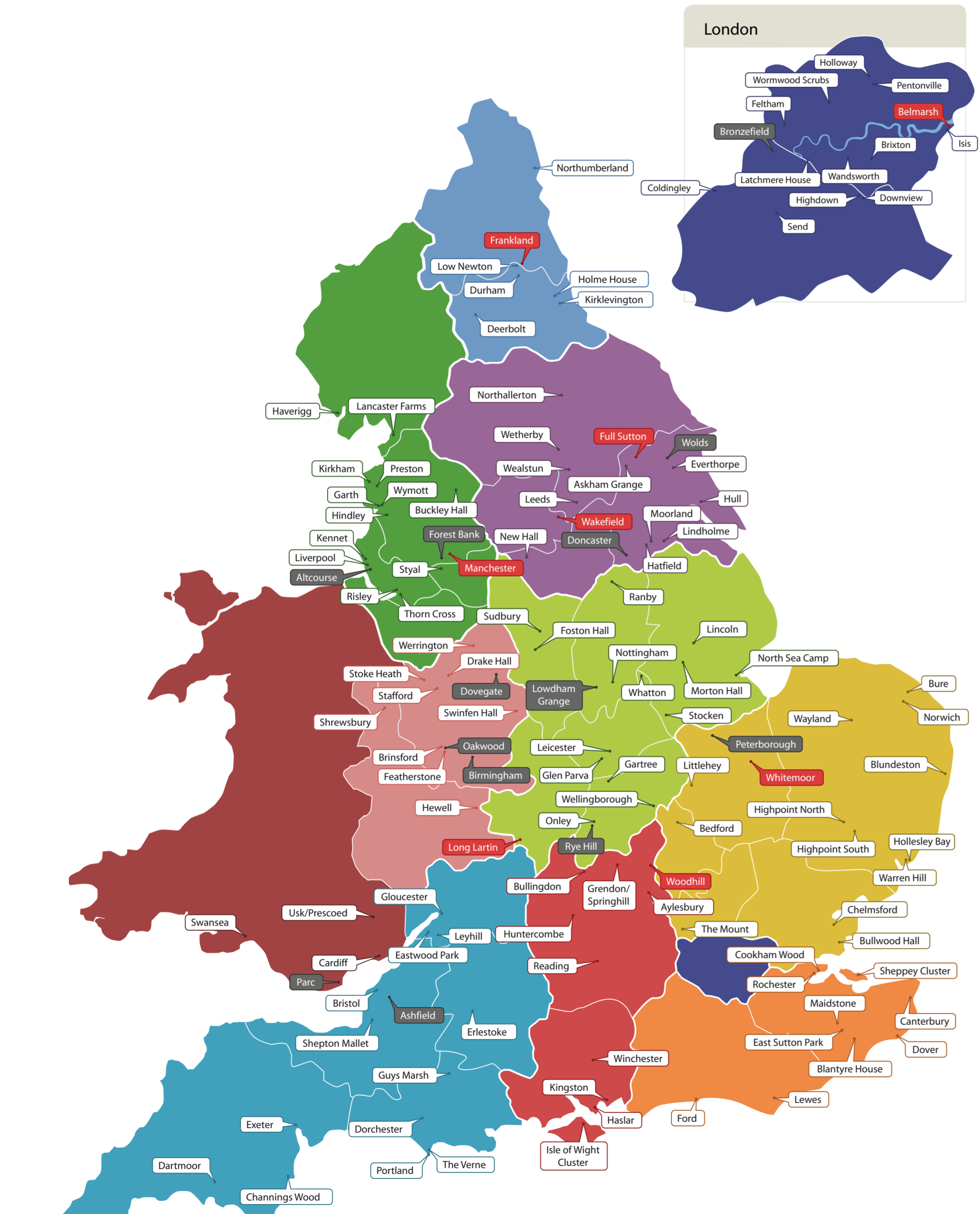
### GLOSSARY

A4E	Action for Employment
IAG	Information Advice and Guidance
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CIAS	Careers Information and Advice Service
CPD	Continuing professional development
DfE	Department for Education
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills
DTLLS	Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector
FENTO	Further Education National Training Organisation
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
HMIP	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
HMPS	Her Majesty's Prison Service
IAG	Information Advice and Guidance
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
ITT	Initial teacher training
LLN	Language, literacy and numeracy (cf. SfL)
LONCETT	London Centre for Excellence for Teacher Training
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MIAP	Managing Information Across Partners
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
OCNLR	Open College Network, London Region
OLASS	Offender Learning and Skills Service
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PTLLS	Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector
QIA	Quality Improvement Agency
QTLS	Qualified Teacher Status Learning & Skills
SCH	Secure Children's Home
SfL	Skills for Life (National strategy for literacy, language (ESOL) and numeracy)
SIOU	Social Inclusion and Offenders Unit
STC	Secure Training Centre
YOI	Young Offender Institution

