



House of Commons
Education Committee

Not just another brick in the wall: why prisoners need an education to climb the ladder of opportunity

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Summary

Prison education is in a poor state following a long-term decline in both the quality of education and the number of prisoners participating in learning or training. In December 2020, Ofsted reported that nearly two-thirds of inspections showed poor management of the quality of education, skills and work in the custodial estate. Only nine of the 32 institutions inspected were judged to be good or outstanding, compared to eight out of 10 providers for further education in the community.

Prison education and training plays a key role in changing lives and improving people's futures, getting prisoners onto the ladder of opportunity. Research by the Ministry of Justice found that people who had participated in education whilst in prison were significantly less likely to reoffend within 12 months of release than those who had not by 7.5% points.

Prison education must play a key role in improving the employability of prisoners and therefore in reducing reoffending. However, prison education must also be understood in broader terms than just improving the employability of a prisoner. Education allows a prisoner to gain self-confidence and provides mental health benefits in isolating conditions, while improving their behaviours in prison. Education has a value in itself, developing the person as a whole. The Ministry of Justice must develop prison education policy accordingly.

The Coates Review highlighted the need for prison education to be at the heart of the prison system. Six years later, we are concerned that this aspiration has still not been realised. There have been a number of missed opportunities to effect major change and to change the culture surrounding prison education. While we welcome the Government's renewed focus on prison education with the publication of the White Paper on Prison Strategy in December 2021, our inquiry highlighted the urgent need for change across the prison estate. Our Report therefore makes the following key recommendations.

Improve support for prisoners with SEND and learning difficulties

Data shows that over 30% of prisoners have a learning difficulty or learning challenges. However, we heard that this figure is likely to be an underestimate and that the true scale of the issue is not known, as prisons rely heavily on prisoners declaring themselves to have learning needs. The current screening process is not adequate to identify prisoners with additional leaning needs. We recommend that the Ministry of Justice introduce a consistent assessment process for every prisoner when they enter the prison estate. We believe that there is a strong case for every prisoner to receive an assessment for learning needs from an educational psychologist, or at the very least a more intensive form of screening, and we recommend that the Ministry of Justice prepares a cost appraisal for implementing such an approach.

There needs to be a whole prison approach to prisoners with learning difficulties. This is currently hampered by the lack of information sharing between the community and the prison estate regarding prisoners' educational attainment in the community, and any learning difficulties that were identified. This also continues during the prison sentence, with different departments holding their own information on prisoners. There must be

greater integrated working between different providers in custody—between education, health and offender management. The Government must introduce legislation to enable data on prisoners to be shared so that prisons can access prisoners' previous records of educational attainment from the National Pupil Database, and also to enable previous diagnosis on learning needs to be shared.

The Government must provide greater clarity on the funding available to fund specialist support staff, how many will be appointed, where they will be distributed across the prison estate, with a minimum of one SENCo per prison, and the timescale for their introduction across the prison estate.

Introduce Digital Education Passports

Prisoners are often transferred with short notice across the prison estate. The loss or delay in the transfer of their educational records can have serious repercussions on their ability to continue their studies, and can in some cases cause prisoners to become disheartened and to give up on their learning. It is unacceptable that the effort made by prisoners in improving themselves can be so easily discarded. The Ministry of Justice must introduce a digital education passport, which contains a record of a prisoner's learning, and any identified educational needs, that follows prisoners through their sentence and across the prison estate.

Transfer of prisoners

The transfer of prisoners is a significant barrier against effective prisoner education. When considering moving prisoners, the position of where they are in a course or qualification should be considered. The ability of whether they would be able to continue their qualification where they are moved to, should also be a factor.

Improve links between prisons and employers

The reoffending rate for adult prisoners released from custody is 42%, with an estimated yearly cost of £15 billion. Many factors can help reduce reoffending post-release, but one of the most important is getting prison leavers into employment. Government statistics show that employment can reduce the chance of reoffending significantly—by up to nine percentage points compared to those without a job upon release. However, a significant number of people leaving prison are currently failing to find employment. The proportion of former prisoners in P45 employment one year after release is just 17%. The low number of former prisoners finding long-term employment following their release from prison is stark.

The prison estate has a role in supporting former prisoners in finding employment, We welcome the employment hubs that are currently operational, but believe that the scheme must be extended. The Government must, by the end of the year, set out a clear timetable for the roll-out of employment hubs across the prison estate, where appropriate.

No-one understands the skills market better than employers. Local partnership with employers is key to identifying and providing the necessary skills for the job market.

Prisons must be able to react to the needs of employers. We welcome the announcements in the Government's White Paper to improve links between prisons and businesses, such as the establishment of Employment Advisers and local Employment Boards. The Ministry of Justice must in its response to our Report set out clear timetables for the changes announced in its White Paper on Prison Strategy.

Encourage businesses to employ former prisoners

Businesses may have some reservations about employing former prisoners, which the Government must work to overcome. The Government must introduce incentives to encourage businesses to employ former prisoners, such as national insurance holidays for the first year of employing former prisoners.

Allow prisoners undertaking education to have access to educational digital resources

The prison population does not have internet access. The majority of prisons in England and Wales do not have the cabling or hardware to support broadband. The lack of controlled and secure access to educational digital resources is a significant barrier to learning. It is stifling opportunity for improvement through education and leaving prisoners unprepared for the real world, lacking the digital skills they need for employment and life skills, and reducing their likelihood of reoffending. The digital divide between prisoners and the community is ever increasing. We cannot let this continue. The pandemic has brought into stark focus the need for prisoners to be able to work individually and in their cells. The Government must set out, by the end of the year, a date for when all prisons will be able to support broadband.

We have serious concerns around allowing prisoners free and un-fettered access to the internet. However, we have been assured that security concerns can be overcome as technology exists which allows access to be restricted to approved content which can be monitored. A change in attitude to technology in prisons is long overdue. The Ministry of Justice must ensure that prisoners are taught the digital skills necessary to live in a digital age and those necessary for employment and life skills. If security can be assured and access can be monitored and tightly restricted to educational purposes, we recommend that the Ministry of Justice provide in-cell laptops, such as Chromebooks, to prisoners only when undertaking education.

Establish the role of Deputy Governor of Learning

There needs to be a culture shift within prisons to embed a culture of education into prison establishments. This will not happen unless it is supported by all the prison departments, and by all levels of staff. Governors must raise the profile of prison education and to promote and facilitate education in prisons wherever possible. There must be a clear signal in each prison that education is an operational priority. We recommend that each prison has a Deputy Governor of Learning who is part of the Senior Management team, and is directly responsible for education audits and the educational outcomes of prisoners. The job description for this role must include qualifications and/or experience in prison education.

Incentivise prisoners to engage with education

Many prisoners have limited or negative experiences of education and therefore a limited belief in the potential of learning. We recognise that incentives could play a part in getting prisoners “through the doors” to start their engagement, or to get them re-engaged, with education. Prison education is often paid at a lower rate than unskilled work, acting as a disincentive. We recommend that the Ministry of Justice ensures that pay for education is equal to the pay for prison work, to ensure that prisoners do not lose out by choosing education. In order to qualify for the equal pay, prisoners must be able to demonstrate progress within their studies. We also recommend that the Government examines the potential of using Release on Temporary License (ROTL) as an incentive to encourage prisoners to engage with education.

Give greater access to loans to undertake higher education

The current educational offer in prisons does not respond to the diverse range of sentence lengths, and more attention is needed to look at the educational opportunities given to long-term prisoners. Research shows that prisoners who had undertaken education via distance learning are less likely to reoffend and reoffend less frequently than those who did not. For every 100 prisoners who undertake higher education courses, compared to those who did not, the number of prisoners who commit a proven reoffence within one year after release is lower by four to five individuals.

The current student loan regulations state that prisoners with more than six years left until their earliest release date are ineligible to access a student loan. This regulation disproportionately affects people who might benefit most from higher-level study. The Government must remove the “six-year rule” so that prisoners on long sentences can apply for higher education courses earlier in their sentence. This would give them motivation during their sentence and keep them focused on their potential employment opportunities following release.

1 Introduction

1. Prison education in England is in a poor state following a long-term decline in both the quality of education and the number of prisoners participating in learning or training.¹ In December 2020, Ofsted reported that nearly two-thirds of inspections showed poor management of the quality of education, skills and work in the custodial estate. Only nine of the 32 institutions inspected were judged to be good or outstanding, compared to eight out of 10 providers for further education in the community.²

2. The table below shows the overall effectiveness judgements of education in prisons and young offender institutions for inspections published in year, over time:

Table 1: Overall effectiveness judgements of education in prisons and young offender institutions

	Total number of prisons inspected	Number of published inspections			
		Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
2019/20 ³	32	0	9	19	4
2018/19	45	1	17	20	7
2017/18	41	0	16	20	5
2016/17	41	1	22	12	6
2015/16	42	2	14	20	6

Source: Ofsted (EPB00057)

3. There has been a marked decline in the number of prisoners in England, aged 18 and over, participating in educational qualifications. In the 2017/18 academic year, 31,700 prisoners participated in level 2 courses (equivalent to GCSE at grades 4–9), and just 200 participated in a level 3 course (equivalent to AS-levels and above). This was an 18% and 90% decrease respectively compared to the 2010/11 academic year.⁴

Recent attempts to improve prison education

4. In 2016, a Government-commissioned review by Dame Sally Coates was published, which set out a holistic vision for prison education, with three main conclusions: 1) education in prison should improve the wellbeing of prisoners and increase their employment prospects; 2) it would reduce offending and make communities safe; and 3) the prison education system is inadequate for these purposes.⁵ It advocated a greater role for prison governors including giving them “new autonomy in the provision of education” and holding them to account for the educational progress of all prisoners in their jobs. Although the Government accepted the main recommendations in principle, changes in administration meant that a detailed implementation plan was not published.

1 Education in prisons in Wales is the responsibility of the Welsh Government.

2 Ofsted, [The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2019/2020](#), 1 December 2020

3 Includes four inspections carried on or after 1 February 2020 under the education inspection framework, which replaced the common inspection framework.

4 Department for Education, [OLASS: participation and achievement by equality and diversity & English and maths level: 2010/2011 to 2017/18](#),

5 Ministry of Justice, [Unlocking Potential: A review of education in prison](#), May 2016

5. In recent years, the Government has announced several policy initiatives around prison education. However, Government commitments on areas around the development of a Prison Education Service, and the introduction of a Prisoner Apprenticeship Pathway, have not been implemented and fully realised. There have been a number of missed opportunities to effect major change and to change the culture surrounding prison education. The table below sets out a range of policy announcements made in the last few years, including the 16 main recommendations of the Coates Review, and traces their progress.

Table 2: Recent policy announcements made concerning prison education

Policy	Origin	Progress
Every prison must use a consistent and rigorous assessment mechanism to set a baseline against which to measure individuals' academic performance and screen for learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD).	Coates Review 2016	A "2-part screening tool", is used by the four educational providers. However, this is only used in the public prison system and is not used in private prisons. In addition, within the public prison system, coverage of the tool varies with some prisons attempting to screen their whole population, whereas others are just screening new arrivals.
Every prisoner must have a Personal Learning Plan that specifies the educational activity that should be undertaken during their sentence.	Coates Review 2016	This is not happening consistently across the prison estate.
A core set of educational performance measures should be used by all prisons. Such data should be monitored consistently to drive continuous improvement.	Coates Review 2016	The majority of education providers are now required to enter the same monitoring data. However, the new system is in development.
Ofsted should carry out inspections using the same framework as for the adult skills sector, with inspection intervals and follow-up arrangements driven by performance data and levels of performance.	Coates Review 2016	Ofsted use the same criteria for prison education as for further education in the community.
HMIP should give prisons an overall performance measure, with educational performance (as measured by Ofsted) receiving a separate, distinct assessment. It should not be possible for a prison's overall performance to be more than one grade higher than the measure awarded for its education provision.	Coates Review 2016	The Ofsted score for education is a distinct measure within HMIP inspection reports. However, no grade is specifically awarded to the Learning and Skills provider within the prison.

Policy	Origin	Progress
Governors, senior leaders, teachers, prison officers, instructors and peer mentors must be given appropriate professional development to support them to deliver high quality education.	Coates Review 2016	There has been limited training available to governors and senior leaders on capability and commissioning.
The recruitment of high quality teachers needs to be developed.	Coates Review 2016	There is no overall HMPPS strategy on recruitment and development of high quality teachers.
A new scheme to attract high calibre graduates to work in prisons for an initial period of two years should be introduced.	Coates Review 2016	In September 2017 Unlocked, a leadership programme modelled on Teach First, was set up.
The current mechanism for funding prison education should be revised so that Governors and/or providers can design a curriculum that meets the individual needs and Personal Learning Plan of each prisoner for whom they are responsible.	Coates Review 2016	Prison Education Framework contracts have been introduced.
Governors should be free to design a framework of incentives that encourage attendance and progression in education.	Coates Review 2016	The new Incentives and Earned Privileges policy framework consulted on in September 2018 has not been published.
Every prison should adopt a whole-prison approach to identifying, supporting and working with prisoners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD).	Coates Review 2016	Very few prisons have a whole prison approach to supporting prisoners with LDD.
Governors should be able to use their education budgets to fund learning at Level 3 and above.	Coates Review 2016	This has not happened. Prisons' current provision is very similar to the level and choice under the previous contract.
Prisoner Apprenticeship Pathway	Prison Safety and Reform White Paper 2016	This has not been fully implemented.
Introduce a core common curriculum across the estate, focusing on maths and English	Prison Safety and Reform White Paper 2016	This has been implemented.

Policy	Origin	Progress
Develop a detailed prisoner employment strategy	Prison Safety and Reform White Paper 2016	The Education and Employment Strategy was published in 2018
Prison Education Service	Conservative manifesto 2019	Not yet implemented. Repeated commitment in the Prisons Strategy White Paper 2021.

