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Improving Offenders' Learning and Skills

Delivery plan
2003/04 - 2005/06

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Foreword



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Education is a important factor in reducing re-offending. The work we are doing in our prisons to rehabilitate, educate and prepare offenders for their return to society is critical in providing them with an alternative to crime.

Last year we set targets for prisons in helping individuals to achieve qualifications, with a focus on basic skills and work skills. Prisons achieved and in many cases exceeded their targets, delivering over 41,000 basic skills qualifications to prisoners. This is a substantial contribution to the Government's drive to improve adult basic skills. Many prisons have taken innovative approaches to education and training across prison regimes. This gives us a solid foundation for moving forward.

The next three years will be an exciting period with unique opportunities for improving offenders' learning and skills.

First, there is increased funding from the generous Spending Review settlement in 2002, giving us £97million in 2003-04, £122million in 2004-05 and £137million in 2005-06 to spend on prison education and training.

Secondly, there is the expansion of PLSU's role to encompass education and training for those on probation, which will bring new opportunities to enhance the work done to meet the needs of offenders who are serving sentences in the community, as well as those of offenders in prisons. This is a significant development which will allow closer partnership working between the Prison Service, Probation Service and Learning and Skills Council, to explore ways in which we can make learning for offenders more continuous, cohesive and more aligned with provision for learners in mainstream education.

This plan sets out in detail how the partnership between the Home Office, Prison Service and Department for Education and Skills to deliver education and training for offenders will support the Government's broader strategy for reducing reconviction rates. This partnership aims to improve the quality and quantity of learning for offenders in custody and on probation. We will judge our success not only through the achievement of targets, but also in how well we are able to create a new culture where learning is integral to both an offender's prison programme and their post custody re-integration into society, giving them the skills they need to live useful, law abiding lives in the future.

The Vision

Delivery Plan 2003/04 to 2005/06

Our vision is that offenders according to need should have access to education and training both in prisons and in the community, which enables them to gain the skills and qualifications they need to hold down a job and have a positive role in society, and that the content and quality of learning programmes in prisons, and the qualifications to which these lead, are the same as comparable provision in the community.

The Challenge

Reaching one of the hardest to help groups

Offenders make up one of our hardest to help groups. They often face multiple social disadvantages which make it hard for them to break out of the cycle of re-offending.

The majority of offenders have few qualifications, low basic skills and a history of low school attendance:

- **52 per cent of male and 71 per cent of female adult prisoners have no qualifications at all;**
- **half of all prisoners screened on reception are at or below level 1 in reading, two-thirds in numeracy and four fifths in writing. Level 1 is what is expected from an eleven year old;**
- **30 per cent of all prisoners have been regular truants;**
- **almost four out of five prisoners have been temporarily or permanently excluded from school; with at least 6 months' education lost in nearly half of all cases;**
- **89 per cent of male prisoners and 84 per cent of women prisoners have left school at 15 or 16, compared to just 32 per cent of the general population.**

Research suggests that, like others in the population, large numbers of prisoners are excluded from large numbers of jobs due to poor levels of skills. But we also know that stable employment following release from custody is one of the key drivers in reducing re-offending, and prisons provide an

opportunity to start raising offenders' skills levels. Offering the right education and training opportunities will improve offenders' chances of getting a job in the future, and of making a positive contribution to society.

There have been significant improvements in the provision of education and training in prisons in recent years. The partnership between the DfES, Prison Service and Home Office to deliver prison education continues to mature. However, there is still much to be done to build capacity and develop the relevance, quality and continuity of the provision on offer, not only for those in prison but also for offenders on probation. As sentencing policy moves towards a different balance of time spent in prison and in the community, there is a stronger challenge to keep individuals in learning throughout their sentence and beyond.

There are two key developments which will enable us to step up the rate of progress and improve the life chances of those at risk of re-offending. First, there is the additional funding made available through the Year 2002 Spending Review, which will provide significant improvements in the quality and quantity of learning opportunities for offenders. Second, there is the expansion of PLSU's remit from 2004 to cover education and training policy for offenders on probation, as well as those in custody. This will allow us to work towards a closer alignment between education and training policy for offenders on probation with developments in mainstream education and training. It will also provide the opportunity to develop the capacity of the Learning and Skills Council to meet the learning needs of these individuals.

Strategic Links

Working with other key Government strategies

Manifesto commitment

This plan supports the Government's manifesto commitment to

increase dramatically the quality and quantity of education provision in prisons.

Responsibility for delivering this commitment is shared between the Home Office and Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The Prisoners' Learning and Skills Unit, based in DfES, is working with partners to deliver the commitment.