## ADULT CURRICULUM LEVELS

National Curriculum Levels	Adult Literacy and Numeracy Levels	Key Skills Levels	Equivalent FHEQ
		KS L6	Honours degree
		KS L5	Interim
		KS L4	Certificate
		KS L3	A & AS level
	Level 2	KS L2	GCSE A* - C
NC Level 5	Level 1	KS L1	
NC Level 4			
NC Level 3	Entry Level 3		
NC Level 2	Entry Level 2		
NC Level 1	Entry Level 1		

# Prisons Map



### KEY

- Lincoln Prison establishment
- Belmarsh High Security prison
- Wolds Contracted prison (C)

Juvenile (J)  
Female (F)  
Youth Offender Institution (YOI)  
Foreign Nationals Prison (FNP)  
Immigration Removal Centre (IRC)  
\* indicates change to 'Trust' status April 2010

### WEST MIDLANDS

**Prisons**

- Birmingham (C)
- Brinsford (YOI)
- Drake Hall (F)
- Dovegate (C)
- Featherstone
- Hewell
- Oakwood (C)
- Shrewsbury
- Stafford
- Stoke Heath (YOI)
- Swinfen Hall (YOI)
- Werrington (J)

### GREATER LONDON

**Prisons**

- Brixton
- Bronzefield (C)
- Coldingley
- Downview (F)
- Feltham (YOI/J)
- Highdown
- Holloway (F)
- Isis (YOI)
- Latchmere House
- Pentonville
- Thameside (C)
- Send (F)
- Wandsworth
- Wormwood Scrubs

### NORTH EAST

**Prisons**

- Deerbolt (YOI)
- Durham
- Holme House
- Kirklevington Grange
- Low Newton (F)
- Northumberland

### HIGH SECURITY

**Belmarsh**  
**Frankland**  
**Full Sutton**  
**Long Lartin**  
**Manchester**  
**Wakefield**  
**Whitemoor**  
**Woodhill**

### KENT & SUSSEX

**Prisons**

- Blantyre House
- Canterbury (FNP)
- Cookham Wood (J)
- Dover (IRC)
- East Sutton Park (F)
- Ford
- Lewes
- Maidstone
- Rochester (YOI)
- Sheppey Cluster
  - Elmley
  - Standford Hill
  - Swaleside

### YORKSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE

**Prisons**

- Askham Grange (F)
- Doncaster (C)
- Everthorpe
- Hatfield (YOI)
- Hull
- Leeds
- Lindholme (IRC)
- Moorland
- New Hall (F)
- Northallerton (YOI)
- Wealstun
- Wetherby (J)
- Wolds (C)

### SOUTH CENTRAL

**Prisons**

- Aylesbury (YOI)
- Bullington
- Grendon / Springhill
- Haslar (IRC)
- Huntercombe (FNP)
- Isle of Wight Cluster
  - Albany
  - Camp Hill
  - Parkhurst
- Kingston
- Reading (YOI)
- Winchester

### WALES

**Prisons**

- Cardiff
- Swansea
- Parc (C/J)
- Usk/Prescoed

### EAST MIDLANDS

**Prisons**

- Foston Hall (F)
- Gartree
- Glen Parva (YOI)
- Lincoln
- Lowdham Grange (C)
- Morton Hall (IRC)
- North Sea Camp
- Nottingham
- Onley
- Ranby
- Rye Hill (C)
- Stocken
- Sudbury
- Wellingborough
- Whatton

### SOUTH WEST

**Prisons**

- Ashfield (C/J)
- Bristol
- Channings Wood
- Dartmoor
- Dorchester
- Eastwood Park (F)
- Erlestoke
- Exeter
- Gloucester
- Guys Marsh
- Leyhill
- Portland (YOI)
- Shepton Mallet
- The Verne

### EAST OF ENGLAND

**Prisons**

- Bedford
- Blundeston
- Bullwood Hall (FNP)
- Bure
- Chelmsford
- Highpoint North
- Highpoint South
- Hollesley Bay
- Littlehey
- Peterborough (C)
- The Mount
- Norwich (YOI)
- Warren Hill (J)
- Wayland

### NORTH WEST

**Prisons**

- Altcourse (C)
- Buckley Hall
- Forest Bank (C)
- Garth
- Haverigg
- Hindley (J)
- Kennet
- Kirkham
- Lancaster Farms (YOI)
- Liverpool
- Preston
- Risley
- Styal (F)
- Thorn Cross (YOI)
- Wymott

**Please note:**  
This map is for illustration only. The map also gives an indication of prison locations. The inset map shows the prison locations for London.  
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