Sources: [Prisoner Learning Alliance, Unlocking potential – three years on, May 2019](#); [Prison Safety and Reform White Paper, November 2016](#); [Education and Employment Strategy, Ministry of Justice, May 2018](#); [Get Brexit Done, Unleash Britain's Potential, The Conservative and Unionist Manifesto 2019](#); [Prisons Strategy White Paper, Ministry of Justice, December 2021](#)

6. During our inquiry, the Government published its White Paper on Prisons Strategy in December 2021. This pledged, among other things, to “deliver a step change in [prison] education”.⁶ In February 2022, we were particularly pleased that the Secretary of State for Justice, Dominic Raab MP, and the Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi MP, accepted our calls for prisoners to be able to study for apprenticeships, and announced that the Government would bring in legislation to allow this to happen.⁷ We welcome the Government’s renewed focus on prison education, especially given that Covid-19 has severely affected the provision of education in prisons.

Our inquiry

7. We launched our inquiry on 19 November 2020. The original terms of reference included examining the level of prison education received by young prisoners. However, based on the evidence we received, we decided that this topic merited a separate inquiry which we intend to hold later in the Parliament.

8. We received 77 written submissions, including 52 submissions from current prisoners.⁸ Due to the nature of these submissions, and the risk that prisoners could be identified via these, we opted to keep submissions from prisoners confidential. In addition to the oral evidence sessions we held, which are listed at the back of our Report, we undertook a visit to HM Prison Thorn Cross, a Category D men’s prison, where we spoke to staff and learners at the prison. Our visit was also informed by staff from HM Prison Garth, a Category B men’s prison, who spoke to us about their experiences. We are extremely grateful to all those who have contributed to our inquiry.

6 Ministry of Justice, [Prisons Strategy White Paper](#), December 2021

7 [“Apprenticeships for prisoners to cut crime”](#), Ministry of Justice press release, 11 February 2022

8 Some submissions have been kept confidential.

2 Embedding a culture of education

Purpose of Prison Education

9. Research by the Ministry of Justice in 2018 found that people who had participated in education whilst in prison were significantly less likely to reoffend within 12 months of release than those who had not by 7.5% points i.e. a reoffending rate of 32.6% from a baseline one-year reoffending rate of 40.1%.⁹

10. Employment, for some time, has been recognised as one of the core pathways to reducing reoffending following release.¹⁰ This was clearly laid out by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) in its Education and Employment Strategy in 2018.¹¹ Throughout, there is a focus on education for employment, recognising that individuals who have good levels of literacy and numeracy capability are more likely to obtain and sustain employment post-release.¹²

11. However, witnesses expressed concern about having a narrow focus on employability and offending-related needs. Nacro, a social justice charity, stated that it was important that the benefits of prison education should also be understood in broader terms. There was a need to develop the person as a whole, and not just in terms of the qualifications held by prisoners for employment. Education in prison offered the opportunity for personal success and progression, and to develop “positive behaviour and attitudes to education and employment”.¹³ The University and College Union, a trade union for academic and academic-related staff in higher and further education, stated that prison education should be provided because it was the right thing to do: “Education and the process of engaging in learning, has a value in itself which needs to be recognised and is a mark of a civilised society”.¹⁴

12. We also heard of the positive benefits that education could bring to a prison’s “overall culture and environment”. Clinks, an organisation that supports voluntary sector organisations working in the criminal justice system, told us that it improved prisoners’ wellbeing and mental health in a stressful and isolated environment, and reduced conflict in the prison “by encouraging a sense of collaboration and community”.¹⁵ The Open University agreed, stating that it “brought a sense of purpose and hope as well as offering a realistic pathway towards living a different life on release”.¹⁶

13. The purpose of education and training in prisons should be to get prisoners onto the ladder of opportunity. It must play a key role in improving the employability of prisoners and therefore in reducing reoffending. However, prison education must be understood in broader terms than just improving the employability of a prisoner. Education allows a prisoner to gain self-confidence and provides mental health benefits in isolating conditions, while improving their behaviour in prison. Education has a value in itself, developing the person as a whole. The Ministry of Justice must develop prison education policy accordingly.

9 HM Prison & Probation Service, [Evaluation of prisoner learning](#), 2018

10 Social Exclusion Unit, [Reducing reoffending by ex-prisoners](#), July 2002

11 Ministry of Justice, [Education and Employment Strategy](#), May 2018

12 Dr Anne O’Grady ([EPB0051](#))

13 Nacro ([EPB0030](#))

14 University and College Union ([FPB0055](#))

15 Clinks ([EPB0054](#))

16 Open University ([EPB0029](#))

Making education a priority across the prison estate

14. The Coates Review called for education to be at the heart of the prison system:

My vision for learning to be at the heart of regime requires a whole-organisation approach to education and to workforce development. Professional development for all staff—including Governors and their Senior Leadership Team, teachers, prison officers, instructors and peer mentors—will be a crucial part of reform and rapid change.¹⁷

15. Witnesses told us that there still needed to be a culture shift within prisons for Dame Coates' vision to become a reality, and for education to become a priority across the prison estate. Dr Anne O'Grady commented that it was difficult for educational activity to be valued or valuable when it was often the first activity to be closed and the last activity to be reopened.¹⁸ Clinks noted that this was exemplified in the recent pandemic:

Education providers in prison were not classed as key workers or as providing an essential services during the first lockdown and even during the times when prisons have been able to move towards recovery, education providers have faced challenges accessing prisons due to ongoing restrictions on regimes.¹⁹

16. Kiri Jolliffe, a former offender, told us that the low priority given to education had an impact on whether prisoners chose to study or to take up a prison job,²⁰ while other witnesses said that the behaviour and priorities of the Governor were key to developing a learning culture. There were noticeable differences when Governors adopted behaviours that supported a learning culture.²¹ They could incentivise education by “demonstrating their personal commitment to learning and creating a learning culture, by monitoring attendance and engagement of prisoners and recognising achievement”.²²

17. Steve Johnson told us that there was a need for education to be better integrated into the rest of the prison system, and that governance arrangements at prisons needed to be significantly changed.²³ In many prisons, the learning and skills manager was not a senior figure within the prison and did not “hold much sway”, with the result that there was often no-one on the senior management team who had a responsibility for education.²⁴

18. Prison officers have the most day-to-day interaction with prisoners. Although several of the submissions acknowledged the commitment and dedication of many prison staff, it was suggested that there was a lack of understanding among prison officers about the importance of prison education. The Prisoner Learning Alliance told us that more work was needed to highlight the importance of education to wing residential officers so that they could understand the link between educational outcomes and successful resettlement.²⁵

17 Ministry of Justice, [Unlocking Potential: A review of education in prison](#), May 2016

18 Dr Anne O'Grady ([EPB0051](#))

19 Clinks ([EPB0054](#))

20 [Q329](#) (Kiri Jolliffe)

21 [Q96](#)

22 Prisoner Learning Alliance ([EPB0066](#))

23 [Q158](#) (Steve Johnson)

24 [Q324](#)

25 Prisoner Learning Alliance ([EPB066](#))

19. Raymond Smith, a former offender, expressed frustration that not all prison staff understood the importance of bringing prisoners to their education. This had an impact on their ability to access education:

Once allocated to a class, students go onto a list given to the Wing Officers who unlock them from their cells prior to the starting time of the class so that they can travel through “free flow” when you walk from one wing to another past an officer check. On many occasions there are errors with the lists and people are not called or are not permitted through to their classes causing great frustration as those studying are very committed to their studies.²⁶

20. **The Coates Review highlighted the need for prison education to be at the heart of the prison system. Six years later, this aspiration has still not been realised. It is imperative that there is a renewed focus on embedding a culture of education into prison establishments. This will not happen unless it is supported by all prison departments, and by all levels of staff. The Ministry of Justice must ensure that there is an understanding across the prison estate about the importance of prison education. It is also incumbent on Governors to raise the profile of prison education and to promote and facilitate education in prisons wherever possible.**

21. *The job description and key performance measures used when assessing Governors must be amended to require Governors to ensure that providing adequate prison education and a culture of learning is part of their core responsibilities, and something on which they must be held to account for as part of their performance. Prison officers should also receive training to ensure that they understand the importance of education in supporting prisoners to find employment and reducing reoffending, so they develop a positive attitude towards the role that education has to play in prisons.*

22. *There must also be a clear signal in each prison that education is an operational priority. We recommend that each prison has a Deputy Governor of Learning who is part of the Senior Management team, who is directly responsible for education audits and the educational outcomes of prisoners. The job description for this role must include qualifications and/or experience in prison education.*

Incentivising prisoners

23. Many prisoners have limited or negative experiences of education and therefore a limited belief in the potential of learning.²⁷ Witnesses told us that incentives could play a part to get prisoners ‘through the doors’ to start their engagement, or to get them re-engaged, with education: “The thing with learning is once you unlock it in somebody they don’t need any more incentive. It is about unlocking that. You try to do it in as many ways as possible”.²⁸

24. Many witnesses pointed out that prison education was too often paid at a lower rate than unskilled prison work, acting as a disincentive. David Breakspear, a former offender, told us that prisoners were often caught in a catch-22 situation:

26 Raymond Smith ([EPB0013](#))

27 Ofsted, [The Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills 2019/2020](#), 1 December 2020

28 [Q329](#) (David Breakspear)

In my experience, those who need education the most are individuals who come from deprived areas and whose families/loved ones may not be able to financially support them through their sentence. You do not need a lot of money to survive for a week in prison, but it is more than what education usually pay a week. Therefore, in several cases, it is not the fact an individual does not want to attend education, it is because they cannot afford to. [...] If the prison does not value education, how can we expect our prisoners to do so.²⁹

25. While some prisons had changed their policy to ensure no-one was financially worse off for choosing education, this was not the case across the board. Witnesses called for pay for education to be equal to or more than the pay for prison work, to ensure that prisoners did not lose out by choosing education.

26. Witnesses told us that celebrating success could have a positive effect in showing and creating a commitment to education. Femi Laryea-Adekimi spoke about the impact that hosting awards and presenting certificates could have.³⁰ Novus recommended that a comprehensive incentive programme, linked to achievement, rehabilitation and release, would incentivise participation in learning. Some privileges and incentives could include: extra gym sessions in the evening or weekends; pin/phone credit; hair and beauty treatments in the prison salon/barbers.³¹ Novus told us that the “single most motivating factor” for some prisoners to engage with education was the incentive of earned early release or Release on Temporary License (ROTL).³²

27. The MOJ agreed that participation could be encouraged by linking education to rewards that motivate prisoners, such as prison pay rate, access to the gym or additional visits. The Government was less in favour of restructuring current prison pay systems. Phil Copple told us:

... what I would not want to do is have a centrally directed recalibration of the prisoner pay system that produced 30,000 losers by taking a lot of money from them and moving it to people on education and training courses because that is probably a recipe for major disorder. [...] If there is additional money available, so that there is a kind of levelling up rather than redistribution, that is a bit different.³³

28. *Many prisoners have a negative view of education. Incentives therefore have a part to play in encouraging prisoners to engage, or re-engage, with education. We recommend that the Ministry of Justice ensures that pay for education is equal to the pay for prison work, to ensure that prisoners do not lose out by choosing education. In order to qualify for the equal pay, prisoners must be able to demonstrate progress within their studies. We also recommend that the Government examines the potential of using Release on Temporary License (ROTL) as an incentive to encourage prisoners to engage with education.*

29 David Breakspear ([EPB0001](#))

30 [Q329](#) (Femi Laryea-Adekimi)

31 LTE Group (trading as Novus) ([EPB0044](#))

32 LTE Group (trading as Novus) ([EPB0044](#))

33 [Q435](#)

3 Assessment of Needs

Initial assessment on entry into the prison system

29. A large proportion of prisoners have poor educational attainment, and many were excluded from, or truanted from, schools. 57% of prisoners have English and Maths levels at or below those expected of an eleven-year-old³⁴, and over 40% have been permanently excluded from school.³⁵

30. In addition, over 30% of prisoners have a learning difficulty or learning challenges.³⁶ Francesca Cooney, Head of Policy at Prisoner Learning Alliance, told us that this figure was likely to be an underestimate as prisons rely heavily on prisoners declaring themselves to have learning needs, and that there was a lack of comprehensive data in this area.³⁷ Additionally, 51% of boys in young offenders' institutions are from BME backgrounds compared to 14% of the general population, and 25% of children in custody are Black compared to 4% of the general population.

31. Since 2014 prisoners, on entry into the prison system, have received a mandatory skills assessment by the prison's education department to determine levels of ability in literacy and numeracy. In 2019, a duty was added for prison education departments to screen prisoners for learning difficulties and /or disability as well.³⁸

Screening for SEND and learning needs

32. During our inquiry, the Government introduced a national screening tool for learning difficulties, the "2-part screening tool", to be used by the four educational providers.³⁹ However, this is only used in the public prison system and is not used in private prisons or in Wales. In addition, within the public prison system, coverage of the tool varies with some prisons attempting to screen their whole population, whereas others are just screening new arrivals.⁴⁰ It is also still reliant on prisoners self-identifying as having learning difficulties.⁴¹

33. Witnesses expressed concern about the ability of the screening process to adequately identify additional learning needs. Paul Joyce, Deputy Director for Further Education and Skills at Ofsted, told us that the quality of screening varied across the prison estate, and was not always undertaken by qualified staff.⁴²

34 Ministry of Justice, [Prison Education Statistics April 2019 to March 2020](#), 5 August 2021

35 Ministry of Justice ([EPB0058](#))

36 Prisoners' Education Trust ([EPB0046](#))

37 [Q147](#)

38 Prisoners' Education Trust ([EPB0046](#))

39 The four education providers are: Milton Keynes College, Novus, PeoplePlus and Weston College. They deliver the core common curriculum: maths, English, ICT, English for Speakers of other languages (ESOL), assessment on arrival, as well as vocational training in areas such as construction and catering.

