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The Education and Skills Committee

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Footnotes

In the footnotes of this Report, references to oral evidence are indicated by 'Q' followed by the question number. References to written evidence are indicated in the form 'Ev' followed by the page number.

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Summary

The transfer of responsibility for prison education to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) created an important opportunity for this Committee to inquire into the provision of education and training in prisons, and to scrutinise provision against mainstream standards. We have aimed to shine a light on a subject that has been a low priority for both Government and the general public.

Current provision of prison education is unacceptable. Whilst the Government has provided a substantial increase in resources it is failing to fully meet its manifesto commitment to 'dramatically increase the quality and quantity of education provision'. In 2004, still less than a third of prisoners had access to prison education at any one time. There needs to be a fundamental shift in approach to prison education and a step change in the level of high quality provision that is suited to meet the needs of individual prisoners to provide them with a real alternative to crime on release.

An over arching strategy for prison education

It is essential that we are clear about the purpose of prison education. Prison education should be part of a wider approach to reduce recidivism through the rehabilitation of prisoners. Although contributing to the reduction of recidivism is of key importance, prison education is about more than just this. It is also important to deliver education in prisons because it is the right thing to do. The breadth of the education curriculum is important and the wider benefits of learning should not be sacrificed due to an over-emphasis on employability skills. Education as part of a broader approach to rehabilitation must consider the full range of needs of the prisoner and continue to support the prisoner on release. Prison education does not take place in isolation, and its purpose cannot be understood in isolation from these wider issues.

The transfer of responsibility to the DfES in 2001 has not yet achieved a significant increase in the priority given to prison education. Our main finding is that progress in the provision of prison education and training is being hampered by a lack of an effective over-arching strategy. Despite the creation of the Offender Learning and Skills Unit within the DfES, there is little sense of ownership of prison education, no obvious high profile champion within the DfES, and no drive or energy in moving things forward. The introduction of the National Offender Management Service has added to the confusion over responsibilities. In spite, or because of, all of these players, there is no strategic direction and it is not clear where final decisions about policy are made. Prison education must rise up the Government's agenda. Purpose and commitment must come from Government leadership.

Local delivery

This uncertainty in the system generally is mirrored at local level, with the prison governor, the head of learning and skills, the education manager and now the regional offender manager all having a role in the management of prison education. Everyone agrees that there needs to be an improvement in existing contract arrangements, but recent changes,

including the cancellation of a new tendering round, known as Project Rex, have caused a great deal of uncertainty and instability for staff. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) were given responsibility for the funding, planning and delivery of prison education in 2004 and will be fully in charge from 2006. The LSC have been running three prototypes since January 2005, and new contract arrangements are to be rolled out nationally in August 2006. We have concerns over the timetable of the national roll-out and the lack of clarity of the criteria on which prototypes will be assessed. More generally, we have concerns about these arrangements being put in place being done in isolation from an overarching strategy about what prison education should be delivering.

We recommend that the Learning and Skills Council is given the appropriate resources necessary to apply its standard funding methodology so that prisons have access to all of the funding streams available to mainstream Colleges. In particular, we wish to see the Additional Learning Support funding approach applied to prison education. More broadly, we recommend that the Government undertakes a fundamental review to establish what it wants to achieve through prison education and then funds education provision at a level sufficient to meet this chosen outcome. Existing budget constraints, based on historical levels of provision, should not continue. A clear strategy for prison education should be costed and appropriately funded.

Current provision

Current provision is focused on the delivery of basic skills and is driven by Key Performance Targets on basic skills that each prison has to meet. It is widely accepted that basic skills are not sufficient to enable prisoners to improve their employability in isolation of broader learning including soft skills, and that such a concentrated focus has narrowed the curriculum to the detriment of the learners. Existing Key Performance Targets are driving provision in an unhelpful manner and need to be re-considered, as does the very narrow focus on basic skills. It is totally unacceptable that the existing concentration on particular basic skills qualifications is based on little more than a 'hunch' on the part of the Government that this will provide the training that is most needed. We urge the Government to undertake thorough and robust research to identify what type of education and training provision will have the greatest impact on meeting the individual learning needs of the prisoner and providing them with real alternatives to crime on release.

There needs to be a much better integration of education, vocational training, and work regimes in prisons and a significant step change in the level of provision of high quality vocational and work-based education. Schemes such as the Young Offender Programme, led by National Grid Transco, that now involves over 50 employers and trains prisoners for real jobs to meet a genuine skills gap must be the way forward for vocational training in prisons. The Committee would like to see more identification of skills shortages within local areas to the prison, and partnerships developed with businesses to meet these skill shortages. Real pay for real work should be given further consideration and, at the very least, the pay that prisoners receive for education should be equal to any other activity undertaken. We would like to see the Government encouraging a great deal more entrepreneurial activity within prisons, with more business enterprises within prisons providing real work for prisoners, and much closer links with local Further Education Colleges, Universities and employers.

Focusing on the needs of individuals

There needs to be an overarching strategy for prison education that recognises the need for different models of delivery in different prisons. The majority of prisoners are short-term prisoners passing through local prisons. For these prisoners there should be a service which focuses on properly assessing the needs and aspirations of the individual and providing information advice and guidance that concentrates on linking them with learning and skills provision in the local community and ensuring that they have access to this provision after release. A successful system for the electronic transfer of records is needed as a matter of priority for this to be possible. The provision for longer term prisoners should be different, with more appropriate education and training available in prisons.

We welcome the recognition by Government that improvements are needed. This aspiration to provide better education and training in prisons needs to be matched by a coherent approach. The real key to success is not to create a separate structure for prison education at national or regional level, but rather to make sure that prisoners have access to the facilities which already exist locally.

The delivery of prisoners' Individual Learning Plans as part of their sentence plans needs urgent improvement. Implementation so far has been shambolic. Individual Learning Plans need a thorough and robust assessment of needs (including special educational needs), linked to entitlement, and a much greater focus on the continuation of provision on release through mainstream services.

Barriers across the wider prison regime

Finally, there are a number of barriers across the wider prison regime that are adding to the difficulty of successfully delivering prison education, including overcrowding and the constant movement of prisoners between prisons, described colloquially as 'churn'. Without changes to the wider prison regime, and without a strong commitment to reduce overcrowding and 'churn', it will be very difficult to achieve improvements in prison education.

