



# Estyn

*Rhagoriaeth i bawb - Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

## An evaluation of post-18 offender learning in Wales



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL  
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



FEBRUARY 2009

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- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ LAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies;
- ▲ offender learning; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of The Department for Work and Pensions funded training programmes.

Estyn also:

- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

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## Introduction

- 1 The Welsh Assembly Government asked Estyn in its 2008-2009 remit for an evaluation of post-18 offender learning. There have been no previous Estyn remit reports on this theme.
- 2 The Assembly Government and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Wales set out their joint expectations for the delivery of offender learning and skills in 'Learning to Change – Developing Skills to Reduce Re-offending in Wales' (2007).
- 3 In 2008, Estyn took over the lead responsibility, from Ofsted, for the inspection of offender learning in Wales. During 2008, Estyn inspected the learning in three of the four adult male prisons in Wales and contributed to an Ofsted led inspection of a women's prison in England holding Welsh women. Estyn also inspected the learning for offenders in the community, in all four Welsh probation areas. We did this as part of the HMI Probation led Offender Management Inspections. These prison and probation inspections have provided the main source of evidence for this report.
- 4 We also surveyed FE colleges and a sample of workplace learning providers. Estyn also took evidence from NOMS Wales and HM Prison Service in Wales.
- 5 The main focus of the remit is to look at the quality and consistency of learning programmes for adults in Wales who offend and the relationship of these programmes to the Assembly Government's learning policies.
- 6 This remit report also identifies how far offender learning and skills in Wales meet the requirements of 'Learning to Change', noted above.
- 7 In particular the report identifies:
  - how effective assessment methods and systems are for the diagnosis of individual learning difficulties and disabilities;
  - the quality of information, advice and guidance (IAG) services for all offenders;
  - the quality of offenders' individual learning plans, based on assessment outcomes, to inform decisions on learning interventions throughout the sentence;
  - how well learning programmes meet individual needs;
  - to what extent there are learning programmes that contribute to the personal development of an offender;
  - how well learning programmes meet skills shortages and the needs of employers;
  - the effectiveness of resettlement work which supports offenders' progress into education, employment or training; and

- the effectiveness of leadership and management in education and training for offenders.
- 8 The report includes an appendix which shows good practice examples in providing education and training for offenders.
  - 9 The report includes a glossary of terms which may be unfamiliar to the lay reader.

## Background

- 10 There are over 2,800 males held in prisons in Wales and up to 400 females from Wales held in prisons in England. The Probation Service in Wales currently supervises over 13,000 offenders.
- 11 There are four prisons in Wales for male offenders – HMPs Cardiff, Swansea, Usk/Prescoed and the contracted prison run by G4S at Parc. There are no establishments for female offenders in Wales.
- 12 The probation service in Wales is organised around the four administrative areas which form the police service boundaries. These are North Wales, Dyfed-Powys, South Wales and Gwent.
- 13 Learning and skills provision for offenders in custody in Wales is delivered almost entirely by employees of the Prison Service. Basic skills learning provision for offenders serving their sentences in the community is delivered under contractual arrangements amongst the four probation areas and local education providers. Probation areas, in partnership with others, also deliver a number of interventions, programmes and unpaid work activities which have learning and education components. A number of these activities offer accreditation.
- 14 NOMS Wales funds offender learning and skills. This will change in April 2009, when the responsibility passes to DCELLs. The future of the basic skills provision for offenders on probation is unclear. At the time of writing this report, there was no agreement for funding for this work to be available after March 2009.
- 15 There is a strong link between offending, poor literacy, language and numeracy skills, and low achievement and truancy at school. Many offenders have very poor experiences of school and learning and no experience of stable employment. Over half of offenders in the UK have no qualifications of any kind, and over a third do not have the reading skills expected of an 11 year-old. Both offenders and ex-offenders have employment prospects well below the community in general<sup>1</sup>.
- 16 The UK Government's Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment<sup>2</sup> highlighted the link between employment and re-offending.
- 17 The strategy placed the reduction of re-offending, along with protecting the public, at the heart of the work of prisons and probation services, with a new focus on training offenders and helping them get jobs.

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<sup>1</sup> Reducing Re-Offending: National Action Plan, Home Office, July 2004

<sup>2</sup> *Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment* – DfES, Home Office, DWP, Dec 2005

## Main findings

- 18 Overall, prisons and probation areas offer a wide range of learning choices and qualifications. They achieve this through effective partnership working with other agencies. There are good opportunities for many offenders to find employment at the end of their sentence. Only a minority of them engage in work-related roles which will not improve their employment prospects.
- 19 Nearly all prisons and probation areas help offenders develop their personal and social skills. This helps offenders' self-esteem. However, most tutors do not record these achievements well enough. Staff promote positive attitudes and behaviour. They help offenders to live healthy and more fulfilled lives. In probation areas, staff help offenders settle back into their communities.
- 20 Leadership and management of learning for offenders are generally good. In both prison and probation settings, managers have clear aims and there are good links to national and local priorities. Nearly all managers exceed their performance targets for the achievement of basic and work skills awards and for getting learners into jobs which they keep. Managers in prisons and probation do not always manage attendance well enough. However, overall, offender learning and skills budgets give satisfactory value for money.
- 21 Overall, providers pay good attention to a range of diversity issues and to meeting the needs of individual learners. They have good equal opportunities policies in place and monitor these well. However, there is not enough provision for those with poor basic skills and the future funding of the existing probation provision is not clear. Not enough provision is available in the Welsh language.
- 22 Overall, offenders in custody receive satisfactory support at the end of their sentence. Many resettlement staff prepare offenders well for further education, training and employment. Most prison and probation staff develop useful contacts with external providers. These include links with work-based learning companies and local employers. In many areas in the community, there is comprehensive provision to get offenders into work or learning. However, there is poor transfer of documentation between custody and community. The help given to offenders by colleges of further education is variable.
- 23 The quality of unpaid work placements varies too much across probation areas. Staff miss opportunities to train offenders in skills that are in demand in the labour market. They do not make enough use of local and national labour market information. Managers do not make good enough links with employers to enable jobs to be found for offenders without work.
- 24 Offenders in Wales do not have enough access to Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services. In addition, the quality and availability of these vary too much. Many offenders are not aware of the opportunities and support available. Providers do not do enough to promote the benefits of good information and advice.