40 Part 1 is the "rapid screener" that can be completed by education staff, consisting of a series of key questions to screen for signs of LDD need; Part 2 is the "in-depth assessment" completed at a 1-to-1 with an appropriately-trained practitioner, more focused on identifying specific needs and feeding this into an action plan.

41 HM Inspectorate of Prisons and HM Inspectorate of Probation, [Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System: A Review of Evidence](#), July 2021

42 [Q216](#)

34. Francesca Cooney told us that screening was not the same as a SEND diagnosis⁴³: “it is not a full diagnosis at all. The idea of screening is that it just flags up whether there might be issues. Ideally, you would go on to a full assessment with a more specialist worker once the screening has taken place”.⁴⁴ Steve Johnson from the Prison Governors Association agreed that more needed to be done, and that assessment needed to be “embedded at every level”:

It is not as thorough as people might expect and what you see in the community in a standard education environment outside the prison walls, so it is not as in-depth and there is a lot of self-reporting. [...] We can identify some additional needs, but it is nothing like you would expect in the usual educational environment.⁴⁵

35. Information on special learning needs is captured via CURIOUS, the Government’s education data, case management and contract data platform. However, witnesses expressed concern with the use of this system. The report into Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System noted that CURIOUS was developed as a database for monitoring and managing the delivery of learning and skills contracts, and “was not a reliable or effective system for identifying the prevalence of neurodivergent conditions across the prison population”.⁴⁶ The Report noted that within CURIOUS, only one condition could be recorded as a ‘primary’ health problem. Any others were deemed to be ‘secondary’. In addition, this information system was not used in private prisons and in Wales.

Lack of information sharing

36. Witnesses expressed concerns regarding the lack of information sharing around prisoners with learning difficulties. Although prisoners may have had assessments in the community through social services, education or health, these were not forwarded to the prison service. Francesca Cooney told us that “it would be cheaper and more efficient to have more alignment with those systems so that when people come into custody their needs are known because their previous assessments have come in with them”.⁴⁷

37. This lack of information-sharing also extended to the prisoners’ time in prison, with a lack of “whole prison approach” to prisoners with learning difficulties.⁴⁸ Debbie Leach, a Regional Lead for Learning, Skills and Employment at HMPPS, told us that medical and educational assessments carried out in prisons were not routinely shared with residential or officer staff, with prisoners having to “explain themselves (or not) each time they engage with someone new”.⁴⁹

43 Special educational needs and disability (SEND)

44 [Q144](#)

45 [Q148](#)

46 HM Inspectorate of Prisons and HM Inspectorate of Probation, [Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System: A Review of Evidence](#), July 2021

47 [Q145](#)

48 LTE Group (trading as Novus) ([EPB0044](#))

49 Debbie Leach ([EPB0049](#))

Lack of resources and staff

38. Even where the learning difficulties of an offender had been identified, support was not necessarily available to address them. In its 2019–20 Report, Ofsted reported that “prisoners with additional learning needs received insufficient support and the range of education, skills and work activities that vulnerable prisoners can access is poor”.⁵⁰

39. Witnesses highlighted a lack of specialised staff. Across public prisons, education is provided by the four educational providers. Together they have only 25 qualified Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCo). This equates to around one per four prisons.⁵¹ As a result of a lack of knowledgeable staff and specialised resources, the needs of people with learning disabilities were often missed, leading to prisoners “who are totally disengaged, unable to access whatever is being provided to them”.⁵² Although we heard that there were pockets of good practice and examples of staff developing supportive relationships, these were far too often the exception rather than the norm.

40. Peter Cox, Managing Director of Novus, highlighted the fact that following the movement of responsibility for prison education from the Department to the Ministry of Justice in 2016, the opportunity for educational providers to access additional funding support for learners with special educational needs through Skills Funding Agency (SFA) programmes no longer existed.⁵³

41. Rt Hon Victoria Atkins MP, Minister of State for Prisons and Probation at the Ministry of Justice, admitted that the needs assessment that prisoners received needed to be improved, with greater support for prisoners with learning difficulties. She highlighted that the Government, in its White Paper on Prisons Strategy, had committed to hire Support Managers for prisoners with conditions such as learning disabilities, autism, acquired brain injury or ADHD. They would aim to “strengthen the identification process and related follow-up support for those who have learning needs, within the classroom and across the prison more broadly”.⁵⁴

42. A high proportion of prisoners have learning needs. It is concerning that prisons have only had to screen for additional learning needs since 2019. This means that the majority of the prison population may never have gone through a screening process. It is clear that there is a lack of data around the numbers of prisoners with special needs and that the true scale of the issue is not known. Government figures currently rely heavily on prisoners self-identifying, and many may be unaware of their learning difficulties or too embarrassed to ask for support. The Ministry of Justice must re-design CURIOS to better capture complete data on the levels of prisoners with learning difficulties across the prison estate. It must allow more than one condition to be clearly identified and recorded in the system, and its use must be extended to private prisons. This will enable the Government to properly identify and target funding and support to those that need it most across the prison estate. Assessment and resources for people with ESOL needs should also be considered.

50 Ofsted, [The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2019/2020](#), 1 December 2020

51 Ministry of Justice ([EPB0075](#))

52 [Q219](#)

53 [Q305](#) (Peter Cox)

54 [Q426](#)

43. *The current screening process is not adequate to identify prisoners with additional learning needs. The Ministry of Justice must introduce a consistent assessment process for every prisoner when they enter the prison system. We believe there is a strong case for every prisoner to receive an assessment for learning needs from an educational psychologist, or at the very least a more intensive form of screening, and we recommend that the Ministry of Justice prepares a cost appraisal for implementing such an approach.*

44. *There needs to be a whole prison approach to prisoners with learning difficulties. This is currently hampered by the lack of information sharing between the community and the prison estate regarding prisoners' educational attainment in the community, and any learning difficulties that were identified. This also continues during the prison sentence, with different departments holding their own information on prisoners. There must be greater integrated working between different providers in custody — between education, health and offender management. The Government must amend legislation to enable data on prisoners to be shared so that prisons can access prisoners' previous records of educational attainment from the National Pupil Database, and also to enable previous diagnosis on learning needs to be shared.*

45. *Support for prisoners with learning difficulties is long over-due. We welcome the Government's recent commitment in its Prisons Strategy White Paper to provide dedicated specialist support staff, but the Government must ensure that there is adequate resourcing for this. The Government must, in its response to this Report, provide greater clarity on the funding available to fund specialist support staff, how many will be appointed, where they will be distributed across the prison estate, with a minimum of one SENCo per prison, and the timescale for their introduction across the prison estate.*

Individual Learning Plans and Digital Education Passports

46. For education to have a positive effect and to help effect change, prisoners must be able to take ownership of their education. Rod Clark, a member of the Coates Review, told us:

... you need to sit down and have that conversation about what the aspirations of that individual prisoner are and where they are going, so you can create a learning plan with them. Education cannot be delivered through a needle, like some sort of medical treatment. It needs the active engagement of the individual. That means they have to see the point of it in fitting with their own lives.⁵⁵

47. The Coates Review in 2016 recommended that every prisoner must have a Personal Learning Plan “that specifies the educational activity that should be undertaken during their sentence. This should be in a consistent digital format that can follow the prisoner through the system if they move prisons”.⁵⁶

48. This is not yet happening consistently across the prison estate. Femi Laryea-Adekimi, a former offender, told us that the initial assessment and preparation of the learning plan could often be a “tick- box exercise” and was not tailored to people's needs.⁵⁷ Catch22, a

55 [Q50](#) (Rod Clark)

56 Ministry of Justice, [Unlocking Potential: A review of education in prison](#), May 2016

57 [Q330](#) (Femi Laryea-Adekimi)

social business, told us that the desired model was for each prisoner to have an individual learning plan, that included their SEND assessment, as part of their sentence planning. This would then be regularly updated during their sentence.⁵⁸

49. Paul Joyce, Deputy Director for Further Education and Skills at Ofsted, noted the positive impact on prisoners of having an individual plan that was linked to their sentence planning and followed them through their sentence: “[it] contributes significantly to reducing reoffending rates and to their rehabilitation”.⁵⁹ However, witnesses noted that “it was rare” for learning plans and sentence plans to be co-ordinated, as they were prepared by different departments. Francesca Cooney described the system as “incredibly complicated and fragmented and very hard to co-ordinate”.⁶⁰

50. To enable prisoners to develop a realistic individual learning plan, it is essential that they receive proper guidance and advice. The work of the National Careers Service in prisons, helping people to gain relevant qualifications, build up a CV and connect with employers on the outside, was cancelled by the Government in 2018. Lisa Capper, Director of Education and Skills at Nacro, told us that there had been a critical gap in this area, with prison officers not trained or able to guide or support prisoners into education.⁶¹

51. The MOJ agreed that strengthening the role of careers guidance was important. They told us that they planned to carry out consultations with prisons, suppliers and other key organisations during 2021 to further develop the policy. We have not heard the outcome of these consultations.⁶²

52. Developing individual learning plans with prisoners helps to secure their commitment to, and ownership of, their own education, and provides a focus on individual learning. It helps to make prisoners aware of the options available to them in terms of learning opportunities, and can be used to measure their attainment and their progress towards their goals. *The Ministry of Justice must re-establish a National Careers Service across the prison estate in order to provide advice and support to prisoners in identifying education and employment opportunities.*

53. *We recommend that all prisoners have a personalised Individual Learning Plan linked to their sentence plan, created at the start of their time in prison. This should include the SEND assessment undertaken at their entry into the prison system. The Individual Learning Plan should be updated with their progression and development during their prison sentence.*

Transfer of Records

54. During their sentence, prisoners can be transferred between prisons for several reasons: because an offender’s security category has changed; so that they can serve the final weeks of their sentence in a prison nearer their home; because they are behaving in a disruptive way; due to routine movement of Category A prisoners for security reasons; or because they are being bullied.

58 [Catch22 \(EPB0033\)](#)

59 [Q226](#)

60 [Qq123-Q124](#)

61 [Q61](#) (Lisa Capper)

62 [Ministry of Justice \(EPB0058\)](#)

55. We heard that prisoner-focused sentence planning was hampered by the ineffective transfer of educational records between prisons when prisoners were moved. Few prisons and educational providers had clear sharing protocols.⁶³ During our visit to HM Prison Thorn Cross, prisoners told us of the frustration they felt when they were unable to continue their studies, or start new courses, because their records had not been transferred from their previous prison, or there was a delay in the transfer. In some instances, prisoners had to repeat their initial assessments.⁶⁴ We heard that not only was this “dispiriting” for the individuals concerned, but that it also caused a great deal of resentment, with some prisoners unwilling to go through the process again.⁶⁵

56. Witnesses called for the widespread use of a digital education passport for prisoners “documenting progress and achievements across sentencing”.⁶⁶ This would follow the prisoner through their prison sentence, and would be available as they moved to different prisons. This record could then be used by the prisoner upon release, to show to a new learning provider or an employer.⁶⁷

57. Phil Copple, Director General of Prisons at Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation System, told us that the Government was currently trialling a new prisoner learning plan in the Accelerator prisons, “which we are also seeking to digitise”.⁶⁸ The Government White Paper on Prisons Strategy included the intention to introduce a resettlement passport for prisoners which “could” include a CV setting out the qualifications, skills and work experience gained in custody.⁶⁹

58. Prisoners are often transferred with short notice across the prison estate. The loss or delay in the transfer of their educational records can have serious repercussions on their ability to continue their studies, and can in some cases cause prisoners to become disheartened and to give up on their learning. It is unacceptable that the effort made by prisoners in improving themselves can be so easily discarded.

59. *The Ministry of Justice must introduce a digital education passport, which contains a record of a prisoner’s learning, and any identified educational needs, that follows prisoners through their sentence and across the prison estate, and which can be shown to potential employers.*

63 LTE Group (trading as Novus) ([EPB0044](#))

64 [Q91](#) (Simon Ashworth)

65 [Q329](#) (Ben Leapman)

66 Catch22 ([EPB0033](#))

67 [Q98](#) (David Hughes)

68 [Q400](#) (Phil Copple)

69 Ministry of Justice, [Prisons Strategy White Paper](#), December 2021

4 Education Delivery

Prison Education Framework

60. Following the Coates Review, the budget for prison education was moved from the Department for Education (DfE) to the Ministry of Justice. This was in response to the core recommendation to give prison Governors more flexibility and control over the curriculum to better meet the learning needs of their prisoners. A part of this, a new commissioning process for education was introduced. Governors identified the education provision they required and prisons were divided into groups or “lots” of prisons, usually by geographical area. Prison Education Framework (PEF) contracts were then awarded for each geographical group of prisons, in order to deliver core education provision. The four incumbent education providers for the outgoing OLASS contracts⁷⁰ successfully bid to run the education in prisons—Milton Keynes College, Novus, PeoplePlus and Weston College. The contracts have a total annual value of approximately £129 million and run for four years (1 April 2019–31 March 2023), with the option to extend.

61. Dame Sally Coates expressed disappointment that the contracts were awarded in groups, so that individual Governors were unable to choose their providers, and that it was the four same providers who won the new contracts:

I certainly did not envisage the same providers. I thought that some of them might get it but I envisaged a lot of local further education colleges, perhaps some of the bigger multi-academy trusts, providing education. I envisaged a much more open, more varied system.⁷¹

62. Rod Clark told us that the new contractual system fell “a long way short of the vision that might have been about independent prisons very much in their [Governors’] control”.⁷² The Prisoners’ Education Trust agreed that while Governors had more input into the education provided in their prison, “they do not have autonomy over it”.⁷³

63. Phil Copple defended the allocation of the new contracts by geographical lots, stating that it was done to match prison groups:

That was deliberate to try and improve the provision and the continuity of it, because the prison groups have been deliberately put together to reflect a group of prisons that have different functions but that also have quite strong links with each other in terms of prion movement.⁷⁴

64. During our inquiry, witnesses identified several concerns with the Prison Education Framework contracts, which we explore below.

