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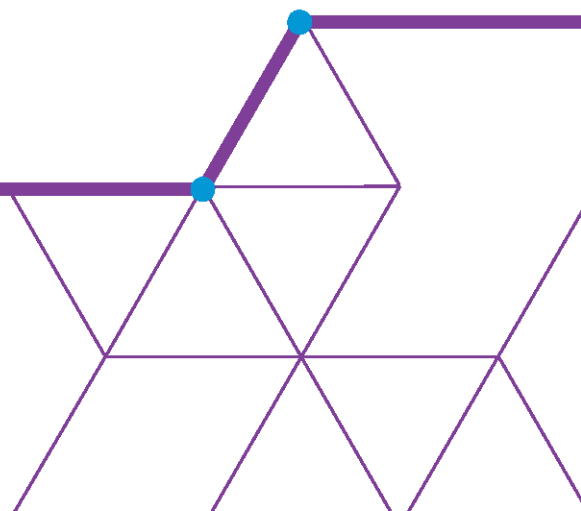
# Evaluation of prisoner learning

## Initial impacts and delivery

Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute  
Sheffield Hallam University  
London Economics

Ministry of Justice Analytical Series  
2018

Preventing victims by changing lives



*Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service is committed to evidence-based practice informed by high-quality social research and statistical analysis. We aim to contribute to the informed debate on effective practice with the people in our care in prisons, probation and youth custody.*

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## The author[s]

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# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Introduction

Ipsos MORI, London Economics and Sheffield Hallam University were commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)<sup>1</sup> and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ)<sup>2</sup> in March 2015 to undertake a process and impact evaluation of prisoner education. This included the impacts of prisoner education under Phase 3 (August 2009 – July 2012) and Phase 4 (introduced August 2012) of the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS3 and OLASS4), as well as changes made to the service under OLASS4, encompassing:

- new co-commissioning arrangements between the Skills Funding Agency (SFA)<sup>3</sup>, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS, formerly the National Offender Management Service (NOMS)) and prisons to facilitate greater local influence on learning;
- modified governance structure, including the creation of Governance Boards covering regional Units of Procurement and the clustering of prisons within these areas, to oversee revised funding arrangements, build strategic partnerships, and facilitate more responsive commissioning;
- new delivery arrangements, including a stronger emphasis on assessment of learning needs, an improved focus on vocational learning, and provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD);
- the delivery of the National Careers Service in prisons;
- the Virtual Campus (VC) – a secure internet-based platform to support prisoners to conduct online learning and job search;
- the introduction of mandatory English and maths assessments from summer 2014 for newly received prisoners on entry into the system, and;
- the introduction of student tuition fee loans for higher education (HE) after September 2012 and Advanced Learner Loans<sup>4</sup> for further education (FE) courses at Level 3 and 4, for eligible prisoners aged 24 and over from 2013/14.

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<sup>1</sup> Machinery of Government changes in July 2016 transferred the functions of the former Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in respect of higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and skills to the Department for Education.

<sup>2</sup> Responsibility for prison education passed to the Ministry of Justice from 1 October 2016. This evaluation was completed before the change took effect, and the text reflect the situation and responsibilities at the time of the evaluation

<sup>3</sup> The Education and Skills Funding Agency replaced the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) in April 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Previously termed 24+ Advanced Learning Loans.



## 1.2 Methodology

### The impact evaluation

The impact evaluation uses linked administrative data from BIS, MoJ, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to estimate the impact of prisoner learning under both OLASS3 and OLASS4 on post-release re-offending, employment, benefit dependency and learning outcomes amongst OLASS learners. The impact analysis is confined to domestic offenders<sup>5</sup>, i.e. it excludes foreign nationals.

To compare against those ex-prisoners in receipt of OLASS learning, a series of matched *counterfactual* groups was created comprising ex-prisoners who did not participate in prisoner learning but who shared similar personal and criminogenic characteristics to OLASS learners. From a methodological perspective, if all these other personal and criminogenic characteristics are controlled for, any difference in outcomes can then be more confidently attributed to participation in prisoner learning. Propensity Score Matching was used to construct the counterfactual groups.

A number of data limitations and caveats need to be made when interpreting the impact findings:

- The impact analysis was supported by multiple datasets and could only include individuals who could be linked reliably across all of these sources. As a consequence, the results relate only to a subset of OLASS learners.
- Despite the obvious importance from a policy perspective, data limitations meant it was also necessary to exclude certain groups from the analysis such as individuals with a prison sentence starting before August 2010, individuals aged under 21, and foreign nationals. In relation to foreign nationals, the re-offending datasets used in this analysis already exclude those foreign nationals who MoJ is confident will be deported on release based on codes in the prison release data. There are other 'foreign national offenders' who *may* be deported, but the final decision rests with the Home Office and these offenders are included in the initial re-offending dataset. This second category makes up approximately five per cent of the cohort and are excluded from the main impact analysis presented

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<sup>5</sup> A 'domestic offender' for the purposes of this evaluation is a prisoner recorded as British in the re-offending dataset.

here. Hence, this method is likely to exclude EU nationals who remain in the UK, misclassified UK nationals and some other foreign nationals<sup>6</sup>.

- An important caveat when using HMRC P45 and P14 records to study employment and earnings is that this data only covers those who pay tax through the PAYE system: it excludes self-employment; those working cash-in-hand; and some of those with an income below the National Insurance threshold.
- The scope of the OLASS3 analysis is limited to data available from 2010/11 onwards, as the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) could not reliably identify learner specific OLASS learning aims before then. This means that data do not cover the full OLASS3 period.
- While the various datasets contain many personal and criminogenic characteristics, it is possible that they do not include every factor related to the determinants of participation in prisoner learning and the outcomes of interest. Omission of such factors from the propensity score matching may bias the results.
- The sample sizes on which the impact analyses are based vary according to the time and the specific outcome being considered, due to data availability. In particular, the labour market datasets contain records only up until summer 2013 which means that *only very short-term post-release labour market outcomes can be analysed for OLASS4 (i.e. 9 months)*. A further consequence of this is that when the impact of OLASS4 on employment or learning is measured in terms of the difference in outcomes 9 months post-release, this comparison can only be based on the subset of OLASS4 learners who started an OLASS4 aim and were released from prison in the relatively short window between 1 August 2012 and 31 October 2012.
- OLASS4 was operational in only seven of the ten Units of Procurement during this time, therefore the period of analysis does not reflect a fully operational OLASS4. It is therefore not advisable to compare impacts from the early implementation stage of OLASS4 with impacts from a well-established OLASS3. Caution should also be exercised in comparing OLASS3 and OLASS4 since at

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<sup>6</sup> These 'foreign national offenders' are included in re-offending cohorts used by the MoJ and also likely to be included in the DWP/HMRC outcomes information. Furthermore, the cost benefit analysis is based on the number of re-offences per re-offender, but these figures are based on the entire re-offending cohort (which does not exclude 'foreign national offenders'), and whose re-offending rates are consistently lower than for UK nationals. Further analysis conducted by the MoJ has shown that the exclusion 'foreign national offenders' is likely to have had a comparable impact on both the treatment and counterfactual groups. This means that, although this is a domestic only report, findings are likely to have been consistent were this evaluation extended to include 'foreign national offenders'.

that start of OLASS4 much of the provision offered was the same as during OLASS3.

- Some policy measures, such as mandatory English and maths assessments were not implemented during the initial period of OLASS4 (1 August 2012 to 31 October 2012) being analysed.
- The OLASS3 and OLASS4 impacts are not directly comparable, since labour market conditions at release may have been different over time for the two groups of learners.
- We have assumed that the OLASS funded learning is associated with 100 per cent *additionality*, i.e. in the absence of OLASS funding, none of the learning that offenders received would have taken place.
- In relation to the cost benefit analysis undertaken in respect of OLASS3, there were a number of data limitations including the lack of costs per learning aim or learner. Therefore, we have assumed that the costs associated with OLASS3 provision are comparable to the costs per learning aim for OLASS4.
- The cost benefit analysis of OLASS3 covers the time period from 2010/11 onwards since it uses OLASS3 impact estimates based on data from this period.
- The cost benefit analysis of OLASS3 makes an assumption about the persistence of estimated impacts: that the impact illustrated in the first year persists in full for a second year, and subsequently erodes by 50 per cent in each subsequent year after the initial two year period.
- To undertake a cost benefit analysis, it is necessary to understand the extent of the *costs avoided* – including the reduced criminal justice costs associated with re-offending. We have assumed that the cost savings from reduced re-offending are representative of the average cost per offence for re-offenders that had been previously released from custody (rather than the costs that might be associated with the entire population of both first-time offenders and re-offenders).

These caveats, and the implications in relation to the interpretation of the data are presented in greater detail in section 4.1.2 and in the Appendices.

## The process evaluation

The process evaluation focuses on the implementation and delivery of prisoner learning under the OLASS4 contract, which started in August 2012. It involves a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods including:

- Ten prison-based case studies exploring the delivery of prisoner learning and related support across a range of prison categories and contracting regions (also called Units of Procurement). High-security prisons were excluded. Qualitative interviews were conducted with 49 prisoners and with over 110 strategic and operational staff across prisons, OLASS providers, the National Careers Service, resettlement services, and other agencies;
- Four Governance Board case studies;
- Analysis of Statistical First Release (SFR) data on patterns in learning participation and achievement over the duration of the OLASS4 contract; and
- Analysis of management information on concurrent policy areas including the use of the VC and the take up of distance learning and student tuition fee and Advanced Learner Loans.

### 1.3 The impacts of prisoner learning under OLASS3 and OLASS4

Overall, the impact evaluation results provide robust evidence that prisoner learning has positive impacts on reducing proven re-offending and on post-release employment outcomes among domestic offenders, particularly in the medium-term. The findings reported are statistically significant at the 5 per cent level unless otherwise stated. In particular, the OLASS3 impact analysis found that:

- The impact of OLASS3 participation was to reduce the one-year proven re-offending rate by approximately 7.5 percentage points (pp) to 32.6 per cent (from a baseline one-year re-offending rate amongst the counterfactual group of non OLASS3-learners of 40.2 per cent).
- OLASS3 learners were more likely than non-OLASS3 learners to be in P45 employment 12 months post-release (by 1.8 percentage points). Although statistically insignificant, the analysis also indicated that the 6-month and 24-month employment rate amongst OLASS3 learners was higher amongst the treatment group of OLASS3 learners (by 0.7 percentage points, and 2.2 percentage points respectively) compared to the counterfactual group of non-learners.
- Participation in OLASS3 was also associated with a higher likelihood of out-of-work benefit dependency both 6 and 12 months post-release. This higher take-up of

out-of-work benefits may indicate increased labour market engagement (i.e. that fewer ex-prisoners are economically inactive) or could be a side-effect of reduced re-offending (i.e. as they are highly unlikely to receive out-of-work benefit if they return to prison due to a re-offence).

When comparing OLASS3 achievers to those who participated in OLASS3 but did not achieve a learning aim:

- There was no statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of proven re-offending, P45 employment or benefit dependency.
- OLASS3 achievers were statistically significantly more likely to be engaged in further (non-OLASS) learning one year after release (although this proportion itself is low, standing at approximately 3 per cent).

There is no evidence that the early stage of OLASS4 had an impact on reducing proven re-offending. Although the analysis suggests that early OLASS4 learners were less likely to be in employment nine months after release than non-learners, this only refers to the initial impact on learners who started a course during the first three months of OLASS4. Given that the OLASS4 cohort under analysis was drawn from a relatively short period at the start of the contract, it is too early to draw firm conclusions about its impact overall.

In relation to post-release engagement with non-OLASS4 education and training, the analysis suggests that there is a small negative (and statistically significant) impact on learning participation among OLASS4 learners (compared to non-OLASS4 learners) 3 months post-release, but this does not persist beyond the 6-month marker.

Due to the fact that OLASS3 learning was delivered in an earlier time period than OLASS4, the post-release labour market outcomes of OLASS3 learners exist for a longer period of time. Although the medium-term post-release impact estimates for OLASS3 cannot be directly compared with the short-term impact estimates for OLASS4, the persistency of the positive labour market and proven re-offending outcomes are nonetheless informative.

***What you can say:*** Prisoner education makes a positive difference to one-year re-offending outcomes and to one-year P45 employment outcomes among domestic offenders.

Participation in prisoner education (under OLASS3) significantly reduced one-year proven re-offending rates. Prisoners who had taken part in learning under OLASS3 were

approximately 7.5 percentage points less likely to re-offend after one year from release, than prisoners who had not done any learning.

OLASS3 learners were significantly more likely to be in P45 employment one year from release, than non-learners (by 1.8 percentage points). They were also more likely to be in receipt of out-of-work benefits, which may indicate increased labour market engagement (i.e. that fewer ex-prisoners are economically inactive) or could be a side-effect of reduced re-offending (i.e. as they are highly unlikely to receive out-of-work benefit if they return to prison due to a re-offence).

Participation in OLASS3 learning did not lead to an increased likelihood of gaining further qualifications, post-release. The results of the impact analysis do not imply that OLASS4 learning was any more or less likely to lead to positive outcomes than OLASS3, as it is too early to make this comparison.

### **The costs and benefits associated with prisoner education under OLASS3**

In relation to the cost benefit analysis undertaken for prisoner education under OLASS3, there were a number of data limitations including the lack of costs per learning aim or learner. Therefore, we have assumed that the costs associated with OLASS3 provision are broadly comparable to the costs per learning aim for OLASS4. Combining information on the average nature and number of the learning aims undertaken under OLASS3, we estimated the cost per OLASS3 learner stood at approximately £1,200-£1,300.

We have assumed that the cost savings associated with reduced re-offending are representative of the proven re-offences associated with ex-offenders that had been previously released from custody (rather than the distribution of offences (and associated costs) that might be associated with the entire population of proven offenders).

Under the assumption that the OLASS3 re-offending and employment impacts in the first year post-release persists in full for another year and then erodes by *50 per cent* in each successive year – the analysis suggests that the economic benefit associated with OLASS3 proven re-offending and employment outcomes stands at approximately £6,700-£6,800, compared to costs of provision of £1,200-£1,300 (i.e. a net benefit of £5,400-£5,600 per learner).

**What you can say:** The data indicates that investment in prisoner education is cost-effective. Based on the assumptions set out in this report, the economic benefit associated with OLASS3 proven re-offending and employment outcomes outweighs the costs of provision by a ratio of approximately 5:1.

## **1.4 The delivery of prisoner learning under OLASS4**

### **Participation and achievement**

Under OLASS4, learner numbers and achievements have increased, particularly at Level 1 (equivalent to GCSEs below grade C) and below. Participation in and achievement of full Level 2 qualifications (equivalent to five GCSEs at grades A\* to C) has increased under the OLASS4 contract, as intended. The proportion of prisoners engaged in OLASS learning with a known learning difficulty or disability also increased over the course of the OLASS4 contract. This has been achieved in the face of a core budget for prisoner education that has declined in real terms over the course of the OLASS4 contract.

Although the evaluation has not estimated the impact of OLASS4 provision on the take-up of learning by prisoners in prison, the delivery of OLASS4 has taken place in the context of rising participation during a period of budget restraint.

### **Commissioning and governance arrangements**

Governance Board activity focused on overseeing performance and financial management, as part of their remit, but there was less activity on more strategic issues such as partnership-building or identifying gaps in provision.

Governance Boards were transferring funds between prisons, so resource allocation was more flexible than under OLASS3. However, movement of funds tended to be reactive rather than strategic, and there remained inflexibility in the system due to restrictions in the funding rules for certain types or levels of course.

### **English and maths assessments and the sequencing of learning**

There were strong procedures in place to conduct the mandatory English and maths assessments from August 2014. These commonly took place on arrival at the prison – generally as part of induction. But across all case studies, there was evidence of repeat assessments as systems to share information on prior attainment were not always kept up-to-date.

## **Types of learning offered**

Vocational provision was geared towards the end of the sentence (although scope for this varied by prison classification and sentence length). Between 2011/12 and 2013/14 there were minor changes in the distribution of learning undertaken by subject area, with a small decline in 'ICT' learning aims and an increase in 'retail and commercial enterprise'. The largest subject area for courses remained 'preparation for life and work'.

An improved focus on identifying learning needs meant that prisoners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) were offered more tailored and specialised support.

## **Tailoring of the curriculum to local needs**

Local labour market information was being used to inform curriculum planning. However, the perceived quality and relevance of this to the prison population was mixed and there were sometimes overlaps in how labour market information was provided, with more than one organisation involved. Some resettlement prisons had put in place dedicated employer engagement roles to build direct links with local employers – this informed curriculum planning with the OLASS provider and helped to create placement and employment opportunities for prisoners, especially through Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL).

## **The take-up of distance learning and student loans**

Tuition fee loans for part-time HE first became available for study in the 2012/13 academic year. Prisoners making distance learning applications were given information and practical support by National Careers Service advisers, and could access funding through the Prisoners' Education Trust (PET), as well as the Student Loans Company. The proportion of funding provided by PET remained stable over the course of the OLASS contract.

The numbers taking part in Open University distance learning are small relative to the prison population, but increased between 2011/12 and 2012/13 before stabilising; where possible, prisoners undertaking distance learning were provided with additional resources such as books and computer access to support successful completion of courses.

Applications for HE tuition fee loans increased as new cohorts of learners accessed them in successive years. Thus, applications trebled over the three years between 2012/13 (the first year of operation) and 2014/15, albeit from a low base. Use of Advanced Learner Loans for Further Education (FE) at Level 3 and above is also very low not least given the size of the prison population. Key barriers to participation in distance learning include limited availability



of provision at those levels; a common aversion to taking on any form of debt; and access to the internet/IT to undertake various provision.

### **Use of the VC**

Management information on the VC shows the number of active users and completed activities is relatively low compared to the number of registrations, suggesting that continued use after initial registration is limited. The main barriers were: lack of internet connectivity; technical issues; low awareness and lack of training among prison and provider staff; poor quality resources; and prison regime constraints. There was very limited knowledge of being able to access the VC post-release.

### **The effectiveness of pre-and post-release employment support**

The approach to pre-and post-release employment support was still in development and thus disjointed in most of the case study prisons. The new Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) were still in early days after being commissioned from May 2015 and as a result of this, respective partner roles and remits were sometimes unclear, leading to duplication.

Co-ordination between OLASS providers and the National Careers Service varied – there was some good practice, but some evidence of overlaps, for example, when gathering prisoner information at the induction stage. In cases where the National Careers Service had the time and resource to undertake promotional work (to raise awareness of the service and engage a wider range of prisoners) and more in-depth individual case work, support was more effective.

Services were inhibited by a lack of Data Sharing Agreements (DSAs) to facilitate comprehensive data sharing which also meant it was difficult to monitor employment outcomes for prisoners once they had been released. In the case study prisons where resettlement services operated a co-located approach and used shared systems or had data sharing agreements, partnership working was improved and offered prisoners a smoother process.

## 1.5 Enablers and barriers to impact, and further areas for consideration

The main enablers to impact were underpinned by the extent and quality of **partnership working**, in particular between the OLASS provider and the prison, and between the OLASS provider and the National Careers Service. Partnership working could be enhanced by **co-location** of services from different providers and by taking a **strategic approach to issues like data-sharing**, to ensure appropriate DSAs were in place and that common systems were being used in a consistent way. The other key enabler was the **flexibility** of the OLASS provider and the prison itself, and their respective willingness to adapt processes to support more effective delivery of learning, for example by changing the curriculum in response to local need, embedding English and maths within vocational courses, or by putting targeted initiatives in places to help boost attendance. In addition, some case study resettlement prisons had created specialist roles for staff to directly **engage with local employers** and generate work placement and employment opportunities.

Barriers to impact were related to the following key issues:

- **Constrained resources** – for example, in relation to the impacts of New Ways of Working on staff resourcing levels and prisoner movements; and pressures on National Careers Service advisers, especially in high-churn, local prisons;
- **Limited information-sharing** – in particular between agencies working at the resettlement stage of the sentence, and between in-custody and in-community services;
- **Lack of clarity about partnership roles** – this applied particularly to pre- and post-release employment support, where there was evidence of some overlaps between the CRC, National Careers Service, and Jobcentre Plus (JCP);
- **Funding rules and processes** that were viewed as inflexible or insufficiently tailored to a prison setting – for example, restrictions on funding for certain entry level short courses, and – at the other end of the scale – for courses at Level 3. Several stakeholders referred to funding rules and contractual processes running according to the academic year, rather than being designed around prison education, which operates on a year-round basis. For providers, this resulted in some uncertainty about which courses would continue to be funded from September each year, making it difficult for them to plan curricula and resourcing during August and September while they waited to find out the new funding rules.

This evaluation has identified a number of issues for future consideration in improving the delivery and impacts of prisoner education. While the emphasis on English and maths and vocational provision under OLASS4 was welcomed by stakeholders, many of them regarded

the funding rules as being inflexible. Greater consideration could be given to incorporating more scope for tailoring within the funding rules, to support the introduction of more innovative provision within the prison setting. Extending funded provision at **Level 3** could enhance progression pathways for the increasing number of prisoners who complete courses at full Level 2, as well as offering prisoners the opportunity to obtain higher level qualifications which would improve their competitiveness in the wider labour market. However, any extension of Level 3 provision would need to be supported by improved awareness and take-up of **Advanced Learner Loans**, which is very low within the prison population. The effectiveness of **outcome-based funding** depends on having well-defined outcomes which can be recorded and monitored appropriately. For example, it is extremely difficult for the National Careers Service to systematically monitor employment outcomes among prisoners as they are reliant on being able to contact prisoners on release, or on prisoners to self-report. Comprehensive **data sharing agreements** between the National Careers Service and the CRCs/the National Probation Service would help to improve how this target is monitored, providing better quality information on prisoners' transitions into employment.

## 2. Introduction

Ipsos MORI, London Economics and Sheffield Hallam University were commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)<sup>7</sup> and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ)<sup>8</sup> in March 2015 to undertake a process and impact evaluation of prisoner education. This included the impacts of prisoner education under Phase 3 and 4 of the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS3 and OLASS4) and changes made to the service under Phase 4, including new commissioning and delivery arrangements, the delivery of the National Careers Service in prisons, the Virtual Campus (VC), English and maths assessments for newly received prisoners, and the introduction of student tuition fee loans for higher education (HE) and Advanced Learner Loans<sup>9</sup> for further education (FE). Most of these changes have been made around the same time as wider reforms to prisoner resettlement, set out in the 2013 MoJ policy paper *Transforming Rehabilitation*<sup>10</sup>, however this research is not intended as an evaluation of *Transforming Rehabilitation*.

### 2.1 Prisoner learning arrangements under OLASS3

The OLASS3 contracts ran from August 2009 to July 2012. The contracts were awarded and centrally managed by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)<sup>11</sup> until 2010, when the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) took over control of the contracts. Reflecting long-established practice in prison education delivery, funding was based on teaching hours delivered, rather than outcomes. Providers were required to deliver 80 per cent of the contract value through the learning and skills offer in the following broad core curriculum areas:

- Employability skills
- Functional skills (literacy, numeracy and ICT) and ESOL
- QCA accredited vocational qualifications

With a maximum of 20 per cent of provision as Personal and Social Development (PSD), focused on engagement and motivation activities.

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<sup>7</sup> Machinery of Government changes in July 2016 transferred the functions of the former Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in respect of higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and skills to the Department for Education.

<sup>8</sup> Responsibility for prison education passed to the Ministry of Justice from 1 October 2016. This evaluation was completed before the change took effect, and the text reflect the situation and responsibilities at the time of the evaluation

<sup>9</sup> Previously termed 24+ Advanced Learning Loans.

<sup>10</sup> *Transforming Rehabilitation: A Strategy For Reform*, Ministry of Justice, 2013, <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/transforming-rehabilitation/results/transforming-rehabilitation-response.pdf>, last Accessed 21 December 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Although the Regional Offender Managers and, latterly, Directors of Offender Management were expected to play a significant role in determining the curriculum offered.

The intention was that the core curriculum offered in a prison was aligned with LSC's (and from April 2010 the SFA's) priorities to address the integrated employment and skills agenda.

Providers were expected to tailor the core curriculum, through an appropriate mix and balance, in response to the particular learner profile in each establishment. In all cases, providers had to agree with the LSC and the establishment how the core curriculum would be built up. During OLASS3, careers advice and guidance in prisons was delivered by the Careers Information and Advice Service (CIAS), a specialist advisory service that operated only in prisons.