The plan sets out a coherent vision for delivering the commitment in terms of funding, capacity building and the content and quality of education and training offered in prisons. However, this work does not exist in isolation. It feeds into other key Government strategies as follows:

Reducing reconviction

The Home Office's reducing reconvictions programme supports delivery of the PSA target to reduce the rate of convictions of all offenders punished by imprisonment, of all offenders punished by community supervision, and of all young offenders by 5% by 2006 compared to the predicted rate. The Home

Office programme is delivered by three responsible agencies: the Youth Justice Board, National Probation Service and HM Prison Service. These agencies feed into a delivery programme which focuses on funded, targeted interventions which research has shown to have an impact in reducing re-offending rates, including action on offending behaviour, healthcare and drugs, and education. The targets in this plan on achievement of basic skills qualifications and work skills are a key component of the reconvictions programme.

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National Rehabilitation Strategy

The Home Office Adult Offender and Rehabilitation Unit is developing a coherent national rehabilitation strategy for all offenders in prison and on probation. This is in response to the Social Exclusion Unit report "Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners" published in July 2002. This delivery plan will contribute to this work in particular through the development of education, training, employment and enterprise policy jointly with key partners such as the Learning and Skills Council. The work is supported longer term through the new sentencing framework planned for all aged 16 plus, with many more individuals serving sentences with periods in custody and in the community.

Skills for Life

The Government's strategy to improve adult literacy and numeracy and language, Skills for Life, sets out how the Government will reach its target of improving the basic skills of 1.5 million adults by 2007, with an interim target of 750,000 adults by 2004. This strategy is led by the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit in DfES. Progress is monitored by the Adult Basic Skills Cabinet Committee.

Skills for Life has helped deliver real improvements. Over 1.5 million adults have already started basic skills programmes, and more than 300,000 people by summer 2002 had already achieved national awards for their progress. There has also been success in improving the quality of teaching. All teachers in the post-16 sector are now required to have full teaching qualifications, and degree level certificates are being introduced for specialists in literacy and numeracy.

Offenders are cited in Skills for Life as one of the "hard to reach groups" whose need for

basic skills is particularly acute. The Prison Service is a major contributor to the national target. In 2001-02 prisons achieved over 24,000 basic skills qualifications. This amounted to around 10% of the national total - achieved with only 0.01% of the adult population. In 2002-03 the number of qualifications achieved has increased to over 41,000.

Success for All

Success for All, launched in November 2002, set out the Government's strategy for reforming further education and training, focusing on four key areas of meeting needs and improving choice; putting teaching and learning at the heart of what we do; developing the teachers and learners of the future; and developing a framework for quality and success. These principles are as relevant to prison education and training as they are to provision in the mainstream, and they impact on this delivery plan as far as the constraints of prison education allow. (For example, there are constraints about providing choice for the learner in the prison environment.) Success for All will make an important contribution to improving teaching and learning in prisons.

Skills strategy

The 2002 Spending Review White Paper gave DfES a new PSA target to reduce by at least 40% the number of adults in the workforce without a Level 2 qualification by 2010. There is an interim target to help 1 million adults in the workforce to achieve Level 2 between 2003 and 2006.

The Department will publish a Skills Strategy in June 2003 setting out how it will deliver this target, building on the Review of Funding of Adult Learning. Improving the work skills of offenders will be an important objective in the new strategy.

Strategic Fit

The Delivery Plan for Improving Offenders' Learning and Skills:



Partnerships

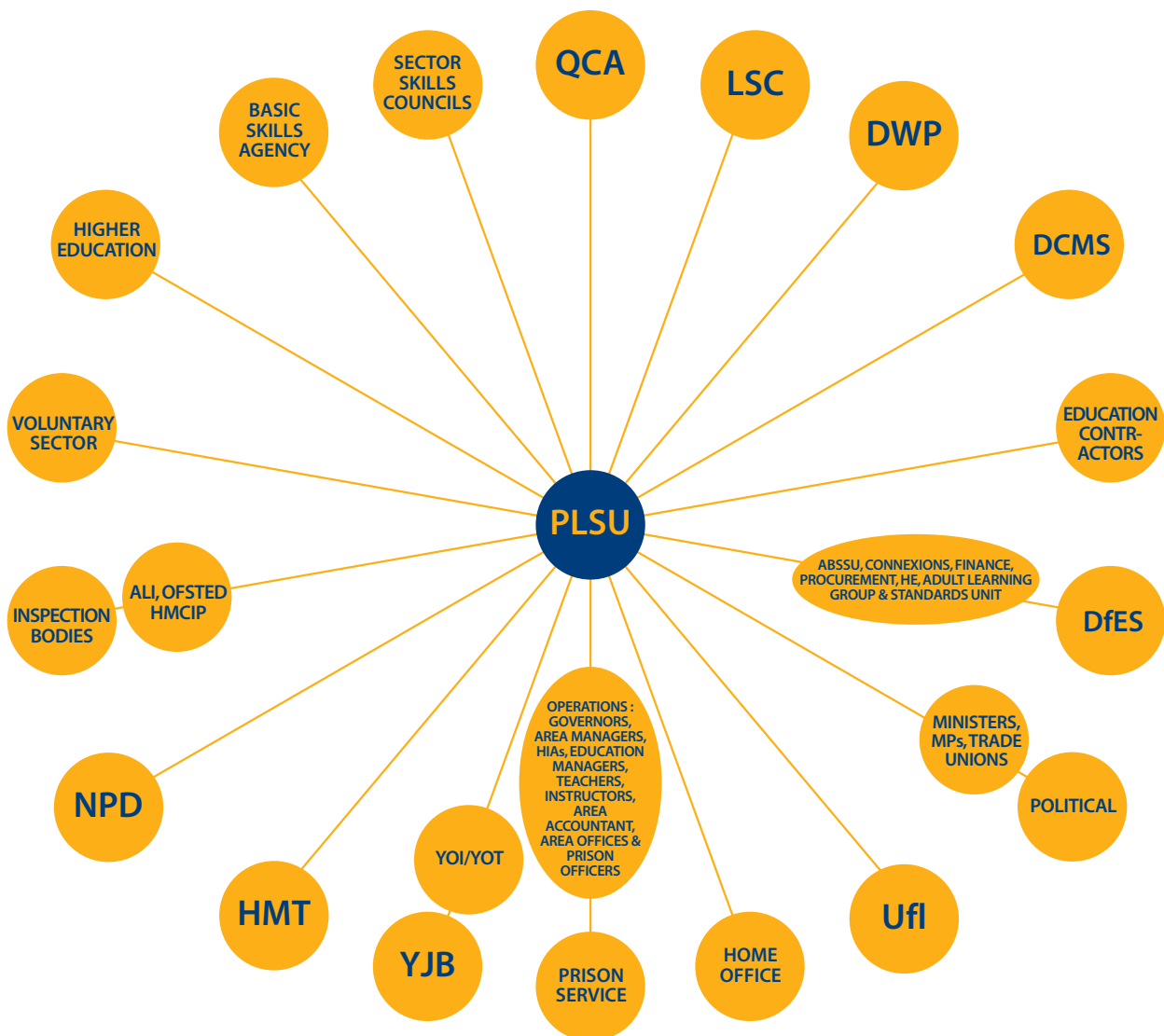
Working together to achieve success

The success of this delivery plan will lie in how well the Government Departments, agencies and partners who have a stake in it work together to achieve common goals.

Ministerial responsibility for delivery of education and training for offenders is held jointly by the Community and Custodial Sentences Minister and the Minister for Adult Skills in DfES.

Both Ministers sit on the Adult Basic Skills Cabinet Committee. The Prisons Minister chairs the Correctional Services Board which monitors the Home Office's reducing reconvictions delivery programme.

Delivery is through the Prison and Probation Services in conjunction with a wide range of partners (see diagram below).



The Prisoners' Learning and Skills Unit is a cross-Government unit which reports jointly to the Home Office and the Department for Education and Skills. The Unit supports delivery through:

- providing funding for education and training for offenders;
- providing policy support and advice; and
- through the work of its network of Learning and Skills Advisers.

Learning and Skills Advisers

The work of PLSU's network of Learning and Skills Advisers (LSA) is crucial in developing partnerships at local level, and supporting individual prison establishments to improve the quality of education and training on offer. The LSA structure is developing so as to be fully complementary to that of the Prison Service, with one LSA for each geographical area, two separate Learning and Skills Performance Advisers to work with juvenile establishments and separate advisers to support the high security and women's estates. LSAs work directly with individual prisons and Prison Service area teams to ensure that establishments are delivering quality education and training that is preparing learners for further training and/or employment in the community.



The role of the Learning and Skills Advisers

Equality and Diversity

Encouraging diversity in delivery

It will be important to apply equal opportunities principles and encourage diversity in the delivery of all the objectives in this plan.

This includes:

- working to ensure that education and training provision is geared to the needs of individual offenders;
- identifying areas where more needs to be done to address particular needs and taking action on them;
- respecting and celebrating differences between individuals;
- improving systems which monitor the participation of under-represented groups;
- taking opportunities to spread good practice in equal opportunities among partners.

These principles are implicit in the vision. Every strand of work has its own explicit equal opportunities objectives.

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Aims supporting the Vision

Offenders having access to targeted education and training

This plan focuses on action needed to realise the vision of offenders having access to education and training according to their needs which matches mainstream provision.

There are three main areas on which the PLSU needs to focus its resources, and these form the overarching aims of the delivery plan.

The aims are:

- 1. Increasing supply;**
- 2. Building capacity; and**
- 3. Delivering learning, achieving targets and improving quality.**

1. Increasing supply

This aim is about securing and allocating resources to support a larger volume of education and training in prisons, and ensuring that contracts at establishment level are of the best possible specification. It also covers the transfer of responsibility for probation education and training policy and development to PLSU, with the Learning and Skills Council being funded by DfES to deliver probation education programmes, working closely with the National Probation Service.