- 25 Assessments vary in their effectiveness. All providers assess the literacy and numeracy levels of offenders using a range of tests. They link these to the National Standards for Adult Literacy and Numeracy. However, they are not always clear which test offenders should receive. A minority of offenders, especially those with the most complex learning needs, do not have their needs assessed well enough. This means the learning planned for them does not always meet their needs.
- 26 Tutors in prisons and probation do not use Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) consistently. Plans vary too much in quality. In the majority of cases, where offenders have learning plans, there are very few links between these and their sentence plan. In the community, there is little overall co-ordination of offender learning across different agencies.

## Recommendations

### **In order to make progress at a national level, the Welsh Assembly Government should:**

- R1 clarify the funding arrangements for basic skills provision for offenders serving sentences in the community after April 2009; and
- R2 further improve the quality of learning and skills for offenders in prisons and probation.

### **In order to make progress at a local level, all providers should:**

- R3 ensure there are effective assessment procedures in place for literacy, language and numeracy needs, linked to the planning process, and which include diagnosing learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities;
- R4 increase the quality and availability of IAG services so that all offenders are aware of the learning, skills and work opportunities and support that are available to them;
- R5 ensure that all offenders have a good quality ILP, linked to their sentence plan, which co-ordinates all of the work done by different agencies;
- R6 ensure that offenders with literacy, language and numeracy needs receive the help they need;
- R7 make better use of labour market information and links with employers to inform the development of provision and get offenders into work;
- R8 ensure that where offenders are developing their personal and social skills, these additional achievements are recorded fully;
- R9 increase the number of interventions available through the medium of Welsh;
- R10 improve the transfer of documentation between different agencies to ensure a smooth transition of learning between custody and community; and
- R11 improve attendance at learning and skills provision in custody and the community.

## Assessing the learning needs of offenders

### In custody

- 27 In prisons, staff assess offenders when they first arrive. However, the quality of these assessments varies. Nearly all offenders then take part in an induction programme to help them understand what to expect about their time in prison.
- 28 In one prison, information, advice and guidance (IAG) staff screen nearly all offenders' basic skills. Staff quickly identify offenders who do not speak English. In these cases, they arrange promptly for help in translation, often by making good use of other offenders' language skills and backgrounds.
- 29 In the same prison, IAG staff record assessment information on a very helpful database. They use this well to make sure they assess all new arrivals early and monitor their progress. Tutors then assess more fully the offenders who go on to attend the learning and skills department. They also administer a full diagnostic assessment to those with learning difficulties or disabilities.
- 30 In another prison, initial assessment is thorough, well recorded and used effectively to produce individual learning plans.
- 31 One prison does not have an effective enough strategy to screen and assess the basic skills of all offenders on induction. Not enough offenders go on to receive a diagnostic assessment. Learning and skills staff do not identify additional learning needs or learning styles well enough.

### In the community

- 32 In the probation service, nearly all offender managers screen offenders at the start of their sentence. The majority use the recommended screening tool<sup>3</sup>. This gives a basic understanding of skills need. However, it does not say what level the offender is at. Not enough offender managers refer offenders for a more detailed test. This means they cannot be sure that offenders will have the right skills for the programmes they plan for them.
- 33 Across all probation areas, most offenders do not have good enough access to online assessments. This is because the probation centres do not have the necessary IT resources.
- 34 Overall, most offender managers do not pass on routinely the results of assessments to interventions or programmes staff. Even when they do, many of these staff do not understand well enough what they mean. This means offenders do not always get the support they need.

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<sup>3</sup> Probation Circular PC13/2007 – introduction of a new skills screening tool: First Move – initial skills checker

- 35 In one probation area, both the screening and initial assessment tests are available in English and Welsh. Offender managers refer those who need it to basic skills classes. On a few occasions, basic skills tutors in these classes then repeat the same assessment. This is frustrating for the learner and wastes resources. In a very few sessions, basic skills staff carry out a full diagnostic assessment.
- 36 In another probation area, tutors assess motivation well. They use the initial interview to ask offenders about their qualifications and skills.