We must keep in mind the fact that a prison is a prison and not a secure learning centre. Nevertheless, the Government should be aiming to develop a culture in prisons in which education is a much greater priority. This cannot be achieved without a significant shift in the investment in training given to Prison Officers. At just 8 weeks, the initial training period for Prison Officers is too short and we invite the Home Office to review this. A much greater level of investment in staff education and development is required in order to encourage a more positive attitude amongst Prison Officers towards the role that education has to play in prisons. The Home Office must take the lead in the large scale of reform that is necessary, and we encourage them to be bold in the reform of prisons and probation that is reportedly taking place at present.

1 Introduction

1. The transfer of responsibility for prison education to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has created an important opportunity for this Committee to inquire into the provision of education and training in prisons, and to scrutinise provision against mainstream standards. We welcome the opportunity to shine a light on an area that is given very little attention by both Government and the general public.

2. During the course of this inquiry we took evidence from; the Adult Learning Inspectorate; the Association of Colleges; Lord Filkin, Janice Shiner, Susan Pember, and Chris Barnham from the Department for Education and Skills; the Dialogue Trust; staff and offenders at Feltham Young Offenders' Institution; Anne Owers HMI Chief Inspector of Prisons; Paul Goggins (MP) and Phil Wheatley from the Home Office; the Howard League for Penal Reform; Jeanne Harding, Dudley College of Technology; Professor Andrew Coyle, Director of the International Centre for Prison Studies, Kings College London; Caroline Neville, the Learning and Skills Council; Merron Mitchell, City College Manchester; NATFHE—the University and College Lecturers' Union; Martin Narey, National Offender Management Service; OCR—the awarding body; Ofsted; the Prison Governors' Association; the Prison Officers' Association; the Prison Reform Trust; Professor David Wilson, Forum on Prison Education and University of Central England; Professor Augustin John, University of Strathclyde; the Shannon Trust; Unlock - the National Association of Ex-Offenders; the Youth Justice Board.

3. Our inquiry has also been informed by visits to Finland and Norway in October 2004 and to British Columbia, Canada in January 2005. Within the U.K., we visited Camphill, Albany and Parkhurst Prisons on the Isle of Wight and HMP Reading. Unusually, we also held a formal evidence session outside Westminster at Feltham Young Offenders' Institution. What we learned on these visits has aided us immensely in our work.

4. We are very grateful to our specialist advisers Professor Andrew Coyle, Director of the International Centre for Prison Studies, Kings College London; Christine Braddock, Principal of Matthew Boulton College, Birmingham; and Sarah Morgan, Head of Learning and Skills, HMP Garth, for their assistance with this inquiry. We would also like to extend our thanks to the Forum on Prisoner Education for supplying us with detailed statistical information.

Background

5. Education has been provided in prisons since 1908. Until 1991 prison education was delivered by local providers. It was funded by the Home Office and delivered under contract by Local Education Authority adult education services and Further Education colleges. In 1991 a tendering process was introduced where contractors bid for 5 year contracts and delivered education in prisons across much wider geographical areas. There was very little flexibility in the contract at local level and contracts were based on the number of teaching hours delivered. Prison education could no longer be cut at the whim of the Governor, but the cost of this was the loss of both local delivery and flexibility of provision to meet the needs of the individual learner.

6. In 2001, responsibility for prison education was transferred to the DfES bringing prison education into the mainstream. A similar transfer had been made, with responsibility for health services in prison moving to the Department of Health, with great success. After decades of neglect, prison education has seen some recent improvements, but we believe that these changes are not nearly enough. The transfer of responsibility to the DfES has been welcomed, but progress has been nothing like that which has been seen in health services and questions remain regarding overall responsibility for prison education and future provision.

Principal findings

7. By way of introducing the context of this report, we will outline the principle findings at this stage. The main recommendations and conclusions are listed at the end of the report.

8. It is essential that we are clear about the purpose of prison education. The purpose of prison education should be understood as part of a wider approach to reduce recidivism through the rehabilitation of prisoners. Although contributing to the reduction of recidivism is of key importance, prison education is about more than just this. It is important also because to provide prison education is the right thing to do and this is an important point to bear in mind when making policy decisions. Education as part of a broader approach to rehabilitation must consider the full range of needs of the prisoner and continue to support the prisoner on release. Prison education does not take place in isolation, and its purpose cannot be understood in isolation from these wider issues.

9. The transfer of responsibility to the DfES in 2001 has not yet achieved a significant increase in the priority given to prison education. The main finding of this Committee is that progress in the provision of prison education and training is being hampered by a lack of clarity of purpose in an over-arching strategy. Despite the creation of the Offender Learning and Skills Unit within the DfES, there is little sense of ownership of prison education, no obvious high profile champion within the DfES, and no drive or energy in moving things forward. The introduction of the National Offender Management Service has added to the confusion over responsibilities. In spite, or because of, all of these players, there is no strategic direction and it is not clear where decisions about policy are made. Prison education must rise up the Government's agenda. Purpose and commitment must come from Government leadership.

10. Current uncertainty is mirrored at local level, with the prison governor, the head of learning and skills, the education manager and now the regional offender manager all having a role in the management of prison education. Everyone agrees that there needs to be an improvement in existing contract arrangements, but recent reforms, including the cancellation of a new tendering round, known as Project Rex, have caused a great deal of uncertainty and instability for staff. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) were given responsibility for the funding, planning and delivery of prison education in 2004 and will take on this responsibility in full from 2006. The LSC have been running three prototypes since January 2005, and new contract arrangements are to be rolled out nationally in August 2006. This Committee has concerns over the timetable of the national roll-out, the lack of clarity of the criteria on which prototypes will be assessed, and more generally, we have concerns about this being done in isolation of any overarching strategy about what it is that prison education should be delivering.

11. Current provision is focused on the delivery of basic skills and is driven by Key Performance Targets that each prison has to meet in this area. It is widely accepted that basic skills are not sufficient to enable a prisoner to improve their employability in isolation of broader learning including soft skills, and that such a concentrated focus has narrowed the curriculum to the detriment of the learners. Existing Key Performance Targets are driving provision in an unhelpful manner and need to be re-considered, as does the very concentrated focus on basic skills. More research is needed to find out what type of education should be delivered in prisons and what works in terms of enabling prisoners to enter secure employment on release.

12. There needs to be a much better integration of education, vocational training, and work regimes in prisons and a significant step change in the level of provision of high quality vocational and work-based education. Schemes such as the Young Offender Programme, led by National Grid Transco, that now involves over 50 employers and trains prisoners for real jobs to meet a genuine skills gap, must be the way forward for vocational training in prisons. Real pay for real work should be given further consideration and, at the very least, the pay that prisoners receive for education should be equal to any other activity undertaken. Entrepreneurial activity that has achieved links with local businesses as well as local Further Education Colleges and Universities only exists in pockets of excellence at present and should be far more widespread.