2. Building capacity

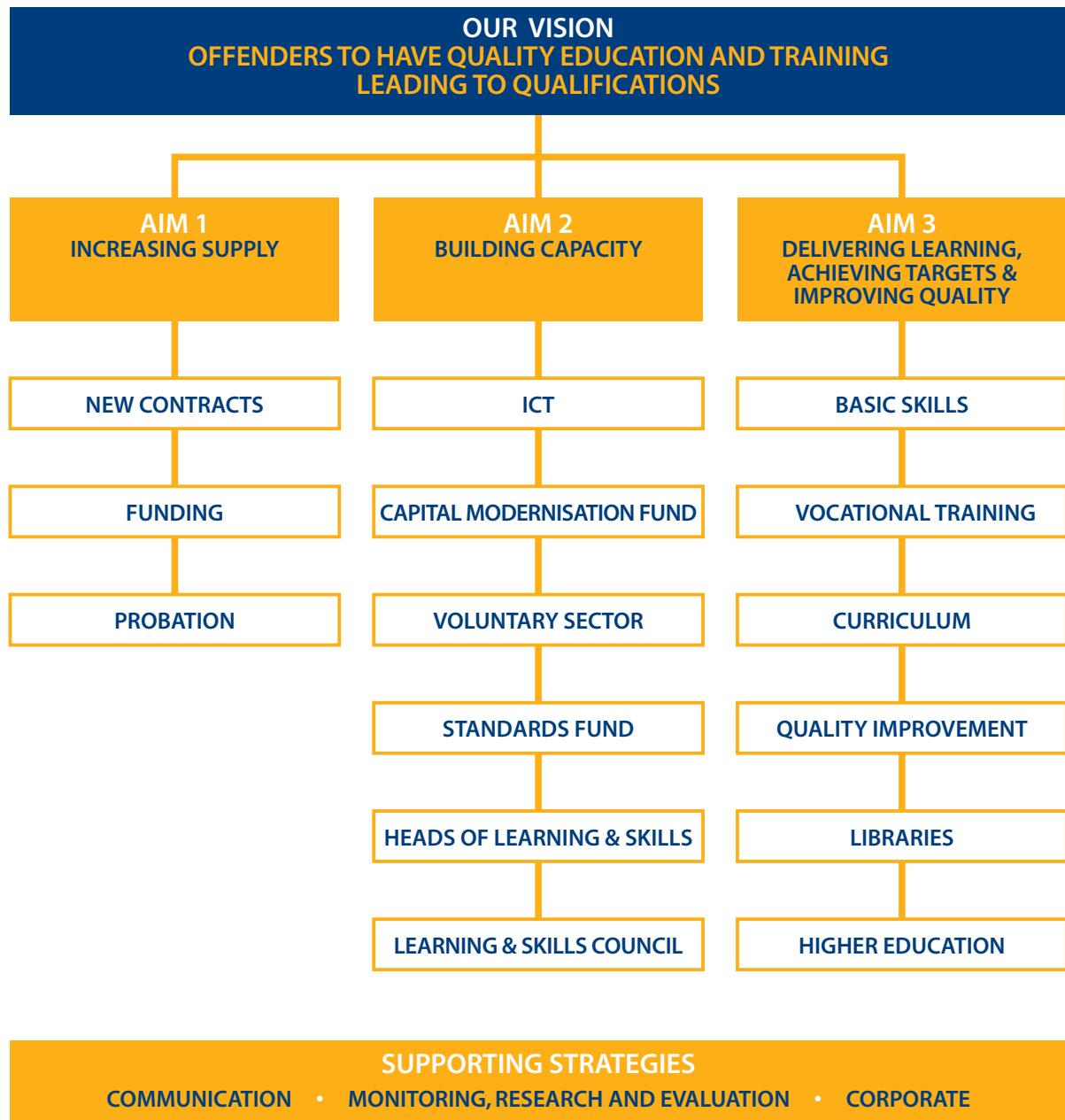
This aim is about ensuring that we have the right infrastructure in place in prisons, and in the learning and skills sector more widely, to support significant improvements in education and training for offenders. It includes developing ICT resources in establishments, capital improvements, strengthening partnerships with the Learning and Skills Council, improving partnerships between prisons and voluntary sector organisations who deal with training and resettlement of offenders, and developing the role of Heads of Learning and Skills across the prison estate.

3. Delivering learning, achieving targets and improving quality

This aim is about the development of provision which in terms of its content and quality, and the qualifications to which it leads, is comparable to equivalent provision in the community, and which is relevant to the needs of individual prisoners and the labour market to which they hope to return. Specifically, the aim is about supporting prisons to achieve basic skills and work skills qualifications targets. It will produce a new specification for prison libraries and increased participation in higher education. Crucially, it covers the development of a comprehensive quality framework to secure a cycle of continuous improvement and to support the identification, dissemination and transfer of good practice.

Delivery plan

Vision and Aims 2003-2006:



Work strands which support these aims

Contributing to the aims of the Delivery Plan

This plan is made up of 15 individual strands of work which contribute to the aims. Several of these work strands operate as formal projects with their own reporting structure. All have their own objectives and deliverables but are linked together by programme wide corporate and communications strategies.