## **Information, advice and guidance**

### **In custody**

- 37 In induction programmes, nearly all offenders receive information about the range of work and learning on offer in the prison.
- 38 Nearly all induction tutors create an informal atmosphere, which puts learners at ease. Most learners are aware of the range of opportunities available and a few take very good advantage of this. They combine vocational training or work, evening classes and flexible learning. This helps them to develop a broad experience of learning. Workshop staff also encourage learners to attend education classes in order to improve their skills.
- 39 In one prison, IAG staff use a questionnaire to find out about the offender's previous experience. This is useful to identify their existing skills. However, in many cases, IAG staff do not collect detailed enough responses. This means these offenders need a further interview before tutors can tailor learning to their individual needs.

### **In the community**

- 40 In most probation areas, offenders do not have enough contact with specialist advisers. They do not get enough help to overcome barriers, make realistic plans or progress to other education, training or employment options. A few offenders make plans which are not realistic and these go unchallenged by their tutors and offender managers.
- 41 Many probation areas do not plan well enough for offenders who are coming to the end of a sentence. Although careers advice and guidance is available when offenders complete their learning interventions, not enough tutors refer them on for this help.
- 42 In a few cases, where tutors offer IAG, they do not probe learners' needs in enough depth or check understanding well enough. They do not refer learners on for more appropriate careers guidance.
- 43 A few basic skills tutors give good IAG, such as explaining how to apply for a fork lift truck job or help with housing and debt.
- 44 In one area, offenders need more help to plan their next steps. However, few of the probation staff encourage them to make appointments with careers advisers. Many supervisors of unpaid work do provide informal advice. This helps offenders settle back into their communities. It also improves their confidence and social skills.

## Individual learning plans

### In custody

- 45 In many prisons, tutors use ILPs well, making good use of test results and information in learner profiles to inform their planning. In the best examples, learners have individual learning plans which identify learning goals, targets set, and the action required, with appropriate timescales.
- 46 Very few tutors in prisons use sentence plan information when setting learning targets. Although this is available, together with other assessment information, tutors do not use it routinely to inform ILPs.
- 47 In prison workshops, staff do not always offer enough help with learning to those who need it. Many of them do not access assessment results when offenders begin training or work, and a few staff are unclear of their value. This means that they sometimes miss opportunities to match learning to individual needs, and as a result, a few offenders do not work at the right level.
- 48 One prison has not developed the use of ILPs well enough. In many cases, plans do not clearly identify the steps learners need to take to improve their learning.

### In the community

- 49 In probation areas, interventions staff use Individual Referral Records (IRR) to plan learning for the offender. However, staff do not complete many of these well enough and there is little input from learners. The results of assessments do not inform the planning of many ETE interventions.
- 50 Across all probation areas there are very few co-ordinated learning plans in place. Staff do not use them effectively to set clear objectives, record achievement and progression, or co-ordinate learning. There is little reference to sentence planning objectives and little overall co-ordination of work done across different agencies. This means that offender managers do not have an overview of the progress offenders are making. Offenders themselves do not know how well they are doing.

## Meeting individual needs

### In custody

- 51 In prisons, access to education and training is generally available to all offenders. Participation by offenders from minority ethnic groups in learning and work is generally good. Overall, staff monitor and manage this well.
- 52 Many tutors use a range of effective and innovative teaching styles. In some classes, tutors make very effective use of electronic whiteboards. In one prison, for example, there is a special programme to help learners who are dyslexic. Nearly all learners taking part in this programme achieve well. They make significant improvements in a very short time.
- 53 Most tutors provide good support for learners with poor literacy and numeracy skills, and those who speak English as an additional language. In one prison, staff and learners produce special signs and instructions for these learners. However, in one prison, there is not enough ESOL provision for learners to make progress. Staff do not assess these learners' needs well enough. Individual learning plans for these learners are of poor quality.
- 54 In most prison libraries, there are not enough books, newspapers or dictionaries available in the main foreign languages.
- 55 In nearly all prisons, tutors effectively support learners with disabilities. For example, learners with impaired vision receive learning materials in Braille. In most prison libraries there is a good selection of audio books.
- 56 Many PE staff meet the needs well of a wide range of learners, including older learners, those with disabilities, and those with health problems.
- 57 Most prisons do not promote the Welsh language and culture well enough. Tutors do not routinely identify Welsh speakers. In most prisons there is also limited bilingual signage.
- 58 In one prison support for learners with specific learning difficulties means that staff identify these learners by a symbol on the register. They record learners' specific needs in their ILP. In this prison, staff have improved their awareness of learning difficulties, such as dyslexia.
- 59 In another prison, education staff do not routinely screen offenders when they apply for offending behaviour courses. As a result, offenders with poor literacy skills struggle with the reading and writing elements of these courses.
- 60 One prison has introduced useful Cultural Diversity Workshops where learners improve their understanding of other cultures. The prison's counsellors have also worked effectively with individuals to reduce racist or aggressive behaviour.

