

BIS | Department for Business
Innovation & Skills

CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Review of Offender
Learning

AUGUST 2010



Ministry of
JUSTICE

Introduction

Offender learning is a vital element within the offender skills and employment agenda. We know that, especially in concert with the resolution of housing issues, it is a very significant factor in reducing re-offending. We need to focus on protecting the public from the costs and effects of crime. Effective and relevant offender learning provision makes offenders better able to find work, and so more of an asset to the economy, and less of a concern to the wider community, particularly through preventing people from becoming the victims of tomorrow.

In December 2006, *Reducing Re-offending Through Skills and Employment: Next Steps* (“*Next Steps*”) set out a plan of actions to improve the effectiveness of the cross-government arrangements for delivering skills and providing the employment services, within the context of the criminal justice system, that lead to reduced re-offending. A great deal of activity has taken place since then, including the appointment of a new set of offender learning providers, the introduction of separate arrangements for providing careers information and advice, the introduction by the National Offender Management Service of arrangements to support offenders on transition back into the community, and a strategic review of employment services for offenders.

The review of offender learning announced by John Hayes, Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, will assess progress against the policy framework set out in the *Next Steps* document and make recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the arrangements. The review is taking full account of the earlier strategic review of employment services for offenders, and will inform the Ministry of Justice’s Autumn Green Paper setting out the proposed approach to sentencing and rehabilitation reform. *Next Steps* can be found at <http://noms.justice.gov.uk/news-publications-events/publications/strategy/DfES-Reducing-Re-Offending?view=Binary>

This call for evidence is an important part of the review: we want to know what you think and why. This is your chance to tell us what we can start doing, do better or stop doing at all.

We look forward to hearing from you.



Jane Bateman
Chair of the Offender Learning Review Steering Group

What is the format of this Review?

The Review begins with this call for evidence intended to secure the views of those involved or affected by offender learning, as well as other interested parties, who are able to provide evidence in support of their answers.

The Review will produce a report and final recommendations for Ministers in October. The outcome of this will be published in due course.

What does this Review cover?

The Review is looking at all elements of the offender learning system in the adult prison estate, and for adults serving sentences or being supervised in the community, in England. It does not cover the prison estate in Wales or the education arrangements in the secure youth justice system, although it is interested in the transition arrangements. Immigration Removal Centres are outside the scope of the review.

How will the Review be carried out?

The Review is being steered by a group of officials from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Skills Funding Agency, the National Offender Management Service and Jobcentre Plus. The broad composition of the Steering Group reflects the significant, ongoing interest across departments in the agenda and the continuing need to articulate the learning, skills and employment arrangements as part of the rehabilitation reform.

The review team is drawn similarly from across the departments and their agencies.

It is crucial that the Review is informed by the evidence and experience of those involved in, or affected by, the offender learning arrangements. Gathering evidence to inform recommendations will form a substantial part of the Review's work.

How do I respond to the call for evidence?

As this is a broad subject, we have posed lots of questions: these cover both strategic and operational aspects and it is not expected that all respondents will be able to provide evidence to all of the questions. The Review is working to a rapid timescale: your response should be no longer than 2,500 words.

Our preference is for responses by email to offenderlearningreview@bis.gsi.gov.uk.

If absolutely unavoidable, you can send responses by post to:

Offender Learning Review Team
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
Level 2, Spur 1
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

Please submit responses as soon as possible and no later than 5:00pm on Friday 24th September 2010, making clear whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents, and how the views of your members were assembled.

A hard copy of this call for evidence is available on request by emailing your request and postal address details to: offenderlearningreview@bis.gsi.gov.uk.

Questions

We would welcome views on the following questions. Respondents need not feel they should supply comments for every question, but only those for which they have experience. In each case, it would be helpful if your response could make clear what has guided your answer to the question posed, e.g. personal experience, feedback from members, feedback from the public, specific research or evidence.

Overarching issues

Call for evidence	
1.	How well do offender learners achieve and enjoy their learning?
2.	How well do offender learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?
3.	Should the delivery of offender learning focus more on outcomes than targets? How would success be measured?
4.	What is the role of the careers information and advice service in respect of offenders and how effective is it?

Gaining skills and improving employability

The framework to continue improving the planning, organisation and funding of learning and skills, builds on the earlier introduction of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service reforms as part of the responsibilities of the mainstream management and funding arrangements that aimed to forge stronger links with mainstream learning services for adults.

Call for evidence	
5.	To what extent has the introduction of the Learner Plan system (for transferring learning data as an offender moves into, through and out of custody) reduced the incidence of repeat assessment and the learner demotivation to which that leads?
6.	How effectively does the provision in both custody and the community

	meet the needs and interests of users?
7.	How can we improve progression in the continuation of learning or in to employment post release?
8.	How effectively does the provider use partnerships to develop its provision to meet learners' needs?

We have introduced a new core curriculum in prisons and put in place strengthened careers information and advice arrangements that will, by the summer of 2012, become part of the integrated adult careers service available to all adults across England. Together, these support offenders in developing individual learning plans that address their particular needs, and allow those needs to be met as they move around and through the system. The new Next Step service providing adult careers advice will be available to offenders in the community.