70 The Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) contracts were the predecessor contracts to the current Prison Framework contracts. They were awarded by the Skills Funding Agency.

71 [Q20](#) (Dame Sally Coates)

72 [Q8](#)

73 Prisoners’ Education Trust ([EPB0046](#))

74 [Q405](#)

Bureaucratic contracts

65. Witnesses criticised the Prison Education Framework contracts, stating that they did not facilitate partnership working. Sally Alexander, Principal of Milton Keynes College, one of the education providers, told us that the contract was bureaucratic, and did not allow for the personalisation of education delivery:

It does not feel like a contract where you look at delivering a service to meet individual needs [...] it is a very bureaucratic process that needs to be signed off at different levels.⁷⁵

Peter Cox agreed that the contracting framework was “very commercial and transactional” and did not allow for a flexible contract that could provide an innovative curriculum.⁷⁶ Phil Cople accepted that the current system was more bureaucratic than its predecessor but added that, “candidly, what we had before could be charitably described as light touch and it was not rigorous enough”.⁷⁷

Contract management

66. Education contracts are directly managed by the prison Governor. Witnesses stated that prison Governors often had little time to manage these contracts alongside their other responsibilities. Matthew Coffey also pointed out that many Governors were not experienced in managing contracts.⁷⁸ Phil Cople acknowledged that Governors required more training and support around contract management.⁷⁹

Lack of local delivery

67. Our visit to HMP Thorn Cross showed us the potential for local partnership working and local delivery, and we congratulate the work Warrington and Vale Royal College, and Riverside College are doing with the open prison. However, during our inquiry, we heard that this was not the norm. Witnesses told us that the contracts had led to a move away from local delivery in many cases, as well as a shift away from focusing on individuals.⁸⁰

68. David Hughes, Chief Executive at the Association of Colleges, also told us that local FE colleges were constrained by the prison education contracts:

... they are constrained by the way the contracts are set up, they are constrained by the way the contracts are managed. To put it very bluntly [...] I think the contracts are managed as if they were supplying blankets or food to the prison, not the kind of complex educational offer that needs to be met. I think we need to have another look at the way the contracts are managed, the way the contracts and targets are set.⁸¹

75 [Q283](#)

76 [Q285](#)

77 [Q409](#)

78 [Q200](#)

79 [Q409](#)

80 Prisoners' Education Trust ([EPB0046](#))

81 [Q86](#) (David Hughes)

A National prison education service?

69. Some witnesses questioned whether the current system of privately-contracted education was the correct delivery system for prison education. Some witnesses, such as Ben Leapman, a former offender, suggested that a national Prisoner Education Services, run by the Department of Education, offering a standard curriculum with only minor variations from prison to prison, was preferable.⁸²

70. **The quality of prison education is of huge concern and has been deemed “inadequate”. The vision of Governor autonomy, as set out by the Coates Review, has not been realised by the new contracts and we are disappointed that the new contractual arrangements resulted in the same four educational providers being appointed. The new contracts were meant to encourage partnership between prisons, prison educators, the further education sector and the voluntary sector, but in practice bureaucratic contracts undermine this vision and make educational provision transactional, rather than rooted in the needs of the individual and the local area. The Government must ensure that there is a greater emphasis on working with the Further Education sector.**

71. *We have concerns about whether the Prison Education Framework contracts are able to deliver the improvement in prison education that is desperately needed. The Government must carry out a wholesale review of the current prison education framework by the end of 2022, with a view to improving the current contract structure, before the contracts are considered for extension in 2023. The review should examine how the contracts could be improved to encourage partnership working, how to ensure that Governors have the autonomy to choose their education providers and to work with the further education sector, and how to develop a focus on engaging with local employers, including SMEs.*

72. *We also recommend that all prison Governors are given the appropriate training by the Ministry of Justice to acquire the skills to manage the contracts with their education providers more effectively.*

Dynamic Purchasing System

73. Alongside the PEF process, Governors can directly commission services through the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). This is an electronic purchasing system that is open to a wider number of providers, including smaller bespoke providers and charities. This is the route through which most education services and activities delivered by the voluntary sector are now procured.

74. Witnesses told us that the DPS had particularly affected the voluntary sector, changing their relationship with prison Governors, moving it from a partnership relationship to a contractual one. Clinks stated that this had:

... effectively rendered the sector’s role as simply a provider of services rather than a partner in the design of those services that should be engaged with at every stage of the commissioning cycle [...] there is little visibility of the potential pipeline of contracts that will become available through the DPS.⁸³

82 [Q348](#)

83 [Clinks \(EPB0054\)](#)

75. We also heard concerns regarding the length of the contracts available through the DPS. Originally given for one year, the contracts had been extended to two years from 1 February 2020. Clinks expressed concern that this was a short period of time given the complexity of the bidding process, and that this caused smaller organisations to spend a significant amount of time bidding for a short-term speculative contract.⁸⁴

76. The Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) was meant to allow Governors to contract bespoke training, including with voluntary organisations, for their prisons. However, the current length of contracts is making it difficult for smaller organisations to bid. The length of DPS contracts should be extended beyond the current two years.

77. It is key that civil society is allowed to engage with prisons. To ensure that prisons fulfil this aim, a criteria must be added to the evaluation framework of Ofsted inspections to ensure that they examine how prisons engage with civil society.

Inspections

78. Prison inspections are undertaken by HM Inspectorate of Prisons for England and Wales (HMI Prisons), an independent inspectorate led by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. It provides independent scrutiny of the conditions for and treatment of prisoners and other detainees and reports on its findings. In England, Ofsted inspectors lead on the inspection of Education, Skills and Work. To ensure that establishments are held accountable to the same standard of performance as schools and colleges in the community, HMI Prisons' Expectations for Education, Skills and Work explicitly adopt Ofsted's inspection framework.

79. Under the inspection regime, HMI Prisons award a single grade to the establishment on the overall effectiveness of purposeful activity. This was in contrast to the previous contract regime where Ofsted awarded a grade for the Learning and Skills provider within the prison. Novus told us that it was now difficult for educational providers to understand their grade or performance. They continued:

... it is now more difficult for the provider to identify clear areas for improvement and where responsibility lies. It can also be demotivating for the provider and their teachers, as the opportunity to understand strengths and improvements is no longer there explicitly.⁸⁵

Witnesses agreed that a failure to meet standards was often a complicated picture, which could not always be attributed to one provider. Matthew Coffey, Chief Operating Officer of Ofsted, acknowledged that problems were often caused by the leadership and managers of prisons, rather than the four educational providers.⁸⁶ However, we were concerned that, during our evidence session with Ofsted, they were unable to identify the four providers.⁸⁷

80. Where it is clear that a provider is not meeting the required standards, under the PEF contracts a Governor is able to hold the provider to account and ask for an improvement plan. Ultimately, if the provider fails to take action to improve the service, they could lose 5% of their budget for the next quarter.

84 Clinks ([EPB0054](#))

85 LTE Group (trading as Novus) ([EPB0044](#))

86 [Q168](#)

87 [Q206](#)

81. In its written evidence, Ofsted noted that it was “very common” to find that prisons had not addressed the recommendations from the last inspection regime to a sufficient degree or, in some cases, at all.⁸⁸ Ofsted cannot take regulatory action against prisons, and Matthew Coffey expressed frustration with the lack of action to remedy the situation:

There are no consequences for failure in this respect at all [...] it’s frustrating. In every other walk of Ofsted’s life there are consequences—for a school it would be the Department for Education that would take action. But the Prison Service does not have the same arrangement. I have been at Ofsted since 2007 and have never seen a prison held to account for poor provision.⁸⁹

82. The current prison inspection regime does not give enough weight to the quality of education. The award of a single grade to the establishment makes it difficult to see the origin of the failure, therefore making it difficult to act to improve the situation.

83. We recommend that prisons have clear and meaningful KPIs related to education, training and employment which are monitored by Ofsted. The Ministry of Justice must also reform the inspection regime so that Ofsted is able to give a grade for the education provider within the prison. We recommend that Ofsted is given the legal tools to allow it to take regulatory action against individual prisons, including, where necessary, changes to the prison leadership.

88 Ofsted and HM Inspectorate of Prisons ([EPB0057](#))

89 [Q207](#)

5 Education Facilities and Infrastructure

84. During our inquiry, we heard about existing barriers to the successful delivery of prison education. A number of them are considered below: prison estate infrastructure; transfer of prisoners; organisation of the prison day; staffing levels of prison officers; staffing levels of prison educators; access to IT; and prison education funding.

Prison estate infrastructure

85. There are 119 prisons in England and Wales.⁹⁰ The prison estate is a mixture of publicly and privately-run institutions; around a third of the prison estate was built during the Victorian era. Only around a quarter of the prison estate dates from the late 20th and early 21st century. The then Chief Inspector of Prisons, Peter Clarke, in his 2019–2020 annual report, stated that prisoners were spending much of their lives locked in shared, overcrowded, insanitary cells.⁹¹ The Prisoners' Education Trust told us that prison infrastructure was a significant barrier to education and training in prisons, and spaces were not appropriately designed to support educational, training and classroom-based activities.⁹²

86. In 2020 the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee published reports that were critical of the attempts made by the Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to improve the prison estate.⁹³ The Public Accounts Committee said that despite promises to create 10,000 new-for-old prison places by 2020, just 206 new places had been delivered, and prisoners continued to be held in unsafe, crowded conditions that did not meet their needs. The 2020–21 Spending Review also included £315m capital funding which HMPPS said would be used to make a start on critical refurbishment projects. The Public Accounts Committee concluded that the £315 million was significantly below what was required to maintain the prison estate.⁹⁴

87. Witnesses agreed that there was a need for capital investment in the prison estate. Tutors from Milton Keynes College told us that they had to deal with “rotting walls and doors, mould, leaking roofs requiring buckets, lack of adequate heating”.⁹⁵ Novus told us that the improvement and updating of education facilities needed to become a core priority of the renewal of the national prison estate and that “learning delivery needs should be a key factor in the design requirements under the new Prison Estates Transformation Programme”.⁹⁶

Transfer of prisoners

88. The transfer of prisoners was seen as a significant barrier against effective prisoner education. It was particularly problematic when a prisoner was part way through a course not offered at the receiving prison.⁹⁷ The Prisoner Learning Alliance stated that they would like a process that enabled prisoners to be on “education hold” and not be eligible

90 This number includes four under 18 Youth Offender Institutions but does not include Secure Training Centres.

91 HM Inspectorate of Prisons, [Annual Report 2019–20](#), HC 856

92 Prisoners' Education Trust ([EPB0046](#))

93 National Audit Office, [Improving the Prison Estate](#), 7 February 2020

94 Public Accounts Committee, Fifteenth Report of Session 2019–2021, [Improving the prison estate](#), HC 244

95 Milan Grubnic, Ruth Carver, Tracey Bishop, Adrian Bryant and Shakti Karavadra ([EPB0032](#))

96 LTE Group (trading as Novus) ([EPB0044](#))

97 Prisoners' Education Trust ([EPB0046](#))

for transfer in certain specific circumstances.⁹⁸

89. *When considering moving prisoners, the position of where they are in a course or qualification should be considered. The ability of whether they would be able to continue their qualification where they are moved to, should also be a factor.*

Organisation of the prison day

90. In many prisons, learning events are scheduled for a whole morning or afternoon, each usually three hours long. Prisoners are then returned to their wing for a couple of hours over lunchtime for a roll count and officer shift change. Witnesses told us that the daily timetable at a prison worked against effective education. The Prisoners' Education Trust considered the length of classes to be too long, particularly for those already with little or negative prior experience of class-based education. They also noted that learning time was lost for several hours in the middle of the day when prisoners returned to their cells.⁹⁹ During our visit to HMP Thorn Cross, we heard how the prison had made changes to its prison day, and had made the classroom sessions shorter in order to encourage participation. They agreed that better use needed to be made of the full day.

Prison officer staffing levels

91. Prisons are currently facing an inability to recruit and keep staff. In August and September 2021, more than 200 officers resigned from permanent positions each month—the first time this level of resignations had been reached.¹⁰⁰ The resignation rate of prison officers has increased from 3.4% in financial year 2009/10 to 9.1% in 2020/21.¹⁰¹

92. Witnesses noted the implications of staffing shortages among prison officers for prisoners' opportunities to participate in education. Nacro described the consequences as follows: "Officer staffing levels [...] can have a significant impact on learning, as many hours of education can be lost due to the fact that people are not unlocked and/or escorted to their lessons".¹⁰²

Prison educators staffing levels

93. With University and College Union (UCU) research showing that seven in 10 teachers are set to leave prison education, tackling the crisis in staff recruitment and retention must be at the heart of any strategy to provide an effective prison education system.¹⁰³

94. Poor pay, lack of career development, unsafe working environments and no time or respect to do a quality job has left the recruitment and retention of qualified and experienced prison educators at crisis point. There are hundreds of prison education vacancies, with more money being offered to agency workers rather than long-standing and serving teachers.