## In the community

- 61 All probation areas meet the Welsh Assembly Government's agenda for social inclusion well. They pay very good attention to the needs of specific groups.
- 62 Probation areas operate throughout the year. Planning processes take into account the needs of offenders with childcare needs during school holidays. Some interventions take place at weekends and evenings for those who work during the day. Staff take good account of lone females working in all male environments. Staff work hard to keep offenders in existing employment.
- 63 Offenders on unpaid work have their individual needs met well. Staff on these programmes take good account of offenders' health needs when allocating workplaces. They are flexible about meeting offenders' requests to work outdoors and in manual work. Probation staff explain clearly the rules about breach and offenders understand these well. Staff make good use of interpreters for those who do not speak English well. Many tutors consider well aspects of the offender's circumstances.
- 64 Most accredited programme tutors try to take good account of the individual needs of offenders. They adapt handouts and flip charts and give instructions in a different way. In one area, offenders on induction sign a document about 'rights and responsibilities'. However, it is too complex for many offenders with poor basic skills to understand.
- 65 The majority of probation tutors know where to refer learners with dyslexia. There is language support available for offenders whose first language is not English. In a few unpaid work projects, health and safety materials are available in Polish. In one basic skills provider, tutors use British Sign Language and bring in specialist help for ESOL learners.
- 66 Overall, however, the probation service does not offer enough basic skills support before or during programmes. Not enough offenders know they can use 20% of the time they are sentenced to unpaid work, to attend basic skills classes.
- 67 There are not enough probation staff able to deliver interventions in the Welsh language. In one area, only one tutor in the accredited programmes team speaks Welsh. This means that a few offenders, whose first language is Welsh, are not able to participate in group or individual sessions to the best of their ability.
- 68 In one area, managers have developed good links with voluntary groups and use these well to support offenders with disabilities. They also support gypsy travellers by linking in well with local authority basic skills provision.

## **Personal and social development**

### **In custody**

- 69 In all prisons, staff provide a range of enrichment and personal development programmes. These include citizenship courses, drama, cooking and food hygiene, art, music and yoga. Offenders also learn to work independently and study a broad range of distance learning programmes, at Level 3 and above.
- 70 In the best sessions, all learners make very good progress in the development of their personal and social skills. Almost all learners show high levels of motivation and make productive use of their time. In art classes, learners appreciate and respect each other's work. Learners in English literature courses, describe how learning to discuss and appreciate other people's perspectives on a novelist's work, has helped them to listen and value other viewpoints.
- 71 Many offenders develop more mature attitudes and behaviour. They show concern for other people and cultures. Most recognise that they can reduce their risk of reoffending by improving their employment prospects and learning new skills.
- 72 Many learners develop independent learning skills well and apply these to a range of new opportunities. They use their time in custody to gain new skills and qualifications.
- 73 Most prison PE departments give learners good opportunities to develop knowledge and personal fitness levels.
- 74 In most prisons, action plans and progress reviews do not record clearly enough many of these additional achievements. Tutors do not have enough detail about learners' previous qualifications and aspirations. They do not encourage learners to reflect on learning and record what they have learned.

### **In the community**

- 75 In probation areas, nearly all interventions staff develop good working relationships with offenders. They show empathy and there are high levels of mutual respect. Interventions staff present as good role models. This helps offenders to develop appropriate behaviour. Most make sure that offenders pay good attention to diversity issues.
- 76 Supervisors on unpaid work help offenders improve their confidence and improve their social skills. They provide informal advice that helps offenders reintegrate better into their communities.
- 77 Most offenders reflect positively on the impact of unpaid work on their lives and the restrictions it places on their free time.

- 78 Learners in unpaid work also acquire a range of skills which they can use in their own home environment including painting and decorating and gardening.
- 79 Staff on unpaid work programmes design good projects that develop team work, communication skills and problem solving.
- 80 For a few offenders the routine of getting up for their unpaid work changes their attitudes positively to work.
- 81 In most probation areas there is good celebration of success. Staff hold award ceremonies for offenders to recognise their achievements. For many offenders this is the first time they have achieved an award.
- 82 Many probation areas achieve good media coverage for offenders who take part in successful unpaid work projects. This helps their motivation and encourages them to reintegrate into communities.

## Meeting skills shortages and the needs of employers

### In custody

- 83 Nearly all prison workshops develop relevant workplace skills. Many offenders develop useful skills such as punctuality, attention to detail and working as a member of a team. In one prison, offenders discuss the importance of trust and reliability. They consider how future employers will see them as ex-offenders, and how they will have to earn trust over time.
- 84 Offenders gain accreditation in many areas, for example, in industrial cleaning or catering. These are relevant for the world of work. Trainee barbers gain useful skills in hairdressing. In many prisons, offender learners work well towards bricklaying or painting and decorating awards. Most make good progress.
- 85 In many areas, offenders are positive about learning. They become enthusiastic about the employment potential of the skills they are developing. They are clear about what they need to do to make further progress and to complete awards. Most offenders are keen to use their skills in employment and many have a realistic understanding of the needs of the labour market.
- 86 However, not all offenders have a good prospect of finding employment related to their training upon release. They may use outdated equipment or cannot gain a wide enough range of skills and experience to complete a qualification. Prison staff try to make changes to provision. However, they do not always respond quickly enough to local circumstances.
- 87 Offender learners in IT, many of whom have not previously used computers, achieve well and to a high standard. All apply themselves to their work, concentrate during sessions, and make very good progress in using word processing and database applications. They attain CLAIT qualifications at a very good rate.
- 88 Many offenders have good opportunities to improve their basic skills. Tutors often provide this support before offenders progress to vocational training. Learning and skills staff also support offenders in workshop employment who want to improve their basic skills on the job.
- 89 In the best cases, key skills assignments are relevant to offenders' vocational interests. A few offenders build on skills they gain from other workshops or prisons to improve their job prospects. However, one or two repeat learning they have already done before.
- 90 Overall, senior managers have developed good skills training for offenders who can now gain accreditation in many areas. However, staff miss opportunities around the prison to train learners in skills, such as catering, which are in demand.
- 91 Overall, managers take good account of national labour market information when they develop their provision. However, most prisons have not developed good enough links with local employers.