Aim 1. Increasing supply

This aim is about generating the conditions whereby offenders can access more education and training opportunities of a better range and quality. The work strands are:

Funding

The allocation and monitoring of funding to support increases in volume. The additional resources, following the 2002 Spending Review will provide scope to expand the number and range of education and training opportunities on offer to offenders, and provide incentives for quality improvement.

New contracts

The redesign and re-tendering of education contracts for all prison establishments, including the incorporation of vocational training in contracts from April 2004. This will have wide ranging benefits in developing the supplier base for prisoner education and training.

Education and training for offenders on probation

Managing the transfer of responsibility for the achievement of basic skills targets for people on probation from the Probation Service to

DfES; and managing the transfer of responsibility for all basic skills and vocational training to the Learning and Skills Council, including additional funding made available in 2002. This work will impact significantly on the range and amount of learning for offenders on probation within a new framework agreed by partners.

Aim 2. Building capacity

The work strands under this aim are:

ICT strategy

Developing a database and secure site for data sharing between establishments, upgrading ICT equipment in prisons and developing opportunities for interactive learning for prisoners, including the staged introduction of learndirect across the establishment. This will ensure that the use of ICT to support learning in prisons resembles much more clearly that in the community.

Capital Modernisation Fund (CMF) project

Allocating and monitoring use of capital resources provided as part of the 2002 CMF round. This will help to modernise vocational training facilities and improve facilities for assessment, basic skills teaching and libraries in prisons.

Work with the voluntary sector

Developing a new relationship at national and local level to enhance services for offenders in accordance with key priorities, building on work by the Prison Service and National Probation Service.

Standards Fund

Developing criteria and arrangements for a Standards Fund as part of the drive to improve the quality of learning and skills provision in prisons. The Fund will be to support prisons in raising standards of delivery through building capacity.

Heads of Learning and Skills

Supporting the recruitment and maximising the impact of around 100 new Heads of Learning and Skills who will oversee education and training at prison establishments.

Strengthening partnerships with the Learning and Skills Council

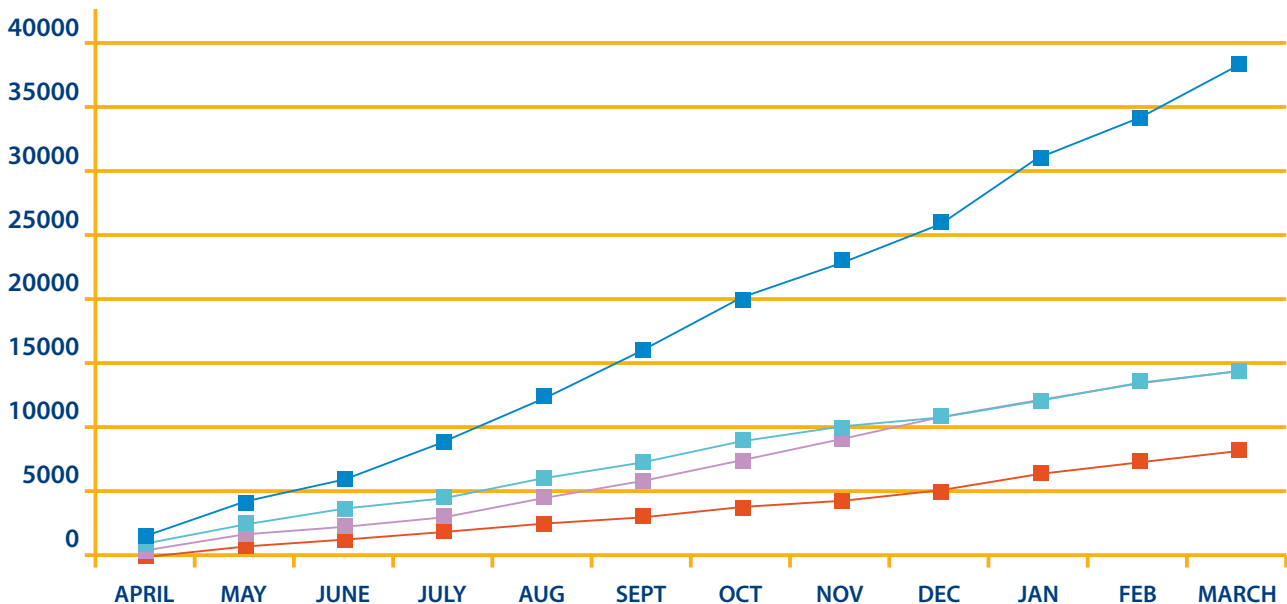
A strategy for working more closely with the LSC to develop coherence in learning and information, advice and guidance programmes for offenders in prisons and in the community.