## 2.2 The rationale for OLASS4

The policy rationale for the changes in prisoner education made under OLASS4 was set out in the 2011 joint BIS and MoJ review *Making Prisons Work*<sup>12</sup>. The review reiterated the case for investment in skills in prisons, highlighting National Audit Office analysis suggesting the social cost of re-offending was in the order of £9.5bn to £13bn per annum<sup>13</sup>. *Making Prisons Work* also highlighted the priority to reduce re-offending, and the importance of securing employment in achieving this. However, low levels of skills and work experience often constrained ex-offenders' competitiveness in the labour market. As such, public investment in prison education and training was perceived to have the potential to deliver the social benefits associated with reduced re-offending, *if* that learning is effective in supporting transition into work, post-release.

However, while noting the advances associated with expanded skills investment in prisons since 2006, *Making Prisons Work* raised concerns over the strength of evidence that learning outcomes were delivering the employment outcomes expected. Unavoidable movement of prisoners between prisons led to sometimes frequent reassessment of learning needs, loss of information on prior attainment, and difficulties for learners in completing learning aims that they had started. The review also suggested that limitations on the exchange and circulation of information post-release weakened referrals between learning providers and the Probation Service, acting as a further constraint on progression.

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<sup>12</sup> BIS and Ministry of Justice (May 2011), *Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/call-for-evidence-review-of-offender-learning>, last accessed 21 December 2015.

<sup>13</sup> National Audit Office (March 2010), *Managing Offenders on Short Custodial Sentences*, <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/0910431.pdf>, last accessed 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

In addition, the review highlighted a range of issues with the funding model and governance arrangements: the input based funding mechanisms under OLASS3 led to a weak correlation between the distribution of resources and delivery of learning across prisons, and did not provide sufficiently strong incentives to focus on employment outcomes. Reflecting reforms elsewhere in the skills system, the review also emphasised the principle that offenders should expect to pay a share of the costs involved (potentially creating stronger incentives to pursue employment post-release). Finally, the review highlighted that weak local control over the specification of learning provision inhibited the extent to which strong links were made between vocational education and the labour markets into which offenders would be released.

## 2.3 Policy objectives

*Making Prisons Work* identified the following key policy objectives for prisoner education in response to these issues:

- **greater local influence on provision for offender learners**, both in prison and in the community, in order to better equip them to compete for work in the labour markets into which they will be released;
- **effective partnership working** as the key to making local arrangements operate well, with the effective engagement of employers critical;
- the need to focus on the quality of offender learning and implementation of the VC, and on the flexibility of delivery in the community;
- **encouraging the take up and continuation of learning and employment opportunities** through mentoring for prisoners, with a focus on transition when leaving prison, as well as for those serving community sentences; and
- a new focus on identifying and meeting the needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities participating in learning and skills.

## 2.4 Changes to prisoner learning arrangements under OLASS4

New arrangements for commissioning and delivering learning provision were introduced under OLASS4, from August 2012 in most areas<sup>14</sup>. Table 2.1 shows the four OLASS providers contracted to provide learning and skills training for prisoners across the ten Units of Procurement in England.

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<sup>14</sup> OLASS4 commenced in August 2012 in seven Unit of Procurement areas and in November 2012 in the remaining three areas.

**Table 2.1: OLASS4 providers and contracting areas**

<b>OLASS4 providers by contracting area</b>	
Novus (formerly The Manchester College)	London, North East, North West, Kent & Sussex, Yorkshire & Humber
Milton Keynes College	East Midlands, South Central, West Midlands
Weston College	South West
People Plus (formerly A4E)	East of England

*Source: Ipsos MORI, based on SFA documentation regarding the delivery of OLASS4*

The main changes to OLASS4 compared with OLASS3 involved:

- **Co-commissioning arrangements** in which procurement was led jointly by the SFA, HMPPS and prisons, to facilitate **greater local influence** on learning provision to ensure that it was tailored to the needs of employers; and to **improve continuity of learning** by reorganising delivery around clusters of prisons within which prisoners move (based within ten regional Units of Procurement). The SFA remains accountable for funding and continues to be responsible for performance management of the OLASS contract across each Unit of Procurement<sup>15</sup>.
- The OLASS4 arrangements were developed and implemented with a move towards improved local control and accountability in mind. As well as Governors being involved in the selection of OLASS4 providers, the expectation under the revised contract was that Governors would facilitate the commissioning of the curriculum in their prison and the monitoring, review and assessment the effectiveness and impact of education delivery in their prison.
- This ‘local commissioning’ message was reiterated in a joint letter to prison Governors from the HMPPS Chief Executive, Michael Spurr, and the Chief Executive of Skills Funding, Peter Lauener, on 16 December 2014<sup>16</sup>.
- **Greater local partnership working** between prisons, learning providers, and other agencies, through **regional governance** arrangements. Ten Governance

<sup>15</sup> SFA (2015), *OLASS Phase 4 Governance Guidance Note*, September 2015, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/459483/OLASS\\_phase\\_4\\_governance\\_guidance\\_September\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/459483/OLASS_phase_4_governance_guidance_September_2015.pdf), last accessed 4 January 2016.

<sup>16</sup> BIS (2014) *Adult Literacy and Numeracy: Government response to House of Commons, Business Innovation and Skills Select Committee Fifth Report of Session 2014-2015* [http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/business-innovation-and-skills/45419%20Cm%208982%20Adult%20Literacy\\_Print.pdf](http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/business-innovation-and-skills/45419%20Cm%208982%20Adult%20Literacy_Print.pdf) last accessed 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

Boards were established, one covering each Unit of Procurement, to be chaired by the Deputy Director of Custody (DDC) for each area, although specific governance arrangements may vary to reflect local circumstances. The main purpose of the Boards is to ensure that careers services and learning and skills target learners effectively, enhancing employment and wider post-release prospects of offenders<sup>17</sup>.

- Changes to the **funding model**, to bring allocations for each prison in line with new priorities including funding based on outcomes (enrolments, achievements, success rates and progression)<sup>18</sup> rather than inputs. Learners aged 18 to 23 were eligible for full funding for all learning aims up to and including Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) level 3, including units. Learners aged 24 or over are eligible for full funding for all learning aims up to and including QCF level 2, including units. From August 2013, any learner aged 24 or over at the start of learning and studying any of the learning aims listed below is not eligible for funding through OLASS, but may be eligible to apply for an Advanced Learner Loan, repayable once they are working and earning above the stipulated earnings threshold. Eligible courses include:
  - QCF Certificates and Diplomas at levels 3 and 4;
  - A-levels (including AS, A2 and full A-levels); and
  - Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Access to HE Diplomas.
  - changes to the delivery of learning including **stronger assessment of learning needs** at the start of a prison sentence addressing basic skills needs, **greater targeting of vocational learning** at those coming to the end of their sentence, and **greater priority on meeting the additional needs** of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD)<sup>19</sup>.
- encouraging the take up and continuation of learning and employment opportunities, through **integration with post-release support**.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> SFA (2013), *Funding Rules and Guidance 2013/14 for OLASS*, September 2013, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/279297/funding\\_rules\\_and\\_guidance\\_2013\\_14olass4.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/279297/funding_rules_and_guidance_2013_14olass4.pdf), last accessed 30 December 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Initially this was supported by ring-fenced funding, which was removed in 2013/14.



## 2.5 The wider policy landscape in which OLASS4 operates

OLASS4 has been implemented in the context of concurrent changes affecting prisoner learning and support services and therefore cannot be considered in isolation from these.

Table 2.2 sets out the changes within scope of this evaluation.

**Table 2.2: Concurrent policy changes introduced during the OLASS4 contract**

Policy Intervention	Overview	Timescale
National Careers Service	The former Careers Information and Advice Service in custody was replaced by the National Careers Service from August 2012, which provides greater support to prisoners in their transition to employment and onward referral to National Careers Service provision post-release, to support resettlement and facilitate progression. The National Careers Service is delivered via a number of prime contractors spanning 12 area-based contracting regions. The National Careers Service was re-contracted in October 2014 under a new service model.	From August 2012; new contracts started in October 2014
Virtual Campus (VC)	The VC (an electronic vehicle for delivering learning and employment support in prisons already being trialled in two regions at the time of the review <i>'Making prisons work: skills for rehabilitation'</i> ) was rolled out nationally. The VC was designed to increase the quality and flexibility of learning available to prisoners, as it can be accessed post-release to allow prisoners to retrieve documents (such as CVs) prepared while in prison. In March 2013 a suite of enterprise provision was added to help encourage self-employment. Rollout of the VC to prisons which had the requisite internet connectivity was completed in December 2013.	Complete as of December 2013
Student Loan Eligibility	From September 2012 prisoners were required to take out tuition fee loans for part-time HE in the same way as other learners. In line with changes to mainstream provision, 2013/14 saw the introduction of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans for eligible prisoners who are undertaking a FE course at Level 3 and Level 4 in the same way as other learners. 24+ Advanced Learning Loans have since been re-named Advanced Learner Loans.	September 2012 for HE loans, and August 2013 for Advanced Learner Loans
Mandatory maths and English assessments	Partway through the OLASS contract it became a mandatory requirement that the OLASS 4 providers conduct English and maths assessments for newly received prisoners. SFA funding rules stipulate that a prisoner arriving in a prison who has had a mandatory assessment within the previous six months should not be given another, to avoid prisoners doing the same test repeatedly.	From August 2014

*Source: Policy documents and interviews with national stakeholders*

In addition, the package of reforms to prisoner learning set out in *Making Prisons Work* is set within the wider policy agenda set out in the 2010 Green Paper *Breaking the Cycle*<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Justice (2010) *Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders* <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/breaking-the-cycle-effective-punishment-rehabilitation-and-sentencing-of-offenders--2> last accessed 7th June 2016.

*Breaking the Cycle* focuses on addressing issues associated with high rates of short-term proven re-offending and a broad set of reforms to the rehabilitation of offenders. These reforms include priorities around addressing issues with substance misuse and mental health, as well as improving resettlement (including supporting offenders into work). In this context, a number of new interventions have been introduced that may also contribute towards achieving the outcomes targeted by OLASS4 arrangements and the other initiatives defined through *Making Prisons Work*. In particular, a strategy for reform of rehabilitation was set out in the 2013 MoJ policy paper *Transforming Rehabilitation*<sup>21</sup>. This set out several key new initiatives, including statutory rehabilitation services for those on short sentences of less than 12 months and a nationwide ‘through the gate’ resettlement service. This includes the award of contracts to 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) from the private, voluntary and social sectors, charged with improving resettlement support and reducing re-offending among short-sentence prisoners<sup>22</sup> and the creation of a new National Probation Service (NPS) to manage high-risk offenders.

The successful bidders in the competition for the CRCs began to deliver the programme from May 2015 onwards, and the case study research took place approximately four months afterwards, when many CRCs were still establishing themselves. CRCs are designed to provide support for prisoners both pre-release and post-release by having a presence in prison and in the community. CRCs provide information, signposting and referrals for prisoners to services that will help them to continue their rehabilitation in the community with the ultimate aim to reduce re-offending. These include support with housing, training and employment, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and guidance on benefits.

During the period covered by OLASS4, prisons in England have been introducing organisational changes so as to make more efficient use of staff resources based on the principle of ‘resource follows risk’, whereby Prison Officers accompany prisoners off the wings, creating a more effective and efficient deployment of staff. From October 2013, HMPPS introduced a phased programme of prison reforms called New Ways of Working, with the aim of standardising staffing levels in similar types and sizes of publicly-run prisons. Modifications include: changes to the core day; maximising opportunities for prisoners to be in purposeful activities; less time for structured association; and fewer layers of

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<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Justice (2013), *Transforming Rehabilitation: A Strategy For Reform*, <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/transforming-rehabilitation/results/transforming-rehabilitation-response.pdf> last accessed 7th June 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Justice (2014) *Target Operating Model – Rehabilitation Programme*, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/387795/target-operating-model-3.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387795/target-operating-model-3.pdf), last accessed 4 January 2016.

management<sup>23</sup>. During this major change programme, which includes a voluntary severance option, staff turnover has been higher than anticipated by HMPPS. This has led to staff shortages in some prisons which have contributed to the implementation of restricted regimes that, in the short term, may impact on prisoners' access to learning activities and other purposeful activity<sup>15</sup> because there may be insufficient staff to escort them.

## **2.6 The intervention logic model and evaluation objectives**

### **Achieving the target outputs, outcomes and impacts**

This section elaborates the mechanisms through which prisoner learning and concurrent interventions are expected to achieve the anticipated outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Each of these is summarised below.

#### **Local engagement and partnership working**

New governance and co-commissioning arrangements have been designed to improve local engagement by prisons in the delivery of learning to prisoners, as well as encourage broader partnership working across agencies and, critically, employers. This included the definition of 28 geographical clusters<sup>24</sup> of prisons that regularly transfer prisoners between themselves, to aid the establishment of a common curriculum (where possible) to allow prisoners to complete learning aims where interrupted by prison transfers, and therefore improve participation, completion and achievement rates for prisoner education (as prisoners could in theory continue a course they had started in a different prison, within the same cluster). These changes were also expected to improve labour market outcomes post-release by increasing the vocational relevance of learning, through better tailoring to the local labour market. In particular, OLASS4 contracts were designed to catalyse the creation of new partnerships between local agencies (such as Work Programme contractors and local employers) to facilitate the transition into work.

“The success of the service will depend upon partners – providers, the prison service, careers advisers, Jobcentre Plus and, where possible, employers – working together to match the needs of the labour market with the needs of prisoners in order to map the skills journey to employability on release.”

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<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Justice Select Committee Ninth Report, 2014-15, *Prisons: Planning and Policies*, House of Commons. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmjust/309/30902.htm>, last accessed 15 January 2016.

<sup>24</sup> BIS and Ministry of Justice (May 2011), *Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation*. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/230260/11-828-making-prisons-work-skills-for-rehabilitation.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/230260/11-828-making-prisons-work-skills-for-rehabilitation.pdf), last accessed 21 December 2015.

– BIS and the MoJ (2011), *Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation*, page 8.

### Distribution of funding

An explicit expectation was set out in *Making Prisons Work*<sup>25</sup> that OLASS4 arrangements would lead to a change in the distribution of funding that better reflected the delivery of the outcomes involved. Under OLASS4, funding is now distributed at Unit of Procurement level on the basis of need; with decentralised cluster arrangements designed to be more responsive to local need than centrally led commissioning: regional Governance Boards have the flexibility to move resources between prisons in the same cluster. This change might be expected to channel resources to those prisons and providers most effective in incentivising and encouraging prisoners to take up learning (as opposed to those that could defray the resources).

### Delivery of learning

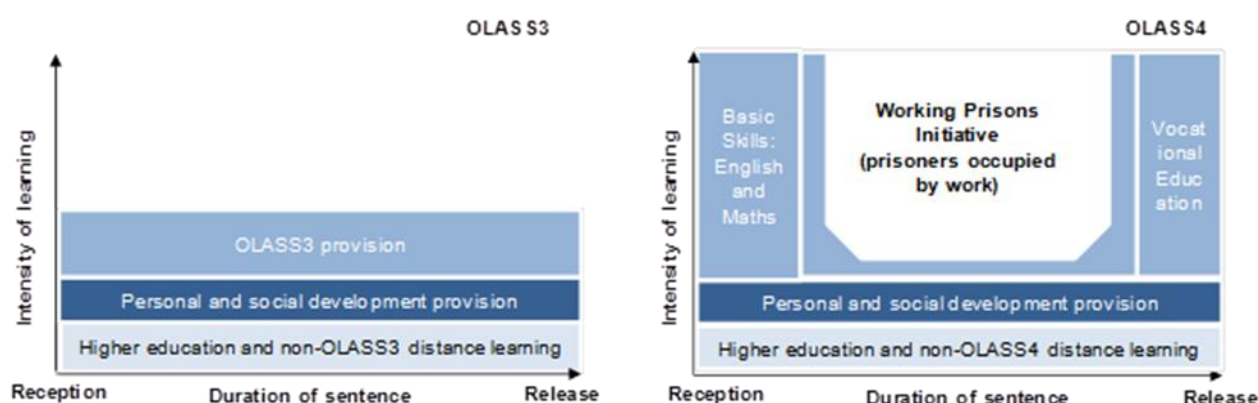
A key range of outcomes was expected with regard to the delivery of learning outcomes. Improvements in the flexibility of learning, alongside higher quality and vocational relevance were expected<sup>26</sup>. Additionally, the OLASS4 funding model defines an expectation that vocational learning would be undertaken towards the end of sentences to maximise impacts on employability post-release (with the focus at reception on addressing basic skills needs, partly in order to better prepare prisoners for undertaking subsequent vocational provision, with the aim of improving completion and achievement rates). The diagram below illustrates the anticipated changes in the profile of learning provision under OLASS3 and OLASS4 arrangements to align with changes made to mainstream funding

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 2.1: OLASS3 and OLASS4 Learning Arrangements**



Source: BIS, 2015

## Learning outcomes

The policy framework also sets out an expectation that the changes would lead to a widening of access to learning, leading to growth in the overall participation in learning undertaken by prisoners. The emphasis on widening access also relates to meeting the needs of those with LDD.

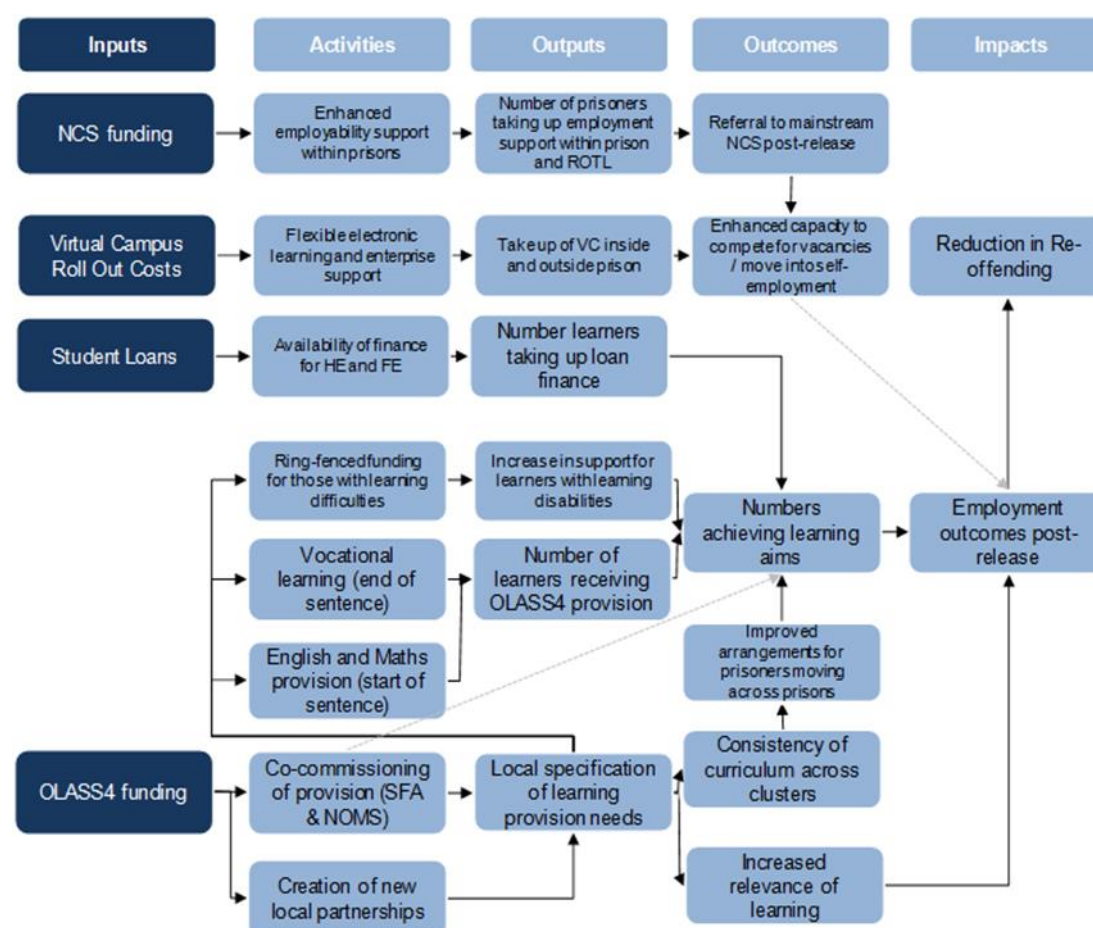
## Downstream impacts

The key long term outcomes of interest are clearly specified in *Making Prisons Work*: achievement of employment and re-offending outcomes (with the evidence that achievement of the former will help contribute to the latter). These objectives were to be supported in particular by the National Careers Service and the emphasis on improved local partnership working, where OLASS4 learners are able to acquire more vocationally relevant skills to aid their transition into local labour markets and obtain enhanced employment support post-release (through access to support from National Careers Service in the community as well as complementary services provided by Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and the Work Programme). Additionally, take up of OLASS4 provision may encourage progression to further learning in the community (which in turn could have reinforcing effects through enhanced employability and reduced likelihood of re-offending).

## 2.7 Intervention Logic Model

Drawing together the elements discussed in Section 2.6.1, the anticipated causal process of the combined reforms to prisoner learning is illustrated in the diagram below.

**Figure 2.2: Logic model underlying the changes to prisoner learning under OLASS4 and concurrent policies**



Source: Ipsos MORI, Sheffield Hallam and London Economics consultations with Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and review of documents provided by the SFA (grey lines have been added to show where outputs may contribute to downstream outcomes and impacts indirectly).

## 2.8 About this evaluation

### Evaluation objectives

The overriding aim of this evaluation is to assess the early and medium term impacts of prisoner learning under OLASS3 and OLASS4 among domestic offenders (i.e. excluding foreign nationals), and in particular to understand the implementation and early impacts of changes made to prisoner learning under OLASS4, and the concurrent policy changes set out in Section 2.2.



It should be noted that this is an evaluation of how OLASS4 operates in the context of concurrent policies, including the extent to which synergies have been optimised between them, and *is not an evaluation of those policies in their own right*. In particular, while the evaluation has considered the impact of CRCs on resettlement support provided to prisoners preparing for release, it is not an evaluation of the introduction of CRCs – its focus is on how resettlement providers are working *in partnership* with prisons, OLASS providers, the National Careers Service, and other agencies to support post-release employment and learning. It should also be noted that the evaluation scope does not include reforms introduced as a result of *Transforming Rehabilitation* although some of those changes are mentioned, where relevant.

## Process evaluation

The aims of the process evaluation are to establish (1) how far the expected changes in institutional arrangements were delivered as anticipated, and (2) how far those changes produced the desired effects on the volume and nature of learning delivered under OLASS4. The process evaluation examines a wide range of questions exploring how far the execution of the reforms aligned with prior expectations, and how far they produced the effects implicit in the underlying policy objectives. In summary, these questions relate to the following general themes:

- **Service specification and contracting:** How far did the procurement process meet the joint needs of the SFA and HMPPS, while enabling individual prisons and prison clusters to influence the content of provision?
- **Governance arrangements:** How far did the new Governance Boards introduced as part of the reforms facilitate more efficient and responsive allocation of resources for learning and employment support, act as a vehicle for driving quality improvement and maximising synergies between services, and support the tailoring of provision to the needs of individual prisons and/or clusters?
- **Partnership working:** How effectively have the reforms catalysed the formation of new partnerships to enable prison clusters to tailor provision to the needs of local labour markets?
- **Learning and employment support provision:** How have the reforms removed barriers to learners completing learning where they were subject to prison transfers, led to changes in the timing of basic skills provision and vocational learning to align with the start and end of sentences respectively, improved the

vocational relevance or quality of learning provided within prisons, and supported up-take by those with LDD?

- **Post-release:** How effectively is key information transferred from prisons into the community post-release (either through the National Careers Service or the VC)?
- **Barriers:** How far have any external barriers inhibited the delivery of the reforms as planned?

## Early impact evaluation

The aim of the impact evaluation is to quantify (as far as practicable) the impacts of prisoner learning on further learning, employment, benefits dependency, and proven re-offending among domestic offenders (i.e. excluding foreign nationals). In addition to the early impacts of prisoner learning under OLASS4, this report also includes, additional analyses of the early and medium-term impacts found under the previous arrangements for prisoner learning (OLASS3). The rationale for this approach was developed through the initial scoping stage of the evaluation.