98 Prisoner Learning Alliance ([EPB0066](#))

99 Prisoners' Education Trust ([EPB0046](#))

100 [PQ 106830](#), [on prison officer numbers], 1 February 2022

101 "[Chief Inspector warns on prison officer shortage](#)", Inside Time, 22 February 2022

102 Nacro ([EPB0030](#))

103 UCU and the Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA), [Hidden Voices](#), August 2021

95. Evidence provided by UCU to this inquiry shows that “urgent steps need to be taken to address the pay, terms and conditions of prison education staff, making them comparable to the rest of the education sector” because, “without such investment, it will be impossible to recruit the skilled staff needed to resource and run the education that prisons and prisoners so desperately need”.¹⁰⁴

96. In his evidence session with the committee, Matthew Coffey referenced the evidence in this report, saying: “I don’t disagree with these findings about recruitment and retention. There is a challenge. There is a problem”.¹⁰⁵ The Coates Review itself concluded that “the recruitment of high-quality teachers needs to be developed”.¹⁰⁶

Digital Infrastructure

97. The prison population does not have internet access. The majority of prisons in England and Wales do not have the cabling or hardware to support broadband, with just 18 out of 117 prisons possessing in-cell cabling.¹⁰⁷

98. We heard that some lower-risk prisoners in lower category prisons may have highly restricted access via an internal system, but this was the exception, not the rule. The Virtual Campus (VC) is a secure intranet system available in classrooms and libraries, which can be used under tutor supervision. Witnesses told us that accessing the communal areas where the VC is located could be problematic. It was not always possible to get prison officers to escort prisoners to the communal locations.¹⁰⁸ Often, there were only a few computer terminals in which to access the VC in each prison.¹⁰⁹ Peter Stanford, Director of the Longford Trust, was critical of the VC system, stating that it had been “failing for a number of years”.¹¹⁰

99. Witnesses overwhelmingly agreed that a significant failing of the current provision was the lack of access that prisoners have to the internet as a learning tool and as a key skill. Higher education in prisons is undertaken through distance learning, using organisations such as the Open University. David Breakspear told us that the lack of internet access had a huge impact on prisoners’ ability to participate in some of the techniques course providers employ, such as real-time participation in discussion forums and setting up virtual “buddy groups”, and that immediate, direct access to tutors for guidance and feedback was impossible.¹¹¹

100. Witnesses called for prisoners to have greater access to the internet, including in-cell technology. Francesca Cooney stated that access to digital technology would “revolutionise prison education”,¹¹² while the Prisoner Learning Alliance told us that it was their “number one priority”.¹¹³ In-cell technology, such as Chromebook laptops, would allow prisoners to have greater access to courses and tutors, enabling them to work at their own pace, and would provide continuity when they moved prisons. We heard examples of different

104 University and College Union ([EPB0055](#))

105 [Q235](#)

106 Ministry of Justice, [Unlocking Potential: A review of education in prison](#), May 2016

107 The Centre for Social Justice, [Digital Technology in Prisons](#), January 2021

108 [Q106](#) (Frances Cooney)

109 [Q334](#)

110 [Q43](#) (Peter Sanford)

111 [Q336](#) (David Breakspear)

112 [Q136](#)

113 Prisoner Learning Alliance ([EPB0066](#))

initiatives and projects allowing access to digital technology to support education across the prison estate, such as at HMP Berwyn, but these were far and few between.¹¹⁴

101. Understandably, we recognise that there could be some hesitancy in allowing prisoners access to the internet. But witnesses reassured us that the technology to ensure security existed, and we whole-heartedly agree that prisoners should only be given access to the internet if this can be tightly controlled, monitored and used for appropriate learning purposes.

102. The Minister acknowledged that the Government was coming from a “low base” with regards to digital infrastructure across the prison estate. Four prisons currently had in-cell technology, with this number due to increase to 15 by Summer 2022. She recognised the positive aspects of in-cell technology and while the Government was exploring issues around security “very, very carefully”, it wanted to “take this forward”.¹¹⁵

103. The lack of controlled and secure access to proper online education is a significant barrier to learning. It is stifling opportunity for improvement through education and leaving prisoners unprepared for the real world, lacking the digital skills they need for employment and life skills, and reducing their likelihood of reoffending. The digital divide between prisoners and the community is ever increasing. We cannot let this continue. The pandemic has brought into stark focus the need for prisoners to be able to work individually and in their cells. *The Government must set out, by the end of the year, a date for when all prisons will be able to support broadband.*

104. We have serious concerns around allowing prisoners free and un-fettered access to the internet. However, we have been assured that security concerns can be overcome as technology exists which allows access to be restricted to approved content which can be monitored. A change in attitude to technology in prisons is long overdue. *The Ministry of Justice must ensure that prisoners are taught the digital skills necessary to live in a digital age and those necessary for employment and life skills. If security can be assured and access can be monitored and tightly restricted to educational purposes, we recommend that the Ministry of Justice provide in-cell laptops, such as Chromebooks, to prisoners only when undertaking education.*

Prison education funding

105. The Institute of Government notes that despite the Government starting to reverse the reductions in spending on prisons and the number of prison officers, both remain below 2009/10 levels.¹¹⁶ Education funding in prisons has remained at the same level for the last five years (approximately £129 million per annum) and has been guaranteed at the current level for the life of the PEF contract.¹¹⁷ However in real terms (adjusted for inflation) this equates to an 8% decrease between financial year 2019/20 and 2022/23.¹¹⁸

114 [Q43](#) (Peter Stanford)

115 [Q398](#) (Victoria Atkins)

116 Institute for Government, [Prisons; Performance Tracker 2021](#)

117 Prisoner Learning Alliance ([EPB0066](#))

118 Ministry of Justice ([EPB0058](#)); HMT, [GDP deflators](#), 24 Mar 2022; Office for Budgetary Responsibility, [Economic and fiscal outlook](#), 23 Mar 2022 (table 1.7 of supplementary economy tables). GDP deflator growth for 2020/21 and 2021/22 have been averaged across the two years to smooth the distortions caused by pandemic-related factors. OBR forecasts are used for 2021/22.

106. Novus commented that education funding, and in turn the resources available to deliver education, were not enough to support the complexity of need that was presented by prisoners. Prison education was underfunded compared to mainstream community provision. For example, a comparison of the current Adult Education Budget (AEB) compared to the Prison Education Framework (PEF) shows that only one-third of the funding available under AEB is available per learner in PEF.¹¹⁹ Peter Cox said that there had been “years, if not decades” of underinvestment in capital facilities in prisons. This has had a limiting factor on the services that education providers could provide to learners.¹²⁰ However, Phil Copple reassured us that the overall level of investment in the prison estate was due to rise. Following the Spending Review, more than £500 million additional money would be invested in the prison estate.¹²¹

107. Prison Education is in a perilous state due to a continual decline in funding. The Government has not increased funding for prison education for the last five years. The current prison regime contains many barriers to the successful delivery of prison education. Without significant investment in the prison estate, in buildings, classrooms, equipment and technology, prisoners will not be able to get the skills and qualification that they need to find employment and turn their lives around. *The Ministry of Justice must undertake an audit across the whole prison estate on the quality of physical infrastructure necessary to provide a high level of education, such as libraries, classrooms and workshops. The Ministry of Justice must establish clear guidelines about the minimum standards of provision for education across the prison estate.*

108. *The Ministry of Justice must, by the end of this year, set out a clear budget for prisons for the next 10 years, which sets out a long-term strategy for prison education, and a minimum expected spend on prison education.*

119 LTE Group (trading as Novus) ([EPB0044](#))

120 [Q286](#)

121 [Q398](#) (Phil Copple)

6 Academic study

Basic skills

109. The current PEF contracts offer a core curriculum of numeracy, literacy and IT courses. Witnesses told us that this focus on basic skills has reduced flexibility of learning opportunities made available to prisoners. The Prisoners' Education Trust also expressed concerns about the literacy and numeracy qualifications offered by providers, questioning whether they were adequate, or recognised by employers and higher education providers.¹²²

110. Many prisoners have had a negative experience of education. Witnesses spoke of the need to embed basic skills in more applied learning experiences, and to approach learning in a different way. As Dame Coates commented:

[education] needs to be on the wings. It needs to be in the workshops. It needs to be equipping people to lead fulfilling lives. It does not need to be sitting in stuffy classrooms with bits of worksheet and paper and nothing. That is never going to get people who have already dropped out of the system back in it.¹²³

111. The importance of a broader curriculum to engage disaffected prisoners was seen as key. PeoplePlus commented that prisons tended to have a “blind spot” when it came to the role that arts could play to support positive outcomes in rehabilitation.¹²⁴ Safe Ground told us that the importance of art programmes “cannot and must not be overlooked or lost alongside a governmental drive to promote employment or functional skills”.¹²⁵

112. A broader curriculum was also seen as essential in terms of delivering the soft skills prisoners would need to gain employment, such as interview skills, oracy, financial education, or drafting a CV. The ability of individual prisoners to present appropriately, be organised, accept and provide feedback in a positive way, and engage constructively with colleagues was an important factor in whether they gained successful employment.¹²⁶

113. Witnesses expressed concern that the current curriculum offer was not available to prisoners on remand and on shorter sentences. Kiri Jolliffe told us that she was not allowed to start education courses while on remand.¹²⁷ David Breakspear, a former offender, argued that those on short-term sentences were the ones who needed education the most.¹²⁸

114. Some witnesses raised the issue of modular GCSEs. Dame Sally Coates set out the advantages of modular exams in the prison setting, particularly where transfers between prisons was common:

I do think for adult GCSEs for English and maths, particularly for prisoners and for adult learners, they should be able to take a module, bank it and then if you move prison, you have the algebra bit of the maths banked and you can go on to the next [...] which would create a sense of success and confidence.¹²⁹

122 Prisoners' Education Trust ([EPB0046](#))

123 [Q17](#)

124 PeoplePlus ([EPB0053](#))

125 Safe Ground ([EPB0005](#))

126 Prisoners' Education Trust ([EPB0046](#))

127 [Q331](#) (Kiri Jolliffe)

128 David Breakspear ([EPB0001](#))

129 [Q20](#) (Dame Sally Coates)

115. **The current provision of prison education is too narrow, and is not allowing prisoners to achieve their full potential. Prisoners must be able to access a varied and diverse curriculum. Whilst aiming to meet the basic needs of prisoners with numeracy, literacy and IT, the Ministry of Justice must introduce a broader prison education curriculum which supports prisoners' sentence and learning plans. The provision should also enable prisoners to embed these basic skills in more practical learning experiences. Where practical, prisoners should also be offered the chance to study wider subjects, including arts, and gain employability skills which will be crucial for them as they progress into society and the world of work.**

116. **We recognise the reality of prison life and that prisoners may be transferred, often at short notice. The Ministry of Justice must look at the ways that this can cause as little harm to their education as possible. We have already recommended that digital passports are introduced. We also recommend that the Ministry of Justice introduce modular courses in prisons for education and skills qualifications. This would allow prisoners to "bank" units of a qualification as they complete them, thereby reducing the disruption caused by prison transfers.**

Higher education

117. Witnesses told us that the current educational offer in prisons did not respond to the diverse range of sentence lengths, and that more attention was needed to look at the educational opportunities given to long-term prisoners. Research shows that prisoners who had undertaken education via distance learning are less likely to reoffend and reoffend less frequently than those who did not. For every 100 prisoners who undertake higher education courses, compared to those who did not, the number of prisoners who commit a proven reoffence within one year after release is lower by four to five individuals.¹³⁰

118. The growth in people serving longer and life sentences means that for many, release is some time away. Some will never be released or when they are, will be elderly and not job-seeking. Around one in nine prisoners are serving a life sentence, and the average minimum term in custody for a mandatory life sentence is now over 21 years. There are just over 1,400 people under the age of 25 serving life sentences with a minimum custodial sentence of 15 years.¹³¹ For these groups, the Prison Reform Trust argued that education had to be about more than short term 'employability'.¹³² Many of these prisoners sought to do higher education or other level 3+ courses.

119. We have already heard about how the lack of digital access affects learning in prisons. This is particularly acute when trying to access distance learning. Due to the limited technology available to prisoners, distance-learning courses are only accessible in paper-based format. The application process and delivery of distance learning is dependent on the support of prison education staff, which varies across establishments. There is a significant workload in sending off applications and ensuring that learners receive course materials and have access to libraries and (sometimes) word processing facilities. Jonathan Gilbert pointed out that it was challenging "doing my masters in the cell with just Post-it stickers and notebooks".¹³³

130 Justice Data Lab Experimental Statistics: [Employment and reoffending behaviour after support from Prisoners' Education Trust](#), January 2021

131 Prison Reform Trust ([EPB0045](#))

132 Prison Reform Trust ([EPB0045](#))

133 [Q334](#)

120. Witnesses spoke about the difficulties of applying for funding for distance learning, and the lack of available grants. The Prisoners' Education Trust noted that while there were a few sources of funding for prisoners wishing to do a degree, these grants were highly competitive and did not cover the bulk of degree fees.¹³⁴

121. Prisoners were able to apply for student loans using the same process as students in the community, although they were unable to make online applications. However, we heard that long sentenced prisoners who wished to study a degree fell foul of the “six-year rule”.¹³⁵ The current student loan regulations state that prisoners with more than six years left until their earliest release date are ineligible to access a student loan. Witnesses argued that this regulation disproportionately affected people who might benefit most from higher-level study.¹³⁶ Francesca Cooney called for prisoners to be allowed to take their first Level 3 qualifications for free, mirroring the opportunity afforded to adults in the community.¹³⁷ In addition, if an offender already had a degree, they were ineligible to receive a loan for a second degree. We heard how some prisoners funded the distance learning courses themselves, which could cost up to £5,000.¹³⁸

122. Alex Burghart MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Education, told us that the Government did not want to give loans to prisoners “who have no prospect of paying those loans back”.¹³⁹

123. Reoffending is lower in prisoners who participate in higher education. The Government must remove the “six-year rule” so that prisoners on long sentences can apply for higher education courses earlier in their sentence. This would give them motivation during their sentence and keep them focused on their potential employment opportunities following release.

Education prisons?