Aim 3. Delivering learning, achieving targets and improving quality

The work strands under this aim are:

Basic skills

Setting and monitoring progress towards targets and a range of interventions to enhance the quality of teaching and learning both in prisons and for offenders in the community. In 2003-04, prisons will be working towards a target of 36,000 basic skills qualifications. We expect prisons to achieve this target as shown below:



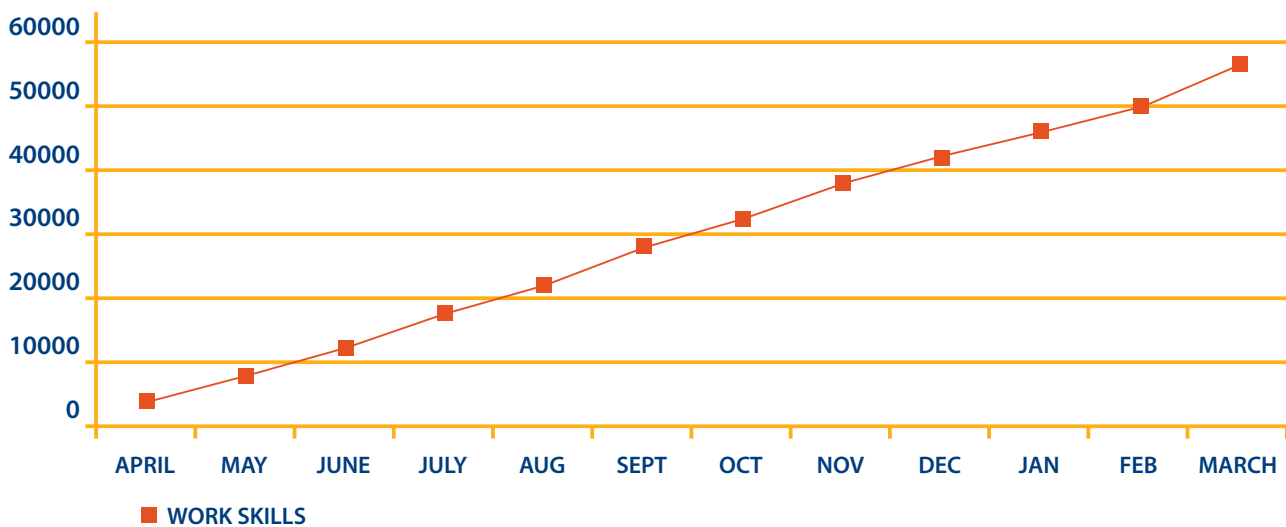
Basic Skills Trajectory 2003-2004



Vocational training

Managing the transfer of funding and policy responsibility to PLSU and the integration of vocational training in contracts at establishment level; and a major piece of work in line with the Government's Skills Strategy, to increase the labour market relevance of vocational training provision and the qualifications to which it leads. In 2003-04, prisons will be working towards a target of over 54,000 work skills qualifications. We expect prisons to achieve this target as shown below:

Work Skills Trajectory 2003-2004:



Curriculum

Undertaking a major review of the prison curriculum, ensuring that it is developed in line with government priorities both within the FE/Adult learning sectors and the Criminal Justice System.

Quality improvement

A series of interventions to drive up the quality of opportunities on offer, based around the establishment of quality improvement groups, around self assessments and development planning, inspections, monitoring and the dissemination of good practice. The network of Learning and Skills Advisers will play a pivotal role in building partnerships to deliver the quality agenda.

Libraries

Developing a new set of expectations for modernised prison library provision to enhance their role in education, and building these into a new deal with public library authorities.

Higher education

Doubling the number of prisoners taking Open University degrees.

Quality Improvement

Improving quality as well as the quantity of education

The Government's manifesto commitment is to improve the quality as well as the quantity of education for prisoners. This needs to be addressed not only by ensuring relevance of the curriculum and putting the right delivery structures in place, but by building formal quality improvement mechanisms into all interventions on prisoners' learning. Key aims are to continue to embed quality improvement cycles in the delivery of education and training. As with other education and training sectors, responsibility for continuous improvement rests with those responsible for delivering the provision.

There will be significant opportunities for quality improvement with the appointment of Heads of Learning and Skills for all prisons. These will be new senior level posts, similar to those already in existence in juvenile establishments and which have had a major impact on the quality of education for young offenders. We envisage that Heads of Learning and Skills will chair prisons' quality improvement groups and have a pivotal role in drawing up self-assessments and development plans for their establishments. Most establishments will have Heads of Learning and Skills in place from Autumn 2003.

Formal inspections of education and training in prisons under the new Common Inspection Framework began in April 2002. Establishments are expected to prepare action plans following inspections setting out how they propose to tackle issues raised. They are also expected - like all post-16 providers - to

prepare annual self-assessments and development plans based around the Common Inspection Framework.