It is important to note that the impacts of OLASS3 and OLASS4 presented in this report are not directly comparable due to differences in the policy implementation timeframes under consideration. Some of the early impacts of OLASS4 (for example, employment impacts at nine months) are estimated based on learners who started and completed a learning aim during just the first three months of the OLASS4 contract (August to October 2012), when not all of the new contracts had come into operation. This means that the impact analyses cover different phases in the implementation of the different prisoner learning regimes (i.e. a very early and incomplete OLASS4 system, and a well-established OLASS3 system).

## The Review of Prisoner Education

Emerging findings from the process evaluation were shared with the independent *Review of Prisoner Education in England* chaired by Dame Sally Coates, which ran between September 2015 and March 2016<sup>27</sup>. Dame Coates' review was commissioned by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice to examine how prisoner education supports effective rehabilitation of different segments of prison learners (for example young adults,

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<sup>27</sup> The Review's Terms of Reference are available here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/460403/review-of-education-in-prisons-term-of-reference.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/460403/review-of-education-in-prisons-term-of-reference.pdf), last accessed 18 January 2016.



older prisoners, female prisoners, short sentenced prisoners and longer sentence/life sentenced prisoners). The report was published in May 2016<sup>28</sup>.

## 2.9 The structure of this report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 3** – summarises the methodology for the evaluation as a whole and for the process and impact assessments specifically, with further detail provided in the Appendices.
- **Chapter 4** – provides a detailed analysis of the early and medium-term impacts of prisoner learning under OLASS3 and of the early impacts of prisoner learning under OLASS4 (note that for some outcomes, this analysis only covers prisoners who participated in OLASS4 in the early stages of its delivery). This chapter also includes cost-benefit estimates for prisoner learning delivered under OLASS3.
- **Chapter 5** – examines the delivery of prisoner learning under OLASS4. It assesses the governance arrangements established for OLASS4 and concurrent policies and whether these have operated as intended. It provides a detailed assessment of learning provision and delivery under OLASS4 including the volume and nature of learning delivered and the processes through which this is achieved, alongside concurrent policies. Finally it examines the effectiveness of arrangements for pre- and post-release support, including interaction with the National Careers Service and CRCs.
- **Chapter 6** – explores stakeholders' perception of the impacts of prisoner learning under OLASS4 and the differences between OLASS4 and OLASS3, and sets out the main conclusions and some issues for consideration.

In addition, to this report there is a Technical Appendix, containing the following Appendices:

- A technical appendix describing the process evaluation methodology in more detail.
- A technical appendix describing the impact assessment method in more detail, for both OLASS3 and OLASS4.
- A technical appendix including further analysis of impact estimates.
- A technical appendix on the process evaluation framework.

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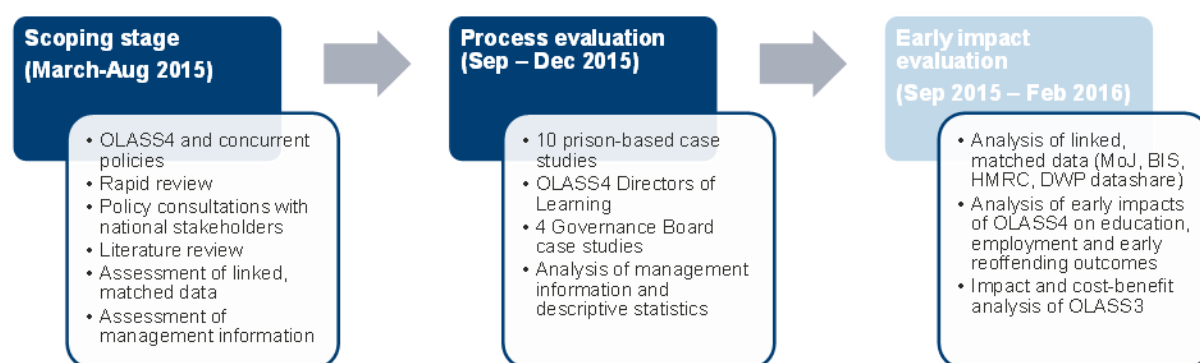
<sup>28</sup> Dame Sally Coates (2016), *Unlocking Potential: A Review of Education in Prison*, Ministry of Justice, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unlocking-potential-a-review-of-education-in-prison>, last accessed 9 June 2016.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 The evaluation design

Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the evaluation design and how the elements fit together.

**Figure 3.1: Overview of the evaluation design**



*Source: Ipsos MORI*

### 3.2 The scoping stage

The scoping stage covered both the process and impact evaluations and built on the existing feasibility study. It involved:

- A rapid review of policy documentation on policies introduced since the feasibility study, primarily focusing on changes introduced to resettlement support;
- Interviews with seven national policy stakeholders, including senior representatives from the department for BIS, HMPPS, the SFA, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the National Careers Service;
- A literature review informing decisions about the scope of the impact evaluation, covering published data on the links between education, employment and earnings outcomes among the wider population;
- A detailed assessment of the linked data (incorporating data from MoJ, BIS / SFA, DWP and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC));
- A detailed assessment of the available management information on concurrent policies such as the VC, National Careers Service, participation in distance learning, and student tuition fee loans and Advanced Learner Loans.

The scoping work resulted in several changes to the design of the impact evaluation, and a decision not to undertake an ex-post economic evaluation, mainly due to limitations on the period covered by the outcome data at the time of analysis (September 2015 to February

2016). Subsequent to the review of the scoping study, the steering group agreed to include OLASS3 impact and economic evaluation elements in the study due to the limitations of the time period for which OLASS4 data was available.

### 3.3 The process evaluation

The process evaluation took place between September and early December 2015. It involved:

- **Ten prison-based case studies**, focusing on the delivery of OLASS provision and concurrent policies at establishment level, conducted in September and October 2015. The case study sample was agreed with the project Steering Group and designed to cover all of the ten Units of Procurement and OLASS providers in place across fieldwork dates, across a range of prison categories (except high security prisons). Private prisons delivering OLASS were included within scope of the sample. An overview of the prison sample is provided in Appendix A.1.

Each prison case study involved up to five interviews<sup>29</sup> with prisoners who had experienced OLASS provision, covering a range of age ranges and sentence lengths, together with up to 16 interviews<sup>30</sup> with strategic and operational staff involved in the planning and delivery of OLASS provision and concurrent policies at that site. This included the prison Governor (where available), the Heads of Reducing Re-Offending and Learning and Skills, the OLASS manager for that site, the National Careers Service manager or lead adviser for that site, the CRC or NPS manager or lead worker for that site, and a range of other operational staff including OLASS tutors and representatives from voluntary and community sector organisations involved in prisoner support.

- **Four Governance Board case studies** were conducted at Unit of Procurement level, covering each of the four OLASS providers. The Governance Boards were selected based on the consultations during the scoping stage, and agreed with the evaluation Steering Group. Each Governance Board case study involved 4-5 telephone interviews with members of the Board, including the Chair and senior representatives of the OLASS provider and the National Careers Service.

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<sup>29</sup> In practice, in one prison an interviewee dropped out and was unable to be replaced, so 49 out of 50 prisoner interviews were achieved.

<sup>30</sup> In practice, data saturation was reached before this point and the number of interviews conducted with strategic and operational staff varied between 11 and 14 per prison.

- Telephone interviews with the **four OLASS Directors of Learning** (or equivalent), covering all the providers.
- **Review and analysis of Statistical First Release (SFR) data and management information** on distance learning, student loan take-up, use of the VC and use of the National Careers Service.

### 3.4 The impact evaluation

The impact evaluation uses linked administrative data from BIS, MoJ, DWP and HMRC to estimate the impact of prisoner learning under both OLASS3 and OLASS4 on post-release proven re-offending, employment, benefit dependency and learning outcomes among learners.

This involves the identification of the additional benefits that an individual has gained through participation in the programme. However, at any given time, it is not possible to observe the same individual in two different states (for example, having participated in prisoner learning and simultaneously not having participated). As such, it is necessary to consider an appropriate counterfactual.

Although a randomised control trial is the gold standard method for evaluation, it requires that the programme under evaluation be implemented in a very specific way (i.e. with random assignment). However, OLASS3 and OLASS4 were not implemented with random assignment. During the feasibility study stage, there was consideration given to undertaking a randomised trial by allocating prisons to offer different incentives for prisoners to participate. However, this was ruled out due to logistical difficulties (e.g. a fundamental change in policy; the potential difficulty in randomisation due to movements of prisoners between prisons; potentially high drop-out rates, as well as cost and timeliness).

Instead, a propensity score matching method to generate a counterfactual using administrative data was selected as the best available option for evaluation. In addition to propensity score matching, a coarsened exact matching approach was also considered. However, the propensity score matching approach was ultimately preferred as it has been established as an agreed and transparent method for analysis of this type of data following previous work by the MoJ Justice Data Lab.

Propensity score matching (PSM) involved constructing a matched *counterfactual* group comprising ex-offenders who did not participate in prisoner learning but share similar characteristics to those who did. Based on a range of personal, socioeconomic and

criminogenic characteristics, the PSM process involves generating a score that indicates the likelihood of any particular individual being selected for the treatment(s) under consideration. Simultaneously, the econometric model assigns individuals *not* receiving the treatment with an estimated probability of being selected for participation in the programme. Individuals in the treatment group(s) are then matched to individuals with the same (or very similar) probability of selection – but who were not selected for treatment. This is known as the counterfactual group. From a methodological perspective, if all other characteristics are controlled for, any difference in outcomes can then be more confidently attributed to participation in prisoner learning.

The main methodology, caveats and results from the impact analysis are presented at an aggregate level in the main report; however additional analysis relating to the impact of OLASS3 and OLASS4 for different subgroups of learner, as well as the detailed results from the cost benefit analysis, are presented in the Appendices.

## 3.5 Interpreting the data in this report

### The impact evaluation

#### Limitations of post-release data

The impact (defined as the Average Treatment effect on the Treated, or ATT) is calculated at different points in time following release. The sample size on which the ATT is based varies according to the time and the specific outcome being considered due to data availability.

For instance, one year proven re-offending outcomes are available for all OLASS4 learners released between 1 August 2012 (when OLASS4 was first launched) and 30 September 2013. However, the linked labour market datasets contain records only up until summer 2013 (until the end of May 2013 for benefit dependency and until the end of July 2013 for employment and learning outcomes). This means that *only very short-term post-release labour market outcomes can be analysed for OLASS4 learners*. A further consequence of this is that when the impact (ATT) of OLASS4 on employment or learning is measured in terms of the difference in outcomes 9 months post-release, *this comparison can only be based on the subset of OLASS4 learners who started an OLASS4 aim and were released from prison in the relatively short window of time between 1 August 2012 and 31 October 2012*. When the impact on benefit dependency is considered, only those who were treated and released between 1 August 2012 and 31 August 2012 can be included.

### Further exclusions and caveats

A number of further data limitations and caveats need to be made when interpreting the impact findings:

- The impact analysis was supported by multiple datasets and could only include individuals who could be linked reliably across all of these sources. As a consequence, the results relate only to a subset of OLASS learners.
- Despite the obvious importance from a policy perspective, data limitations meant it was also necessary to exclude certain groups from the analysis such as individuals with a prison sentence starting before August 2010, individuals aged under 21, and foreign nationals. In relation to this latter group, the re-offending datasets used in this analysis already exclude those foreign nationals who the MoJ is confident will be deported on release based on codes in the prison release data. There are other 'foreign national offenders' who *may* be deported, but the final decision rests with the Home Office and these offenders are included in the initial re-offending dataset. This second category makes up approximately five per cent of the cohort and are excluded from the main impact analysis presented here. Hence, this method is likely to exclude EU nationals who remain in the UK, misclassified UK nationals and some other foreign nationals<sup>31</sup>.
- An important caveat when using HMRC (P45 and P14) records to study employment and earnings is that this data only covers those who pay tax through the PAYE system: it excludes self-employment; those working cash-in-hand; and some of those with an income below the National Insurance threshold.
- The scope of the OLASS3 analysis is limited to data available from 2010/11 onwards, as the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) could not reliably identify learner specific OLASS learning aims before then. This means that data do not cover the full OLASS3 period.
- While the various datasets contain many personal and criminogenic characteristics, it is possible that they do not include every factor related to participation in prisoner learning and the outcomes of interest. Omission of such factors from the propensity score matching may bias the results. For example,

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<sup>31</sup> These 'foreign national offenders' are included in re-offending cohorts used by the MoJ and also likely to be included in the DWP/HMRC outcomes information. Furthermore, the cost benefit analysis is based on the number of re-offences per re-offender, but these figures are based on the entire re-offending cohort (which does not exclude 'foreign national offenders'), and whose re-offending rates are consistently lower than for UK nationals. Further analysis conducted by the MoJ has shown that the exclusion 'foreign national offenders' is likely to have had a comparable impact on both the treatment and counterfactual groups. This means that, although this is a domestic only report, findings are likely to have been consistent were this evaluation extended to include 'foreign national offenders'.

prison has not been controlled for in the impact analysis as there was no reliable way from the data analysed to identify which prison a prisoner was in at a specific point in time. This means that regional variation could account for some of the difference in impact.

- The sample sizes on which the impact analyses are based vary according to the time and the specific outcome being considered, due to data availability. In particular, the labour market datasets contain records only up until summer 2013 which means that *only very short-term post-release labour market outcomes can be analysed for OLASS4 (i.e. 9 months)*. A further consequence of this is that when the impact of OLASS4 on employment or learning is measured in terms of the difference in outcomes 9 months post-release, this comparison can only be based on the subset of OLASS4 learners who started an OLASS4 aim and were released from prison in the relatively short window between 1 August 2012 and 31 October 2012.
- OLASS4 was operational in only seven of the ten Units of Procurement during this time, therefore the period of analysis does not reflect a fully operational OLASS4. It is therefore not advisable to compare impacts from the early implementation stage of OLASS4 with impacts from a well-established OLASS3. Caution should also be exercised in comparing OLASS3 and OLASS4 since at that start of OLASS4 much of the provision offered was the same as during OLASS3.
- Some policy measures, such as mandatory English and maths assessments were not implemented during the initial period of OLASS4 being analysed (1 August 2012 to 31 October 2012).
- The OLASS3 and OLASS4 impacts are not directly comparable since labour market conditions at release may have been different over time for the two groups of learners.
- In relation to the cost benefit analysis undertaken in respect of OLASS3, there were a number of data limitations including the lack of costs per learning aim or learner. Therefore, we have assumed that the costs associated with OLASS3 provision are comparable to the costs per learning aim for OLASS4.
- The cost benefit analysis of OLASS3 covers the time period from 2010/11 onwards since it uses OLASS3 impact estimates based on data from this period.
- The cost benefit analysis of OLASS3 makes an assumption about the persistence of estimated impacts: that impacts illustrated in the first year persist

in full into the second year, and then continue to persist for a further three years, although eroding by 50 per cent in each successive year.

- To undertake a cost benefit analysis, it is necessary to understand the extent of the *costs avoided* – including the reduced criminal justice costs associated with re-offending. We have assumed that the cost savings from reduced re-offending are representative of the average cost per offence for *re-offenders* that had been previously released from custody (rather than the costs that might be associated with the entire population of both first-time offenders and re-offenders).

These caveats, and the implications in relation to the interpretation of the data are presented in greater detail in Section 4.1.2 and in the Appendices.

### 3.6 The process evaluation

The process evaluation draws on Governance Board and prison-based case study research involving a large number of qualitative interviews. The sample of case study prisons has been designed to provide a range of different characteristics and a broad coverage across Units of Procurement and different OLASS and National Careers Service providers: it is not designed to be representative, but illustrative of the different contexts in which prisoner learning is delivered.

The process evaluation also draws on SFR data to examine patterns of participation and achievement in prisoner learning. The population on which this data is based differs from the cohort used for the impact analysis presented in Chapter 4 (for example it includes prisoners aged 18 and above participating in OLASS aims) as well as covering a longer time period, up to the end of 2014/15.

### 3.7 Reporting conventions

Throughout, direct and indirect identifiers have been removed from the impact and process evaluation analysis to protect anonymity and confidentiality.

Throughout the analyses presented in Chapter 4:

- All estimates and confidence intervals have been rounded to 2 decimal places;
- Statistically significant differences between treatment and counterfactual estimates reported at a 5 per cent confidence level, unless otherwise stated, and are marked with an asterisk (\*); and



- The confidence interval (at the 95 per cent level) and the sample size of the treatment group are presented alongside the ATT.

Throughout the analyses of management information presented in Chapter 5:

- In line with the approach used in the SFR, figures in tables are rounded to the nearest 10 and cells with a value of 5 or lower have been suppressed;
- Percentages are based on the original rather than the rounded totals.

In addition, all quotes presented throughout the report have been anonymised.

## 4. Early and medium-term impacts of prisoner learning on post-release outcomes

### Chapter summary

- This chapter compares the post-release outcomes achieved by prison learners with the post-release outcomes of ‘similar’ offenders who did not participate in learning, for both OLASS3 and OLASS4 learners.
- There are several caveats associated with the analysis. Specifically, the data does not cover all OLASS learners; there are some groups who were excluded from the analysis (i.e. foreign nationals); there are uncertainties in relation to why certain offenders’ data could not be matched to HMRC/DWP labour market outcome information; and only those ex-offenders who are employees earning above the NI earnings threshold are contained in the analysis (i.e. it does not include those in self-employment or working cash-in-hand).
- Most importantly - when looking at the OLASS4 analysis - there is very limited post release information available, and the cohort of prisoner learners for whom analysis of labour market and education outcomes is possible is limited to those who started a course *and* were released from prison between 1 August and 31 October 2012 (the first three months of the OLASS4 contract). This means that the OLASS4 outcomes reported here relate to a very specific group of ex-offenders and a narrow period at the start of the OLASS4 contract. Consequently, caution needs to be exercised when interpreting these results and it is not advisable to compare impacts from OLASS4 with impacts from OLASS3.
- There is evidence of a statistically significant impact of reduced proven re-offending amongst OLASS3 learners. There is no evidence that the early stage of OLASS4 had an impact on reducing proven re-offending.
- OLASS3 analysis suggests increased labour market engagement (in terms of P45 employment and receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance) amongst learners, in the medium-term.
- Although the analysis suggests that OLASS4 learners were less likely to be in employment nine months after release than non-learners, this only refers to the initial impact on learners who started a course during the first three months of OLASS4.

- There is no substantive evidence that participation in OLASS4 or OLASS3 has an effect on take-up of further learning, post-release.
- Estimates of impact on re-offending and employment outcomes and information about the cost of provision are compared in a cost effectiveness analysis. This analysis suggests that the approximate economic benefit of OLASS3 in the first year post release in relation to proven re-offending stood at £2,300-£2,400 per offender and the economic benefit in terms of employment was between £6,700 and £6,800 per offender (compared to £1,200-£1,300 in costs).

## 4.1 Introduction

The impact evaluation uses linked data (from BIS, MoJ, DWP and HMRC) to estimate the impact of prisoner education under OLASS3 and OLASS4 on post-release proven re-offending, employment, benefit dependency and learning outcomes among learners, focusing on domestic offenders only (i.e. excluding foreign nationals). This section presents a very brief summary of the methodology used for this analysis and guidance for interpreting the results. Further information can be found in Technical Appendix 2.

### Summary methodology

Propensity Score Matching (PSM) was used to generate a number of counterfactual groups comprising ex-prisoners who did not receive learning under either OLASS4 or OLASS3, but in each case, shared similar personal characteristics and offending histories to those who did<sup>32</sup>. As a result of PSM, when these other characteristics are adequately controlled for, any difference in post-release outcomes can be more confidently attributed to participation in learning under either OLASS4 or OLASS3, depending on the treatment group under analysis<sup>33</sup>.

In order to achieve a good understanding of the **early impacts** of prisoner learning, the analysis assessed post release outcomes for a range of treatment and counterfactual comparisons:

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<sup>32</sup> In theory, the best approach to understanding the impact of OLASS learning would be to administer a randomised control trial (RCT); however, such an approach cannot be used to determine the impact of OLASS learning retrospectively. Furthermore, in implementing a RCT, it is necessary to randomly allocate the availability of education and training on a random basis amongst prisoners, which has serious ethical considerations.

<sup>33</sup> Note that a full description of the Propensity Score Matching Model, as well as the variables included in the matching process are included in Technical Appendix 2.

- participation in OLASS4 versus no participation in OLASS4;
- participation in OLASS4 versus participation in OLASS3; and
- participation in OLASS4 *combined* with achievement of associated learning aim(s) compared to participation in OLASS4 *without* achievement of any relevant learning aim(s).

In addition, to understand more about the **medium-term impacts** of prisoner learning, similar analyses were conducted on prisoners who completed learning under OLASS3, which finished in July 2012 and therefore offers a longer interval of time for analysis. This assessed the following treatment and counterfactual comparisons:

- participation in OLASS3 versus no participation in OLASS3; and
- participation in OLASS3 *combined* with achievement of associated learning aim(s) compared to participation in OLASS3 *without* achievement of any relevant learning aim(s).

## Interpreting results of the impact evaluation

### Interpreting the results

The main measure of interest in the impact analysis is the Average Treatment effect on the Treated (ATT), which is calculated as the difference in the post-release outcome of interest among those who have received prisoner learning under OLASS3 or OLASS4, and the same outcome among prisoners with similar characteristics, who did not receive learning.

Throughout the analysis presented in this chapter:

- All estimates and confidence intervals have been rounded to 2 decimal places
- Statistically significant differences between treatment and counterfactual estimates reported at a 5 per cent confidence level, unless otherwise stated, and are marked with an asterisk (\*)
- Confidence interval (at the 95 per cent level), and sample size of the treatment group are presented alongside the ATT. Statistically significant differences are marked with an asterisk (\*).

### Limitations of the impact analysis using post-release data

The impact estimates become increasingly uncertain as time elapses post release, owing to diminishing sample sizes. This is a particular issue for the OLASS4 impact assessments. For instance, one year proven re-offending outcomes are available for all OLASS4 learners released between 1 August 2012 (when OLASS4 was first launched) and 30 September 2013. In contrast, the linked labour market datasets contain records until the end of May

2013 for benefit dependency and until the end of July 2013 for employment and learning outcomes, which means that only very short-term post-release labour market outcomes can be analysed for OLASS4 learners<sup>34</sup>.

A further consequence of this is that when the impact of OLASS4 on employment or learning is measured at 9 months after release, this comparison can only be based on the subset of OLASS4 learners who started an OLASS4 aim and were released from prison in the first three months of the OLASS4 contract, between 1 August 2012 and 31 October 2012. When the impact on benefit dependency is considered, only those who started a course and were released between 1 August 2012 and 31 August 2012 can be included.

### Further exclusions and caveats

The impact evaluation analysis was supported by data from a range of sources and could only include individuals who could be linked reliably across the multiple datasets. Presented in greater detail in Technical Appendix 2, the main exclusions and caveats are:

- The impact analysis was supported by multiple datasets and could only include individuals who could be linked reliably across all of these sources. As a consequence, the results relate only to a subset of OLASS learners.
- Despite the obvious importance from a policy perspective, data limitations meant it was also necessary to exclude certain groups from the analysis such as individuals with a prison sentence starting before August 2010, individuals aged under 21<sup>35</sup>, and foreign nationals, which is explained in greater detail in Section 3.5.1 and in the Technical Annex.
- Learners who could not be matched to any record in the re-offending dataset<sup>36</sup> were also excluded. It was also necessary to ensure that the learning aim actually occurred during the prison sentence relevant to the re-offending record, which further narrowed the sample.

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<sup>34</sup> Note that the analysis was predominantly focused on understanding the longest post-release outcomes achieved by ex-prisoners permitted by data availability. It is clear that assessing the 9 month post release labour market outcomes of those ex-prisoners receiving OLASS4 training in the first three months of OLASS4 might not provide a fully comprehensive view of labour market impacts given the fact that OLASS 4 might not have been fully embedded. In future analysis, it would be beneficial to consider the outcomes of OLASS4 learners in the labour market depending on the point in time during their sentence at which the training was received (i.e. first three months versus second three months).

<sup>35</sup> Note that Statistical First Releases relating to adults include all individuals aged 18 or above, whereas the impact analysis presented here only includes individuals aged 21 or above.

<sup>36</sup> The proven re-offending dataset indicates whether an offender has a proven re-offence or not. As such, it includes offenders who do not have a proven re-offence as well as those who do.