## In the community

- 92 Probation areas offer many offenders a wide range of learning programmes and qualifications. These include carpentry, gardening, construction, ICT, bakery skills, warehousing, fork lift truck driving, drama and photography or work in the care sector. A number of offenders go on to volunteer in different projects.
- 93 In the basic skills classes in the probation service, a few offenders make good progress with their learning. They develop basic computer skills using web-based learning materials. A few learn how to write a business plan for a small business.
- 94 In many cases, offenders do not have enough opportunities to develop IT skills that improve their job prospects. They do not have good enough access to IT equipment. They do not know how to access on-line job search facilities, and very few are aware of Careers Wales online.
- 95 In a very few cases tutors fail to plan learning, and offenders repeat techniques they have already learnt.
- 96 The quality of unpaid work placements varies across probation areas. In one probation area, most unpaid work placements are creative and of good quality. However, around half of unpaid work placements do not provide enough creative or challenging opportunities. They do not take good enough account of local labour market needs. Opportunities to develop new or increase existing skills levels are too limited.
- 97 In a few cases, individuals attend placements that make good use of their advanced skills. However, overall, staff do not take enough account of what offenders can already do, or their overall career planning goals.
- 98 Offenders have a good induction into unpaid work, during which they learn about health and safety and the rules about attendance. Staff carry out good risk assessments before learners go on site. Offender learners are able to achieve general and specialist health and safety qualifications. This improves their job prospects.

## Preparing for release and resettlement

### In custody

- 99 Overall, offenders receive satisfactory support for their release. Many resettlement staff help offenders with CVs and letter writing. Job Centre Plus staff provide job search facilities and fast track appointments in the community. This allows for a smooth transition into work or training on release. On a few occasions, resettlement staff negotiate successfully with employers to keep open the jobs of short-sentenced offenders.
- 100 Many resettlement staff develop links with supportive local employers who recruit ex-offenders.
- 101 Many offenders in custody do not have enough access to high quality IAG services. In one prison however, there is good access to a range of services on offer from Job Centre Plus, Careers Wales and Remploy. Jobcentre Plus staff visit the prison regularly so that offenders know about vacancies in their home areas. In another, Careers Wales advisers offer impartial careers advice. This helps prisoners identify the opportunities that may be most useful to them. However, advisers do not integrate details of the work done through this service into learners' ILPs or resettlement plans.
- 102 In a very few cases staff use successfully Release on Temporary Licence arrangements. This allows learners to attend job interviews or train in the community.
- 103 Most prisons develop useful contacts with external providers. One prison, for example, works in partnership with a local college to provide Learn Direct courses. Offenders and the wider community benefit from this. It provides the learner with purposeful activity and increases their chances of employment.
- 104 There is poor transfer of documentation between custody and community. In a few cases tutors do not make sure that learner portfolios go with them when offenders transfer into the community. This means offenders on licence repeat assessments and work they have already done. This de-motivates them and slows their progress.
- 105 One prison has previously run very regular resettlement events. However, the frequency of these has decreased. This means prisoners are not getting enough help to continue with learning and skills or employment when they leave prison.

### In the community

- 106 In many areas, there is comprehensive provision to get offenders into work or learning. Probation partners offer a good range of qualifications from basic skills to vocational qualifications, such as first aid, fork lift truck driving, health and safety and the construction industry site certificate. In many cases, offenders are developing skills such as working in teams, communicating with others and problem solving. However, staff do not formally record or track these skills.

- 107 There is a good spread of basic skills classes for offenders across all of the probation areas. This helps offenders not confident enough to access mainstream provision, to take their first steps to learning. However, the future funding of this provision is not clear.
- 108 Probation areas link well with external providers to improve employment outcomes for offenders. For example, in one area, the New Start programme<sup>4</sup> has resulted in 23 out of 45 participants moving into employment over a period of nine months.
- 109 Probation staff also make good use of Employment Zone services<sup>5</sup>. Here, a work-based learning company works with 'harder to help' clients to identify and overcome the barriers which prevent them from finding and keeping sustainable employment.
- 110 The help given to offenders by colleges of further education varies. The group which represents them in Wales<sup>6</sup> does not have a strategy for supporting offender learners.
- 111 However, most colleges consider applications from learners who have offended. Many of these colleges interview applicants and undertake risk assessments of their offences prior to enrolment.
- 112 Most colleges have measures in place to enable offenders to access learning once they have been accepted onto a course. In a few cases, offenders are not able to follow their chosen career due to the nature of their offence. The college then gives them further advice and counselling.
- 113 Ex-offenders and those at risk of becoming offenders take up courses in many colleges. These include Health and Safety, First Aid, Painting and Decorating, and Fabrication and Welding. Many colleges embed basic skills within courses to support these learners.
- 114 A few colleges have partnership arrangements in place with groups who support offenders. For example, one college works with a group whose aim is to resettle ex-offenders.
- 115 One probation area has developed an extensive partnership to support offenders into work. The partnership offers alternative courses such as practical rural skills, arts and crafts, artisan baking, heritage and recycling work. It also trains people for employment in the social care field and to work as mentors.

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<sup>4</sup> Based on a partnership with a work based learning company and Job Centre Plus

<sup>5</sup> A Department for Work and Pensions initiative to help long-term unemployed people living in some of the most deprived communities to find and keep sustainable employment.