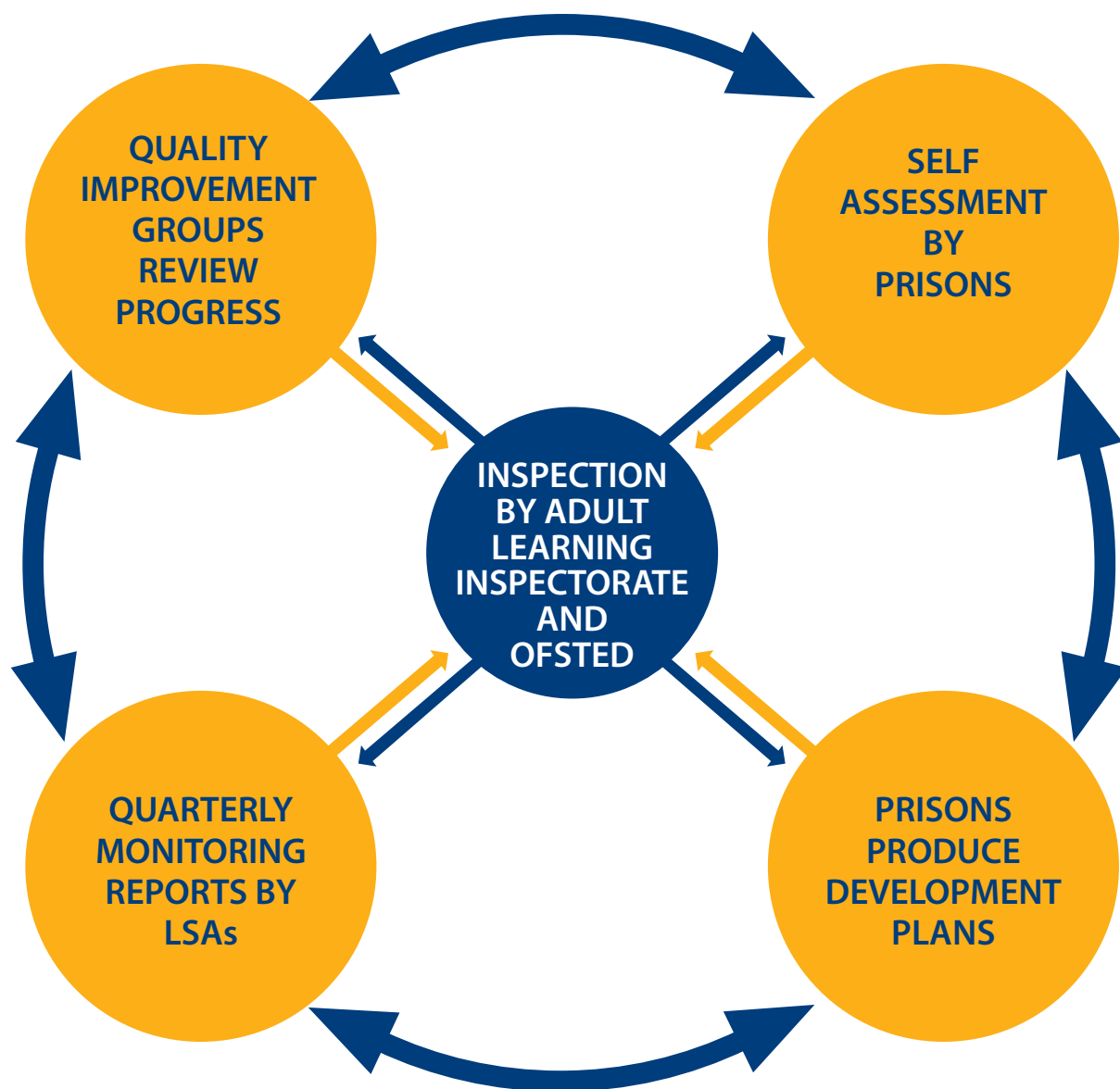
PLSU's Learning and Skills Advisers (LSAs) are working with prisons to embed the cycle of continuous improvement in their education and training activities. LSAs provide essential support to establishments in preparing their self-assessments and plans and conduct quarterly "provider reviews" to consider progress against them. They also help establishments to improve by identifying and disseminating good practice. LSAs will prepare quarterly reports on individual establishments' progress in conjunction with Prison Service Area Managers. These reports will provide an important measure of how effectively quality is being improved locally.

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The Quality Cycle

The quality cycle which is being embedded is shown below:



Resources

2003/04 to 2005/06

The 2002 Spending Review outcome has brought a large injection of funds for prison education over the next three years. The total provision from the Spending Review is:

£ MILLION		
2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
85	110	125

In addition, funding for vocational training will transfer to DfES as follows:

£ MILLION		
2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
12	12	12

Much of the additional funding will go into core provision of education and training in prisons, who will be required to submit 3-year development plans. Funding will be dependant on prisons having plans in place to raise achievement levels and improve education and training outcomes for prisoners.

Other areas of spending include:

- capital expenditure to support increases in the volume of provision;
- the early introduction of Heads of Learning and Skills in all parts of the prisons estate;
- to roll out a new ICT strategy;
- a Standards Fund targeted on improving standards of delivery through building capacity and spreading best practice; and
- enhanced advice and guidance services for young people in juvenile establishments.