- Where an offender was not successfully matched to the DWP/HMRC data, it was not possible to tell whether this was due to difficulties in the matching process or whether the individual had simply never claimed any DWP benefits nor been in P45 employment. As in previous MoJ research, these unmatched individuals were excluded.
- When using HMRC (P45 and P14) records to study employment and earnings outcomes, it is important to note that the data cover those who pay tax through the PAYE system. Specifically, this data source does not include workers who are paid cash-in-hand, or self-employed workers. Not all lower paid jobs are included in the data.<sup>37</sup>

The scope of the OLASS3 analysis is limited to data available from 2010/11 onwards, as the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) could not reliably identify OLASS learning aims before then. This means that data do not cover the full OLASS3 period.

While the various datasets contain many personal and criminogenic characteristics, it is possible that they do not include every factor related to participation in prisoner learning and the outcomes of interest. Omission of such factors from the propensity score matching may bias the results. For example, prison has not been controlled for in the impact analysis as there was no reliable way from the data analysed to identify which prison a prisoner was in at a specific point in time. This means that regional variation could account for some of the difference in impact.

OLASS4 was operational in only seven of the ten Units of Procurement during this time, therefore the period of analysis does not reflect a fully operational OLASS4. Caution should also be exercised in comparing OLASS3 and OLASS4 since at that start of OLASS4 much of the provision offered was the same as during OLASS3.

Some policy measures, such as mandatory English and maths assessments were not implemented during the initial period of OLASS4 (1 August 2012 to 31 October 2012) being analysed.

The OLASS3 and OLASS4 impacts are not directly comparable, since labour market conditions at release may have been different over time. It is therefore not advisable to

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<sup>37</sup> This is an important caveat given the fact that self-employment is a particular focus for policy

compare impacts from the early implementation stage of OLASS4 with impacts from a well-established OLASS3<sup>38</sup>.

In relation to the cost benefit analysis undertaken in respect of OLASS3, there were a number of data limitations including the lack of costs per learning aim or learner. Therefore, we have assumed that the costs associated with OLASS3 provision are comparable to the costs per learning aim for OLASS4.

The cost benefit analysis of OLASS3 covers the time period from 2010/11 onwards since it uses OLASS3 impact estimates based on data from this period.

- We have assumed that the OLASS funded learning is associated with 100 per cent *additionality*, i.e. in the absence of OLASS funding, none of the learning that offenders received whilst in custody would have taken place.
- The cost benefit analysis of OLASS3 makes an assumption about the persistence of estimated impacts: that the impact illustrated in the first year persists in full for a second year, and subsequently erodes by 50 per cent in each subsequent year after the initial two year period.
- To undertake a cost benefit analysis, it is necessary to understand the extent of the *costs avoided* – including the reduced criminal justice costs associated with re-offending. We have assumed that the cost savings from reduced re-offending are representative of the average cost per offence for re-offenders that had been previously released from custody (rather than the costs that might be associated with the entire population of both first-time offenders and re-offenders)

Due to the timing of OLASS4 learning and the coverage of the available datasets, the impact analysis of OLASS4 was limited to measuring short-term post-release impacts. However, because of the nature of the data shares available, the earlier timing of OLASS3 learning has allowed for the tracking of labour market outcomes for a longer period post-release.

While the OLASS4 impact analysis covered labour market outcomes at 3, 6 and 9 months following release, the OLASS3 impact analysis can cover outcomes 6, 12 and 24 months following release. As such, the OLASS3 impact analysis provides valuable additional information about the overall impacts of prisoner learning. Only short-term labour market

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<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, because there is no information on learning received at an individual level prior to 2010/11, it is not possible to compare the post release outcomes achieved by learners in receipt of learning in the first 3 months of OLASS4 with the outcomes achieved by learners in receipt of learning in the first 3 months of OLASS3.

outcomes can be tracked for OLASS4 learners with the given data. As such, the medium-term impact estimates for OLASS3 cannot be directly compared with the short-term impact estimates for OLASS4.

Since the focus of this part of the analysis is on the impact of OLASS3 on post-release outcomes, it was necessary to restrict the sample of OLASS3 learners to those released between August 2010 (as OLASS learning could not be identified in the ILR before this point) and September 2013 (the last date of release for which proven re-offending records were available at the time of analysis (February 2016)).

## 4.2 OLASS3 participation vs. no OLASS3 participation

The first strand of analysis on OLASS3 learning compares the outcomes of those who have participated in at least one OLASS3 aim with the outcomes of a group of prisoners with similar personal, socio-economic and criminogenic characteristics that did not participate in any OLASS3 aim. The rationale for this comparison was to ascertain the impact of participation in OLASS3 in isolation.

Table 4.1 summarises the impacts of OLASS3 participation over time. As with the OLASS4 analysis, the main measure of interest is the Average Treatment effect on the Treated (ATT) – the difference in percentage points between the post-release outcomes of the treated group and the matched counterfactual group. In addition, we also present whether the coefficients are statistically significant at the 5 per cent level, while the associated 95 per cent confidence interval and sample size of the treatment group are also included for reference. Where the ATT is negative, the correct interpretation is that the outcome was less common among OLASS3 learners than non-learners.

It can be seen from Table 4.1 that:

- OLASS3 participation significantly reduced the one-year proven re-offending rate relative to non-participants, by approximately 7.5 percentage points (32.6 per cent compared to 40.2 per cent).
- One year post-release, OLASS3 learners were 1.8 percentage points more likely than non-learners to be in employment (28.1 per cent compared to 26.3 per cent).
- One year post-release, OLASS3 learners were 4.6 percentage points more likely to be in receipt of out-of-work benefits compared to the matched non-learner group (51.5 per cent compared to 46.9 per cent), and at all-time points in the



analysis (6, 12 and 24 months) they were significantly more likely to be in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).

- OLASS3 participation had no significant impact on post-release learning outcomes<sup>39</sup>, compared with non-learners.

**Table 4.1: Summary of post-release outcomes (OLASS3 participation vs. no OLASS3 participation)**

	Number of months following release		
	6 months	12 months	24 months
Proven re-offence	-	-7.54%* (a)	-
[Confidence Interval]	-	[-8.88, -6.21]	-
Sample size	-	N = 16,440	-
P45 employment	0.65%	1.79%* (b)	2.22%
[Confidence Interval]	[-0.59, 1.89]	[0.50, 3.08]	[-0.30, 4.75]
Sample size	N = 15,095	N = 12,760	N = 4,011
Receipt of out-of-work benefit	4.51%* (c)	4.58%* (d)	2.31%
[Confidence Interval]	[3.06, 5.96]	[3.00, 6.17]	[-1.02, 5.63]
Sample size	N = 14,571	N = 11,228	N = 2,965
Receipt of JSA	3.79%* (e)	3.07%* (f)	3.63%* (g)
[Confidence Interval]	[2.47, 5.11]	[1.69, 4.46]	[0.91, 6.34]
Sample size	N = 13,400	N = 11,228	N = 2,965
Further learning	-0.19%	0.07%	0.40%
[Confidence Interval]	[-0.68, 0.29]	[-0.40, 0.55]	[-0.51, 1.30]
Sample size	N = 15,095	N = 12,760	N = 4,011

Source: London Economics' analysis of ILR/HMRC/DWP/MoJ matched data

Note: Table shows OLASS3 participation (treatment group) vs. no OLASS3 participation (counterfactual group). All estimates and confidence intervals have been rounded to 2 decimal places. Statistically significant differences between treatment and counterfactual estimates reported at a 5 per cent confidence level, unless otherwise stated, and are marked with an asterisk (\*). Confidence interval (at the 95 per cent level) are presented in square brackets [ ]. Sample size of treatment groups are presented alongside the ATT. Note that in relation to proven re-offending, only 12 month post release estimates are available

- (a) 12 month post release proven re-offending rate of treatment group: 32.6 per cent; 12 month post release proven re-offending rate of counterfactual group: 40.2 per cent

<sup>39</sup> Note that further learning only includes any education and training that is publicly funded and leads to a formally recognised qualification. Training that is privately funded or that does not lead to a formally recognised qualification is not included in relation to post-release outcomes.

- (b) 12 month post release employment rate of treatment group: 28.1 per cent; 12 month post release employment rate of counterfactual group: 26.3 per cent
- (c) 6 month post release receipt of out of work benefit rate of treatment group: 55.1 per cent; 6 month post release receipt of out of work benefit rate of counterfactual group: 50.7 per cent
- (d) 12 month post release receipt of out of work benefit rate of treatment group: 51.5 per cent; 12 month post release receipt of out of work benefit rate of counterfactual group: 46.9 per cent
- (e) 6 month post release receipt of JSA of treatment group: 33.0 per cent; 6 month post release receipt of JSA of counterfactual group: 29.2 per cent
- (f) 12 month post release receipt of JSA of treatment group: 27.7 per cent; 12 month post release receipt of JSA of counterfactual group: 24.6 per cent
- (g) 24 month post release receipt of JSA of treatment group: 23.2 per cent; 24 month post release receipt of JSA of counterfactual group: 19.6 per cent

### **4.3 OLASS3 achievement vs. non-achievement of OLASS3**

This element of the impact analysis compares the outcomes of those who participated in OLASS3 and achieved at least one aim with those who participated in OLASS3 but did not achieve any aim. Table 4.2 summarises the impacts of OLASS3 participation on proven re-offending, employment, benefit dependency and further learning outcomes. None of the differences in the proven re-offending, employment or benefit outcomes were found to be large enough to be statistically significant.

Achievers appeared more likely to continue with FE upon release than the matched group of non-achievers, particularly at 12 months after release when the difference was large enough to be statistically significant (3 per cent compared to 1.9 per cent). There were no other statistically significant differences.

**Table 4.2: Summary of post-release outcomes (OLASS3 achievement vs. non-achievement of OLASS3)**

ATT (in percentage points)	Number of months following release		
	6 months	12 months	24 months
Proven re-offence	-	0.90%	-
[Confidence Interval]	-	[-2.32, 4.11]	-
Sample size	-	N = 14,177	-
P45 employment	-0.66%	-0.03%	1.63%
[Confidence Interval]	[-3.51, 2.189]	[-3.17, 3.11]	[-3.55, 6.81]
Sample size	N = 12,993	N = 10,989	N = 3,428
Receipt of out-of-work benefit	0.19%	2.01%	-1.74%
[Confidence Interval]	[-3.28, 3.61]	[-1.95, 5.97]	[-8.51, 5.03]
Sample size	N = 12,533	N = 9,658	N = 2,526
Receipt of JSA	3.07%	3.19%	-0.36%
[Confidence Interval]	[-0.13, 6.28]	[-0.27, 6.65]	[-5.86, 5.15]
Sample size	N = 11,517	N = 9,658	N = 2,526
Further learning	0.59%	1.03%* (a)	0.60%
[Confidence Interval]	[-0.40, 1.57]	[0.04, 2.02]	[-1.14, 2.35]
Sample size	N = 12,993	N = 10,989	N = 3,428

Source: London Economics' analysis of ILR/HMRC/DWP/MoJ matched data

Note: Table shows OLASS3 achievement (treatment group) vs. non-achievement of OLASS3 (counterfactual group). All estimates and confidence intervals have been rounded to 2 decimal places. Statistically significant differences between treatment and counterfactual estimates reported at a 5 per cent confidence level, unless otherwise stated, and are marked with an asterisk (\*). Confidence interval (at the 95 per cent level) are presented in square brackets [ ]. Sample size of treatment groups are presented alongside the ATT. Note that in relation to proven re-offending, only 12 month post release estimates are available.

(a) 12 month post release further learning rate of treatment group: 3.0 per cent; 12 month post release employment rate of counterfactual group: 1.9 per cent.

## 4.4 OLASS3 cost effectiveness analysis

A cost effectiveness analysis helped compare the costs of provision of OLASS3 with the economic benefits associated with learning. The details of the methodology and full set of results can be found in Technical Appendix 3.3.

In relation to the cost benefit analysis undertaken in respect of OLASS3, there were a number of data limitations including the lack of costs per learning aim or learner. Therefore,

we have assumed that the costs associated with OLASS3 provision are broadly comparable to the costs per learning aim for OLASS4. Combining information on the characteristics (i.e. level of specialisation and credits) and the number of learning aims undertaken under OLASS3, we estimated the cost per OLASS3 learner stood between £1,200 and £1,300.

The analysis suggests that the expected economic benefit associated with desisting from proven re-offending would be in the region of £27,598 per offender, while the average annual economic benefit associated with moving an individual into employment (from unemployment) stands at £14,904 per annum (in 2015 prices). Combining these two pieces of information on the benefits associated with reduced proven re-offending suggests that a 1 percentage point reduction in the incidence of proven re-offending is associated with a £276 economic benefit for the representative individual (assuming no persistency of effect), while a 1 percentage point increase in the probability of being employed is associated with a £149 economic benefit for the representative individual.

Using information from the impact analysis comparing the outcomes between individuals who have been in receipt of OLASS3 compared to those that have not participated in OLASS3 indicates that the relative likelihood of proven re-offending 12 months post release was approximately 7.5 percentage points lower amongst the treatment group compared to the counterfactual group (where the baseline 12 month proven re-offending rate was estimated to be 40.2 per cent). Using this information on proven re-offending, our estimates indicate that the approximate economic benefit of OLASS3 in the first year post release in relation to proven re-offending (assuming no persistency) stood at £2,300-£2,400 per offender (compared to £1,200-£1,300 in costs).

We have also modelled the relative benefits and costs assuming some degree of **persistency** of proven re-offending and employment effect<sup>40</sup>. Assuming the impact in the first year fully persists into the second year post-release *and* partially persists for the next 36 months (eroding by 50 per cent per annum), the analysis suggests that the economic benefit associated with OLASS3 proven re-offending and employment outcomes stands at approximately £6,700-£6,800 compared to costs of provision of £1,200-£1,300 (i.e. a net benefit of £5,400-£5,600 per learner).

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<sup>40</sup> In previous analysis undertaken for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011), analysis of the matched ILR-HMRC-DWP data set illustrated that although there was an immediate employment and earning boost associated with the acquisition of vocational qualifications (amongst the general population of learners), it was often the case that the positive effect eroded over time. To mimic this *persistency* effect, we have assumed that the entire first year effect carries forward into the second year, but erodes by 50 per cent year

## 4.5 Early impacts of prisoner learning under OLASS4

### OLASS4 participation vs. no OLASS4 participation

The first matched analysis on OLASS4 learning compares the outcomes of those who have participated in at least one OLASS4 aim with the outcomes of a group of prisoners with similar characteristics who did not participate in any OLASS4 aim<sup>41</sup>. The rationale for this comparison was to ascertain the impact of participation in OLASS4 in isolation. The caveats associated with the analysis of the impact of OLASS4 are presented in detail in section 4.1.2 and in Technical Appendix 2.

Table 4.3 summarises the impacts of OLASS4 participation on the outcomes of interest over time. Where the impact (ATT) is negative, the outcome was less common among OLASS4 learners than non-learners. The analysis shows that:

- Participation in OLASS4 reduced the probability that individuals were in work 9 months post release by approximately 5 percentage points (24.5 per cent compared to 29.7 per cent) though not before. When interpreting the 9 month results, it should be noted that OLASS4 was operational in only seven of the ten Units of Procurement during the time covered by the analysis. Therefore the period of analysis does not reflect a fully operational OLASS4.
- Participation in OLASS4 reduced the likelihood of participating in further (non-OLASS) learning 3 months following release by 0.8 percentage points (2.4 per cent compared to 3.2 per cent), though not at 6 or 9 months post release<sup>42</sup>.

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on year in the three subsequent year (and is zero thereafter). Note, however, the assumption underpinning the modelling of the persistency effect is likely to generate a conservative estimate of the medium term benefits that are generated. In particular, the BIS (2015) analysis suggests that (amongst the general population of learners), using similar data sources as adopted in this analysis, there are positive earnings returns in the period 3-5 years post qualification completion compared to the counterfactual. These earnings returns are greatest for full level 2 and full level 3 qualifications, but also exist for English and Maths qualifications and qualifications below Level 2. In addition, in relation to employment returns, the same analysis suggests that there are also persistent employment effects (especially in relation to full Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications).

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2015) *Measuring the Net Present Value of Further Education in England*, Research Report 228, June 2015.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/435166/bis\\_15\\_323\\_Measuring\\_the\\_Net\\_Present\\_Value\\_of\\_Further\\_Education\\_in\\_England.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/435166/bis_15_323_Measuring_the_Net_Present_Value_of_Further_Education_in_England.pdf) Accessed August 2016

<sup>41</sup> Note that this analysis also compares the outcomes of OLASS4 *achievers* versus OLASS4 *non-achievers*. Part of the rationale for this approach reflects the fact that a number of recent analyses commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills consider the relative outcomes between achievers versus non-achievers using the Individualised Learner Record. Given the limited number of Guided Learning Hours or credits associated with OLASS4 learning, and the fact that the relative *intensity* of the treatment received between the treatment and counterfactual groups (i.e. achievers and non-achievers) is limited, it would be expected that there would be only marginal differences in post-release outcomes identified.

<sup>42</sup> Note that further learning only includes any education and training that is publicly funded and leads to a formally recognised qualification. Training that is privately funded or that does not lead to a formally recognised qualification is not included in relation to post-release outcomes.

- OLASS4 had no effect on proven re-offending at 12 months or the likelihood that learners were claiming JSA or other out-of-work benefits.

**Table 4.3: Summary of post-release outcomes (OLASS4 participation vs. no OLASS4 participation)**

ATT (in percentage points)	Number of months following release		
	12 months	24 months	
Proven re-offence (% with $\geq 1$ proven re-offence) [Confidence Interval] Sample size	-1.03% [-2.66, 0.59] N = 11,890	-1.33% [-2.95, 0.30] N = 11,880	
	3 months	6 months	9 months
P45 employment (% in P45 employment) [Confidence Interval] Sample size	-0.40% [-2.29, 1.49] N = 6,285	-2.41% [-4.98, 0.15] N = 3,305	-5.15%* (a) [-10.28, -0.03] N = 1,048
Receipt of out-of-work benefit (% in receipt of out-of-work benefit) [Confidence Interval] Sample size	1.09% [-1.66, 3.85] N = 4,213	0.59% [-3.60, 4.77] N = 1,722	4.24% [-11.29, 19.76] N = 230
Receipt of JSA (% in receipt of JSA) [Confidence Interval] Sample size	-0.26% [-2.95, 2.42] N = 4,213	1.32% [-2.56, 5.21] N = 1,722	0.16% [-13.48, 13.80] N = 230
Further learning (% in (non-OLASS) learning) [Confidence Interval] Sample size	-0.81%* (b) [-1.58, -0.03] N = 6,285	-0.30% [-1.24, 0.64] N = 3,305	0.09% [-1.61, 1.79] N = 1,048

Source: London Economics' analysis of ILR/HMRC/DWP/MoJ matched data

Note: P45 employment impact at 3/ 6/ 9 months based on those released before end of Apr 2013/ Jan 2013/ Nov 2012, respectively. Further learning impact at 3/ 6/ 9 months based on those released before end of Apr 2013/ Jan 2013/ Nov 2012, respectively. Benefit dependency impacts at 3/ 6/ 9 months based on those released before end of Feb 2013/ Nov 2013/ Aug 2012, respectively.

The table shows OLASS4 participation (treatment group) vs. no OLASS4 participation (counterfactual group). All estimates and confidence intervals have been rounded to 2 decimal places. Statistically significant differences between treatment and counterfactual estimates reported at a 5 per cent confidence level, unless otherwise stated, and are marked with an asterisk (\*). Confidence interval (at the 95 per cent level) are presented in square brackets [ ]. Sample size of treatment groups are presented alongside the ATT.

- (a) 9 month post release employment rate of treatment group: 24.5 per cent; 9 month post release employment rate of counterfactual group: 29.7 per cent
- (b) 3 month post release further learning rate of treatment group: 2.4 per cent; 3 month post release employment rate of counterfactual group: 3.2 per cent

## 4.6 OLASS4 participation vs. OLASS3 participation

The second strand of the early impact analysis on OLASS4 learning involved comparing the early outcomes of OLASS4 learners with the early outcomes of matched OLASS3 learners. When the outcomes of OLASS4 and OLASS3 learners are compared, it should be noted that the outcomes in question occurred at different points in time and potentially in the context of different labour market conditions. Further, as discussed previously, the labour market and learning impacts for OLASS4 learners relate to those learners who started a course and were released in the first three months of OLASS4 implementation, between 1 August and 31 October 2012. For this reason it is too early to draw any conclusion about the full impact of OLASS4 learning relative to OLASS3.

Table 4.4 summarises the early impacts of OLASS4 participation relative to OLASS3 participation on the post-release outcomes of interest. The main differences are:

- OLASS4 learners are associated with a one-year proven re-offending rate which is approximately 5.4 percentage points *higher* than the matched group of OLASS3 learners (42.8 per cent compared to 37.5 per cent);
- Participation in OLASS4 lowers the likelihood of participating in further (non-OLASS) learning relative to OLASS3 participation at 6-months post release (2.4 per cent compared to 2.9 per cent)<sup>43</sup>; and
- Relative to OLASS3, participation in OLASS4 had no impact on the likelihood of P45 employment or that learners were claiming JSA or other out-of-work benefits within the first nine months, post release.

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<sup>43</sup> Note that further learning only includes any education and training that is publicly funded and leads to a formally recognised qualification. Training that is privately funded or that does not lead to a formally recognised qualification is not included in relation to post-release outcomes.



**Table 4.4: Summary of post-release outcomes (OLASS4 participation vs. OLASS3 participation)**

ATT (in percentage points)	Number of months following release		
	12 months		
Proven re-offence	5.37%* <sup>(a)</sup>		
[Confidence Interval]	[3.62, 7.11]		
Sample size	N = 11,888		
	3 months	6 months	9 months
P45 employment	-1.46%	-2.18%	-0.51%
[Confidence Interval]	[-4.09, 1.18]	[-7.07, 2.71]	[-15.29, 14.28]
Sample size	N = 6,284	N = 3,305	N = 1,048
Receipt of out-of-work benefit	-1.57%	-0.23%	0.68%
[Confidence Interval]	[-5.97, 2.84]	[-10.61, 10.15]	[-72.63, 73.99]
Sample size	N = 4,213	N = 1,722	N = 230
Receipt of JSA	-2.15%	-0.98%	-3.14%
[Confidence Interval]	[-6.54, 2.25]	[-10.80, 8.84]	[-70.23, 63.95]
Sample size	N = 4,213	N = 1,722	N = 230
Further learning	-0.39%	-0.48%* <sup>(b)</sup>	-0.01%
[Confidence Interval]	[-1.47, 0.69]	[-2.42, -0.48]	[-5.51, 5.48]
Sample size	N = 6,284	N = 3,305	N = 1,048

Source: London Economics' analysis of ILR/HMRC/DWP/MoJ matched data

Note: P45 employment impact at 3/ 6/ 9 months based on those released before end of Apr 2013/ Jan 2013/ Nov 2012, respectively. Further learning impact at 3/ 6/ 9 months based on those released before end of Apr 2013/ Jan 2013/ Nov 2012, respectively. Benefit dependency impacts at 3/ 6/ 9 months based on those released before end of Feb 2013/ Nov 2013/ Aug 2012, respectively.

Table shows OLASS4 participation (treatment group) vs. OLASS3 participation (counterfactual group). All estimates and confidence intervals have been rounded to 2 decimal places. Statistically significant differences between treatment and counterfactual estimates reported at a 5 per cent confidence level, unless otherwise stated, and are marked with an asterisk (\*). Confidence interval (at the 95 per cent level) are presented in square brackets [ ]. Sample size of treatment groups are presented alongside the ATT

- (a) 12 month post release proven re-offending rate of treatment group: 42.8 per cent; 12 month post release proven re-offending rate of counterfactual group: 37.5 per cent
- (b) 6 month post release further learning rate of treatment group: 2.4 per cent; 6 month post release employment rate of counterfactual group: 2.9 per cent

## Comparing the characteristics of OLASS3 and OLASS4 learning and learners

The identification of a significant difference in proven re-offending outcomes between OLASS4 learners and the matched OLASS3 counterfactual group encourages a comparison of the learning aims undertaken, which is presented in this section. A comparison of the characteristics of OLASS3 and OLASS4 learners is presented in Technical Appendix 3.3.