Call for evidence	
9.	What further actions should be taken to target resources in order to have the greatest impact on reducing re-offending by equipping offenders with the skills and qualifications they need to secure and sustain employment?
10.	What factors do we need to take into account in redistributing resources so that the right provision reaches the most appropriate groups of learners in custodial or community settings?
11.	Are there aspects of learning for which the current arrangements over provide – or aspects where a different mix of provision is needed?
12.	How might we achieve better value for money through redistribution of resources? How can we best allocate resources to meet the needs of offenders seeking higher education and distance learning options?

We set out plans to sharpen the accountabilities that underpin integrated learning and employment services for offenders, in the light of new offender management arrangements at regional level. There has been much change in the landscape of organisations involved in the skills and employment agenda but the principles of effective working at local level, and proper co-ordination at levels above that, still hold good.

Call for evidence	
13.	How should we go about ensuring localism and the Big Society agenda is taken in to account in the arrangements for determining the offender learning offer, especially for offenders in the community who will

	largely access mainstream learning services?
14.	How well do offender learners make a positive contribution to the community?

We set out plans to design and develop an offender campus delivery model, to be trialled by partnerships within two test bed regions. Arrangements would focus on providing more personalised learning based on information and advice services including assessment identifying capabilities, work aspirations and skills needs. Skills training would be broadly based, covering a range of issues including literacy, language and numeracy skills, attitude and behaviour, disclosure skills training, life and financial literacy skills, enterprise and self-employment training, with vocational skills development led by employer needs.

Call for evidence	
15.	How well have partnerships between learning providers, prison staff and other agencies evolved to the benefit of offender learners? Where partnerships are proven to be ineffective, how can that be addressed?
16.	Do these factors bear more significantly on the public sector, or are private sector or third sector organisations most affected?
17.	Have you examples of similar collaborative working, perhaps involving local strategic direction-setting, which have worked well or been ineffective? What were the key factors in determining success or failure?

Motivated to work – skilled for employment

A mix of activities to improve training and work experience in order to improve pathways into employment were put in place. So far as learning delivery was concerned, the focus was on strengthening the emphasis on providing work with skills development in custody and community, and using the design of the prison day – and prison activities and facilities - to support a stronger focus on skills and employment.

Call for evidence	
18.	How might prison learning providers, and those who provide careers information and advice to prisoners, support prison colleagues in developing prison regimes progressively so that they become more realistic workplaces with training to support employment on release?
19.	What, if any, are the key issues that frustrate this ambition at present?

20.	What other avenues ought we to pursue in order to engage employers in the delivery of learning and skills training that will prepare offenders for employment on release?
21.	To what extent is the delivery of apprenticeships in prisons possible? What barriers need to be considered and how can the support of employers be secured?

We put in plans to improve the use of technology in delivering teaching and learning, as well as offering more widespread access to ICT qualifications.

Call for evidence

22.	How might we increase the use of technology in offender learning to make effective use of recent developments?
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We reviewed the role of prison heads of learning and skills as it evolved in the light of new offender learning delivery arrangements. Heads of learning and skills had provided a focus at local level for integrating learning and skills into the delivery of the whole regime and had played – and have continued to play – a key part in the improvement in quality over recent years.

Call for evidence

23.	Now that a second generation of offender learning provision is in place, with new careers information and advice providers in operation too, how should the role of heads of learning and skills evolve?
24.	In considering the evolution of the role, how should the aspirations of postholders for career progression, and for continuing professional development, best be met?
25.	How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition in the workforce?
26.	How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?
27.	How well do leaders and managers secure value for money and in the current economic climate what is their capacity to do more for less?

We envisaged that workforce reforms would pave the way for all teachers in offender learning being properly qualified and having a licence to practise.

Call for evidence

28.	Has the perceived gap of professionalism between the teaching workforce in offender learning compared with those in other settings narrowed, and to what extent might this be further improved?
29.	How has the alignment of offender learning within similar learning in mainstream colleges benefited learners?
30.	How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?
31.	How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to attain their learning goals?

Young People

There has been major change in the way education for those in the youth justice system is delivered over the last few years. Those changes culminated in the significant duties placed on local authorities by the 2009 Apprenticeship, Children, Skills and Learning Act.

This call for evidence does not, then, seek responses on the efficiency and effectiveness of offender learning in the youth justice system.

However, the review is concerned with the effectiveness of the transition from the youth justice to the adult criminal justice system.

Call for evidence

32.	What are the critical issues in ensuring the education arrangements are as effective as possible for those offenders who, having been in the youth justice system, enter the adult criminal justice system? Do those critical issues vary if an offender transitions without leaving custody as compared with one who, having experienced youth detention and release, enters adult detention some time later?
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And finally ...

Call for evidence

33.	What can be learned from the way in which other sectors work which could be transferred to the offender learning system?
34.	How efficiently and effectively do the providers and the prison and probation service use their available resources to secure value for money?

35.	Do you know of any good and innovative practice in the UK that the review should consider?
36.	Is there anything we can learn from international examples? Is there anything we can particularly share internationally?
37.	What question would you have liked us to ask that we haven't posed and what would your response be?

The questions posed in this document may not fully cover every aspect of offender learning delivery. We welcome any further information and evidence that you feel relevant to the review.

Information provided in response to this call for evidence, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2004 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). If you want information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

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