124. Some witnesses spoke of the need for the prison estate to offer specialised centre of excellence. Ben Leapman suggested turning one of the men's category “C-training prisons” into an “education prison” or “secure campus” run in partnership with a local university:

Prisoners with a year or more left to serve, who had the aptitude and enthusiasm for degree-level learning, could apply to transfer there. The secure campus would offer taught lectures and seminars [...] with the opportunity to begin a degree course during the term of imprisonment then continue it at a “bricks and mortar” campus after release.¹⁴⁰

125. Our Report makes it clear that education should be at the heart of the prison regime. The Government must look at innovative ways to make this a reality. We recommend that the Government establish a pilot scheme establishing specialised prisons with a focus on education, run in partnership with a local university, a further education college, or other recognised quality educational providers.

134 Prisoners' Education Trust ([EPB0046](#))

135 [The Open University](#) ([EPB0029](#))

136 Prisoners' Education Trust ([EPB0046](#))

137 [Q135](#)

138 [Q335](#)

139 [Q434](#)

140 Ben Leapman ([EPB0015](#))

7 Route to Employment

126. The reoffending rate for adult prisoners released from custody is 42%, with an estimated yearly cost of £15 billion.¹⁴¹ Many factors can help reduce reoffending post-release, but one of the most important is getting prison leavers into employment. Government statistics show that employment can reduce the chance of reoffending significantly—by up to nine percentage points compared to those without a job upon release.¹⁴² However, a significant number of people leaving prison are currently failing to find employment. The proportion of former prisoners in P45 employment one year after release is just 17%.¹⁴³

Understanding the labour market

127. Nearly all prisons offer a range of vocational programmes for their prisoners to access. However, the relevance and quality of these programmes was not consistent across the estate.¹⁴⁴ Witnesses expressed concern that vocational education in prison was not offering the skills needed in today’s labour market, and that many of the qualifications offered were outdated.¹⁴⁵

128. Witnesses called for a broader curriculum across the prison estate. We heard concerns that the vocational curriculum in women’s prisons was too narrow, often based on gender stereotypes, with a focus on courses such as hairdressing and beauty. Sasha Simonds, Head of Social Value at O’Neill & Brennan, expressed her disappointment at the difficulty with getting female prisoners into the construction industry, “unless the opportunities to train in the likes of bricklaying and carpentry available in the male estate are also made available to females”.¹⁴⁶ Minister Atkins acknowledged that the Government needed to improve the skills training available to female prisoners.¹⁴⁷

129. Witnesses called for regular reviews to understand local labour markets needs in the resettlement areas of each prison. Nacro stated that Governors needed to have “clear assessments of local need and a clear plan as to how the provision within their establishment will address particular skills gap”.¹⁴⁸ Catch22 stated that, with review of local labour markets, education could be tailored to help enhance job prospects.¹⁴⁹

130. During our visit to HMP Thorn Cross, we visited their employment hub. The Hubs provides a service where prison residents can find local and national job vacancies. They are designed to help prisoners find employment on temporary licence whilst in custody (ROTL) and on release.¹⁵⁰ They are, in effect, like small job centres, but inside the prison. Vacancies are displayed on a notice board and residents can come in to discuss employment in general and raise interest in any of the vacancies. Matthew Coffey called

141 Ministry of Justice, [Economic and social costs of reoffending](#), 2019

142 Ministry of Justice, [Analysis of the impact of employment on re-offending following release from custody, using Propensity Score Matching](#), March 2013

143 HM Prison & Probation Service, [Evaluation of Prisoner Learning: Initial impacts and delivery](#), 2018

144 Milton Keynes College ([EPB0026](#))

145 Ben Leapman ([EPB0015](#))

146 [Q363](#)

147 [Q422](#)

148 Nacro ([EPB0030](#))

149 Catch22 ([EPB0033](#))

150 Employment hubs are currently being piloted in HMPs Berwyn, Haverigg, Kirkham, Liverpool, Thorn Cross and Wymott.

them a “gamechanger,” stating that they helped to influence and inform the curriculum offer in a prison.¹⁵¹ Currently, there are nine Employment Hubs across the prison estate that are fully operational.

131. In its recently published Prisons Strategy White Paper, the Government announced that all resettlement prisons would have an Employment Adviser. They would “develop a local employment strategy that is unique to their prison as well as matching candidates to suitable roles for in-prison work, work placements on Release on Temporary Licence and jobs on release brought to the prison by the New Futures Network, the prison service’s network of employment brokers...”¹⁵²

Working with Employers

132. In 2018, the Government established The New Futures Network (NFN), a specialist part of the prison service that brokers partnerships between prisons and employers. Its aim is to provide employment opportunities for serving prisoners and prison leavers, as well as identify skills gaps within industries. Since launching as a pilot in three areas initially, the NFN now covers all 18 prison group regions across England and Wales.¹⁵³

133. In its Prisons Strategy White Paper, the Government announced that it would establish local Employment Boards in all resettlement prisons, “which link prisons with business networks to provide challenge and advice so that prisons deliver the skills and training that employers need”, increasing their number from the current 20 to 91.¹⁵⁴

134. Witnesses stated that much more needed to be done to establish stronger links between prisons and local employers. Ofsted noted that in too many prisons, “there is not sufficiently good relations with employers to help ensure that prisoners stand a good chance of obtaining employment on release”.¹⁵⁵ Milton Keynes College stated that successful programmes need to be developed in partnership with the provider, the prison and the employer, involving the employer in delivery, providing resources and to support the route into gaining a job. They noted that “partnership working between those with the educational expertise is really important, but does not always happen”.¹⁵⁶

135. During our inquiry, we took evidence from several companies who have set up successful training schemes and workshops in prisons. We welcome the commitment they have shown in training and employing prisoners. We agree with them that skills and training in prisons should be industry-led.¹⁵⁷ They told us that they were investing in prisoners’ education and training as part of their corporate social responsibility policies, not purely for philanthropic reasons, but because there was also a strong business case for doing so. Darren Burns, National Recruitment Manager at Timpson, explained that:

On the commercial reasons, people are very hardworking, very loyal. They stay with us longer than people we recruit from other streams. We find that they bring with them not only lots of life experience but personal resilience;

151 [Q232](#)

152 Ministry of Justice, [Prisons Strategy White Paper](#), December 2021 CP 581

153 Ministry of Justice ([EPB0058](#))

154 Ministry of Justice, [Prisons Strategy White Paper](#), December 2021 CP 581

155 Ofsted and HM Inspectorate of Prisons ([EPB0057](#))

156 Milton Keynes College ([EPB0026](#))

157 [Q360](#) (Darren Burns)

obviously, because they have been able to navigate their way through that prison sentence. It just enriches our business because we get people from lots of diverse backgrounds. They are some of the commercial reasons but, again, the societal reasons just very briefly are that we believe that people deserve a second chance.¹⁵⁸

136. While welcoming the work of the New Futures Network, witnesses expressed concern that it was only engaging with larger employers. Sasha Simmonds highlighted the need to work with small and medium sized companies, stating that it was smaller companies that took a lot of their workforce from prisons. She called for case studies to be published from all different types of companies.¹⁵⁹

137. We also heard concerns about the capacity of the New Futures Network. Simon Ashworth, Chief Policy Officer at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, told us: “If you have a co-ordinator who has to work across a cluster of prisons, they have a huge task in terms of where you need a range of skills with the individual prisons. They are dealing with employers. Brokering with other stakeholders...”.¹⁶⁰ To date there have been no published figures of people who have secured employment through the network.

138. Employment has been shown to reduce reoffending. Getting prisoners into employment therefore makes economic sense for society, easing the current burden on prisons, and allowing former prisoners to re-enter society. The low number of prisoners finding long-term employment following their release from prison is stark. The Ministry of Justice must improve its vocational skills offer to prisoners, ensuring that it is preparing prisoners for the current job market with qualifications that meet industry standards.

139. The prison estate has a role in supporting prisoners in finding employment. We welcome the employment hubs that are currently operational, such as that in HMP Thorn Cross, but believe that the scheme must be extended. The Government must, by the end of the year, set out a clear timetable for the roll-out of employment hubs across the prison estate, where appropriate.

140. No-one understands the skills market better than employers. Local partnership with employers is key to identifying and providing the necessary skills for the job market. During our inquiry, we heard of some fantastic partnerships between prisons and businesses. However, these examples are too few. The Ministry of Justice must build on this and significantly expand this approach. Prisons must be able to react to the needs of employers. We welcome the announcements in the Government’s White Paper to improve links between prisons and businesses, such as the establishment of Employment Advisers and local Employment Boards. *The Ministry of Justice must in its response to our Report set out clear timetables for the changes announced in its White Paper on Prisons Strategy.*

141. *The New Futures Network was established by the Ministry of Justice to build partnerships with employers and prisons. However, there is no published data as to what success it is having. The Ministry of Justice must publish annual data showing the number of employment opportunities it has found for former prisoners. The data must*

158 [Q385](#) (Darren Burns)

159 [Q383](#) (Sasha Simmonds)

160 [Q101](#) (Simon Ashworth)

show the size of the companies the Network is engaging with to ensure that it is engaging with employers of all sizes, including small and medium sized employers.

Release on Temporary Licence placements

142. Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) allows prisoners to be released temporarily into the community for specific purposes such as to engage in employment, to maintain family ties or to receive medical treatment. According to the MOJ's Policy Framework, ROTL facilitates the rehabilitation of prisoners by helping to prepare them for resettlement in the community once they are released. Not every prisoner is eligible to be released on temporary licence. Some, such as those posing the highest security threat, are barred altogether. In May 2019 the Government revised the rules on ROTL to allow more prisoners to become eligible for ROTL earlier in their sentence.

143. Employers told us that ROTL was an opportunity to build relationships between businesses and prisoners, leading to sustained employment. However Ted Rosner, founder of Redemption Roasters, told us that the Government's promise to increase the use of ROTL had yet to deliver significant results:

Our experience with ROTL has been very poor. We have made several requests for it at different prisons that we have operated in over the years and we have had zero success in getting it so far [...] there is a bit of a lack of willingness there.¹⁶¹

Sasha Simmonds told us that while the rules had been revised in 2019 to enable prisoners to be eligible for ROTL as soon as they transferred to open conditions, rather than the previous rules of having to wait three months, this was not being recognised within the prison estate: "the men and women who are able to go out on ROTL are still having to wait three months, and even longer in some cases, before they can go out".¹⁶²

144. *Release on Temporary Licence allows relationships to develop between prisoners and employers and allows prisoners to require vital employment skills. The Government must ensure that greater use is made of Release on Temporary Licence for work placements, thus enabling prisoners to receive employment experience towards the end of their sentence.*

Apprenticeships

145. During our inquiry, witnesses called for those eligible for ROTL to undertake apprenticeships. Many submissions highlighted that the lack of apprenticeships in prison was a huge obstacle to improving employment opportunities for prison leavers. Novus noted the importance of apprenticeships in developing vocational skills that directly correspond to employers' needs, and as a key learning route into employment for those in the community.¹⁶³ David Breakspear stated that apprenticeships for those in custody would provide "hope, and sometimes, hope is all you need to influence change".¹⁶⁴

161 [Q378](#) (Ted Rosner)

162 [Q378](#) (Sasha Simmonds)

163 LTE Group (trading as Novus) ([EPB0044](#))

164 David Breakspear ([EPB0001](#))

146. Having listened to the views of our witnesses, the Committee campaigned for prisoners to be able to undertake apprenticeships. The Chair of the Committee, supported by Committee Members, tabled an amendment to the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill [Lords].¹⁶⁵ As we have mentioned in our introduction, we were delighted that the Secretary of State for Justice accepted this call that prisoners should be able to study for apprenticeships. In announcing the change, the Secretary of State stated that prisoner apprenticeships would give prisoners “the skills and training they need to secure a job on release”. He added:

Getting offenders into work offers them a second chance to lead a more positive life and stay on the straight and narrow. Breaking the cycle of crime is critical to our mission to drive down reoffending, cut crime and protect the public.¹⁶⁶

The Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said that: “Apprenticeships will offer prisoners a lifechanging chance to gain the skills they need to secure a rewarding career, while providing more businesses with the skilled workforce they need to grow”.¹⁶⁷

147. In discussing the proposed changes during the Report stage of the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill [Lords], the Minister for Skills acknowledged our work in bringing about this change.¹⁶⁸

148. Our inquiry has shone a light on the benefits of prisoners being able to take apprenticeships. We are pleased that the Government has listened to the weight of evidence submitted to us on this issue, and will amend current Government policy. It is imperative that there is no delay in the introduction of this policy. *The Ministry of Justice must confirm by the Summer that the necessary changes to legislation to allow prisoners to take up apprenticeships will be made later this year.*

Apprenticeship Levy

149. The Apprenticeship Levy was introduced as a government scheme to fund apprenticeships. Apprenticeship Levy rules state that employers with a payroll of more than £3 million must pay a 0.5% levy on their total payroll, offset by a £15,000 government allowance. The levy is paid monthly through PAYE alongside income tax and national insurance contributions. Levy contributions appear in a digital account which can be used by the employer to arrange and pay for apprenticeship training. The funds can only be spent on apprenticeship training or End-point Assessment according to apprenticeship levy rules.¹⁶⁹

150. Darren Burns called for a change to the apprenticeship levy, allowing the funds companies paid into the Apprenticeship Levy to be directed towards their prisoner rehabilitation schemes. He told us:

165 [Amendment Paper](#), Skills and Post-16 Education Bill [Lords], As Amended, Monday 21 February 2022

166 [“Apprenticeships for prisoners to cut crime”](#), Ministry of Justice press release, 11 February 2022

167 [“Apprenticeships for prisoners to cut crime”](#), Ministry of Justice press release, 11 February 2022

168 Skills and Post-16 Education Bill [Lords], Report Stage, 21 February 2022, [Col 122](#)

169 After 24 months any unused levy funds expire and return to the Government. Non levy-paying employers can pay 5% of the apprenticeship course cost, and the Government will pay the remaining 95% through the process of ‘co-investment.’