Table 4.5 provides a comparison of OLASS4 and OLASS3 learning by the subject of the learning aims undertaken. For the sample of learners in question, the analysis shows that a greater proportion of the matched OLASS3 learners participated in at least one *Skills for Life* learning aim compared to OLASS4 learners, while a lower proportion of OLASS3 learners participated in at least one vocational aim. The proportions who participated in at least one ICT aim were similar. The subgroup analysis presented in Technical Appendix 3 (Table A3.4) shows the interaction between the subject of the aim and outcomes.

**Table 4.5: Comparison of OLASS4 and OLASS3 learning among the matched comparison group, by subject of aim**

Subject of aim	% of OLASS4 learners	% of OLASS3 learners
Participated in at least one Skills For Life aim	19.6%	23.9%
Participated in at least one vocational aim	50.0%	47.4%
Participated in at least one ICT aim	11.7%	12.1%

*Source: London Economics' analysis of ILR/HMRC/DWP/MoJ matched data*

*Note: The percentages do not add to 100 per cent as an OLASS learner could participate in aims of more than one type.*

Table 4.6 compares OLASS4 and OLASS3 learning by the highest level of learning aim. A lower proportion of the matched OLASS3 learners participated in an aim below Level 1 (20.8 per cent) compared to OLASS4 learners (25.3 per cent), while higher proportions of the matched OLASS3 learners were engaged in Level 1 and Level 2 aims. In both the groups, relatively few learners participated in a learning aim at Level 3 or above.

In the subgroup analysis presented in Technical Appendix 3 (Table A3.11), undertaking Level 1 and Level 2 aims was associated with lower one year proven re-offending rates among OLASS4 learners, as well as a higher likelihood of P45 employment 3 months following release (relative to aims below Level 1). The higher incidence of these aims among the matched OLASS3 group may explain, at least in part, why the matched OLASS3 group was associated with a lower rate of proven re-offending in the months following release.

**Table 4.6: Comparison of OLASS4 and OLASS3 learning by level of aim**

Highest level of aim in which learners participated	% of OLASS4 learners	% of OLASS3 learners
Participated in an aim below Level 1	25.3%	20.8%
Participated in a Level 1 aim	52.1%	53.8%
Participated in a Level 2 aim	22.0%	25.0%
Participated in an aim of Level 3 or above	0.6%	0.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

*Source: London Economics' analysis of ILR/HMRC/DWP/MoJ matched data*

Finally in this section, Table 4.7 provides a comparison of OLASS4 and OLASS3 learning by the number of aims undertaken. Matched OLASS3 learners tended to participate in more learning aims than the OLASS4 learners. Specifically, 33.5 per cent of the matched OLASS3 learners participated in at least five aims compared to 30 per cent of OLASS4 learners<sup>44</sup>.

In the subgroup analysis presented in Appendix A (Table A3.12), the one year proven re-offending rate among OLASS4 learners declined as the number of learning aims undertaken increased (although the impact was not statistically significant). The tendency of the matched OLASS3 group to participate in more learning aims may explain - at least in part - why the matched OLASS3 group was associated with lower rates of proven re-offending.

**Table 4.7: Comparison of OLASS4 and OLASS3 learning by number of aims**

Number of aims	% of OLASS4 learners	% of OLASS3 learners
Participated in 1 aim	28.0%	26.8%
Participated in 2 aims	20.2%	19.4%
Participated in 3 or 4 aims	21.8%	20.3%
Participated in at least 5 aims	30.0%	33.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

*Source: London Economics' analysis of ILR/HMRC/DWP/MoJ matched data*

It is important to note that given the many caveats presented in both Section 3.5 and Section 4.1, the direct comparison of OLASS3 outcomes and OLASS 4 outcomes could be

<sup>44</sup> The analysis of the number of learning aims undertaken by offenders under OLASS 3 and OLASS 4 suggests that under OLASS3, learners undertook approximately 5.23 learning aims, while OLASS4 learners undertook approximately 4.38 learning aims (a difference of approximately 0.85 learning aims per learner. In sum, the analysis suggests that learners under OLASS3 were undertaking more learning aims, but also learning aims that were on average associated with higher qualification levels than learners under OLASS4. It should be noted that this analysis is based on a sub-sample of learners from the first year of the OLASS4 contract.

misleading, and it would be incorrect at this stage, given the available evidence, to suggest that OLASS3 is superior or inferior to OLASS4.

#### **4.7 OLASS4 achievement vs. non-achievement of OLASS4**

This strand of the analysis compares the outcomes of those who participated in OLASS4 *and* achieved at least one aim with those who participated in OLASS4 but did not achieve any aim.

Table 4.8 shows that achievers are more likely to be in FE than the matched group of non-achievers at 6 months after release (2.6 per cent compared to 0.9 per cent). Any other differences in impact were not statistically significant.

**Table 4.8: Summary of post-release outcomes (OLASS4 achievement vs. non-achievement of OLASS4)**

ATT (in percentage points)	Number of months following release		
	12 months	24 months	
<b>Proven re-offence</b>	-2.03%	-1.99%	
<b>[Confidence Interval]</b>	[-5.22, 1.17]	[-5.14, 1.16]	
<b>Sample size</b>	N = 9477	N = 9470	
	3 months	6 months	9 months
<b>P45 employment</b>	-1.92%	-1.40%	-1.48%
<b>[Confidence Interval]</b>	[-5.54, 1.71]	[-6.84, 4.05]	[-11.76, 8.80]
<b>Sample size</b>	N = 4929	N = 2518	N = 756
<b>Receipt of out-of-work benefit</b>	-3.67%	-4.60%	0.02%
<b>[Confidence Interval]</b>	[-9.19, 1.85]	[-12.96, 3.77]	[-47.95, 48.00]
<b>Sample size</b>	N = 3246	N = 1299	N = 130
<b>Receipt of JSA</b>	-5.71%	-5.91%	-5.59%
<b>[Confidence Interval]</b>	[-11.22, -0.20]	[-13.95, 2.13]	[-51.36, 40.18]
<b>Sample size</b>	N = 3246	N = 1299	N = 130
<b>Further learning</b>	0.46%	1.67%* (a)	0.63%
<b>[Confidence Interval]</b>	[-0.82, 1.74]	[0.07, 1.67]	[-3.09, 4.35]
<b>Sample size</b>	N = 4929	N = 2518	N = 756

Source: London Economics' analysis of ILR/HMRC/DWP/MoJ matched data

Note: P45 employment impact at 3/ 6/ 9 months based on those released before end of Apr 2013/ Jan 2013/ Nov 2012, respectively. Further learning impact at 3/ 6/ 9 months based on those released before end of Apr 2013/ Jan 2013/ Nov 2012, respectively. Benefit dependency impacts at 3/ 6/ 9 months based on those released before end of Feb 2013/ Nov 2013/ Aug 2012, respectively.

Table shows OLASS4 achievement (treatment group) vs. non-achievement of OLASS4 (counterfactual group). All estimates and confidence intervals have been rounded to 2 decimal places. Statistically significant differences between treatment and counterfactual estimates reported at a 5 per cent confidence level, unless otherwise stated, and are marked with an asterisk (\*). Confidence interval (at the 95 per cent level) are presented in square brackets [ ]. Sample size of treatment groups are presented alongside the ATT  
6 month post release further learning rate of treatment group: 2.6 per cent; 6 month post release employment rate of counterfactual group: 0.9 per cent

## 5. The delivery of prisoner learning under OLASS4

### Chapter summary

- Learner numbers and achievements have increased under OLASS4, particularly at Level 1 and below. Participation in and achievement of full Level 2 qualifications has also increased, as has the proportion of prisoners engaged in learning with a known learning difficulty or disability. This has been achieved in the face of a core prisoner education budget that has declined in real terms over the same period.
- Governance Board activity mainly focused on overseeing performance and financial management, but there was less activity on strategic issues such as partnership-building or identifying gaps in provision. Governance Boards were transferring funds between prisons, so resource allocation was more flexible than under OLASS3.
- Strong procedures were in place to conduct mandatory English and maths assessments (introduced from August 2014) on arrival at the prison – generally as part of induction. There was some evidence of repeat assessments.
- Vocational provision was geared towards the end of the sentence (although scope for this varied by prison classification and sentence length). Between 2011/12 and 2013/14 there were minor changes in the distribution of learning aims undertaken.
- While local labour market information was being used to inform curriculum planning, the perceived quality and relevance of this to the prison population was mixed.
- Prisoners making distance learning applications were given information and support by National Careers Service advisers, and could access funding through the Prisoners' Education Trust as well as the Student Loans Company.
- The numbers taking part in Open University distance learning are small relative to the prison population, but increased between 2011/12 and 2012/13 before stabilising. Applications for HE tuition fee loans increased as new cohorts of learners accessed them in successive years. Thus, applications trebled over the three years between 2012/13 (the first year of operation) and 2014/15, albeit from a low base. Use of Advanced Learner Loans for FE at Level 3 and above is very low given the size of the prison population. Limited

awareness, reluctance to take out a loan, and restricted access to IT were the key barriers to participation in distance learning.

- Management Information on the VC shows the number of active users and completed activities is relatively low compared to the number of registrations, suggesting that continued use after initial registration is limited. The main barriers were: lack of internet connectivity; technical issues; low awareness and lack of training among prison and provider staff; poor quality resources; and prison regime constraints.
- The approach to pre-and post-release employment support was still in development and was therefore disjointed in most of the case study prisons. The new CRCs were still in early days and as a result, respective partner roles and remits had not been fully established.
- In the case study prisons, partnership working was improved by a co-located approach to resettlement services, and shared systems or data sharing agreements.

This first part of this chapter examines the participation and attainment levels across the duration of the OLASS contract. The chapter then proceeds to analyse procurement and governance arrangements established for OLASS and concurrent policies and whether these have operated as intended. It draws on case study data to explore delivery issues and utilises management information from a range of sources to examine concurrent policies. Finally, the chapter examines the effectiveness of the arrangements to provide pre-and post-release employment support.

## 5.1 Participation and attainment in OLASS provision

### Participation

Statistical First Release (SFR) data has been used to assess OLASS participation and achievement between 2010/11 and 2014/15<sup>45</sup>. The changes made to OLASS provision under Phase 4 of the contract were designed to increase participation and raise achievement, in particular of English and maths and of full Level 2 qualifications. SFR data is based on adult OLASS learners aged 18 and above, and for OLASS4 it covers the period

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<sup>45</sup> SFA (2015) *Further education and skills: statistical first release – learner participation, outcomes and level of highest qualification held*

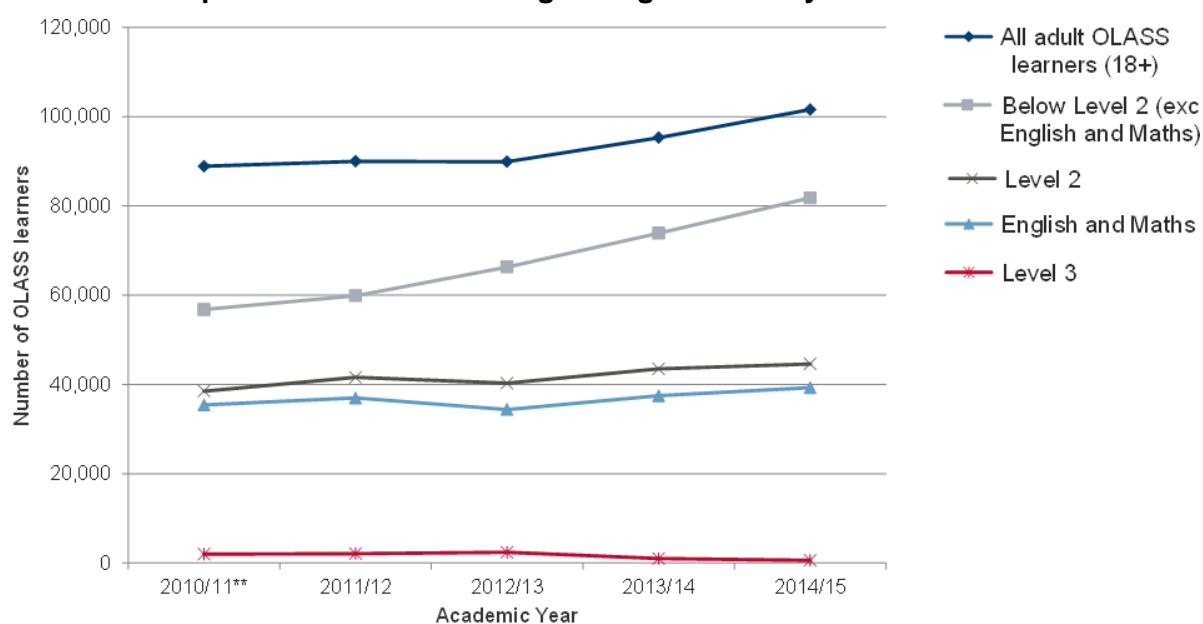
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/487247/learner-participation-outcomes-and-level-of-highest-qualification-data-tables-november15-ofqual-update.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/487247/learner-participation-outcomes-and-level-of-highest-qualification-data-tables-november15-ofqual-update.xls), Tables 7.1 and 7.2, last accessed 29/1/16.

from the start of the contract in August 2012<sup>46</sup>, up to the end of the 2014/15 academic year, therefore the population differs from that covered by the impact assessment presented in Section 3<sup>47</sup>. The SFR data does not split out OLASS3 and OLASS4 provision.

Figure 5.1 shows that the numbers in learning have increased over the OLASS4 contract period, in line with policy objectives. At the aggregate level there has been an around six or seven per cent increase in the number of learners participating, year on year, since the start of the OLASS4 contract in 2012/13. This is driven primarily by increases in participation in courses below Level 2 (excluding English and maths), which includes both full Level 1 courses, and units. Full Level 2 is equivalent to five GCSE passes at Grades A\* to C.

Participation in Level 3 courses has declined over the same period, but from a relatively low base.

**Figure 5.1: Participation in OLASS learning during academic years 2010/11 to 2014/15**



Source: BIS/ SFA Statistical First Release SFR R14 ILR, 18 November 2015, Table 7.1, Excludes Level 4 and Level Unassigned. \*\*Note that 2010/11 figures are not directly comparable with later years due to differences in how the data were recorded in the Individualised Learner Record

<sup>46</sup> Note that the contract started in August 2012 in seven of the Unit of Procurement areas and in November 2012 in the other three.

<sup>47</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, the impact assessment excluded certain groups including young people aged 21 or below because of the relatively low matching rate and subsequently poorer quality of linked, matched data for this age group.



## Demographic trends in participation

SFR data shows that male prisoners continued to account for approximately 92 per cent of all OLASS learners, between 2010/11 and 2014/15. Table 5.1 shows that the distribution of learners by age group has changed over that period, with a growing proportion of learners aged 25-49 and 50+, and fewer aged 18-24<sup>48</sup>.

**Table 5.1: Distribution of learners by age group, 2010/11 to 2014/15**

Age	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
<b>18-24</b>	35.4%	34.3%	31.9%	29.0%	<b>26.5%</b>
<b>25-49</b>	58.1%	58.3%	60.2%	62.9%	<b>64.5%</b>
<b>50+</b>	6.5%	7.0%	7.6%	8.2%	<b>9.1%</b>
<b>Unknown</b>	-	*	*	-	-
<b>Total number of offender learners</b>	<b>88,900</b>	<b>90,100</b>	<b>89,900</b>	<b>95,300</b>	<b>101,600</b>

*Source: BIS/ SFA SFR R14 ILR, OLASS participation and achievement by E&D, English & Maths, December 2015. Offender Learners - All Age Demographic Summary of FE and Skills Participation (2010/11 to 2014/15) – Learner Volumes, 18 November 2015.*

*\*refers to a percentage of less than 0.5 per cent, but more than zero.*

*- indicates less than five cases.*

Table 5.2 shows participation in OLASS learning by learning difficulty or disability, over the same period. Again, the figures show that participation has increased substantially among prisoners with a known learning difficulty or disability, in line with policy objectives. The proportion whose status was unknown or unrecorded has fallen over that period, suggesting that identification of additional support needs is improving over time<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> SFA (2014) *FE data library: education and training* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-education-and-training>, OLASS participation and achievement by equality and diversity & by English and maths Level, 2010/11 to 2014/15, last accessed 7/4/2016.

<sup>49</sup> SFA (2014) *FE data library: education and training* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-education-and-training>, OLASS participation and achievement by equality and diversity & by English and maths Level, 2010/11 to 2014/15, last accessed 7/4/2016.

**Table 5.2: Distribution of learners by learning difficulty or disability status, 2010/11 to 2014/15**

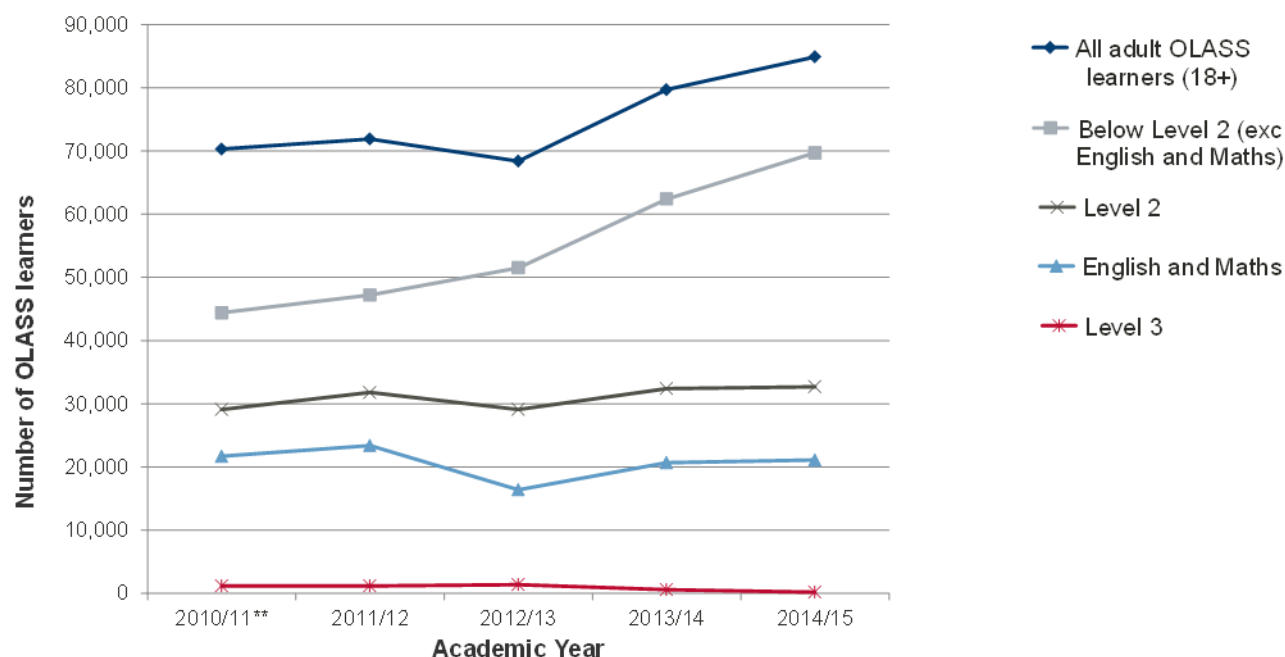
LDD status	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
<b>Learning Difficulty/Disability</b>	18.3%	21.5%	21.6%	23.1%	<b>33.2%</b>
<b>No Learning Difficulty/Disability</b>	61.1%	65.1%	60.3%	63.8%	<b>50.9%</b>
<b>Not Known</b>	20.6%	13.4%	18.0%	13.1%	<b>15.9%</b>
<b>Total number of offender learners</b>	<b>88,900</b>	<b>90,100</b>	<b>89,900</b>	<b>95,300</b>	<b>101,600</b>

Source: BIS/ SFA SFR R14 ILR, OLASS participation and achievement by E&D, English & Maths, December 2015. Offender Learners - All Age Demographic Summary of FE and Skills Participation (2010/11 to 2014/15) – Learner Volumes, 18 November 2015.

## 5.2 Achievement

Figure 5.2 shows that achievements in OLASS learning increased sharply over the same period at aggregate level, again driven by increased achievement of below Level 2 (excluding English and maths).

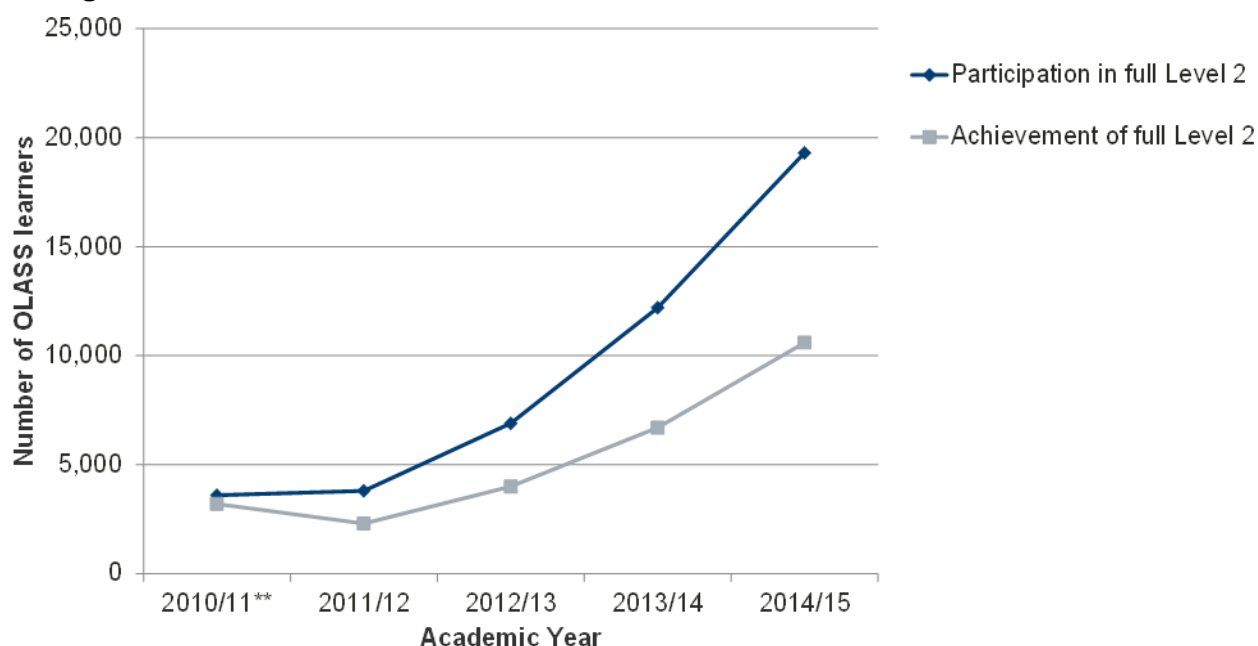
**Figure 5.2: Achievement in OLASS learning, 2010/11 to 2014/15**



Source: BIS/ SFA Statistical First Release SFR31, 18 November 2015, Table 7.2, Excludes Level 4 and Level Unassigned. \*\*Note that 2010/11 figures are not directly comparable with later years due to differences in how the data were recorded in the Individualised Learner Record.

Figure 5.3 shows the increase in participation and achievement of full Level 2 qualifications. As a percentage of all Level 2 provision, full Level 2 has increased from 17 per cent in 2012/13 to 43 per cent in 2014/15. Full Level 2 courses now account for 19 per cent of OLASS learners compared with 8 per cent in 2012/13, at the start of the contract.

**Figure 5.3: Participation in and achievement of full Level 2 qualifications in OLASS learning, 2010/11 to 2014/15**



Source: BIS/ SFA Statistical First Release SFR31, 18 November 2015, Table 7.1 and 7.2, full Level 2 qualifications only. \*\*Note that 2010/11 figures are not directly comparable with later years due to differences in how the data were recorded in the Individualised Learner Record

### Funding for prisoner learning under OLASS4

Table 5.3 shows that the increased volume of prisoners in learning under OLASS4 has been achieved in the context of a declining core budget. The figures below include funding to pay for the National Careers Service in custody but do not include additional funding from the MoJ that pays for education costs relating to prison expansions and also exclude grants that directly support distance and HE delivery in prisons.