<sup>6</sup> Fforwm

## Leadership and management

### In custody

- 116 Leadership and management in most prisons are good. Senior management teams set a clear direction for learning and skills which often links well to the prison's overall plan. Prisons have effective strategies in place which integrate learning and skills into all aspects of the prison regime. Prisons' reducing reoffending plans recognise the importance of learning and skills. In most prisons these strategies show clear links to the learning and skills agenda set by the Director of Offender Management Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government.
- 117 Most prisons meet or exceed their NOMS targets for learning and skills. However, leaders and managers do not set challenging enough attainment and progression targets of their own to ensure that all learners achieve their full potential.
- 118 In most prisons, operational management is good or very good. Curriculum managers hold effective regular meetings where staff share information and receive support. In the best cases, there are good management systems in place to review and evaluate courses and programmes. There are effective quality processes and reporting structures in place which allow managers to track developments.
- 119 In a few examples, senior managers do not always make clear enough to staff at all levels what their priorities and targets are. This means that all staff do not always understand the central role of learning and skills.
- 120 Overall, strategies for managing poor attendance and punctuality are not effective enough. Staff outside the learning and skills department do not always challenge poor attendance and punctuality. They do not always record reasons for late and non-attendance or explore these enough. This adversely affects learners' progress in some sessions.
- 121 A minority of learners have their learning disrupted when the prison transfers them to other establishments. This is because the next prison does not run the same course or the course is fully subscribed.
- 122 In around half of prisons, the systems for collecting and monitoring data are good. A good range of data is collected. This includes classroom efficiency figures, key performance target data, and data on recruitment, attendance, and retention. Basic skills assessment results are also collected. In these prisons, education staff use data sets effectively to improve performance and the quality of the learning and skills provision.
- 123 In the prisons where data management is not as good, staff do not use data effectively to help with management decisions and to improve provision. They do not receive regular reports about the current retention or achievement rates.
- 124 Many prison learning and skills staff are very well qualified. They have a range of appropriate teaching qualifications and experience in a range of subjects. Many staff also have basic skills qualifications. A few staff, for example in libraries and in IAG, while very experienced, do not hold formal qualifications.

- 125 Overall, PE staff hold a varied range of sports qualifications. They use these well to offer broad programmes which improve learners' skills and qualification levels. Vocational training staff hold assessor awards. A few are starting to achieve first level teaching awards.
- 126 All prisons have quality improvement arrangements in place. However, the effectiveness of these vary. In the best cases, useful quality assurance manuals cover key learning and skills processes and there are effective teaching observation schemes. Tutors receive good feedback and a record of individual action points. In one prison there are good links to the staff performance management scheme.
- 127 All prisons have a quality improvement group with representation from across the prison. Attendance is variable and groups sometimes lack direction. This impedes the progress prisons make in improving quality across all areas. Most prisons produce a self-assessment report, but these are not always evaluative enough. Not all staff in the prison are involved fully in the self-assessment process.
- 128 Overall, prisons' learning and skills budget give satisfactory value for money. Senior staff make spending decisions related to prison priorities, and all prisons meet their learning and skills performance targets. However, prisons do not always use resources as efficiently as they could. For example, they do not manage attendance well enough and there are sometimes too many empty spaces each day in classrooms.
- 129 One prison does not have an up-to-date management strategy for education and training. This means it is not always clear who is responsible for improving provision.

### **In the community**

- 130 The leadership and management of learning and skills vary across probation areas. In the best, there are clear aims for ETE and unpaid work provision which take good account of national priorities and local partnerships. There are good links between ETE activity and the NOMS ETE action plan and to the Welsh Assembly Government plans, for example Future Skills Wales. ETE interventions are included in the overall business plan. However senior managers do not always give them a high enough priority.
- 131 Most areas have effective systems in place to manage the work of interventions staff. Staff understand well the aims, objectives and targets of the area they work in. One service has effective systems in place for collecting and monitoring data to support performance management.
- 132 During 2007-2008, all of the probation areas met or exceeded their ETE targets, for offenders achieving basic skills awards and for offenders finding jobs.
- 133 The strong focus on meeting performance targets means that interventions staff do not always meet individual learning needs well enough. This is particularly the case for the most vulnerable offenders. Probation areas miss too many opportunities to offer accreditation. In one area, for example, during 2007-2008 staff assessed 372 offenders at Level 1 or Level 2 in Literacy and 321 at Level 1 or Level 2 in Numeracy. However, all the awards during this period were at levels below this.

- 134 On a few occasions probation areas evaluate well their work. For example, one area commissioned an independent report on basic skills.
- 135 Many managers take care to seek the views of service users. Managers in one area make good use of exit questionnaires for ETE to find out about offenders' views. These questionnaires are carefully analysed but the analysis does not result in an action plan for improvement.
- 136 Unpaid work staff send anonymous questionnaires to organisations benefiting from their projects. They do this to find out how well they view the Unpaid Work Service and whether it benefits the community. The positive feedback helps offenders to feel good about their work.
- 137 All probation areas commission projects and services to improve the range of learning opportunities available to offenders. These partnerships bring good added value, because they maximise resources.
- 138 However, the quality of these services varies too much from area to area. Although there are service level agreements in place, they do not say clearly enough what quality systems the providers should have in place.
- 139 Overall, managers do not train interventions staff well enough to meet the learning needs of offenders. Not enough receive training in basic skills, dyslexia, learning styles or how to promote positive attitudes and behaviour. In one area, most of the basic skills staff are not qualified enough. However, in a few areas, there is a very good focus on training and development for interventions staff. Accredited programme tutors attend basic skills awareness training and supervisors on unpaid work complete teaching and learning qualifications.
- 140 Overall, probation learning and skills budgets give satisfactory value for money. However, resources allocated for basic skills are not always used to their full potential. For example, probation managers do not monitor referrals and take up of basic skills well enough. This means there are often empty spaces in these classes. In addition, offenders do not spend the available 20% of unpaid work time allowed on basic skills activities. These are important shortcomings. Not enough offenders with poor basic skills receive the help they need.