13. There needs to be an overarching strategy for prison education that recognises that there have to be different models of delivery in different prisons. The majority of prisoners are short-term prisoners passing through local prisons. For these prisoners there should be a service which focuses on properly assessing the needs and aspirations of the individual and providing information advice and guidance that concentrates on linking them with learning and skills provision in the local community and ensuring that they have access to this provision after release. A successful system for the electronic transfer of records is needed as a matter of priority for this to be possible. The provision for longer term prisoners should be different with appropriate education and training available in prisons.

14. We welcome the recognition by Government that improvements are needed. This aspiration needs to be matched by a coherent approach. The real key to success is not to create a parallel structure for prison education at national or regional level, but rather to make sure that prisoners have access to the facilities which already exist locally. A new approach is required regarding the delivery of prisoners' Individual Learning Plans as part of their sentence plans. Implementation so far has been shambolic. Individual Learning Plans need proper implementation with a thorough and robust assessment of needs (including special educational needs), linked to entitlement, and a much greater focus on the continuation of provision on release through mainstream services.

15. Finally, there are a number of considerable barriers across the wider prison regime that are adding to the difficulty of successfully delivering prison education, including overcrowding and constant movement of prisoners between prisons, described colloquially as 'churn'. The sentencing of short-term prisoners needs radical re-thinking. It is very difficult to achieve improvements in prison education without changes in the wider prison regime. Changes will have to be driven from the top down, and without a strong commitment to reduce overcrowding and 'churn', these barriers will continue to prevent the effective delivery of prison education.

16. We must keep in mind the fact that a prison is a prison and not a secure learning centre. Nevertheless, the Government should be aiming to develop a culture in prisons in which education is a priority. This cannot be achieved without a significant shift in the investment in training given to Prison Officers. At just 8 weeks, the initial training period for Prison Officers is too short and we invite the Home Office to review this. A much greater level of investment in staff education and development is required in order to encourage a more positive attitude amongst Prison Officers towards the role that education has to play in prisons.

2 The Purpose of Prison Education

The purpose of prison education

17. Is education in prison considered to be important? Certainly for many decades in this country the answer has been no. It has been a very low priority for the Government as well as in the mind of the public. However, given that 58% of all adult prisoners, 72% of 18–20 year-old male prisoners, and 85% of 14–17 year-old male prisoners were re-convicted within 2 years of release¹; that the cost of recidivism to the tax payer is an estimated £11 billion a year¹; and that the number of victims of crime as a result of recidivism is also very high, with released prisoners being responsible for at least 1 million crimes per year¹, then in these circumstances the importance of reducing recidivism for the wider benefit of society is considerable.

18. Reducing recidivism is achieved through the rehabilitation of prisoners into society and secure employment, giving prisoners a real alternative to crime on release. Education is a key part of this broader commitment to increase the opportunity for the prisoner to choose a real alternative to crime, and therefore reduce recidivism. As Martin Narey, Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service, told this Committee:

‘I believe passionately that, in the right circumstances, we can reduce criminality and change people’s lives, and the major way we do that is through education. I think if we educate people we can change their lives, we can make them employable, we can get them into jobs and we can reduce criminality.’²

19. However, the purpose of prison education should be defined not just in terms of its contribution to the reduction of recidivism. It is important to recognise that to provide prison education is important in itself in a civilised society because it is the right thing to do. We should be developing the person as a whole, not just in terms of the qualifications they hold for employment. Education, and the process of engaging in learning, has a value in itself which needs to be recognised. A focus on reducing recidivism without considering the prisoner’s right to education more broadly, would not be sufficient.

20. The view of Professor Andrew Coyle, Director of International Centre for Prison Studies, Kings College, London, was:

‘I think there is an argument saying we should provide prison education because it is the right thing to do. I think that is an important starting point, not just in terms of education but in terms of what goes on in prison. It is the right thing to do. That passes an important message to a variety of people.’³

21. On our visit to British Columbia, this Committee was shown a system that was entirely focused on the provision of programmes, including education programmes, that were diagnosed to be required for the prisoner’s rehabilitation into work. Whilst there seemed to be some advantages to such a well-organised and purpose-driven approach, there was

1 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Social Exclusion Unit, *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*, July 2002.

2 Q 561

3 Q 4

concern amongst academics we spoke to that there was an over-concentration on employment related programmes to the detriment of a broader curriculum in education. It was thought that the benefits of a wider curriculum (including art and drama), that can often be the first step to motivating and engaging a prisoner in learning, had been lost. As a result, it was felt that many of the wider benefits of education in terms of soft skills had also been sacrificed. In describing the goals of prison education Lord Filkin, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State of Children and Families, told this Committee:

‘we ought to have as an object of policy reducing illiteracy and innumeracy for social exclusion reasons as opposed to (just) employment reasons. .. (it is) about almost classic reasons for education, by which I mean that it has a value in its own right in terms of what it does to the individual.’⁴

22. The purpose of education and training in prisons should be to play a key role in improving the employability of prisoners and therefore contribute to reducing recidivism. However, we would wish the purpose of prison education to be understood in broader terms than just improving the employability of a prisoner. We would emphasise the importance of delivering education also because it is the right thing to do in a civilised society. Education has a value in itself and it is important to develop the person as a whole, not just in terms of the qualifications they hold for employment. The breadth of the education curriculum is important and employability skills should not be emphasised to such an extent that the wider benefits of learning are excluded.

The link to recidivism

23. Having a job makes re-offending less likely, and the right education, training, and work experience can help offenders to gain secure employment on release. As the Social Exclusion Unit found, ‘research shows that employment reduces the risk of re-offending by between a third and a half’⁵. We know that prisoners who do not take part in education are three times more likely to be reconvicted than those that do¹. The Forum on Prisoner Education believes that education for prisoners ‘can hold the key to living without crime by building self-esteem, encouraging self-motivation, and providing new opportunities after release.’⁵

24. Bobby Cummines, an ex-offender and Chief Executive of UNLOCK, the National Association of Ex-Offenders, told us that:

‘Educational training is probably the most important thing you have in prisons today. It is one of the things that will stop people re-offending.’⁶

25. Afrim Mahmuti, a young offender in Feltham Young Offenders Institution told the Committee:

‘I think education is going to help me to stay out of crime. That is what I think, that education helps to educate yourself to help you get out of crime.’⁷

4 Q 763

5 Ev 1

6 Q 251

26. It is not just a question of gaining qualifications for employment: education can help the employability of prisoners in other ways. Dr John Brennan, Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, said that education provided:

‘the knowledge, the qualifications which will help them not just to secure a job on release but also to equip them to cope with the complexities of the lives they often lead; to give them confidence, raise their own aspirations, shift them away from offending behaviour, to becoming much more productive members of society.’⁸

27. One point must be emphasised, however. Improving the knowledge and skills of a prisoner is important, but is not sufficient to reduce recidivism in isolation of other factors. Encouraging prisoners into education and training can be pivotal to a crime-free future but should be part of a broader package, including help with finding work, maintaining family ties, addiction and behavioural counselling (if necessary) and securing suitable housing.