**Table 5.3: Baseline prison education budget, 2012-13 to 2015-16**

Financial year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
<b>BIS baseline prison education budget</b>	<b>£131.8m</b>	<b>£130.4m</b>	<b>£128.9m</b>	<b>£128.9m</b>

*Source: BIS Skills Funding Statements 2012-2015 and 2013-2016*<sup>50</sup>

### 5.3 Procurement and commissioning

New arrangements for commissioning learning provision were put in place under OLASS4. These involved the introduction of co-commissioning arrangements in which procurement was led jointly by the SFA, HMPPS and clusters of prisons within ten contracting regions or Units of Procurement. This section examines the extent to which these arrangements met the needs of the SFA, HMPPS and prison clusters, and how far the design of the commissioning process enabled individual prisons, or clusters, to influence provision offered locally.

#### National procurement

The SFA and HMPPS co-commissioned OLASS4 procurement at a national level. Policy stakeholders viewed this process as having worked well, especially given that it was the first time it happened jointly.

“There was consultation and engagement at every step of the process.”

National policy stakeholder

The selection of providers was a joint process between SFA, HMPPS and prison representatives. The strength of this approach was the level of consultation that went into selection. Some policy stakeholders considered that bid-scoring was not done consistently across all the Governors or Heads of Learning and Skills involved, which led to more in-depth moderation work than anticipated. Many of those interviewed at Governance Board and prison level had no involvement in the original procurement process at national level and therefore could not comment on this process or the training provided by the SFA. Some senior prison stakeholders within the Governance Boards considered that providers’ track records in delivering prisoner education should have been given greater weight in the scoring process.

<sup>50</sup> SFA (2012) *Skills Funding Statement 2012-2015* and SFA (2014) *Skills Funding Statement 2013-2016* [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/82774/bis-12-p172x-skills-funding-statement-2012-2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/82774/bis-12-p172x-skills-funding-statement-2012-2015.pdf), p. 15, last accessed 7/4/2016.  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/278529/bis-14-p172a-skills-funding-statement-2013-2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278529/bis-14-p172a-skills-funding-statement-2013-2016.pdf) p. 26

In those instances where the OLASS provider changed between Phase 3 and Phase 4, there was a need for better transition planning. The impact of the new outcome-based funding rules was unclear to providers at the start of the contract and this affected the extent of sub-contracting in the early part of Year 1, meaning that the contract got off to a slow start in some areas.

## Local commissioning

Labour Market Information (LMI) was being used to shape learning provision by the Governance Board case studies and across the case study prison sites. OLASS providers were represented on the relevant Governance Boards and at more operational level they commonly met with senior staff in the prisons to discuss the content of the curriculum. Despite this there were some barriers in the funding model noted by OLASS providers and individual prisons. OLASS4 funding was seen as inflexible because some courses were not offered due to changes to the SFA funding rules<sup>51</sup>, even though stakeholders considered they would be well suited to the prison population and there was demand from the local labour market. For example, one OLASS provider highlighted the example of a course that they regarded as suitable and in-demand, but not funded under OLASS4:

“I think it doesn’t give the education provider the credibility to choose what’s best for their prison, if that makes, I think it’s very restrictive, I think that makes it very difficult. We design our curriculum, and again it could be that, an instance that I’ve got is that we’ve got a possible employer coming in, plant machinery, that we thought would be quite innovative to do here, use small diggers ready for the road works. Now the course that he delivers on the out, which we would want to do here, is not funded, so I can’t bring him in to deliver it.”

OLASS Manager

## 5.4 Governance arrangements

### Performance oversight

Under OLASS4 the Governance Boards were designed to take a strategic approach to reviewing and assessing progress and ensuring that the provision within the individual

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<sup>51</sup> SFA (2013), Funding Rules and Guidance 2013/14 for OLASS, September 2013, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/279297/funding\\_rules\\_and\\_guidance\\_2013\\_14olass4.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/279297/funding_rules_and_guidance_2013_14olass4.pdf), last accessed December 2015 and SFA (2012), *Funding Rules and Guidance 2012/13 for OLASS*, March 2013 [http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/18379/1/FINAL\\_Funding\\_Rules\\_and\\_Guidance\\_2012\\_13\\_for\\_the\\_O.pdf](http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/18379/1/FINAL_Funding_Rules_and_Guidance_2012_13_for_the_O.pdf) last accessed August 2016

prisons was closely linked to the local labour market and local employers. However, in practice the Governance Boards focused more heavily on performance monitoring, than providing strategic direction.

The Governance Boards met on a quarterly basis; however the attendance of the Boards varied. Commonly the Boards were attended by Lead Governors, regional and cluster Heads of Learning and Skills, the OLASS provider and National Career Service. Some Governance Board members wanted more input from the SFA in these meetings as they hold the contract with the OLASS provider.

Performance monitoring was a key responsibility of the Governance Boards. Data on the performance of the prisons was fed back through the Cluster Heads of Learning and Skills and the OLASS provider, as they attended meetings with senior members of staff at the prison level. A review of how individual prisons were performing was conducted within these meetings and any performance-related issues that arose were then discussed at the quarterly Governance Board. However, more decision-making happened in the lower level meetings than at the Governance Board, as these meetings occurred more frequently. As a result, the Governance Board was more commonly seen as having a monitoring and ratifying role, than one of strategic decision-making.

“The Governance Board that meets quarterly. And because it meets quarterly things have already happened, changed, moved on, so it’s partly a rubber stamping exercise. I don’t think the Governance Board really has any teeth.”

Governance Board member

## **Movement of funding**

National policy stakeholders welcomed the new outcome-based structure for funding introduced under OLASS4. The new regime was designed to ensure that funding can easily be transferred between establishments to ensure it is utilised. Funds can be moved between prisons and across clusters within a Unit of Procurement if it has been agreed by the Governance Board. However, the extent to which these goals were being achieved was variable across Units of Procurement, and some examples were given where prisons that did not fully utilise their resource allocations were unable to transfer funds to neighbouring sites that had already defrayed their budget. One prison case study identified that recent New Ways of Working reforms had impacted on their ability to use their allocated funding; a reduced number of prison staff were available to transfer prisoners to classes on a regular basis.

The case study Governance Boards consistently used the quarterly meeting to discuss funding arrangements and whether funding should be redistributed. In practice, this was commonly discussed with individual Governors before finalising reallocations. Decisions around the movement of funding were predominantly based on data regarding budget expenditure versus budget allocation from the OLASS provider, which was regarded as clear and up-to-date. However, many reallocation decisions were reactive rather than planned: for example, in one instance funding was moved between establishments because a prison had significantly underspent due to a delay in completing new facilities to provide certain OLASS courses.

“Now in year, where we’ve noticed that there’s, for whatever reason, there’s an under delivery in an establishment, we will look to, through the Governance Board, to move money around within year.”

Governance Board member

### **Mechanisms for responsiveness to local prisons**

Performance monitoring enabled the Governance Boards to establish if funding needed to be moved between the prisons. The movement of funds would enable the prisons to provide additional courses where there was an evident demand. Their focus, however, was on the funding arrangements rather than the specific types of learning provided at each establishment.

A common barrier to the responsiveness of the Governance Boards in ensuring that right level of provision was available in their establishments was the impact that New Ways of Working had on prison regimes. Moving the funding from one prison to another too swiftly could lead to other prisons then not having enough funding to deliver their learning provision once the prison regime had stabilised. Therefore, while the Governance Boards reviewed performance on a quarterly basis (and sub-groups met more regularly than this), they tended to move funds between establishments less frequently.

“We went through a period where we were under-recruited and we were adjusting to the benchmark and we were struggling to deliver the regime... we tinkered with the staff resource that we had and now I’m getting much more consistent delivery.”

Governance Board member

## **Mechanisms for quality improvement**

The Governance Boards were monitoring the quality of the OLASS provision in their region on a quarterly basis, through scrutiny of data on learning attendance and outcomes and any Ofsted inspection reports, but they were not the main vehicle for driving quality improvements within the Unit of Procurement. Sub-meetings of Quality Improvement Groups (QIGs) had been set up in many of the regions to monitor the quality of the OLASS provision at prison level. These QIGs generally met on a monthly basis to discuss the quality of the learning provision and the learning outcomes in each prison. The QIGs were driven by the cluster Heads of Learning and Skills, but they were also attended by a range of partners and prison staff, such as the OLASS provider, National Careers Service, the CRC, Offender Management Unit (OMU) and the prison Governor. The outcomes of the QIG meetings were fed back to the Governance Board on a quarterly basis. However, actions were normally taken at the prison level after each QIG meeting.

“The Quality Improvement Group is very much, as it should be, focused on quality. So it was very much, again, looking at outcomes for learning and the quality of teaching and learning, personal development and behaviour, leadership and management.”

Governance Board member

## **5.5 Partnership working at strategic level**

### **Synergies between OLASS4 and other policies at strategic level**

The primary focus of the Governance Board meetings was the OLASS contract and therefore discussions tended to concentrate on monitoring learning within the individual prisons and how funding could be shifted between them, where necessary. The concurrent policies were reviewed within the meetings but this was largely a monitoring exercise rather than a deliberation over new strategies on how to further integrate the policies.

At the beginning of OLASS4, the Governance Boards had been more focused on encouraging prisons to use the VC and aimed to increase the level of prisoner activity on the platform. However, more recently they had focused on monitoring and explaining the level of usage, rather than attempting to increase it.

“I mean we talk at length about different things like the Virtual Campus and so on, and we did in the early days have quite good strategies for dealing with poor performance regarding that.”

Governance Board member



Monitoring of student tuition fee loans for HE and Advanced Learner Loans for FE was less consistent across the Governance Boards. Two of the case study Governance Boards discussed the take up of loans in their quarterly meetings, but the other two decided that they were not going to discuss distance learning or loans, considering that this was better left to individual prisons.

“There haven’t been any discussions around things like Open University, distance learning, student loans...that tends to be left to individual establishments to sort out and resolve.”

Governance Board member

Although the National Careers Service were commonly in attendance at the Governance Boards, stakeholders considered that the monitoring of National Careers Service activity was comparatively high-level compared with the scrutiny of the OLASS4 contract.

“Scrutiny of what the National Careers Service do is more light-touch, like an add-on.”

Governance Board member

### **Use of Labour Market Information by Governance Boards**

LMI was provided to the Governance Boards by the OLASS provider and National Career Service, but these arrangements were not systematic and varied between areas. Some Board representatives regarded the LMI as being too general or out of date, while in one Board the Regional Head of Learning and Skills reported that he was no longer provided with LMI and had to source his own.

The Governance Boards commonly used LMI when reviewing the annual curriculums that were compiled by the senior teams within the individual prisons. However, other than this LMI was not frequently discussed at Governance Board level to support strategic decision making about learning provision or to identify possible gaps. The use of LMI worked better in some areas than others, particularly where there was a history of joint working and information sharing, and where Governance Boards had seized the opportunity to use it early on in the commissioning process. The Governance Boards expected individual prisons to be using LMI more frequently to support their own local decisions over learning provision.

“It’s [use is] marginal because what we expect is that each prison is using it.”

Governance Board member

### Formation of new partnerships at strategic level

The existence of the Governance Boards enabled partnership working because they brought together senior strategic staff from several organisations at the Unit of Procurement level. Good working practice in regards to partnership working at a prison level was also discussed at the meetings. However, the Governance Board had little involvement in creating new partnerships between prisons, employers and other agencies. The responsibility for the creation of new partnerships sat at the local level within the prisons. There was little evidence that the Governance Boards focused on developing new, strategic partnership working at regional level.

“[Partnership working has] been driven by individual governors working with their providers to develop what's required.”

Governance Board member

### Data sharing at strategic level

Data sharing at Governance Board was for the primary purpose of monitoring the performance of the learning provision within the individual prisons. There was less evidence of Governance Boards taking a more strategic role to improve data sharing between partners at Unit of Procurement level.

The majority of the data under scrutiny is supplied by the OLASS providers at individual prison level and contains information on budgets, expenditure, learner attendance and learning outcomes. Data that has been collected by the monthly QIGs is also provided so that the Governance Boards can review the progress that has been made in each establishment. The quality of this data was regarded as good and sufficient to monitor performance in each prison.

“Their MI is very good and it goes from the overview of just how much money on a site is spent, where they are on budget, to actually digging down to which courses are doing well, so we’ve got attendance data in classrooms, we’ve got learner success rates, we’ve got massive amounts of data.”

Governance Board member

## 5.6 Processes for identifying and assessing learning needs

### Participation in English and maths provision

There were clear systems for conducting English and maths assessments at the beginning of sentences. The following induction processes were common across all the case study prisons, regardless of their category:

- **Induction presentation:** Prisoners attended a group-based induction session delivered jointly by OLASS and the National Careers Service. This was typically within a week of arrival. Coverage included an overview of courses and learning opportunities available.
- **English and maths assessment:** Prisoners were asked to complete the initial assessment in English and maths. From 2014/15 when mandatory assessment was introduced, all four providers used the BKSB Initial Assessment tool, so the results from different prisons are comparable, but prior to that different providers used different tools. The tests were taken at a computer (sometimes using the VC) with results provided on completion. Prisoners were required to be excused from the assessment if the Learner Record System (LRS) showed they had completed it within the last six months.
- **1:1 sessions:** Follow up 1:1 sessions took place with the National Careers Service adviser, and in some cases an OLASS tutor. Those who completed the assessment and received below Entry Level 3 were assumed to have a learning difficulty or disability. If test results were available in advance of the 1:1 this would be explored further, with the prisoner encouraged to disclose any known LDD. National Careers Service advisers also used this session to agree a Skills Action Plan.

The emphasis placed on improving functional skills under OLASS4 meant that in most of the case study prisons, prisoners were usually required to achieve Level 2 English and maths before doing vocational courses. When followed, these processes facilitated English and maths provision at the beginning of prisoners' sentences, in line with policy objectives, because they allowed for faster identification of basic skills needs at the same time as emphasising the importance of achieving English and maths to prisoners who may have been deterred from doing so in the past. The main barriers to assessing learning needs effectively at the beginning of sentences were:

- **Prison category:** The category of prison was central to how easy or difficult it was for staff to administer the English and maths assessments. The high churn rate at local prisons meant staff had a large volume of tests to administer. In

some cases this meant it was difficult to process tests quickly enough, and backlogs accumulated. In contrast, open or category D prisons needed to do fewer assessments because they received a large proportion of their population from local prisons, where they had already been assessed.

- **Transfers within the prison estate:** The LRS was used to identify prisoners who had recently completed tests (within the last six months), especially at open or category D prisons, where there was an expectation that the prisoner would have already done these assessments in another prison. However, prisoners across all the case study sites sometimes reported that they were still required to repeat assessments within six months of having taken them as information on prior attainment was not always kept fully up-to-date. Previous knowledge of the assessments and how they worked could lead some prisoners to deliberately perform poorly in the tests if they perceived it meant being placed in maths or English classes more quickly, to minimise the time spent in their cells.
- **Prisoner response and readiness:** Prisoner mood at the time of induction, particularly when sitting the assessments, was a key factor in the accuracy of the English and maths assessments. Those who had not yet acclimatised to the prison environment were unlikely to perform to the best of their ability. This was especially the case for those who had not been to prison before and were still getting used to the prison regime. This could lead to prisoners being allocated to too low a level, risking disengagement. In one case study site the provider routinely re-tested English and maths levels because of concerns that women did not perform as well as they could in those tests, if they were administered too early.
- **Allocations process:** After assessment and their initial induction discussions, prisoners would be entered into the allocation system to match them to a relevant course or prison job. When prisoners were allocated to English and maths classes at the appropriate level there was evidence that accessing basic skills provision at the start of the sentence was beneficial in terms of their self-confidence and motivation, in particular where this could be applied to job-related situations.

"I think [maths classes are] helping me, it's making me better with numbers [...]  
numbers play a big part in everything, don't they? I've always been working on  
building sites and I've always used numbers in my working life, so I'm just  
polishing up my skills, yeah, I think it's beneficial."

Prisoner, 26-49, within 3 months from release

Conversely, shortfalls in prison staffing levels could sometimes impact on the efficiency of the allocations process. In one case study site, staff reported there had at times been a lack of prison officers to move prisoners to classes, which contributed to poor attendance rates at English and maths. Subsequently, those who achieved Level 1 or under were allowed direct access to attend vocational courses instead of having to do English and maths separately, and the OLASS provider adapted the content of vocational provision wherever possible so that English and maths were more embedded within it.

## **5.7 Identifying and engaging prisoners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD)**

OLASS4 contained ring-fenced funding for learning support for those prisoners with LDD in its first year (2012/13) but this ring-fencing was removed in later years to align with changes made to mainstream funding. In all of the case study prisons, OLASS providers identified diagnosing LDD as challenging because the process relied partly on prisoners to self-disclose known issues. While this was not a problem for prisoners who felt comfortable enough to disclose or were aware of their needs, staff participants worried that much went undiagnosed at induction due to prisoners feeling embarrassed, or unaware of specific issues. Prisons found certain practices were particularly helpful in overcoming these barriers:

- **Effective communication between partner organisations:** Effective communication and good working relationships between OLASS tutors and prison staff improved tutors' understanding of prisoners' learning needs, and enhanced their ability to meet them. For example, at one case study prison, a prisoner disclosed that he was not comfortable attending large classes to a prison officer because he suffered from anxiety. The prison officer relayed this information to the OLASS tutors, who subsequently provided more appropriate support.
- **The use of peer supporters or mentors:** having experienced peer support workers or mentors was helpful as both an alternative avenue for prisoners to disclose any issues, and as a hands-on support for people in the classroom, who could sometimes spot issues more quickly than the tutor.
- **Ongoing identification of needs:** For example, at one prison, OLASS tutors were co-located in the same office, and informally discussed prisoner progress in classes and reflected on any traits that could indicate a specific need. Taking a longer term view facilitated identification and, subsequent tailoring of provision.

## 5.8 Types of learning offered

### The sequencing of learning

The design of OLASS4 emphasises the importance of addressing English and maths skills needs at the start of the sentence while vocational provision is concentrated towards the end, building up to the last three months, post-release. This was apparent across all the case study prisons. However, the research found factors which made it easier or more difficult for prisons to deliver this model. The extent to which this model benefitted prisoners – even when successfully implemented – also varied according to sentence length, learning needs and abilities, and job readiness.

### Basic skills provision at the beginning of sentences

Four key related factors influenced the success of this provision:

- **Processes to support attendance:** Low attendance was identified as a problem at some case study prisons, for a range of reasons including staff shortages and administrative errors. In addition, some prisoners simply did not like the classroom environment due to negative school experiences, lack of confidence, lack of interest, or sometimes hostile learning environments. When there was strategic buy-in, at Governor level, it was possible for prisons to develop targeted interventions to improve attendance.

#### Case study example

At one case study prison, staff trained designated prisoners to improve attendance. If a prisoner left a course, or failed to turn up, a designated prisoner approached the prisoner in question directly to explore reasons underpinning non-attendance. If it was possible to identify a specific reason, or an unmet need, this was addressed. For example, it might be that the prisoner required additional learning support and does not feel comfortable telling a tutor. As a result of this approach more prisoners attend classes who otherwise would not – attendance is 88 per cent at this site.

- **Learning environment:** An encouraging learning environment was key to prisoner engagement with maths and English lessons. Prisoners explained how being taught in small groups (8-10), meant tutors were able to spend time working 1:1 with students, which helped to increase their confidence:

“I’ve always been quite a confident person but I didn’t actually realise how much I’d lost my confidence and my self-esteem, so getting positive feedback from people, getting motivated from the staff actually boosts it again.”

Prisoner, 26-49, over 6 months from release

Conversely, prisoners were demotivated by hostile environments, for example where teachers had been openly threatened by other prisoners. The case studies revealed that it was easier for OLASS tutors to create positive learning environments in prisons with smaller populations, and in those of a lower risk category.

- **Learner motivation:** Relatedly, prisoners who wanted to attend English and maths classes because they identified a tangible benefit were far more likely to engage compared to those who did not. For example, those who wanted to learn how to read or improve maths skills to increase employability welcomed the opportunity to attend classes. Those who identified themselves as more ‘hands on’ and perhaps had left school as soon as they could sometimes struggled to understand how they would benefit from English and maths and preferred to develop their vocational skills instead. At some case study prisons, the requirement for all prisoners to attain Level 2 in English and maths combined with other factors such as capacity and timetabling meant that basic skills provision sometimes displaced other learning, such as enterprise skills, which some prisoners would have preferred.
- **Prison regime:** The prison regime in some case study sites meant learners were required to attend long sessions, lasting up to three hours. OLASS staff reported that it could be difficult for some prisoners to maintain concentration for this long, in particular if they had LDD. When embedded learning was possible, whereby OLASS tutors delivered shorter sessions of English and maths *within* vocational workshops, prisoners tended to experience less anxiety and fatigue. Some vocational tutors reported this could be a source of extra burden, as they were required to teach something in addition to their specialist subject. A way of overcoming this was for specialist English and maths tutors to deliver short functional skills lessons *alongside* vocational sessions.

## Vocational emphasis at the middle and end of sentences

SFR data on learning aims by Sector Subject Area (2011/12 to 2013/14) reveals only minor changes in the distribution of learning<sup>52</sup>. The main differences over that period are a small decline in the proportion of ICT learning aims (from 17 per cent of all OLASS learning aims to 14 per cent) and an increase in Retail and Commercial Enterprise (from 7 per cent to 11 per cent of OLASS learning aims, over the same period). There has also been a small but significant fall in Construction, from 11 per cent to 8 per cent. By far the largest Sector Subject Area has continued to be Preparation for Life and Work (representing 45 per cent of provision in 2013/14).

The case study prisons delivered wide-ranging vocational and employability courses. In resettlement prisons, some vocational training was directly linked to placement or job opportunities on release, which appealed to prisoners as they thought it would improve their chances of getting a job. Some prisons had mandatory courses that had to be completed before going on Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). These included CV writing, time management skills, business enterprise, and advice on the workplace. These were popular among prisoners who wanted to work for themselves on release, or those with limited work experience.

Issues related to attendance, learning environment and learner motivation (as explored above) tended to matter less in relation to employment and vocational support, as it was largely more appealing to prisoners to begin with<sup>53</sup>. However, there were two main reasons for such provision being more limited:

- **Average length of stay:** If the average length of stay was very short, for example a few weeks in some of the local case study prisons, it was not always possible to deliver vocational training, even if in a modular format. Here, provision focused more on short employability courses, among those who were due for release.
- **Insufficient prison infrastructure:** Certain types of course, which were in demand in the local labour market, could not be delivered if there was a lack of physical space or facilities to house workshops. This was a source of frustration for prisons:

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<sup>52</sup> BIS and SFA (December 2015), *OLASS aims and achievements by SSA, 2011/12 to 2013/14*, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/481946/feandskills-OLASS-aims-achievements-by-SSA.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/481946/feandskills-OLASS-aims-achievements-by-SSA.xls), last accessed 29/1/16.

<sup>53</sup> This could be reflection of the provision occurring towards the end of prisoners' sentences, when they are closer to release.



“We would mirror the labour market better if it was a big site, we could offer workshops then, we could offer more vocational skills, we could offer plastering and mechanics and all the rest of it, whereas we can't really on a site here which in some respects is a little bit frustrating.”

Prison staff, operational

### Tailoring provision to the local labour market

In the prison case studies, local OLASS providers worked with the National Careers Service and prison staff to use LMI to plan the curriculum, and establish relationships with local employers. There were examples where this has worked well and of further partnerships being developed, but other examples of limitations. Three main factors influenced the extent to which LMI was used to improve the relevance of vocational provision and inform local partnerships with employers, in the case study sites:

- **Clarity of roles:** When there was confusion over who was responsible for the collation and management of LMI data there was a risk that it was ignored and did not feed into curriculum planning meetings. To overcome this, one case study prison had created a dedicated LMI post; this person was responsible for collating LMI from different sources, and had ownership of the process. They had increasingly been tasked with understanding what employers want from future employees and feeding this into the content of the provision.
- A number of the case study prisons had employed an Employer Engagement Officer to build links with local employers and develop placement opportunities, both for prisoners on ROTL and for those about to be released. This was working well to date and had involved a number of large local employers as well as small businesses. Notably these roles were prison-based rather than being delivered by partner organisations such as the National Careers Service or the CRC.
- **Usability of LMI data:** Staff across all case study prisons cited a number of different sources of LMI, including data from JCP, OLASS providers and the National Careers Service. Staff across all agencies reported that the LMI data they used was not always collected with prisoners in mind, and sometimes included employers they deemed inappropriate for many prisoners. LMI sometimes lacked detailed role information and could be difficult and time consuming to interpret.
- **Locality:** Tailoring provision to the local labour market where most prisoners were released was more straightforward when those industries were aligned with prisoners' interests. For example, one case study site was training prisoners in

construction trades as this was a local growth area, in which many prisoners also had an interest. In another site, skill needs were more specific – rather than bricklaying or general construction trades, there was a particular need for double glazing installation and dry lining skills<sup>54</sup>, which was identified through dialogue between the OLASS provider and major local employers. The OLASS Director of Learning for this area highlighted the importance of building relationships with local employers, developing their engagement and highlighting the business benefits of their input into prison-based training, as it could influence the detail of the curriculum and help to address specific skills shortages in the local labour market.