We believe there needs to be a lot of flexibility and a lot more scope for us to direct these funds much more appropriately [...] We would like to see some of the rules relaxed or at least the scope broadened whereby we can provide prison leavers with opportunities to learn all our skills and services [...] If we could direct some of our levy into doing that, we think it would be worthwhile.¹⁷⁰

151. *In any future review of the Apprenticeship Levy, the Government must change the rules to allow businesses to direct it towards prisoner rehabilitation schemes.*

Encouraging businesses to employ former prisoners

152. Companies such as Timpson, Williams Homes, and Redemption Roasters are successful in working with prisoners and providing employment opportunities for former prisoners. However, Bounce Back reports that two-thirds of employers routinely exclude former prisoners when recruiting.¹⁷¹

153. Witnesses called for employers to be incentivised to employ prison leavers. Darren Burns called for the Government to introduce national insurance holidays to encourage employers to take on former prisoners, as doing so requires additional investment.¹⁷² Ted Rosner agreed that “employing prisoners and doing work in prisons often achieve the same results as with other people, but at about three times the effort”.¹⁷³

154. *Businesses may have some reservations about employing former prisoners, which the Government must work to overcome. The Government must introduce incentives to encourage businesses to employ former prisoners, such as national insurance holidays for the first year of employing former prisoners.*

Lack of Data

155. Currently, there appears to be limited data and no large-scale UK studies of prison education underway to evaluate its effectiveness. The Prisoner Learning Alliance told us that whilst there have been research studies, the evidence regarding the effectiveness of prison education and training programmes remained too sparse.¹⁷⁴

156. Weston College agreed that there was a “major data gap” in prisoner destination data for those who had been released: “There is no shared data sources that allows the provider to see the real impact of what the learning has achieved and how this has impacted on their return to society”.¹⁷⁵ Minister Burghart agreed that work was needed to improve data on whether prisoners “are moving into work, the sort of jobs that they are moving into, the sort of incomes that they are getting”.¹⁷⁶

157. *There is a lack of data about the impact of education and training in prisons. It is important that there is in-depth analysis on what kind of programmes are most*

170 [Q376](#) (Darren Burns)

171 Bounce Back ([EPB0074](#))

172 [Q383](#) (Darren Burns)

173 [Q383](#) (Ted Rosner)

174 Prisoner Learning Alliance ([EPB0066](#))

175 Weston College ([EPB0042](#))

176 [Q402](#)

effective, and on longer-term outcomes. *The Ministry of Justice must carry out a longitudinal study of prisoner destination data, comparing the prisoner outcomes of those who have received prison education with those that have not. This information should be shared with education providers, which would allow them to refine their education offer to best support the vocations and careers that former prisoners are pursuing.*

Conclusions and recommendations

Embedding a culture of education

1. The purpose of education and training in prisons should be to get prisoners onto the ladder of opportunity. It must play a key role in improving the employability of prisoners and therefore in reducing reoffending. However, prison education must be understood in broader terms than just improving the employability of a prisoner. Education allows a prisoner to gain self-confidence and provides mental health benefits in isolating conditions, while improving their behaviour in prison. Education has a value in itself, developing the person as a whole. The Ministry of Justice must develop prison education policy accordingly. (Paragraph 13)
2. The Coates Review highlighted the need for prison education to be at the heart of the prison system. Six years later, this aspiration has still not been realised. It is imperative that there is a renewed focus on embedding a culture of education into prison establishments. This will not happen unless it is supported by all prison departments, and by all levels of staff. The Ministry of Justice must ensure that there is an understanding across the prison estate about the importance of prison education. It is also incumbent on Governors to raise the profile of prison education and to promote and facilitate education in prisons wherever possible. (Paragraph 20)
3. *The job description and key performance measures used when assessing Governors must be amended to require Governors to ensure that providing adequate prison education and a culture of learning is part of their core responsibilities, and something on which they must be held to account for as part of their performance. Prison officers should also receive training to ensure that they understand the importance of education in supporting prisoners to find employment and reducing reoffending, so they develop a positive attitude towards the role that education has to play in prisons.* (Paragraph 21)
4. *There must also be a clear signal in each prison that education is an operational priority. We recommend that each prison has a Deputy Governor of Learning who is part of the Senior Management team, who is directly responsible for education audits and the educational outcomes of prisoners. The job description for this role must include qualifications and/or experience in prison education.* (Paragraph 22)
5. *Many prisoners have a negative view of education. Incentives therefore have a part to play in encouraging prisoners to engage, or re-engage, with education. We recommend that the Ministry of Justice ensures that pay for education is equal to the pay for prison work, to ensure that prisoners do not lose out by choosing education. In order to qualify for the equal pay, prisoners must be able to demonstrate progress within their studies. We also recommend that the Government examines the potential of using Release on Temporary License (ROTL) as an incentive to encourage prisoners to engage with education. In order to qualify for the equal pay, prisoners must be able to demonstrate progress within their studies. We also recommend that the Government examines the potential of using Release on Temporary License (ROTL) as an incentive to encourage prisoners to engage with education.* (Paragraph 28)

Assessment of needs

6. *A high proportion of prisoners have learning needs. It is concerning that prisons have only had to screen for additional learning needs since 2019. This means that the majority of the prison population may never have gone through a screening process. It is clear that there is a lack of data around the numbers of prisoners with special needs and that the true scale of the issue is not known. Government figures currently rely heavily on prisoners self-identifying, and many may be unaware of their learning difficulties or too embarrassed to ask for support. The Ministry of Justice must re-design CURIOUS to better capture complete data on the levels of prisoners with learning difficulties across the prison estate. It must allow more than one condition to be clearly identified and recorded in the system, and its use must be extended to private prisons. This will enable the Government to properly identify and target funding and support to those that need it most across the prison estate. Assessment and resources for people with ESOL needs should also be considered. (Paragraph 42)*
7. *The current screening process is not adequate to identify prisoners with additional learning needs. The Ministry of Justice must introduce a consistent assessment process for every prisoner when they enter the prison system. We believe there is a strong case for every prisoner to receive an assessment for learning needs from an educational psychologist, or at the very least a more intensive form of screening, and we recommend that the Ministry of Justice prepares a cost appraisal for implementing such an approach. (Paragraph 43)*
8. *There needs to be a whole prison approach to prisoners with learning difficulties. This is currently hampered by the lack of information sharing between the community and the prison estate regarding prisoners' educational attainment in the community, and any learning difficulties that were identified. This also continues during the prison sentence, with different departments holding their own information on prisoners. There must be greater integrated working between different providers in custody—between education, health and offender management. The Government must amend legislation to enable data on prisoners to be shared so that prisons can access prisoners' previous records of educational attainment from the National Pupil Database, and also to enable previous diagnosis on learning needs to be shared. (Paragraph 44)*
9. *Support for prisoners with learning difficulties is long over-due. We welcome the Government's recent commitment in its Prisons Strategy White Paper to provide dedicated specialist support staff, but the Government must ensure that there is adequate resourcing for this. The Government must, in its response to this Report, provide greater clarity on the funding available to fund specialist support staff, how many will be appointed, where they will be distributed across the prison estate, with a minimum of one SENCO per prison, and the timescale for their introduction across the prison estate. (Paragraph 45)*
10. *Developing individual learning plans with prisoners helps to secure their commitment to, and ownership of, their own education, and provides a focus on individual learning. It helps to make prisoners aware of the options available to them in terms of learning opportunities, and can be used to measure their attainment*

and their progress towards their goals. *The Ministry of Justice must re-establish a National Careers Service across the prison estate in order to provide advice and support to prisoners in identifying education and employment opportunities.* (Paragraph 52)

11. *We recommend that all prisoners have a personalised Individual Learning Plan linked to their sentence plan, created at the start of their time in prison. This should include the SEND assessment undertaken at their entry into the prison system. The Individual Learning Plan should be updated with their progression and development during their prison sentence.* (Paragraph 53)
12. Prisoners are often transferred with short notice across the prison estate. The loss or delay in the transfer of their educational records can have serious repercussions on their ability to continue their studies, and can in some cases cause prisoners to become disheartened and to give up on their learning. It is unacceptable that the effort made by prisoners in improving themselves can be so easily discarded. (Paragraph 58)
13. *The Ministry of Justice must introduce a digital education passport, which contains a record of a prisoner's learning, and any identified educational needs, that follows prisoners through their sentence and across the prison estate, and which can be shown to potential employers.* (Paragraph 59)

Education delivery

14. The quality of prison education is of huge concern and has been deemed “inadequate”. The vision of Governor autonomy, as set out by the Coates Review, has not been realised by the new contracts and we are disappointed that the new contractual arrangements resulted in the same four educational providers being appointed. The new contracts were meant to encourage partnership between prisons, prison educators, the further education sector and the voluntary sector, but in practice bureaucratic contracts undermine this vision and make educational provision transactional, rather than rooted in the needs of the individual and the local area. The Government must ensure that there is a greater emphasis on working with the Further Education sector. (Paragraph 70)
15. *We have concerns about whether the Prison Education Framework contracts are able to deliver the improvement in prison education that is desperately needed. The Government must carry out a wholesale review of the current prison education framework by the end of 2022, with a view to improving the current contract structure, before the contracts are considered for extension in 2023. The review should examine how the contracts could be improved to encourage partnership working, how to ensure that Governors have the autonomy to choose their education providers and to work with the further education sector, and how to develop a focus on engaging with local employers, including SMEs.* (Paragraph 71)
16. *We also recommend that all prison Governors are given the appropriate training by the Ministry of Justice to acquire the skills to manage the contracts with their education providers more effectively.* (Paragraph 72)

17. The Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) was meant to allow Governors to contract bespoke training, including with voluntary organisations, for their prisons. However, the current length of contracts is making it difficult for smaller organisations to bid. *The length of DPS contracts should be extended beyond the current two years.* (Paragraph 76)
18. *It is key that civil society is allowed to engage with prisons. To ensure that prisons fulfil this aim, a criteria must be added to the evaluation framework of Ofsted inspections to ensure that they examine how prisons engage with civil society.* (Paragraph 77)
19. The current prison inspection regime does not give enough weight to the quality of education. The award of a single grade to the establishment makes it difficult to see the origin of the failure, therefore making it difficult to act to improve the situation. (Paragraph 82)
20. *We recommend that prisons have clear and meaningful KPIs related to education, training and employment which are monitored by Ofsted. The Ministry of Justice must also reform the inspection regime so that Ofsted is able to give a grade for the education provider within the prison. We recommend that Ofsted is given the legal tools to allow it to take regulatory action against individual prisons, including, where necessary, changes to the prison leadership.* (Paragraph 83)

Education facilities and infrastructure

21. *When considering moving prisoners, the position of where they are in a course or qualification should be considered. The ability of whether they would be able to continue their qualification where they are moved to, should also be a factor.* (Paragraph 89)
22. The lack of controlled and secure access to proper online education is a significant barrier to learning. It is stifling opportunity for improvement through education and leaving prisoners unprepared for the real world, lacking the digital skills they need for employment and life skills, and reducing their likelihood of reoffending. The digital divide between prisoners and the community is ever increasing. We cannot let this continue. The pandemic has brought into stark focus the need for prisoners to be able to work individually and in their cells. *The Government must set out, by the end of the year, a date for when all prisons will be able to support broadband.* (Paragraph 103)
23. We have serious concerns around allowing prisoners free and un-fettered access to the internet. However, we have been assured that security concerns can be overcome as technology exists which allows access to be restricted to approved content which can be monitored. A change in attitude to technology in prisons is long overdue. The Ministry of Justice must ensure that prisoners are taught the digital skills necessary to live in a digital age and those necessary for employment and life skills. *The Ministry of Justice must ensure that prisoners are taught the digital skills necessary to live in a digital age and those necessary for employment and life skills. If security can be assured and access can be monitored and tightly restricted to educational purposes, we recommend that the Ministry of Justice provide in-cell laptops, such as Chromebooks, to prisoners only when undertaking education.* (Paragraph 104)

24. Prison Education is in a perilous state due to a continual decline in funding. The Government has not increased funding for prison education for the last five years. The current prison regime contains many barriers to the successful delivery of prison education. Without significant investment in the prison estate, in buildings, classrooms, equipment and technology, prisoners will not be able to get the skills and qualification that they need to find employment and turn their lives around. *The Ministry of Justice must undertake an audit across the whole prison estate on the quality of physical infrastructure necessary to provide a high level of education, such as libraries, classrooms and workshops. The Ministry of Justice must establish clear guidelines about the minimum standards of provision for education across the prison estate.* (Paragraph 107)
25. *The Ministry of Justice must, by the end of this year, set out a clear budget for prisons for the next 10 years, which sets out a long-term strategy for prison education, and a minimum expected spend on prison education.* (Paragraph 108)

Academic study

26. The current provision of prison education is too narrow, and is not allowing prisoners to achieve their full potential. Prisoners must be able to access a varied and diverse curriculum. *Whilst aiming to meet the basic needs of prisoners with numeracy, literacy and IT, the Ministry of Justice must introduce a broader prison education curriculum which supports prisoners' sentence and learning plans. The provision should also enable prisoners to embed these basic skills in more practical learning experiences. Where practical, prisoners should also be offered the chance to study wider subjects, including arts, and gain employability skills which will be crucial for them as they progress into society and the world of work.* (Paragraph 115)
27. We recognise the reality of prison life and that prisoners may be transferred, often at short notice. The Ministry of Justice must look at the ways that this can cause as little harm to their education as possible. We have already recommended that digital passports are introduced. *We also recommend that the Ministry of Justice introduce modular courses in prisons for education and skills qualifications. This would allow prisoners to "bank" units of a qualification as they complete them, thereby reducing the disruption caused by prison transfers.* (Paragraph 116)
28. *Reoffending is lower in prisoners who participate in higher education. The Government must remove the "six-year rule" so that prisoners on long sentences can apply for higher education courses earlier in their sentence. This would give them motivation during their sentence and keep them focused on their potential employment opportunities following release.* (Paragraph 123)
29. *Our Report makes it clear that education should be at the heart of the prison regime. The Government must look at innovative ways to make this a reality. We recommend that the Government establish a pilot scheme establishing specialised prisons with a focus on education, run in partnership with a local university, a further education college, or other recognised quality educational providers.* (Paragraph 125)