## Appendix 1: Adult Offender Population in Wales

All data in this report has been supplied by RDS-NOMS.

### Prisons

The custodial capacity in Wales and type of prison is detailed in the following table:

| Prison         | Description   | Operational Capacity* |
|----------------|---|-----------------------|
| Cardiff        | Male local prison (age 21 and over) includes a unit for those serving life sentences.   | 769                   |
| Parc           | Male category B training prison and local Young Offenders Institution (also has a 64-bed unit for Young People (15-17yrs) which is not included in the total) | 1,200                 |
| Swansea        | Male local prison (age 21 and over)   | 422                   |
| Usk & Prescoed | Usk – Male category C training prison for convicted sexual offenders.<br>Prescoed – Male category D (open) training prison                                    | 428                   |
| <b>Total</b>   |   | <b>2,819</b>          |

\* data taken from PSimon (July 2008)

On the 31 May 2008, 2,803 male prisoners were being held in custody in Wales.

A data snap shot in June 2007 highlighted that 39% of male prisoners committed from Welsh courts for each type of custodial status were currently being held in an English prison.

As there are no female establishments in Wales; all women received into custody from Welsh courts, regardless of custody status (untried, unsentenced, and convicted), are sent to establishments in England.

Data from June 2007 identified that 187 Welsh women were being held in prisons in England and would be expected to resettle back into Wales upon release.

The Welsh female offender population is based on those females who have been committed from a court in Wales.

| <b>Prison establishment</b> | <b>Sentenced population</b> | <b>Remand population</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Eastwood Park               | 69                          | 30                       | 99           |
| Send                        | 19                          | 0                        | 19           |
| Styal                       | 17                          | 6                        | 23           |
| Drake Hall                  | 11                          | 0                        | 11           |
| Downview                    | 9                           | 0                        | 9            |
| Foston Hall                 | 7                           | 0                        | 7            |
| New Hall                    | 5                           | 1                        | 6            |
| Peterborough                | 4                           | 0                        | 4            |
| Low Newton                  | 2                           | 0                        | 2            |
| Askham Grange               | 2                           | 0                        | 2            |
| Holloway                    | 2                           | 0                        | 2            |
| East Sutton Park            | 1                           | 0                        | 1            |
| Morton Hall                 | 1                           | 0                        | 1            |
| Bronzefield                 | 1                           | 0                        | 1            |
| <b>All</b>                  | <b>150</b>                  | <b>37</b>                | <b>187</b>   |

**Table 1: Female custodial population, sentenced in Wales by current establishment on 30 June 2007**

## **Probation**

The Probation Service in Wales is organised around the four administrative areas which form the boundaries for the police services, namely, North Wales, Dyfed-Powys, South Wales and Gwent.

As of 30 September 2006, the Probation Service in Wales was supervising an overall total of 13,064 offenders. Of those 1,625 (12.4%) were female offenders and 8,934 (68.4%) of the overall offender total were on community sentences.

## **Appendix 2: Good practice examples in custody**

### **Promoting the Welsh language in an English prison holding Welsh women**

The library had books in Welsh which were suitable for different reading abilities. There were also children's books in Welsh so that parents could record a story for their children. Throughout the Education wing there was very good access to ICT, including one package that translates from English to Welsh. Where signage was in different languages, Welsh was included.

### **Support for women returning to Wales**

In one women's prison in England, staff in the resettlement unit give good support to women returning to Wales. They have good links with many Welsh organisations. These women receive useful information and advice and a DVD about their resettlement. There is a developing link with Careers Wales. A secondee from Careers Wales (to Probation) visits the prison. In addition, there are mentoring schemes involving former female offenders to support those returning home. The resettlement fayre has a good range of organisations from Wales who provide information bilingually.

### **Developing external partnerships**

One prison develops good external partnerships. They work successfully with universities. They provide access to courses at a higher level than the prison can offer. This means there are good progression opportunities for learners. One university supplies the prison with a tutor for two hours each week. A tutor from another visits the prison on a monthly basis. They provide additional support for those offenders working towards distance learning degrees. There are also very good links with an organisation that provides monthly courses on self-employment and running a small business. The local authority also works with the prison to teach language courses and a course on language and play for fathers.

### **Work-based training in prisons**

In one prison, offenders can work out in the community during the day. A few attend local colleges to follow bricklaying or welding courses up to NVQ Level 3. Staff at the prison use information from the Construction Skills Council well to develop their provision. They set up plant operator training on the prison farm. Offenders can gain skills in chain saw operation and fork lift truck driving.