Research on the link to recidivism

28. As mentioned above, prisoners who do not take part in education or training are three times more likely to be re-convicted than those who do. It has been calculated that basic skills learning can contribute to a reduction in re-offending of around 12%⁹. Professor David Wilson, Professor of Criminology at the University of Central England, and Chair of the Forum on Prisoner Education, told the Committee:

‘...there is evidence (about the effect of education in prison). That evidence is not particularly well known because this has often been an area which has been neglected. People have not been particularly interested in prison education. But there is evidence. Most of that evidence comes from Canada, and in particular the five years in which the Simon Fraser ran education courses in British Columbia at five jails, and over the course of the number of years that education programme was running there were some 650 prisoners went through the educational programme and the evaluation that was done by Professor Polson from Canada and Professor Duguid from Canada, who looked at the cohort that had achieved in education to see what the predicted rates of re-offending were when they entered jail and then measured that against what had happened when they were released from jail and the predicted rate of re-offending had been reduced by over 30%. So there is indeed evidence to suggest that if you engage prisoners in education you are likely to affect their re-offending when they are released back into the community.’¹⁰

29. However, Professor Wilson questioned the figures in the Social Exclusion Unit’s paper on re-offending:

‘The figures we have got.. come from the Social Exclusion Unit and actually the figures have never really been tested empirically’¹¹

7 Q 823

8 Q 270

9 Social Exclusion Unit, *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*, July 2002.

10 Q 4

11 Q 21

30. The Social Exclusion Unit's report identifies a correlation between taking part in education and re-conviction, but we do not know that this is a causal relationship. The impact of education was not isolated from other factors sufficiently for us to conclude that by increasing the skills level of a prisoner to 'x', we will reduce recidivism by 'x'.

31. The Youth Justice Board describes the research base on the impact of different educational approaches on young people at risk of re-offending as 'needing to be improved'. Nevertheless, it describes the most common finding of over 20 years of research to be that young people who participate in custodial education programmes are more likely in later life to be employed and less likely to end up back in custody than non-participants.¹²

32. On balance, the available evidence suggests that education and training can contribute to gaining secure employment, which in turn contributes to reducing recidivism, but more research is needed to isolate the impact of education and training. The Government accept that the relationship between education and recidivism is a complicated one. Mr Martin Narey, Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service said:

'The link is a very complex one.. but if we can get offenders into employment and somewhere to live, then the chances of their re-offending radically reduces.'¹³

33. The Government is undertaking research on the impact of its investment in improving the basic skills of prisoners on recidivism. Martin Narey said:

'I cannot yet give you evidence that the investment we have put into offenders' basic skills is leading to a significant proportion of those individuals committing less crime.'¹⁴

'I hope that we will be able to demonstrate it in the next couple of years when we start to get some data from the work we are currently doing. It is very difficult to make categorically the benefits of education to re-offending when you just have control groups.'¹⁵

34. We urge the Government to give priority to undertaking the necessary research to demonstrate the impact of education and training on recidivism. It is unacceptable that this research has not been undertaken previously. It is essential to the future of prison education.

Positive justification of prison education

35. The association between basic skill levels and re-offending is complex and, at best, not yet proven. It is also the case that the relationship between employment and offending is 'neither straightforward nor yet fully understood'.¹⁶ Therefore, for the time being at least,

12 Youth Justice Board, *The National Specification for Learning and Skills for Young People on a Detention and Training Order*, 2002.

13 Q 562

14 Q 629

15 Q 630

16 Ev 255

prison education is better justified in terms of what it can offer a prisoner on release, than in terms of what it will prevent a prisoner from doing. Prison education can offer a prisoner secure employment and a real alternative to crime, but it cannot guarantee that a prisoner will not re-commit crime. As Michael Rice described in his summary of his research findings to the Committee, it is 'better justified through human rights than by reference to human wrongs.'¹⁷

36. Other witnesses agreed with this. Professor Andrew Coyle felt that prison education should be provided because it is the right thing to do (paragraph 20). Professor David Wilson told us:

'..quite clearly prisoners come from some of the most marginalised sections of our community in which frankly very few of them have level 1 educational achievement, i.e. they have not got the skills of an eleven-year-old in terms of reading and writing. That clearly does affect their chances of being able to gain employment once they are released back into those communities. So if you can actually use prison as a positive experience to counteract some of the very negative schooling experiences they have..., so much the better.'¹⁸

The current basic skills agenda

37. If the purpose of providing prison education rests on its link to reducing recidivism through providing prisoners with a real alternative to crime, then it is essential that we know what type of education provision is going to have the greatest impact. The difficulty is that, at present, very little is known about what works.

38. Since 1998, there has been a heavily concentrated focus on the provision of basic skills training to prisoners. As Martin Narey told this Committee:

'It is true and we are not ashamed to say that basic skills remains a priority because that is the best possible way that we might reduce criminality.'¹⁹

39. It is clear that basic skills are of key importance in improving the employability of prisoners. However, the Government's approach of focusing on the provision of particular basic skills qualifications is not evidence based. It is not founded on robust and thorough research but on one finding from the Social Exclusion Unit's report that found that half of all prisoners were excluded from 96% of jobs because they did not have the basic skills required²⁰. The statistic was derived from a comparison of prisoner's skill levels to a Basic Skills Agency survey that looked at the skills required for employment. Martin Narey said:

'When the money began to arrive in 1998, we agreed with ministers an educational strategy for prisons with an emphasis on basic skills and essentially we put almost all the new money into basic skills provision and we redirected some of the money which had been spent elsewhere on education also into basic skills because the

17 Ev 255

18 Q 4

19 Q 678

20 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Social Exclusion Unit, *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*, July 2002.

primary mover on this – (was) a survey carried out by the Basic Skills Agency, the overwhelming problem in the prison population was that two thirds of them were essentially ineligible for about 97% of jobs advertised in job centres. So.. overwhelmingly, we concentrate on the barriers to employability, so basic skills primarily.²¹

40. The following table illustrates the considerable increase in funding for prison education that has taken place since 1999.