The Government has also provided £20 million from the Capital Modernisation Fund, which is now being allocated to establishments for improvements to their learning facilities.

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How we will monitor progress

Measuring our success in delivering this plan

Delivery of this plan will be overseen by a DfES led Steering Group, chaired by the Director General of Lifelong Learning and made up of key partners within and outside DfES and the Home Office. The Steering Group will provide strategic direction to the delivery programme and will identify and resolve cross-cutting issues which impact upon it, such as the inter-relationship of PLSU's work with that of the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, the DfES Skills Strategy and Success for All.

We will monitor and analyse progress towards targets on basic skills and work skills each month, and report progress to the Home Office Reducing Reconvictions programme.

We will also use quarterly reports by Learning and Skills Advisers to identify areas for further development, and good practice which we will want to spread more widely.

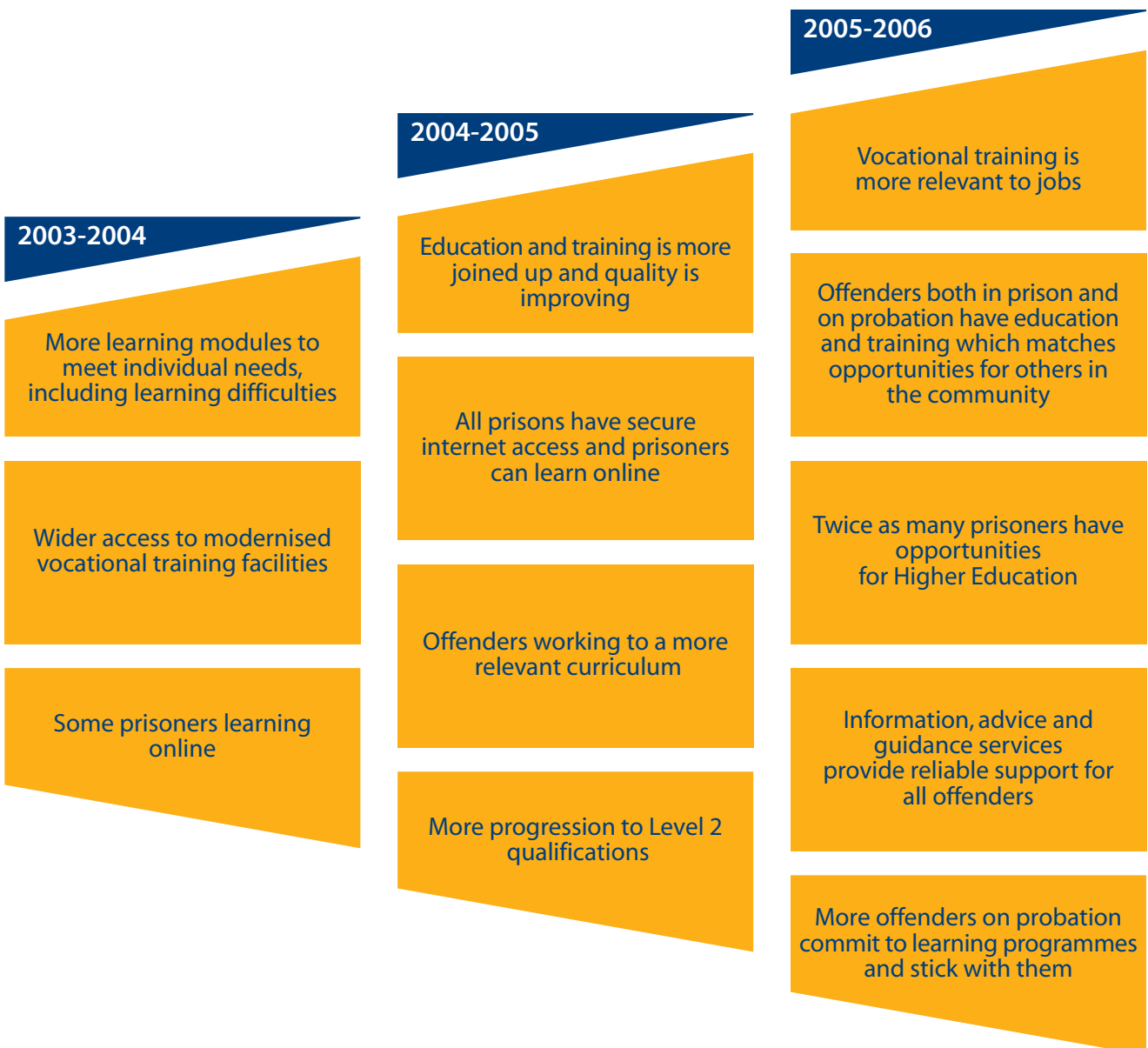
The measure of our success in delivering this plan will be the rate at which we are able to make noticeable improvements to the provision on offer to offenders. We will realise the vision in stages, year by year.

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What does this mean for our target group?

Our year by year vision 2003-2006:



You can contact us at:

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