**Successful resettlement**

In one prison, staff develop links with a very large service industry. They recruit ex-offenders to work in their call centre. This benefits offenders, employers and the wider community. It increases the chances of successful resettlement. In another example, a learner, trained on the barbering course, set up his own barber's shop upon release.

## **Appendix 3: Good practice examples in the community**

### **Good practice in providing IAG**

One probation area has a service level agreement with Careers Wales. Its staff provide good post-programme support for many offenders. There is effective signposting to other services. Careers Wales produce a bilingual leaflet called 'Is your offence holding you back?' This helps offenders to consider the impact of their offence on future employment. Careers staff are experienced and hold NVQ level 4 in IAG. All offenders receive a friendly, motivational assessment and agree an action plan that is realistic and achievable and matches the needs of the local labour market. The staff help offenders to write letters to potential employers about their offences. Careers Wales also attends a careers fayre for Welsh women held in an English prison. The careers advisors support offenders who want to continue learning at the end of their orders.

### **A successful training project**

Interventions workers in one area refer offenders to a successful intermediary labour market project in social care. This provides challenging, personal development workshops. Offenders produce good quality portfolios with certificates in basic skills, first aid, food hygiene, and health and safety. The course lasts six weeks and there is a five-week placement. One offender who completed the course has gone on to work as a support worker in a homeless centre and is working towards an NVQ Level 2 in social care. The project has a 95% success rate of getting people without a work history into sustainable employment.

### **A successful unpaid work project**

The probation service contracted with a conservation trust to deliver unpaid work projects for learners in West Wales. The projects included dry stone walling, land reclamation and improving access to the countryside by building and installing kissing gates. Learners took great pride in what they achieved within these projects. They displayed photographs of their work in the programme centre. They had access to a good range of accreditation for their skills and made good progress towards developing them. They recorded their progress clearly and carefully in well-ordered files. Programme staff monitored and reviewed these regularly. During these reviews, staff set new learning objectives that were well suited to individual learners' circumstances and abilities. Individual Learning Plans were clear, updated well and related to learners' needs. Learners also completed self-assessment forms at the beginning and end of programmes that showed clearly the developments they had made in confidence, self-esteem and motivation.

Learners progressed well, and understood what they needed to do to move forward. A few continued with projects after they had completed an order. The project employed a few as supervisors. Staff helped learners to plan their progression. Learners took good advantage of the employment vacancy displays to find out what jobs were available. They learned how to use computers and how to search the Internet to find vacancies. Learners also used the Careers Wales website and its e-Progress file to record their achievements and find out about their learning styles. They produced their own CVs to a very high standard, despite the fact that most had not used computers prior to engaging with the project.

### **Supporting probation clients into work through Employment Zone services**

The quality of training is good and clients have individually tailored programmes that meet their needs well. The company has a good understanding of local employment conditions. They identify the needs of employers effectively and match the contents of clients' programmes carefully to meet these needs. They make good use of partnership working to address disadvantaged clients.

Consultants provide clients with a very good level of guidance and encouragement and meet with them frequently to check on their progress. They regularly set and monitor clients' short-term targets well and encourage them to take responsibility for independent job search. Consultants also offer clients a useful 'in-work benefit calculation'. This helps clients to understand the financial benefits of being in work and frequently increases their motivation to actively consider seeking work.

## Appendix 4: Glossary of Terms

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Accredited programmes</b> | Accredited programmes help offenders to modify the attitudes, thinking and behaviours that contribute to their offending  |
| <b>Employment Zones</b>      | The Department for Work and Pensions is involved in a number of successful initiatives to help long-term unemployed people to find and keep sustainable employment. These initiatives include Employment Zones which are located in clearly defined geographical areas. In Wales there are two. |
| <b>ETE</b>                   | Education, training and employment  |
| <b>Flexible Learning</b>     | This may include open or distance learning, often self-directed and done at a time to suit the learners.  |
| <b>IAG</b>                   | Information, advice and guidance  |
| <b>Interventions</b>         | A particular planned course of action by a professional and/or a specific service with the aim of reducing reoffending, for example an offending behaviour or drug and alcohol course   |
| <b>Offenders</b>             | The term 'offenders' is used to refer to those aged 18 years and older, whether held in custody, serving part of their sentence in the community or whilst under supervision in the community. Those held on remand are not offenders.  |
| <b>Offender Manager</b>      | This is an officer in the probation service who co-ordinates and manages offender resettlement programmes and support.  |
| <b>Provider</b>              | Those delivering offender learning and skills services, for example prison/probation staff, partner organisation or contractor  |
| <b>Resettlement</b>          | The processes which allow an offender to settle back into the community on completion of their sentence   |
| <b>ROTL</b>                  | Release on Temporary Licence. A specially selected number of offenders are able to leave prison during the day to attend college or work or attend interviews.  |
| <b>Sentence plan</b>         | A plan which sets out a consistent, constructive and coherent approach to be undertaken during an offender's entire sentence, whether in custody or in the community and leading to a reduction in reoffending.   |

**Unpaid work**

Offenders may be sentenced to perform unpaid work in the community for between 40 and 300 hours. Most unpaid work projects directly benefit the local community. Examples of unpaid work schemes include rejuvenating run-down areas for the public's leisure use, decorating village halls and youth clubs or assisting charities in delivering services to those in need. Twenty per cent of the hours can be used for basic skills and employment-related training.

## The remit author and survey team

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