Route to employment

30. Employment has been shown to reduce reoffending. Getting prisoners into employment therefore makes economic sense for society, easing the current burden on prisons, and allowing former prisoners to re-enter society. The low number of prisoners finding long-term employment following their release from prison is stark. The Ministry of Justice must improve its vocational skills offer to prisoners, ensuring that it is preparing prisoners for the current job market with qualifications that meet industry standards. (Paragraph 138)
31. *The prison estate has a role in supporting prisoners in finding employment. We welcome the employment hubs that are currently operational, such as that in HMP Thorn Cross, but believe that the scheme must be extended. The Government must, by the end of the year, set out a clear timetable for the roll-out of employment hubs across the prison estate, where appropriate.* (Paragraph 139)
32. No-one understands the skills market better than employers. Local partnership with employers is key to identifying and providing the necessary skills for the job market. During our inquiry, we heard of some fantastic partnerships between prisons and businesses. However, these examples are too few. The Ministry of Justice must build on this and significantly expand this approach. Prisons must be able to react to the needs of employers. We welcome the announcements in the Government's White Paper to improve links between prisons and businesses, such as the establishment of Employment Advisers and local Employment Boards. *The Ministry of Justice must in its response to our Report set out clear timetables for the changes announced in its White Paper on Prisons Strategy.* (Paragraph 140)
33. *The New Futures Network was established by the Ministry of Justice to build partnerships with employers and prisons. However, there is no published data as to what success it is having. The Ministry of Justice must publish annual data showing the number of employment opportunities it has found for former prisoners. The data must show the size of the companies the Network is engaging with to ensure that it is engaging with employers of all sizes, including small and medium sized employers.* (Paragraph 141)
34. *Release on Temporary Licence allows relationships to develop between prisoners and employers and allows prisoners to require vital employment skills. The Government must ensure that greater use is made of Release on Temporary Licence for work placements, thus enabling prisoners to receive employment experience towards the end of their sentence.* (Paragraph 144)
35. Our inquiry has shone a light on the benefits of prisoners being able to take apprenticeships. We are pleased that the Government has listened to the weight of evidence submitted to us on this issue, and will amend current Government policy. It is imperative that there is no delay in the introduction of this policy. *The Ministry of Justice must confirm by the Summer that the necessary changes to legislation to allow prisoners to take up apprenticeships will be made later this year.* (Paragraph 148)
36. *In any future review of the Apprenticeship Levy, the Government must change the rules to allow businesses to direct it towards prisoner rehabilitation schemes.* (Paragraph 151)

37. *Businesses may have some reservations about employing former prisoners, which the Government must work to overcome. The Government must introduce incentives to encourage businesses to employ former prisoners, such as national insurance holidays for the first year of employing former prisoners. (Paragraph 154)*
38. *There is a lack of data about the impact of education and training in prisons. It is important that there is in-depth analysis on what kind of programmes are most effective, and on longer-term outcomes. The Ministry of Justice must carry out a longitudinal study of prisoner destination data, comparing the prisoner outcomes of those who have received prison education with those that have not. This information should be shared with education providers, which would allow them to refine their education offer to best support the vocations and careers that former prisoners are pursuing. (Paragraph 157)*

Formal minutes

Wednesday 11 May

Members present

Robert Halfon, in the Chair

Apsana Begum

Miriam Cates

Anna Firth

Tom Hunt

Dr Caroline Johnson

Kim Johnson

Ian Mearns

Kate Osborne

Angela Richardson

Draft Report (*Not just another brick in the wall: why prisoners need an education to climb the ladder of opportunity*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 29 read and agreed to.

Paragraph—(*Kim Johnson*)—brought up and read, as follows:

Secure schools as a concept and material reality are deeply concerning. There is a need to end the school-to-prison pipeline and exclusions that disproportionately impact Black and SEND students. The first Secure School will be Oasis Academy Restore and is set to open in 2022 at a cost of over £20 million. Thirty-six children's rights organisations have written to the Government opposing this. Secure Schools will be child prisons, not schools, and will be accountable to the MoJ, not DfE. Where the aims of education are determined by justice professionals, contracting priorities divert resources away from rehabilitation and life-enhancing opportunities of education. Secure Schools will expand the child prison population, when the Government has committed to ending it. This Committee believes that instead of imprisoning children, this Government must invest in early interventions and towards schools with smaller class sizes, teaching assistants, pastoral support and counsellors.

Question put, That the paragraph be read a second time.

The Committee divided:

Ayes, 4	Noes, 5
Apsana Begum	Miriam Cates
Kim Johnson	Anna Firth
Ian Mearns	Tom Hunt
Kate Osborne	Dr Caroline Johnson
	Angela Richardson

Question accordingly negatived.

Paragraphs 30 to 157 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Adjourned till Tuesday 17 May at 9.30am

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 20 April 2021

Dame Sally Coates DBE; **Rod Clark**, former Chief Executive Officer, Prisoners' Education Trust and panel member, Coates Review; **Peter Stanford**, Director, Longford Trust, and panel member, Coates Review

[Q1–55](#)

Tuesday 25 May 2021

Lisa Capper MBE, Director of Education and Skills, NACRO; **Shereen Lawrence**, Peer Advisor Network Coordination Manager, St Giles Trust; **Julian Smith**, CEO, Bounce Back

[Q56–78](#)

Simon Ashworth, Chief Policy Officer, Association of Employment and Learning Providers; **David Hughes**, Chief Executive, Association of Colleges

[Q79–104](#)

Tuesday 8 June 2021

Michala Robertson, Open University; **Stephen Johnson**, Prison Governors Association; **Francesca Cooney**, Prisoner Learning Alliance; **Peter Dawson**, Prison Reform Trust

[Q105–166](#)

Tuesday 21 September 2021

Matthew Coffey, Chief Operating Officer, Ofsted; **Paul Joyce**, Deputy Director for Further Education and Skills, Ofsted

[Q167–247](#)

Peter Cox, Managing Director, Novus; **Sally Alexander**, Principal, Milton Keynes College; **Andrea Greer**, Deputy Principal, Weston College; **Sophie Sterling**, Business Development and Partnerships Director, People Plus

[Q248–319](#)

Tuesday 2 November 2021

Jonathan Gilbert; **Kiri Jolliffe**; **Femi Laryea-Adekimi**; **David Breakspear**; **Ben Leapman**

[Q320–352](#)

Tuesday 14 December 2021

Darren Burns, National Recruitment Manager, Timpson; **Ted Rosner**, Founder, Redemption Roasters; **Sasha Simmonds**, Head of Social Value, O'Neill & Brennan; **Tony Hughes**, Commercial Director, Williams Homes

[Q353–394](#)

Tuesday 18 January 2022

Alex Burghart MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Education; **Louise Wright**, Deputy Director for Apprenticeships, Participation and Traineeships, Department for Education; **Victoria Atkins MP**, Minister of State for Prisons and Probation, Ministry of Justice; **Phil Copple**, Director General of Prisons, HMPPS

[Q395–446](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

EPB numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Adel Beck Secure Children's Home ([EPB0031](#))
- 2 Association of Employment and Learning Providers ([EPB0024](#))
- 3 Bounce Back ([EPB0074](#))
- 4 Breakspear, David (Co-Founder, What Can Be) ([EPB0001](#))
- 5 Catch22 ([EPB0033](#))
- 6 Catholic Church (Bishops' Conference of England and Wales) ([EPB0004](#))
- 7 Chartered Institute of Libraries and Information Professionals, Prison Libraries Group ([EPB0008](#))
- 8 Children's Commissioner's Office ([EPB0052](#))
- 9 City & Guilds and City & Guilds Foundation ([EPB0040](#))
- 10 Clinks ([EPB0054](#))
- 11 Code4000 ([EPB0020](#))
- 12 Coracle Online Ltd ([EPB0027](#))
- 13 Criminal Justice Alliance ([EPB0047](#))
- 14 DWRM (Doing What Really Matters) ([EPB0006](#))
- 15 Earle, Dr Rod (Senior lecturer, The Open University) ([EPB0072](#))
- 16 Entrepreneurs Unlocked CIC ([EPB0014](#))
- 17 Grubnic, Milan; Ruth Carver; Tracey Bishop; Adrian Bryant and Shakti Karavadra (HMPPS Springhill, Milton Keynes College) ([EPB0032](#))
- 18 Howard League for Penal Reform ([EPB0060](#))
- 19 IPSEA ([EPB0068](#))
- 20 Independent Monitoring Boards ([EPB0069](#))
- 21 Inside Connections Support CIC ([EPB0043](#))
- 22 Jameson, Melanie ([EPB0048](#))
- 23 Jones, Penelope (member, Independent Monitoring Board HMP/YOI Isis) ([EPB0063](#))
- 24 Just for Kids Law ([EPB0061](#))
- 25 Kirby, Professor Amanda ([EPB0016](#))
- 26 Leach, Debbie (Kent Surrey and Sussex Regional Learning, Skills and Employment Lead, HMPS) ([EPB0049](#))
- 27 Leese, Dr Maggie; Laura Goldsack; Dr Victoria Bell; and Jennifer Ferguson (Teesside University) ([EPB0071](#))
- 28 LTE Group (trading as Novus) ([EPB0044](#))
- 29 LTE Group (trading as Novus) ([EPB0082](#))
- 30 LTE Group (trading as Novus) ([EPB0135](#))
- 31 Leapman, Ben ([EPB0015](#))

- 32 Linnett, Mr Tony (Volunteer, Independent Monitoring Board for HMP Isis) ([EPB0065](#))
- 33 Local Government Association (LGA) ([EPB0022](#))
- 34 Middleton, Tristan; Adeel ahmed Shafi; and Chris Jones (School of Education and Humanities, University of Gloucestershire) ([EPB0018](#))
- 35 Milton Keynes College ([EPB0127](#))
- 36 Milton Keynes College ([EPB0026](#))
- 37 Ministry of Justice ([EPB0075](#))
- 38 Ministry of Justice ([EPB0058](#))
- 39 Ministry of Justice ([EPB0136](#))
- 40 NACRO ([EPB0030](#))
- 41 NAVSH ([EPB0064](#))
- 42 O'Grady, Dr Anne (Principal Lecturer, Nottingham Trent University) ([EPB0051](#))
- 43 Ofsted ([EPB0076](#))
- 44 Ofsted; and HM Inspectorate of Prisons ([EPB0057](#))
- 45 Peabody, Agatha ([EPB0036](#))
- 46 PeoplePlus ([EPB0081](#))
- 47 PeoplePlus ([EPB0053](#))
- 48 Prison Policy Network ([EPB0073](#))
- 49 Prison Reform Trust ([EPB0045](#))
- 50 Prison Research Network (part of British Society of Criminology) ([EPB0035](#))
- 51 Prisoners' Education Trust ([EPB0046](#))
- 52 Prisoner Learning Academic Network ([EPB0050](#))
- 53 Prisoner Learning Alliance ([EPB0066](#))
- 54 Progressing Prisoners Maintaining Innocence (PPMI) ([EPB0028](#))
- 55 Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists ([EPB0059](#))
- 56 Samuels QC, His Honour John (President, Prisoners' Education Trust) ([EPB0007](#))
- 57 Safe Ground ([EPB0005](#))
- 58 Shannon Trust ([EPB0039](#))
- 59 Smith, Raymond ([EPB0013](#))
- 60 Socrates Software Ltd ([EPB0056](#))
- 61 South and West Yorkshire Resettlement Consortium ([EPB0023](#))
- 62 Southwark Virtual School ([EPB0025](#))
- 63 St Giles ([EPB0067](#))
- 64 StandOut ([EPB0034](#))
- 65 The Bell Foundation ([EPB0019](#))
- 66 The National Association for Youth Justice ([EPB0041](#))
- 67 The Open University ([EPB0029](#))
- 68 Traveller Movement ([EPB0038](#))

- 69 University and College Union (UCU) ([EPB0077](#))
- 70 University and College Union (UCU) ([EPB0055](#))
- 71 Unlocked Graduates ([EPB0011](#))
- 72 Vance, Joanne ([EPB0003](#))
- 73 Wates Group ([EPB0078](#))
- 74 Weston College ([EPB0079](#))
- 75 Weston College ([EPB0042](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2021–22

Number	Title	Reference
1st Report	The forgotten: how White working-class pupils have been let down, and how to change it	HC 85
2nd Report	Appointment of the Chief Regulator of Ofqual	HC 512
3rd Report	Strengthening Home Education	HC 84
4th Report	Is the Catch-up Programme fit for purpose?	HC 940
1st Special Report	Strengthening Home Education: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 823

Session 2019–21

Number	Title	Reference
1st Report	Getting the grades they've earned: Covid-19: the cancellation of exams and 'calculated' grades	HC 617
2nd Report	Appointment of the Children's Commissioner for England	HC 1030
3rd Report	A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution	HC 278
4th Report	Appointment of the Chair of the Office for Students	HC 1143
1st Special Report	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2019	HC 668
2nd Special Report	Getting the grades they've earned: COVID-19: the cancellation of exams and 'calculated' grades: Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 812
3rd Special Report	A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1310