Year	Budget (in millions)
1999/2000	£47.50
2000/2001	£50.90
2001/2002	£57.60
2002/2003	£71.00
2003/2004	£97.00
2004/2005	£122.00

Source: Forum on Prisoner Education, Briefing Paper No. 12

41. Whilst this Committee welcomes such an increase in investment, it remains concerned that the concentrated focus on delivering particular basic skills qualifications is based on little evidence. Martin Narey told us that existing policy is based on no more than a ‘hunch’:

‘The research which the Home Office is carrying out in this area is in relation to what interventions can make the biggest impact in terms of reducing reoffending. We are just beginning a five year study that will look at a range of interventions. Education and learning will be one of those interventions that we will seek to measure over time. We have a hunch, that we are backing with substantial resources, that this will lead to greater employability and reduce reoffending but we have to make sure that we have the research results in place that confirm whether or not that is true.’²²

42. Janice Shiner, Director of Lifelong Learning, DfES, confirmed that evidence was not yet available in the UK to link basic skills and reducing re-offending:

‘If your question is about the impact then—you will not want to hear this—it is early days in terms of the research that will make the link between basic skills and not re-offending.’²³

43. Whilst the finding of the Basic Skills Agency that half of all prisoners are excluded from 96% of jobs because of a lack of basic skills is an important finding, it is not a sufficient basis on which to determine the provision of education and training in prisons. Firstly, this

21 Q 665

22 Q 783

23 Q 745

finding does not imply that providing prisoners with the relevant basic skills qualifications will be sufficient to enable them to gain employment in isolation of other factors. Secondly, it gives no indication of how basic skills training should be provided to meet the needs of the individual prisoner.

44. The Committee has received a great deal of evidence to demonstrate that basic skills are not enough to improve the employability of prisoners on their own. The National Council of Independent Monitoring Boards reported to the Committee that ‘while basic skills are essential for employment, they are not sufficient to guarantee a job because prisoners are released without the additional skill and qualifications that are now needed in the job market.’²⁴

45. By concentrating on basic skills, the Government is failing to recognise the significance of the low skill—low pay equilibrium that will not help many prisoners to find a real alternative to crime on release. Vic Pomeroy, Head of Learning and Skills at HMP The Verne, told the Committee:

‘Research done by Soskice and Finegold that said Britain was trapped in a low skill equilibrium which is low skill/low pay and if we are to succeed with prisoners we have to move to a medium skilled/medium pay which gets them out of the benefit trap. The only way you get people out of the benefit trap is to give them the ability to earn above the benefit, which is at level three.’²⁵

46. Furthermore, the Committee has received a great deal of evidence to demonstrate that the concentrated focus on the achievement of basic skills qualifications, driven by Key Performance Targets that prisons have to meet, has been characterised by a system of ‘box checking’ and has not allowed prisons the flexibility to identify and meet the learning needs of individual prisoners. We have received a great deal of evidence regarding the advantages of providing a much broader curriculum. This issue is discussed in more detail in paragraphs 230 to 237.

47. We are concerned that existing prison education policy, with its heavy concentration on basic skills qualifications, is based on little more than a ‘hunch’. While basic skills are vital, they are not by themselves sufficient to ensure employment on release. We urge the Government to undertake thorough and robust research to identify what type of education and training provision will have the greatest impact on meeting the individual learning needs of the prisoner and providing them with real alternatives to crime on release.

More investment is needed in preventative measures:

48. The majority of prisoners have very poor basic skills, left school before 16, and were regular truants. We know that:

- Half of all prisoners are at or below the level expected of an 11 year old in reading, two-thirds in numeracy and four-fifths in writing.

24 Ev 264

25 Q 901

- More than half of male and more than two-thirds of female adult prisoners have no qualifications at all.
- Half of all prisoners do not have the skills required by 96% of jobs.
- Nearly half of male sentenced prisoners were excluded from school and nearly a third of all prisoners were regular truants whilst at school.²⁶

49. The Youth Justice Board also highlights a growing body of evidence that disconnection from mainstream education and training is an extremely important risk factor for offending and re-offending.²⁷

50. David Bell, HMI Chief Inspector of Schools, told us:

‘It is a very important point. We know that low educational attainment at primary school leads to poor progress at secondary school, which often leads to truanting, which in turn leads to exclusion, which leads to criminality, which leads to prison. I think we can in one sense track the consequences.’²⁸

51. This is an extremely difficult problem to try and tackle by the time offenders are entrenched in criminogenic circumstances²⁹. Professor Rod Morgan of the Youth Justice Board told us:

‘young offenders sentenced to custody who have got seven or more previous convictions where from the prison statistics we know that 96% of them are reconvicted within two years, so we are talking about a pretty intractable population.’³⁰

52. The evidence creates a very strong case for much greater priority being given to preventative measures; measures that will reduce the number of students leaving school with poor basic skills, reduce truancy, and significantly increase staying-on rates at 16. The Government has sought to address these issues in its response to the Working Group on 14–19 reform.³¹ **We urge the Government to focus on improving education provision for the almost 50% of students who do not achieve 5 A–Cs at GCSE, and particularly the 5% that leave school without any GCSEs.**³²

53. Our predecessors’ report on Early Years³³ demonstrated that, in terms of investing in preventative measures, it is the early years of a child’s development and schooling that

26 Information provided by the Prison Reform Trust.

27 Ev 46

28 Q 422

29 Home Office, The situational and social circumstances that are believed to contribute towards involvement in criminal activity. Criminogenic life circumstances include things such as debt and drug dependency.. The Kirkholt Burglary Prevention Demonstration Project. Crime Prevention Unit Paper 13. Forrester, D., M. Chatterton and K. Pease, 1988.

30 Q 110

31 Department for Education and Skills, *14–19 Education and Skills*, 23 February 2005, CM 6476.

32 See Education and Skills Committee, Sixth Report of Session 2004–05, *National Skills Strategy: 14-19 Education*, HC 37–I.

33 Education and Employment Committee, First Report of Session 2000-01, *Early Years*, HC 33.

have the greatest impact on improving their educational outcomes. Evidence from the report demonstrated that the returns on investment were considerable higher in the early years of a child's progress than they were in the later teenage years once a child was already under-achieving. **We wish to highlight the importance of the Government's Every Child Matters programme of reform, on which we will be publishing our recommendations to Government shortly.**

54. There was some suggestion that the Government should even consider re-directing investment in prison education into early years provision. As Professor Andrew Coyle said to the Committee:

'The big question, I would think.. is could the £2 billion plus of taxpayers' money which is currently spent on the prison system be better spent on education or elsewhere and would that lead to a reduction of the offending, rather than focusing within the bubble of the prison service? That is really the big question.'³⁴

55. We do not recommend such a policy at present. Nevertheless, it something that deserves further consideration in the future.