### Provision for prisoners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

OLASS provider staff reported that there was a stronger emphasis on access and inclusion under OLASS4 compared with OLASS3; specific needs should be identified at assessment stage and subsequent provision should be tailored accordingly.<sup>55</sup> This was welcomed, because as an OLASS tutor explained:

“[OLASS4] made learning support a focus of its own, whereas before it got mixed with everything else.”

OLASS staff, operational

OLASS providers saw the opportunity to financially claim for additional support provided as advantageous for learners because it meant tutors could take action to meet learner needs. Prisons provided examples of making adjustments for prisoners with physical disabilities such as blind learners and wheelchair users. However, staff participants, across agencies, also raised concern about the extent to which catering for the full range of prisoners with LDD could successfully be addressed. Two major ongoing barriers were identified:

- **The availability of sufficient specialised staff:** Across all the sites there was a lack of specialised staff to support those with LDD. Even in prisons with multiple Additional Learning Support staff (specialist tutors who can be deployed to provide 1:1 support when needed) there was still sometimes greater demand for support than could be resourced.

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<sup>54</sup> Dry lining: A lining to an interior wall that does not need to be plastered i.e. plasterboard.

<sup>55</sup> It was difficult to attribute changes in provision for LLDD to the initial ring fenced funding (2012/13) due to limited awareness across agencies (OLASS staff, prison staff, National Careers Service and CRCs).

- **Remit:** Strategic prison staff questioned what exactly the role of prisons could be in meeting the needs of prisoners with LDD. Arguably, participants highlighted, it would never be possible to meet the full spectrum of needs within the prison regime. Further clarity on minimum levels of provision would be welcomed amongst these staff.

## 5.9 Awareness of learning, training and related support

### The role of the National Careers Service

The National Careers Service was a key source of promoting awareness of learning and skills opportunities available amongst prisoners at their induction into the prison, and signposting to the relevant learning opportunities or prison jobs that were available. This role applied across different categories of prison, although National Careers Service resources were focused more intensively in resettlement prisons.

#### **National Careers Service role in encouraging take-up of OLASS learning**

National Careers Service staff described their role as signposting prisoners at all points of their 'journey' as learners; at induction, and on an ongoing basis throughout their sentence. At induction a National Careers Service adviser may develop a Skills Action Plan with individual prisoners. This document details short and long-term goals learning and skills goals as well as any related career aspirations.

In all the case study prisons, prisoners generally had initial contact with the National Careers Service at induction (see Section 5.5.1). At this point some prisoners did not consider they could benefit from National Careers Service advice or information, as they already had a job they could go back to on release, or were on a very short sentence; while others simply did not think that they could benefit from National Careers Service advice. For some prisoners though, talking to the adviser and having their own personalised Skills Action Plan was beneficial as a motivational tool:

"It [Skills Action Plan] was very motivating, very positive, it kind of made you think, OK they do want you to progress, they do want, everything that you come here for".

Prisoner, 26-29, over 6 months from release

Setting this tone early in the sentence encouraged prisoners to approach the National Careers Service later should they want further information. However, there were barriers to prisoners accessing this advice, which also limited advisers' ability to promote awareness:

- **Resources:** It was not always possible for National Careers Service advisers to see all prisoners at induction, especially at prisons with a backlog of assessments (Section 5.5.1). Advisers in some of the case study prisons also reported that it was difficult for them to proactively check prisoner progress by visiting the wings, due to pressures on their time, such as dealing with administrative tasks. Resources were less constrained in resettlement prisons where National Careers Service generally had more full time equivalent staff.
- **'Wing lottery':** Prisoners in closed conditions sometimes reported that they had not been able to meet with their adviser since the induction. It was also especially difficult for prisoners on vulnerable prisoner units to access advice. While those in open conditions were able to informally knock on advisers' doors if they had an 'open door' policy, those in closed conditions relied on putting in a formal application, to which there was sometimes no response<sup>56</sup>. Hence prisoners' ability to access National Careers Service advice on an ad-hoc basis, between induction and resettlement, could sometimes be a lottery depending on their wing.

Another significant source of information for prisoners was through peer networks. The option of approaching another prisoner appealed to those who found it hard to engage with staff, whom they perceived as authority figures and unapproachable. Orderlies – prisoners who had jobs supporting particular services such as education or the National Careers Service – were a good way for harder-to-engage prisoners to find out more about services.

## 5.10 Take up of distance learning

Staff and prisoners identified distance learning as an important means to access various higher level qualifications at Level 3 and above, which are not funded under OLASS4.

### Applications for Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) funding

The PET receives a grant from BIS to support Open University study and other distance learning for prisoners. In the case study prisons, it tended to be the National Careers Service role to signpost prisoners to this opportunity. If advisers deemed it appropriate, and felt the

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<sup>56</sup> Applications for most services are made on paper via internal mail and prisoners reported these may sometimes go missing or be delayed.

prisoner met criteria, they would typically support them in completing the application and pass it onto the next stage of the process, whereby Governor approval is sought. This process, and the application form itself, were described as straightforward. PET wrote to prisoners to inform them of the decision, and provided explanations when they refused funding. Applications were unsuccessful when PET deemed the choice of course to be inappropriate, for example, if the prisoner already had a similar qualification, or if there were doubts about whether they would be able to complete it within the remainder of their sentence.

Management information shows that applications for PET funding as a percentage of operational capacity for each Unit of Procurement remained stable across the OLASS4 commissioning period, and in line with OLASS3, at around 6 per cent across all years<sup>57</sup>.

### Open University participation

Overall from August 2012 to June 2015, 200 awards were gained through the Open University, just over half of them being HE diplomas, and the remainder being mainly undergraduate degrees, although there were also a small number of postgraduate awards<sup>58</sup>. Male learners aged 25-34 and 35-44 account for the vast majority of OU awards during this period. One-third of awards were achieved by prisoners from a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) group.

The number of individuals enrolled in Open University courses was 700 in 2012, 1,100 in 2013 and 1,000 in 2014<sup>59</sup>. The proportion of these learners with a declared learning difficulty or disability was extremely low, at less than five per cent of all those enrolled.

## 5.11 The introduction of HE tuition fee loans and Advanced Learner Loans

Management information on the take-up of student tuition fee loans for higher education and Advanced Learner Loans for FE showed low numbers overall, which limits the scope for analysis by subgroups.

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<sup>57</sup> PET Data includes prisons that are classified as Juvenile Centres and Young Offender Institutions only. These have been excluded for this analysis. However, prisons may have been classified as "Cat B, L, YOI" these have been included and therefore the analysis may include some applications from those in Young Offender Institutions. Prisons in Jersey and the Channel Islands have also been excluded.

<sup>58</sup> Based on data provided by the Open University.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

Applications for HE tuition fee loans increased as new cohorts of learners accessed them in successive years. Thus, applications trebled over the three years between 2012/13 (the first year of operation) and 2014/15, albeit from a low base. Total **applications** by prisoners to the Students Loan Company for **HE tuition fee loans** for the academic years covering the OLASS4 contracting period are: 2012/13 – 90, 2013/14 –200 and 2014/15 –280<sup>60</sup>. Total applications by prisoners for **Advanced Learner Loans** for each year show very low numbers – 10 in 2013/14 – and 30<sup>61</sup> in 2014/15.

Interest in and demand for both types of learner loans varied by prison category. Staff and prisoners reported low awareness and interest generally, but especially at local prisons with high churn rates, and where prisoners were predominantly on short sentences that would preclude them completing a course while inside. The availability of provision eligible for these loans remains limited. Some senior prison staff believed it was inappropriate to explore taking out loans with prisoners if their offending was related to a lack of money, especially amongst those with a history of substance abuse or debt. **Lack of buy-in** by senior level staff in the prison could lead to minimal efforts by operational staff to promote such opportunities. Prisoners, similarly, reported that they simply did not want to take out a loan and were clearly **deterred by the prospect of debt**. Two further barriers were identified:

- **Lack of confidence in employment prospects:** One prisoner we interviewed, who had himself applied for an Advanced Learner Loan suggested that a possible barrier to take-up among other prisoners was a deeply ingrained belief that having a criminal record would prevent them from ever getting a job; therefore they believed any action to increase employability was futile.
- **Lack of trust in access to resources:** To complete some distance learning courses, prisoners required access to materials via the VC, but this was not always possible (see Section 4.10). In some cases, this meant prisoners did not apply for loans for their first choice of course, while in others prisoners did not trust that the prison would provide sufficient access to the resources (time and materials) they needed to complete the course.

In contrast, prisoners and staff demonstrated greater interest in loans at category D/open prisons. In the case study prisons, National Careers Service advisers and prison staff

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<sup>60</sup> These figures are rounded.

<sup>61</sup> These figures are rounded.

supported administration of applications, with advisers helping to suggest alternatives, such as PET funding, if a loan was not thought appropriate.

### **Case study example**

One case study prison stood out, where senior staff thought that Advanced Learner Loans provided a good opportunity for prisoners and had appointed a designated Distance Learning Coordinator. This Coordinator had trained two orderlies so that, with time, awareness of opportunities available would increase through word of mouth. One of the prisoners we interviewed from this prison could clearly explain the figures involved, and this degree of understanding meant he did not mind taking out a loan because he understood that he would only be paying it back once he earned a certain amount. Moreover, he felt it was a small price to pay if it helped him to gain employment on release:

*“See, if you’re earning, you only pay [x amount] back a month if you’re earning 22 grand, [y amount] per month if you’re earning 26 grand. So if you pass it all, become a fully qualified electrician, you want to be earning that, you don’t mind the [loan repayments] because you know you’re earning the money. And you’ve got a chance in life then”.*

## **5.12 Use of the VC**

In this section we examine use of the VC and how far this has led to improvements in the quality of, and increases in the volume of, learning and employment support. The VC first went live in June 2008 and by the end of June 2009 it operated in 11 testbed prisons across the West Midlands and the East of England. It is now in 116 prisons in England and Wales. The VC is a secure web-based portal which is managed locally by providers; overseen by a partnership consisting of HMPPS, the SFA, and BIS.

Since the VC’s inception in 2008 up until the 1st August 2015, there have been 60,200 learner registrations. At 1<sup>st</sup> August 2015 there were 26,500 active learners with 33,700 having been transferred to the “Bring on Potential” portal, which is accessible in the community so that learners can access their documents and CVs post-release<sup>62</sup>. The following analysis is based on data for prisoners who registered from January 2009<sup>63</sup> to November 2015, in England and Wales. It contains the records of 38,690 individual prisoner accounts (these are not necessarily active accounts, and some may have been transferred to Bring on Potential). During this time period:

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<sup>62</sup> Figures have been rounded.

<sup>63</sup> This presents the date when systematic data collection of VC data began.

- 88 per cent of all registrants were men and 11 per cent were women; and
- 36 per cent of registrants were aged 25 to 34, with equal proportions of around 22 per cent each being aged 18 to 24 or 35 to 44.

Data on LDD is self-assigned in the VC and does not provide reliable figures as registrants are able to select more than one category of disability while still selecting 'no disability'.

Between July 2012 and October 2015, 27,000 individual outcomes or activities were recorded on the VC, completed by 9,500 individual prisoners (representing 25 per cent of all registrants). By far the most commonly recorded outcome is the creation of a CV, accounting for over 40 per cent of recorded activity, however this number includes individual prisoners who have created multiple CVs– for instance one prisoner created a CV 655 times, suggesting there are issues with the reliability of the data. This is followed by making a course application and job search related activity (approximately 12 per cent and 10 per cent of recorded activity).



### **Case study examples**

**English and maths assessments:** The VC was used by some case study prisons to administer English and maths assessments, alongside other methods such as paper. Users had to register before they could use the VC and do the assessment. This means that registration figures are somewhat inflated by prisoners who may only have used the VC for this specific purpose.

**CV builder tools:** This sometimes formed part of mandatory employability modules prisoners took before going onto ROTL placements (these courses were delivered by OLASS providers). At other prisons this was supported by National Careers Service staff. Prisoners were provided with a CV template to tailor.

**Job searches:** The National Careers Service had the ability to support prisoners to conduct job searches using the VC. However, the perceived quality of these searches was mixed.

**Distance learning:** Distance learners, for example those completing Open University courses, could use the VC to complete and submit coursework. The VC therefore facilitated access to distance learning opportunities.

Prison and OLASS managers recognised the VC's potential as a vehicle to improve partnership working and more integrated support. While there were some clear benefits of use, especially in relation to distance learning, various issues were also identified which suggest that the potential of the VC was not being maximised:

- **Content:** Staff and prisoners identified flaws with the content. For example, the CV builder tool was regarded as being out of kilter with what employers were looking for – especially the use of tick boxes indicating skills – and job vacancies were not always kept up-to-date.
- **Staff capacity and buy-in:** In light of issues related to content it was difficult for strategic staff and VC champions to promote use of the VC to operational staff from different agencies. When staff did use the VC they reported that they would welcome further training in how to best use it, and that much of what they know is self-taught. Staff across agencies and from a range of levels reported that they liked the idea of the VC in theory and initially thought it a valuable platform for prisoners, but in practice had become disillusioned with it.

- **Prison infrastructure and technical issues:** Prison infrastructure – across all categories and types of prison – did not always facilitate access for prisoners. For example, VC computers were sometime installed in one location that was physically difficult for prison officers to move prisoners to regularly. Limited connectivity and technical access problems were commonplace; prisoners sometimes complained that the log-in process was complicated and experienced problems recalling passwords. One case study prison reported that the VC ran very slowly if more than six prisoners used it at the same time; another did not have access to the VC at all.
- **Prison regime:** While there were some reports of designated slots for prisoners in open conditions to access the VC among the case study prisons, it was more difficult for those in closed conditions, where awareness of the VC tended to be lower.

## 5.13 Pre-release employment support

### Overview of the organisations providing support

#### CRCs

The CRCs conducted an initial induction with each prisoner as part of the prison induction process. This initial assessment worked as a mechanism for identifying the needs of the prisoner on release, such as housing, employment or access to entitlements. These issues could then be picked up by the CRC or partner agencies during the prisoner's sentence. Prison staff were positive about this approach; it was important for prisoners to identify early with resettlement so they were aware of who to go to for further support if needed. In contrast, some prisoners did not think it was appropriate to discuss this in the first few days of a sentence, as many aspects of their life could change during that time.

“To try and plan for the future is just so difficult because you don't know what is going to be imposed on you when you get out”

Prisoner, Under 25, Over 6 months from release

The induction assessment (the Basic Custody Screening Tool or BCST1) was usually completed within five days of entering the prison, with completed assessments uploaded to p-NOMIS to share with partner agencies. This worked with varying degrees of success; in case study prisons where agencies such as the CRC and the National Careers Service had established good working relationships (and used the same IT system) these assessments were shared and consulted by both agencies to support resettlement work and avoid duplication. However, in the majority of case study prisons it was more common for provider

agencies working across pre- and post-release support to create separate assessments and work plans for the same prisoners.

Additionally, a 12-week pre-release assessment was undertaken with prisoners by the CRC. This, where possible, revisited the prisoner's induction assessment and updated information based on the prisoners' activities (such as learning or skills training) and whether there was an expected change in family, carer or accommodation circumstances on release. In prisons where partnership working worked well, this plan would be shared with partner agencies working across resettlement. This 12-week pre-release assessment was a key tool for many of the voluntary sector organisations involved in providing specialist housing and rehabilitation advice, as they were able to identify prisoners who may require their support and seek them out on the wings.

However, there were several examples of the 12-week pre-release assessment functioning poorly in prisons. In prisons with a high churn of prisoners entering and leaving, the CRC was not always able to assess everyone eligible in time for their release. In one case study site, prisoners on very short sentences were not seen by the CRC at all as other cases were prioritised.

### **National Careers Service**

Advisers from the National Careers Service working in prison broadly focused their support on two points of formal contact; at the induction phase (see Section 4.5) and within 12 weeks of release. Alongside the main induction process to establish prisoner needs across education, training and employment, advisers should be available for follow-up appointments and advice giving sessions.

Advice and support related to resettlement would typically focus on CV building, providing information on further learning and training on release, and signposting employment opportunities. Advisers could make referrals to through the gate agencies and contact prospective (and old) employers for prisoners, as well as make in-prison referrals to partners such as the OLASS provider or the Employment and Benefits Advice team.

In some case study prisons, changes in staff resource meant that advisers reported they had less time to spend on promotional or ad hoc work. In prisons where this promotional work was limited, partner organisations such as the OLASS provider, CRC and other resettlement colleagues lacked awareness of the service's functions and there were limited examples of cross partner referrals to the National Careers Service.

Good practice working tended to come from prisons where the National Careers Service was well established, had longstanding advisers who knew the local area and prison population well, and had sufficient resource to provide support beyond the induction and pre-release assessments.

## **JCP**

Most case study prisons had a representative from JCP responsible for providing employment and benefit advice to prisoners nearing release. Employment and Benefit Advisers (EBAs) from JCP worked most effectively with partners when they were co-located and had access to resettlement plans so they did not have to ask prisoners the same questions twice. They now regularly make referrals to the Work Programme where appropriate, so viewed the focus of their work on setting up benefits for prisoners on release and referred prisoners to the National Careers Service for learning and careers advice. There was some overlap of work around benefits advice between EBAs and the National Careers Service in prisons where the EBA or JCP staff member was not present full time or, in one case, did not have access to information on prisoners on less than a 12-week sentence.

## **NPS**

Under the restructuring of pre- and post-release support, the NPS is contracted to case manage high risk prisoners being released into the community. Plans were being put into place across prisons for CRCs and NPS to work more in partnership; one prison was developing a shared directory between the two agencies in order to more collaboratively case manage prisoners and ensure no one 'falls through the net'. NPS staff recognised that resettlement resource had been bolstered since the restructure but it would take time for practices to embed.

## **Voluntary and community sector organisations**

All the case study prisons hosted a range of voluntary and community sector organisations specialising in different areas of resettlement advice such as housing, rehabilitation support services, and work placement and employment opportunities.

## **Pre-release support activities**

The focus of pre-release support should be in the final 12 weeks of a sentence. The most commonly found example of resettlement support across prisons was pre-release workshops. These workshops, facilitated by either the CRC or the National Careers Service, served as a vehicle for providing information to prisoners nearing release on where to seek

information on housing, employment and entitlement support both pre- and post-release. Along with the CRC and the National Careers Service, workshops contained presentations from JCP staff and resettlement organisations.

Frequency of workshops differed depending on the need of the prison population; however, both staff and prisoners in prisons with a high churn did not think these were as frequent as they could be. Attendance at workshops had also been negatively impacted by reductions in prison staff, which affected how many staff were available to escort prisoners to the workshops.

### **Case study example**

In one case study prison, a series of pre-release workshops centred on themes such as housing, debt advice and employment. Prisoners were invited to attend workshops related to their needs identified in the initial assessment. In the employment workshop, DWP staff facilitated sessions on job searches and benefits advice. They deliberately held these workshops around 5 weeks pre-release in order to provide relevant and up to date advice for prisoners. While attendance was low at the moment (further promotion of the workshop was needed on the wings) it was considered a key stage of the pre-release support provided to prisoners.

Other pre-release support activities undertaken across prisons included:

- **Employability classes:** across several prisons, the CRC delivered employability classes for those nearing release. The course covered CV writing, interview techniques and job applications. Several OLASS providers were pleased that this 'softer skills' course had been taken on by the CRC. It was widely recognised that this type of course complemented vocational learning in prison and was providing prisoners with more rounded skills in order to enter employment. However, in one case study site, where pre-release support lacked coordination, EBAs from JCP were duplicating the work of the CRC, as benefits advice formed part of its employability course.
- **Job fairs:** Some case study prisons had developed job fairs for prisoners and prospective employers. These were commonly developed in prisons where partnership working between resettlement agencies and local employers was good. Prisoners spoke positively about job fairs: events involving employers who had taken on ex-prisoners increased their confidence in finding a job.

- **Housing advice:** Many CRCs relied on voluntary and charitable organisation partners to provide practical advice around housing to prisoners nearing release.
- **VC:** There were limited examples of the VC being used as a tool for pre-release support. In one case study prison, prisoners were encouraged to use the platform to search for jobs during their pre-release workshop but there were no examples given of applications being made.

In case study prisons where a clear strategy for resettlement support had yet to be established, some prisoners did not know what was available. Awareness of services offered by the National Careers Service and the CRC was low. In prisons with a high churn, a number of prisoners nearing release had not seen anyone from resettlement.

“No one’s come and told me about that yet. At this time, they should have come and told me but they haven’t.”

Prisoner, Under 25, One week until release

Some prisoners thought that resettlement support was too focused at induction and end-of-sentence and were frustrated by the lack of contact about resettlement during their sentence. One example includes a prisoner who was unable to identify someone to help with a FE funding application (usually the responsibility of the National Careers Service). This kind of example was more prominent in case study prisons where National Careers Service advisers were too busy to do promotional and ad-hoc work with prisoners on the wings, making them less visible to prisoners.

### Local partnership working to provide pre-release support

The restructuring of resettlement support had left some prisons unclear as to who had overall responsibility for overseeing employment-related support for prisoners preparing for release, with approaches to support within individual prisons differing. There were a number of prisons where a clear pathway of support for resettlement had not yet been planned or executed. CRC staff working across prisons where set up had been delayed said they had not yet had time (after signing contracts in May 2015) to establish a plan of work with prisoners either pre- or post-release. As a result, some prisons had put in place contingency plans. In one case study prison, the National Careers Service were contracted until December 2015 to provide an enhanced service, giving the CRC more time to embed their practice.

Effective partnership working between agencies involved in resettlement support was therefore still evolving and many prisons described approaches to support being disjointed since the reorganisation. Buy-in and support for the CRC at the Governor level was viewed as a key driver in building good working relationships with prison staff. However, in several case study prisons, prison staff had not yet met representatives from the CRC and National Careers Service advisers expressed concern that the CRC remit could overlap with their work.

Co-location of support agencies, such as the National Careers Service, the CRC, NPS and representatives from JCP helped to improve cross-agency working and collective case management. For example, in one site, the resettlement agencies working there recognised that pre- and post-release support for women tended to be more complex than for male prisoners<sup>64</sup> and required a coordinated effort from a number of agencies. Working from the same office, agencies were able to put together a coordinated approach to resettlement more easily.

“We’ve had no issues in working with one another. We all know what we need to do and we’re not treading on each other’s toes as well and if we’re not sure, we’re on the same bank of desks, we just talk it out.”

Resettlement staff, operational

### **Case study example**

In one case study prison, there had been some duplication of work between the National Careers Service role and the CRC as they both made referrals for the same prisoners to debt management advice. However, this was resolved by setting up weekly meetings between all partners delivering resettlement support to discuss both strategic and individual level case management issues and agree on which agencies will lead across different areas of support.

In prisons where different agencies produced their own resettlement plans, sharing these on shared IT systems facilitated collective approaches and cross-agency referrals. This was particularly important for voluntary and charitable organisations who worked alongside funded agencies in providing resettlement support. For example, in one site, a charitable organisation focused on housing prisoners on release had access to resettlement plans on

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<sup>64</sup> MoJ (2013) *Press release: Reforms for female offenders will improve family ties and employment links* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/reforms-for-female-offenders-will-improve-family-ties-and-employment-links> last accessed 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

the p-NOMIS system, which provided useful information about the prisoners' circumstances on release and helped the charity to find suitable accommodation.

However, in some case study prisons not all agencies working with prisoners used the same IT system or had the same legal access rights to data sharing, so could not share information about individual prisoners very easily.