3 The need for a clear purpose and overarching strategy

No overarching strategy exists

56. There is a need for clarity of overall strategy and purpose of the management of prisoners so that prison education can clearly be seen as feeding into this broader strategy. There is currently no overarching policy in place. Lord Filkin told this Committee that scoping national policy had only just been started:

‘We are at the very early stage as a ministerial trio of working with officials about thinking what is the nature of scoping how such a system would perform.’³⁵

57. He said that Ministers, at this stage, were still asking the question:

‘What would a system look like from beginning to end that had as one of its central objectives the maximisation of the number of people getting into work and supporting them (in) doing so?’³⁶

58. The lack of any overarching strategy is widely felt amongst the prison sector. As Ruth Wyner, Director of the Dialogue Trust, told the Committee:

‘There is no overarching policy really. With the National Offender Management Service there is the potential for that. I think that it has to come from a political level. There has to be a real intention to do something thoughtful that works, and also to bring in the Prison Officer’s Association and so on, so that there is real commitment.’³⁷

59. Paul Goggins MP, Minister for Prisons in the Home Office, said that national policy was outlined in the Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan. He told the Committee:

‘The whole purpose of this is about reducing reoffending. That has to be the sole purpose. We see education as a means to an end, equipping people with skills to gain jobs that can sustain a life outside of crime. In terms of policy, we published in July the National Reducing Reoffending Action Plan and a clear mandate that every region of the country must have in place a Regional Reducing Reoffending Action Plan by the spring of next year.’³⁸

60. It is not at all clear, however, how well prison education is integrated into any ‘National Reducing Reoffending Action Plan’³⁹ and how joined up the DfES and Home Office have been in producing this Action Plan.

35 Q 764

36 Q 767

37 Q 260

38 Q 764

39 Home Office, *Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan*, July 2004.

61. The Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan, published in July 2004, listed 7 key recommendations in education, training, and employment to ‘develop a new integrated Learning and Skills Service, devise arrangements for partnership working, publish a strategy for working with the voluntary and community sector, develop strategy for a more coherent information and advice service to help plan learning in custody and release, integrate vocational training into education in prisons, improve standards of learning and training in prison, and engage with employers’.²¹

62. These recommendations are totally insufficient. **We concur with the findings of the Home Affairs Committee⁴⁰ which said it was ‘disappointed with the elementary nature of many of the National Action Plan’s action points’, and that ‘the National Action Plan should be re-issued in an expanded form .. setting a clear timetable for implementation.’ The National Action Plan fails to providing an overarching strategy for the rehabilitation of prisoners in which the role of prison education can be clearly identified.**

Fallen between two stools

63. It was hoped that the transfer of responsibility for prison education to the DfES would raise its profile and priority, but it is not clear that this has happened. The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, Lord Filkin, agreed that asking what the over-arching direction that prison education should be taking was ‘one of the fundamental questions’⁴¹ but he did not provide an answer as to what the over-arching strategy was. He thought that there were ‘several goals for prison education’ and he said that he could ‘think of at least three off the cuff’⁴².

64. The Government made a manifesto commitment to ‘increase dramatically the quality and quantity of education provision in prisons’. Responsibility for delivering this commitment is shared between the Home Office and the DfES. But has dual responsibility between the Home Office and the DfES meant that prison education has fallen between two stools?

65. David Bell told the Committee:

‘I think it remains to be seen in some ways whether the transfer of responsibilities to the DfES will bring about greater priority on prison education, but you are still going to be left, are you not, with the fundamental issue that the Home Office is the department of state responsible for prisons even if the DfES is responsible for the education provision. I think it is an open question, whether giving that to the department of state responsible for education would give greater priority to education. I do not know the answer but I think it is one well worth pursuing.’⁴³

66. In theory, the DfES seems to be clear about its working relationship with the Home Office. Janice Shiner, Director of Lifelong Learning, DfES, said:

40 Home Affairs Committee, First Report of Session 2004–05, *Rehabilitation of Prisoners*, HC 193.

41 Q 762

42 Q 762

43 Q 427

‘By working together, we need to be clear about the policy that we want to implement and then to use the levers that are available to us to make that happen.’⁴⁴

67. In practice, however, there seems to be a lack of clarity about the overarching policy that is hindering the progress of the DfES in effecting real change in the provision of prison education.

No champion of prison education

68. We know that the success in the delivery of prison health care has come following a great deal of hard work to raise the priority it holds within the Department of Health. It is not clear that similar work is being done within the DfES. There is no clear champion for prison education. Michael Newell of the Prison Governor’s Association identified the need for such a champion and said that progress in prison education had no ‘energy’ in it:

‘Certainly we need to get something in training. There needs to be an awareness, but I believe there needs to be a champion. I know who is responsible for education in the Prison Service but I am not certain that many other people do.’⁴⁵

‘It is working exceptionally well with Primary Care Trusts and it is interesting how the energy for that has gone in, how the very simplistic approach of having a health needs analysis, a mental health needs analysis, looking at the standards, looking at what we do in the NHS and then moving to deliver those, has worked exceptionally well, and there is no energy in education.’⁴⁶

The role of the Offender Learning and Skills Unit

69. As well as there being no clear champion for prison education within the DfES, there also seems to be a great deal of confusion over the role of the Offender Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU). The OLSU was established within the DfES in April 2001 to take responsibility for prison education. However, it is unclear what authority it has and what its relationship is to Ministers and to the Home Office. This has resulted in a confusion over its role within the prison sector as well. Professor David Wilson said:

‘I would look again at the role of the Offender Learning and Skills Unit. There is a great deal of confusion about what the OLSU is’⁴⁷

‘Are they inspectors? Do they inspect prisons? Do they lead prisons at the minute? What is the guidance that is going to come from OLSU? At the moment I can tell you from the various talk shops that the Forum has hosted..⁴⁸ that there is a great deal of confusion about what they have done, what they are doing, and that confusion seems to have been intensified as a result of National Offender Management Service.’

44 Q 728

45 Q 525

46 Q 517

47 Q 18

48 Q 20

70. On paper, the Offender Learning and Skills Unit has a clearly outlined purpose and strategy. Their website states that ‘OLSU works with its key partners to take forward the Government’s Manifesto commitment to improve dramatically the quality and quantity of learning and skills in prison.’ It claims:

‘Our vision is that offenders according to need should have access to education and training both in prisons and in the community, which enables them to gain the skills and qualifications they need to hold down a job and have a positive role in society, and that the content and quality of learning programmes in prisons, and the qualifications to which these lead, are the same as comparable provision in the community.’⁴⁹

71. Despite their published ‘vision’, however, there is a notable lack of any overarching strategy for prison education to feed into, a lack of ownership and precedence given to the Offender Learning and Skills Unit within the DfES, and a failure to implement any step-change in progress. Their written strategy acknowledges the considerable need for improvements in prison education, but it appears to have made little difference in practice.