"If I want to speak to that person I have to do it this way, if I want to speak to that person, I have to use this system, and if I want to speak to that person then it's another way. So resettlement plan wise you've got Oasys; for communicating stuff within the prison you've got p-NOMIS; DWP, via email. So it's not, you're not all looking in one place. It encourages people to work in isolation."

Resettlement staff, operational

## **5.14 Post-release employment support**

The restructure of resettlement support in May 2015 has seen a number of changes to support available "through the gate" for newly released prisoners. In general, links with post-release support were not yet systematic and were still under development.

### **CRCs in the community**

In a similar vein to support being provided in prison, the CRC in the community was still in the set-up stage during the evaluation fieldwork visits. Processes for referring prisoners through the gate were still being developed and many CRCs recognised that this side of the service was not yet fully functioning. Some prisoners nearing release had no knowledge of through the gate services offered by the CRC.

Prison staff across sites did not know how the CRC in the community was going to operate and at the time of the research (September – early December 2015) there were limited examples of referrals being made from agencies working in prison to CRC in the community. CRCs broadly worked well with voluntary organisations providing support for the newly released in areas such as housing and rehabilitation support. These support agencies did not consider their role in post-release support to have changed significantly since the restructuring. However, difficulties accessing lists of prisoners nearing release remained an entrenched issue.



### Transferring data ‘through the gate’

Data sharing was a major barrier to effective partnership working and providing streamlined support on release. Data sharing was particularly problematic when ‘through the gate’ resettlement services were unable to obtain case notes or certificates of qualifications for those newly released.

Data Sharing Agreements (DSAs) had been put in place in several prisons across the different agencies working with the same people through the gate. The DSA process was described as time consuming, difficult to navigate and frustrating for partners who could not access information about newly released people. Both the CRC and the National Careers Service in the community said that newly released people found it difficult to remember all of the qualifications and support they had in prison; therefore obtaining case notes and certificates were a crucial part of providing appropriate and effective support.

“If a prisoner is transferred into the community and accesses the college we should be able to transfer that information so they’re not having to have the embarrassment of going through all the declaring again.”

- OLASS staff, operational

### Links between National Careers Service in-custody and in-community services

The National Careers Service in the community was effective in areas where the in-prison and community arms worked closely together. In one case, the in-community adviser would visit the prison once a week to meet prisoners nearing release who had appointments fixed up, so they knew who they were due to meet on the outside, in order to reduce the risk they might not attend. Where regular communication between the two arms of the service was present, cases were transferred smoothly through the gate and prison-based advisers received feedback on the outcomes of newly released prisoners from colleagues working through the gate. Types of support provided post-release included CV help; job search assistance and advice on seeking further training opportunities.

However, there were a number of barriers that impacted on links between the National Careers Service in-custody and in-community services which inhibited referrals:

- **Voluntary attendance post-release:** non-attendance at appointments post-release was common. Appointments were voluntary and newly released prisoners often missed them. If they did not seek re-contacting permission or if

this was not given by prisoners, the National Careers Service had no way of contacting people post-release to follow this up.

- **Data sharing:** Two barriers were presented in relation to data sharing; firstly, some National Careers Service staff working in prison were not able to transfer case notes securely to colleagues working in the community. In one case, newly released people were expected to take hard copies of their own case notes to their in-community appointment. Secondly, prison-based advisers had very limited information on employment outcomes because they were reliant on being able to re-contact prisoners who had given permission for this follow-up, several weeks after their release. This meant that the National Careers Service found it difficult to track progress and measure employment outcomes for its in-custody service. Comprehensive data sharing agreements between the National Careers Service and the CRCs/ the NPS would help to improve how this target is monitored, providing better quality information on prisoners' transitions into employment.
- **Geographic areas covered:** Cross partnership working with other National Careers Service contractors did not work well. If a prisoner was being released into a different contracting area, there were no formalised channels of communication present for advisers to transfer case notes.

"Obviously the National Careers Service has different prime contractors across the country... My biggest problem at the moment for this area is that a lot of my prisons don't release into our local area that we control as a prime contractor... it has been a massive issue, because the prisons' resettlement areas are all over the place."

National Careers Service manager, strategic

- **Collaboration with CRC in the community:** For many National Careers Service advisers, the role of the CRC in the community remained unclear. In several case study prison areas, the two providers were still working independently and different Skills Action Plans were being developed with the same individuals.

### Use of the VC on release

No evidence from staff interviews across the prison case studies suggested that the VC was being widely accessed by people on release. There was limited awareness that certificates of qualifications could be uploaded onto the VC so individuals could access these after

release, but staff were not confident that these were being picked up. No prisoners interviewed were aware that the VC could be accessed 'through the gate'.

### **5.15 Perceived effectiveness of pre- and post-release employment support**

In order for the effectiveness of services to be realised, more time is needed for changes to pre- and post-release support to embed across prisons. At the time of fieldwork (September to early December 2015), most case study prisons did not yet have a fully functioning CRC working either in prison or the community which meant roles and remits of other agencies remained unclear during this transition period.

A point of frustration for many agencies working across pre- and post-release support was the lack of feedback received on the outcomes of prisoners after release. It was challenging for many prisons to direct their efforts on pre- and post-release support without any reliable data on how effective or ineffective their current strategies were. This meant that many providers working across pre- and post-release support could not comment on how well they thought the service worked for prisoners.

Partnership working and engaging prisoners worked more effectively at the pre-release level; collaboration across agencies such as the CRC and the National Careers Service, although still in its infancy, was emerging. However, areas of continuing development include ensuring that prisoners are not 'over assessed' and that support services and referrals are not duplicated. Agencies working across pre- and post-release support broadly agreed that the focus of resettlement support in the final 12 weeks of the sentence is a good approach. However, many prisoners with longer term sentences did not agree. Some of those with multiple needs considered 12 weeks too late to get support for resettlement and this left them feeling uncertain about the future when they were keen to make plans while still part way through their sentence. Agencies such as the CRC and the National Careers Service were less visible to prisoners outside of induction and the 12 week pre- release window. Some prisoners incorrectly stated that they were not entitled to any resettlement support until just prior to their release.

Data sharing remained a key barrier to effective partnership working and support for prisoners both pre- and post-release. Where a shared IT system was not available or there was no DSA, referrals and opportunities to work effectively together functioned poorly.

## 6. Conclusions

This section synthesises the evidence across the preceding body of the report to draw out key conclusions about the impacts of prisoner learning and the extent to which improvements have been made to how prisoner learning is delivered, under OLASS4.

### 6.1 The early impacts of prisoner learning

A number of data limitations and caveats need to be made when interpreting the impact findings:

- The impact analysis was supported by multiple datasets and could only include individuals who could be linked reliably across all of these sources. As a consequence, the results relate only to a subset of OLASS learners.
- Despite the obvious importance from a policy perspective, data limitations meant it was also necessary to exclude certain groups from the analysis such as individuals with a prison sentence starting before August 2010, individuals aged under 21, and foreign nationals<sup>65</sup>.
- An important caveat when using HMRC (P45 and P14) records to study employment and earnings is that this data only covers those who pay tax through the PAYE system: it excludes self-employment; those working cash-in-hand; and some of those with an income below the National Insurance threshold.
- The scope of the OLASS3 analysis is limited to data available from 2010/11 onwards, as the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) could not reliably identify learner specific OLASS learning aims before then. This means that data do not cover the full OLASS3 period.
- While the various datasets contain many personal and criminogenic characteristics, it is possible that they do not include every factor related to participation in prisoner learning and the outcomes of interest. Omission of such factors from the propensity score matching may bias the results. For example, prison has not been controlled for in the impact analysis as there was no reliable way from the data analysed to identify which prison a prisoner was in at a specific point in time. This means that regional variation could account for some of the difference in impact.
- The sample sizes on which the impact analyses are based vary according to the time and the specific outcome being considered, due to data availability. In

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<sup>65</sup> See Footnote 4

particular, the labour market datasets contain records only up until summer 2013 which means that *only very short-term post-release labour market outcomes can be analysed for OLASS4 (i.e. 9 months)*. A further consequence of this is that when the impact of OLASS4 on employment or learning is measured in terms of the difference in outcomes 9 months post-release, this comparison can only be based on the subset of OLASS4 learners who started an OLASS4 aim and were released from prison in the relatively short window between 1 August 2012 and 31 October 2012.

- OLASS4 was operational in only seven of the ten Units of Procurement during this time, therefore the period of analysis does not reflect a fully operational OLASS4. It is therefore not advisable to compare impacts from the early implementation stage of OLASS4 with impacts from a well-established OLASS3. Caution should also be exercised in comparing OLASS3 and OLASS4 since at that start of OLASS4 much of the provision offered was the same as during OLASS3.
- Some policy measures, such as mandatory English and maths assessments were not implemented during the initial period of OLASS4 (1 August 2012 to 31 October 2012) being analysed.
- The OLASS3 and OLASS4 impacts are not directly comparable, since labour market conditions at release may have been different over time for the two groups of learners.
- We have assumed that the OLASS funded learning is associated with 100 per cent *additionality*, i.e. in the absence of OLASS funding, none of the learning that offenders received in custody would have taken place.
- In relation to the cost benefit analysis undertaken in respect of OLASS3, there were a number of data limitations including the lack of costs per learning aim or learner. Therefore, we have assumed that the costs associated with OLASS3 provision are comparable to the costs per learning aim for OLASS4.
- The cost benefit analysis of OLASS3 covers the time period from 2010/11 onwards since it uses OLASS3 impact estimates based on data from this period.
- The cost benefit analysis of OLASS3 makes an assumption about the persistence of estimated impacts: that the impact illustrated in the first year persists in full into the second year, and then erodes by 50 per cent per annum in each successive year after the initial two year period.
- To undertake a cost benefit analysis, it is necessary to understand the extent of the *costs avoided* – including the reduced criminal justice costs associated with

proven re-offending. We have assumed that the cost savings from reduced proven re-offending are representative of the average cost per offence for *re-offenders* that had been previously released from custody (rather than the costs that might be associated with the entire population of both first-time offenders and re-offenders).

Overall, the impact evaluation results presented in Chapter 4 provide robust evidence that prisoner learning as a whole does have positive impacts on reducing proven re-offending and on post-release employment outcomes, particularly in the medium-term. This is evidenced by the results of the OLASS3 impact analysis, which found that:

- OLASS3 participation significantly reduced the one-year proven re-offending rate relative to non-participants, by approximately 7.5 percentage points (32.6 per cent compared to 40.2 per cent).
- One year post-release, OLASS3 learners were 1.8 percentage points more likely than non-learners to be in P45 employment (28.1 per cent compared to 26.3 per cent).
- One year post-release, OLASS3 learners were 4.6 percentage points more likely to be in receipt of out-of-work benefits compared to the matched non-learner group (51.5 per cent compared to 46.9 per cent), and at all-time points in the analysis (6, 12 and 24 months) they were significantly more likely to be in receipt of JSA.
- OLASS3 participation had no significant impact on post-release learning outcomes, compared with non-learners.

When comparing OLASS3 achievers to those who participated in OLASS3 but did not achieve an aim, the only significant difference was that achievers were more likely to continue with FE upon release than the matched group of non-achievers, particularly at 12 months after release when the difference was large enough to be statistically significant (3 per cent compared to 1.9 per cent).

Due to the fact that OLASS3 learning was delivered in an earlier time period than OLASS4, the post-release labour market outcomes of OLASS3 learners exist for a longer period of time post-release. Although the medium-term post-release impact estimates for OLASS3 cannot be directly compared with the short-term impact estimates for OLASS4, the persistency of the positive labour market and proven re-offending outcomes are nonetheless informative. Analysis suggests that the economic benefit associated with OLASS3 proven re-

offending and employment outcomes stands at approximately £6,700-£6,800 compared to costs of provision of £1,200-£1,300 (i.e. a net benefit of £5,400-£5,600 per learner).

There is no evidence that the early stage of OLASS4 had an impact on reducing proven re-offending. Although the analysis suggests that early OLASS4 learners were less likely to be in employment nine months after release than non-learners, this only refers to the initial impact on learners who started a course during the first three months of OLASS4. Given that the OLASS4 cohort under analysis was drawn from a relatively short period at the start of the contract, it is too early to draw firm conclusions about its impact overall.

***What you can say:*** Prisoner education makes a positive difference to one-year re-offending outcomes and to one-year P45 employment outcomes among domestic offenders (i.e. excluding foreign nationals).

Participation in prisoner education (under OLASS3) significantly reduced one-year proven re-offending rates. Prisoners who had taken part in learning under OLASS3 were approximately 7.5 percentage points less likely to re-offend after one year from release, than prisoners who had not done any learning.

OLASS3 learners were significantly more likely to be in P45 employment 12 months from release, than non-learners (by 1.8 percentage points). They were also more likely to be in receipt of out-of-work benefits, which may indicate increased labour market engagement (i.e. that fewer ex-prisoners are economically inactive) or could be a side-effect of reduced re-offending (i.e. as they cannot receive out-of-work benefit if they return to prison due to a re-offence).

Participation in OLASS3 learning did not lead to an increased likelihood of gaining further qualifications, post-release. The results of the impact analysis do not imply that OLASS4 learning was any more or less likely to lead to positive outcomes than OLASS3, as it is too early to make this comparison

***What you can say:*** The cost-benefit data indicates that investment in prisoner education is cost-effective. Based on the assumptions set out in this report, the economic benefit associated with OLASS3 proven re-offending and employment outcomes outweighs the costs of provision by a ratio of approximately 5:1.

Findings from the process evaluation help to illuminate some of these impact findings. For example, senior stakeholders across prisons and OLASS providers alike judged that the

OLASS4 contract got off to a slow start in some areas, with a need for better transition planning between OLASS3 and OLASS4 where providers changed. An initial lack of clarity about the funding rules meant that sub-contracting arrangements were slow to be instigated in some areas.

In the case study interviews, stakeholders commonly reflected on positive features of the OLASS4 contract as a whole, compared with OLASS3, particularly in terms of:

- A greater focus on employability, in particular offering courses through Awarding Bodies that were better recognised by employers, more regular changes to the curriculum to meet local needs, and more emphasis on English and maths;
- Better targeting and delivery of learning for people with Additional Learning Support needs; and
- Perceived better value for money, in terms of funding based on outcomes rather than inputs.

The main perceived drawback of OLASS4 compared with OLASS3 was identified as the less flexible funding rules, which meant there were more constraints on the types of course that could be delivered, such as certain short, entry-level courses that may be more suitable for people on very short sentences or who needed a more gradual re-introduction to education.

## 6.2 Key barriers to and enablers of impact

Throughout Chapter 5, this report has identified a number of enablers and barriers to impact from across the case study prisons and Governance Boards.

The main enablers to impact commonly underpinned by the extent and quality of **partnership working**, in particular between the OLASS provider and the prison, and between the OLASS provider and the National Careers Service. Partnership working could be enhanced by **co-location** of services from different providers and by taking a **strategic approach to issues like data-sharing**, to ensure appropriate Data Sharing Agreements were in place and that common systems were being used in a consistent way. The other key enabler was the **flexibility** of the OLASS provider and the prison itself, and their respective willingness to adapt processes to support more effective delivery of learning, for example by changing the curriculum in response to local need, embedding English and maths within vocational courses, or by putting targeted initiatives in places to help boost attendance. In addition, some case study resettlement prisons had created specialist roles for staff to directly **engage with local employers** and generate work placement and employment



opportunities. This had a motivating effect on prisoners who could see a clear benefit from completing relevant training courses if there was a placement or job interview on offer at the end of the process.

Barriers were invariably related to the following key issues:

- **Constrained resources** – for example, in relation to the impacts of New Ways of Working on staff resourcing levels and prisoner movements; in processing the increased volumes of English and maths assessments; and pressures on National Careers Service advisers, especially in high-churn, local prisons;
- **Limited information-sharing** – in particular between agencies working at the resettlement stage of the sentence, and between in-custody and in-community services;
- **Lack of clarity about partnership roles** – this applied particularly to pre- and post-release employment support, where there was evidence of some overlaps between the CRC, National Careers Service, and JCP;
- **Funding rules and processes** that were viewed as inflexible or insufficiently tailored to a prison setting – for example, restrictions on funding for certain entry level short courses, and – at the other end of the scale – for courses at Level 3. Several stakeholders referred to the funding rules and contractual processes running according to the academic year, rather than being designed around the needs of delivering in-prison education, which operates on a year-round basis. For providers, this resulted in some uncertainty about which courses would continue to be funded from September each year, making it difficult for them to plan curricula and resourcing during August and September while they waited to find out the new funding rules.

Barriers such as lack of clarity regarding partnership roles were a particular issue as prisoners reached the end of their sentences, in terms of delivering coordinated resettlement support. The research was conducted early in the lifetime of the new CRCs, however, many of them were still developing their services at the point the case studies were conducted. CRCs will have a critical role going forward in terms of maximising support provided to prisoners who have completed job-relevant qualifications during their sentence but still require support and advice to become work-ready and capitalise on those qualifications once they are competing in the wider labour market.

### 6.3 Areas for consideration

This evaluation has identified a number of issues for future consideration in improving the delivery and impacts of prisoner education.

While the emphasis on English and maths and vocational provision under OLASS4 was welcomed by stakeholders, many of them regarded the funding rules as being inflexible. Greater consideration could be given to incorporating more scope for tailoring within the funding rules, to support the introduction of more innovative provision within the prison setting. Extending funded provision at **Level 3** could enhance progression pathways for the increasing number of prisoners who complete courses at full Level 2, as well as offering prisoners the opportunity to obtain higher level qualifications which would improve their competitiveness in the wider labour market. However, any extension of Level 3 provision would need to be supported by improved awareness and take-up of **Advanced Learner Loans**, which have had a very low take-up among the prison population thus far. The effectiveness of **outcome-based funding** depends on having well-defined outcomes which can be recorded and monitored appropriately. For example, it is extremely difficult for the National Careers Service to systematically monitor employment outcomes among prisoners as they are reliant on being able to contact prisoners on release, or on prisoners to self-report. Comprehensive **data sharing agreements** between the National Careers Service and the CRCs/NPS would help to improve how this target is monitored, providing better quality information on prisoners' transitions into employment that could be used to identify improvements in the provision and support offered, pre-release.

This evaluation has also demonstrated the potential for and relevance of undertaking longer-term analysis of any updated linked data (if and when it becomes available) to produce a robust assessment of the impact and effectiveness of OLASS4.

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## Glossary of Terms

Term and acronym (where relevant)	Definition
Advanced Learner Loan	Advanced Learner Loans are government loans offered in FE, which (from 2016/17) is being extended to adults aged 19-23 and to Level 5 and Level 6 qualifications. It does not replace the continuing 19-23 legal entitlement to a fully-funded first full Level 3. Due to extended eligibility, a new name has superseded '24+ Advanced Learning Loans'
Careers Information and Advice Service (CIAS)	A specialist advisory service that operated only in prisons before the formation of the National Careers Service in 2012.
Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs)	There are 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) in the UK. CRCs work with offenders aged 18 and over who have been either sentenced by the courts to a Community Order or Suspended Sentence Order, or released on licence from prison to serve the rest of their sentence in the community.
Data Sharing Agreement (DSA)	An agreement between two parties (Data Controller and Data Processor) to ensure protection and security of data transferred between bodies/agencies. DSAs should be in place between agencies working with learners both in prison and through the gate in order to securely transfer individual case notes.
English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)	Refers to courses and/or qualifications in English for speakers of other languages.
Functional Skills	Refers to qualifications which support the development of practical skills in English, maths and ICT. Functional skills courses are designed to help learners gain the most out of work, education and everyday life.
Further Education	Refers to education that is received in addition to secondary education, but is distinct from the HE offered in universities.
Governance Board	There are ten Governance Boards operating in England and were set up to ensure that careers services and learning and skills target learners effectively at a local level, enhancing employment and wider post-release prospects of prisoners.
Individual Learner Record (ILR)	The Individual Learner Record (ILR) comprises information recorded by providers of FE about individuals undertaken. It is compulsory for all publicly-funded FE providers to collect this information. The datasets include information on learning aims (such as those provided through OLASS3 and OLASS4), as well as personal characteristics of learners at an individual level.
Learner	Refers to an individual undertaking learning and skills training either in prison or post-release.

<b>Term and acronym (where relevant)</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Logic model	A logic model is a tool used by to evaluate programmes. Logic models visually present logical relationships between the resources, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts.
Mandatory maths and English assessment	In August 2014, it became mandatory for OLASS4 providers to conduct English and maths assessments for newly received prisoners. SFA funding rules stipulate that a prisoner arriving in a prison who has a mandatory assessment within the previous six months should not be given another in order to avoid prisoners doing the same test repeatedly.
New Ways of Working	Modifications to both staffing structures and prison regimes, in line with government-led efficiency savings, have been phased in across the public sector prison network from October 2013. Collectively these measures are known as 'New Ways of Working'.
Offender Learning and Skills Service Phase 3 (OLASS3)	OLASS3 ran between August 2009 and July 2012.
Offender Learning and Skills Service Phase 4 (OLASS4)	OLASS4 was introduced in August 2012. This phase introduced a new suite of contracts for the delivery of learning and skills in adult prisons in England.
National Probation Service (NPS)	The NPS is a statutory criminal justice service that supervises high-risk offenders released into the community. NPS works with the National Offender Management Service.
National Careers Service	<p>The National Careers Service provides information, advice and guidance to help individuals make decisions on learning, training and work opportunities.</p> <p>The service offers confidential and impartial information and advice that is delivered by qualified careers advisers. From August 2012, the National Careers Service's remit was extended to support adults in custody through their learning journey and to help them transition into learning or work following their release from prison.</p> <p>The National Careers Service is delivered via a national contact centre and a number of prime contractors spanning 12 area-based contracting regions. The National Careers Service was re-contracted in October 2014 under a new outcome-focused service model.</p>
Personal and Social Development (PSD)	Personal and Social Development (PSD) refers to courses which develop learners' skills in a broad range of areas, including communication, reading and writing, mathematics, skills for independent living, and skills for the workplace and engaging with society. It is possible to complete qualifications in PSD at Entry 1, 2 and 3, Levels 1 and 2.



Term and acronym (where relevant)	Definition
Proven re-offending	The underlying principle of measuring re-offending (or recidivism, which is the most commonly used term internationally) is that someone who has received some form of criminal justice sanction (such as a conviction or a caution) goes on to commit another offence within a set time period <sup>66</sup> .
OLASS providers	There are four contracted OLASS providers: Milton Keynes College, Novus (formerly The Manchester College), PeoplePlus (formerly A4E) and Weston College.
P11	A HMRC document used to calculate how much individuals need to pay to HMRC each month or quarter for PAYE tax, National Insurance Contributions and student loan deductions.
P14	A HMRC document that outlines the End of Year summary for employees who have been required to complete a P11 form
P45	A HMRC document that outlines how much individuals pay in tax on their salary in a given tax year (6 April to 5 April)
Student Loan Eligibility	From September 2012 prisoners were required to take out tuition fee loans for part-time HE in the same way as other learners. In line with changes to mainstream provision, 2013/14 saw the introduction of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans for eligible prisoners who undertake a FE course at Level 3 and Level 4. 24+ Advanced Learning Loans have since been re-named Advanced Learner Loans.
Units of Procurement	OLASS4 is commissioned via ten contracting regions, or Units of Procurement. Each Unit of Procurement has a Governance Board, with responsibility for targeting careers services, learning and skills.
Virtual Campus (VC)	The VC is an electronic vehicle for delivering learning and employment support in prisons. The Virtual Campus was designed to increase the quality and flexibility of learning available to prisoners, as it can be accessed post-release to allow prisoners to retrieve documents (such as CVs) prepared while in prison. Rollout of the VC to prisons which had the requisite internet connectivity was completed in December 2013.

<sup>66</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/192407/proven-reoffending-definitions-measurement.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192407/proven-reoffending-definitions-measurement.pdf)

## Further abbreviations

BIS – Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

DWP – Department for Work and Pensions

EBA – Employment Benefit Advisor

HE – Higher Education

HMPPS – Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (formerly NOMS)

HMRC – Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

JCP – Job Centre Plus

LRS – Learner Record System

MI – Management Information

MoJ – Ministry of Justice

NAO – National Audit Office

NOMS – National Offender Management Service (now HMPPS)

NPS – National Probation Service

OU – Open University

p-NOMIS – Prison National Offender Management Information System

ROTL – Release on Temporary Licence