The need for the Government to change the public image of prison education

72. There is a poor level of public understanding of the purpose and role of prison education. A large part of the public and the press see prison education as a privilege that prisoners do not deserve, rather than having benefit to the wider community. Professor David Wilson said in evidence to this Committee:

‘..because prison education is something often people are rather embarrassed about talking about. Andrew (Coyle) and I were joking about the fact that one of the questions we would often be asked as prison governors would be, "Governor, why should the prisoners have access to computers when my kids don't have access to computers in their schools?" So there has always been rather a reluctance to actually trumpet the success of what education can do.’⁵⁰

73. Bobby Cummines, an ex-offender and Chief Executive of UNLOCK, told the Committee:

‘I think that the problem with the Government as it is, and the Prison Service as it is, is that they do not publish what they do well: they let newspapers publish what they do badly.’⁵¹

74. Improvement in public understanding of the importance of prison education requires political leadership. Change in attitude needs to come from the top. Frances Crook, Director of the Howard League for Penal Reform, told us:

‘I think a change of attitude has to come from the top and it has to be political leadership. What I would like to see is political leadership saying people who have

49 Department for Education and Skills, *Offender Learning and Skills Unit Action Plan*.

50 Q 7

51 Q 261

done something wrong must make amends for the wrong they have done and they should be helped to change their lives.. That is the balance which I think the public would engage with. They do not want to see people getting what they think as benefits from having committed a crime. On the other hand, all of us would agree we want to see a safer society where there are fewer victims of crime, and the best way to achieve that is to have a new system of criminal justice which is based on restoring the damage which has been done by crime and changing people's lives by getting them to make amends for the wrong they have done, and that can be done through education, through training and through work.⁵²

'Until broadly we start promoting what education can do in jail then I think that hierarchy where the educator is seen at the bottom will continue. Therefore, it is about being far more proactive about what prison education can do for the wide community once those prisoners are released.'⁵³

75. Prison education can help the wider community by reducing recidivism and thereby reducing the number of victims of crime affected by re-offending, reducing the significant costs to the tax payer that result from repeat offenders (recidivism costs £11 billion a year⁵⁴), as well as filling genuine skills gaps by producing skilled, trained workers. The Government has a pressing responsibility to communicate this message to the general public so that prison education can be properly understood and properly supported as a key part of reducing recidivism for the good of the community.

76. Frances Crook told us:

'People are interested when something goes seriously wrong, when there is a death or a riot, but you do not hear ministers talking about (prison education). It is not a high political priority. It is never talked about and unless you have strong political and moral leadership given on these issues no-one else will follow.'⁵⁵

77. Neither the Government nor the media have done enough to communicate the importance of prison education to the general public. This Committee believes this is unacceptable. A change in public attitude must be driven by political leadership. The Government must act on its responsibility to inform the general public of the purpose and importance of prison education as part of a broader strategy to rehabilitate prisoners in order to reduce recidivism for the benefit of the wider community.

52 Q 187

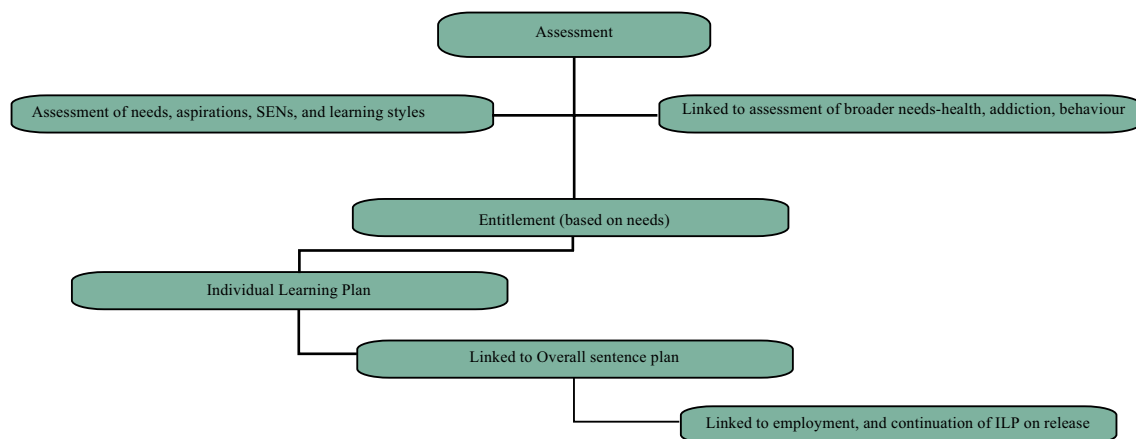
53 Q 7

54 Social Exclusion Unit, *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*, July 2002.

55 Q 188

4 What an overarching strategy should look like

An overarching strategy of provision based on the individual



Should be person-centred

78. At present, the prison education system is focused on the requirement of the institution to meet Key Performance Targets rather than on the needs of the prisoner. This goes a long way to explain the failures of the current system when measured against the purpose of prison education. Professor David Wilson told us:

‘Education has to be more person, prisoner-centred. At the minute, prison education is more centred on the needs of the institution to meet key performance targets. Those targets might have nothing to do with those young people who need to be engaged, who are engaged if they are approached by some of the good education provision in gaols but are not engaged if it is simply a question of making sure that they achieve key skills level 1 so as to allow the prison to tick the box which says they have achieved their target.’⁵⁶

79. Any new system needs to ensure that prisoners themselves take ownership of their education. We were told that it is only when prisoners feel that they own their education that it becomes a ‘tool for living’. This is key to achieving the intended outcome of prison education and training; to offer prisoners a real alternative to crime. As Professor David Wilson put it:

‘This goes back to one of those fundamental issues of who is it who owns the education in prison? Is it the prison and National Offender Management Service that own the education and therefore you can force the prisoner to do things.. we could make it compulsory, or is education a tool for living that becomes a tool for living because it is owned by the prisoner? And if the prisoner owns the education and

actually he has got the basic skills and wants to do degree level and if it is centred on his or her needs therefore you have to look at what the need is in that particular jail at that particular point.⁵⁷

80. The prison system should reflect current practice in mainstream education and learn from the increasing focus on individual needs of students and adding value. Professor Augustin John said:

‘I think, as in schooling, there needs to be a concern about responding to people's needs and identifying those needs adequately... really it is a matter of building upon where people are at the point of entry into the secure state. The issue then of how one assesses their educational needs and builds that into the delivery of a sentencing plan is critical here.’⁵⁸

Flexible and learner-centred provision

81. **If the system of prison education is intended to be learner-centred, there needs to be much more flexibility. Learning needs to be relevant, learner-centred, and key skills should be embedded in employment-focused training.**

82. **A learner-centred system of prison education should deliver a programme of assessment to identify learning needs, including special education needs. This assessment should then be clearly linked to a defined entitlement to provision to meet those needs. This should be delivered through an Individual Learning Plan, owned by the individual, and embedded in their overall Sentence Plan.** This is the basis of the system that the Youth Justice Board is attempting to implement. We have a great deal to learn from the Youth Justice Board's progress in this area. Robert Newman, Head of Policy for Education and Training at the Youth Justice Board, told us:

‘first of all, you have to find out something about their learning profile because everybody learns in different ways.. we have a range of different learning styles amongst the profile, so it is important to find out what it is for that individual young person that actually turns them on and makes the learning most effective. Once you have found that out, it is a question really of setting some very clear objectives that permeate the whole curriculum and what we have introduced is a system of individual learning planning into young offender institutions which give practitioners, if you like, a framework for each young person. The individual learning plan then becomes part of the sentence plan and it will determine the sort of courses that these youngsters go on and the sort of level at which the literacy and numeracy input is pitched, and provided the teachers have got adequate resources, such as PLUS⁵⁹, then they can deliver that to the young people.’⁶⁰

57 Q 36

58 Q 330

59 Ev 50–55, Ev 268

60 Q 129

A thorough and robust assessment of needs

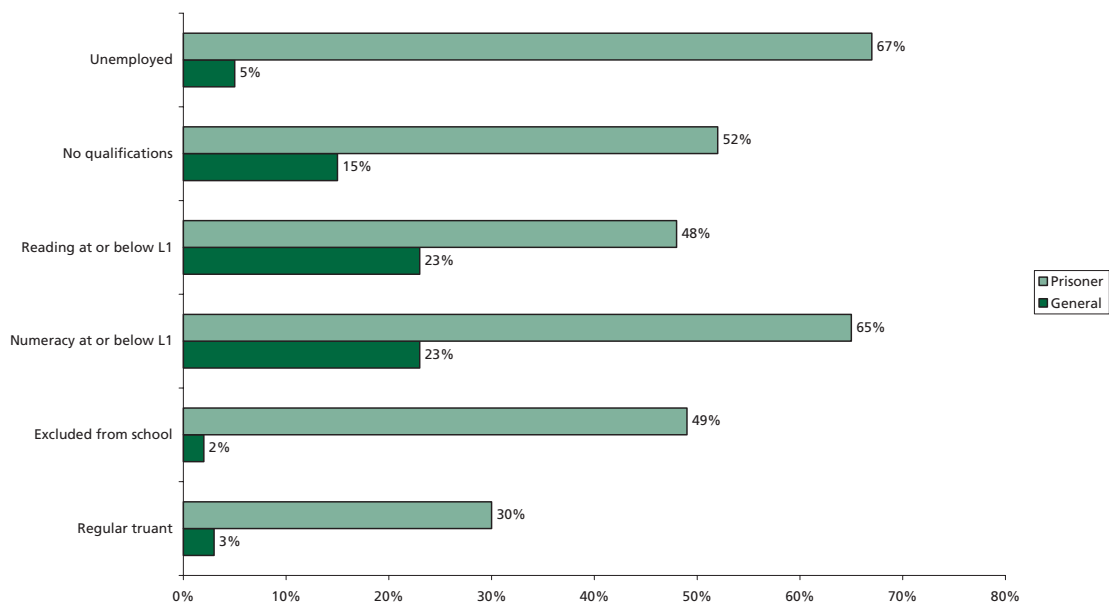
83. According to Paul Goggins MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Correctional Services, we already know the learning needs of our prison population:

‘We have been discussing some of the level of need that we have already established. Four out of five people who go to prison have had some period of exclusion from school and we have heard about the very low levels of numeracy and literacy. They are well recognised, well established figures.’⁶¹

84. What we do know is that the majority of offenders have poor educational attainment, and many were excluded, or truanted from school.⁶²

85. Statistics from the Offender Learning and Skills Unit clearly illustrate the very low levels of education amongst the prison population in comparison to the general population:

Education attainment of the prison population and general population



Source: Department for Education and Skills. Information from 'Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners', Report by the Social Exclusion Unit, July 2002.

86. These figures are from the Social Exclusion Unit's report⁶³ and we have already noted that they have not been tested empirically (paragraph 29). More importantly these are aggregated, national level statistics, and as such are not sufficient to enable provision to be planned around the individual needs of a prisoner. They were based on a very superficial assessment of the educational level of prisoners. It is simply not true that there is a full

61 Q 780

62 See paragraph 48

63 Social Exclusion Unit, *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*, July 2002.

knowledge of the learning needs of every prisoner in enough detail to be able to base provision on meeting those needs.

87. In order to base a system on the individual prisoners, it would be necessary to have a thorough and robust assessment of their learning needs, including any special educational needs and learning difficulties. The existing initial assessment, however, is woefully inadequate.

88. The Adult Learning Inspectorate has found that the 'Fast track', a basic skills initial screening technique developed by the Basic Skills Agency, is an inappropriate tool for analysing the complex learning needs of offenders. The Adult Learning Inspectorate report that 'more sophisticated tools should be introduced for assessing learning needs and reliable means should be developed for transferring assessment outcomes from custody.'⁶⁴ Professor David Wilson told the Committee that initial assessment can often be very short:

'often what one will find is that in some prisons like Highdown in Surrey they have over 275 new receptions per month and an initial assessment, therefore, under the contracting arrangements might be no longer than ten minutes.'⁶⁵

89. The Independent Monitoring Board for Prisons (IMB) state that 'As the education attainments and aptitudes of prisoners vary considerably, it is essential to identify each prisoner's education and training needs before a comprehensive sentence plan can be agreed and the prisoner can make the most constructive use of his time in prison.' However, the IMB finds that initial assessments (where they are carried out) are 'superficial and focus only on the core skills of literacy and numeracy' – those that relate to the prisons' Key Performance Targets.

90. Although not surprising, it is still very concerning that existing initial assessments of a prisoner's education level are limited to the identification of their education level in relation to the prisons Key Performance Targets on basic skills qualifications. As a result they are incapable of identifying the complex learning needs of prisoners. As Professor David Wilson told us:

'Every time a prisoner moves he will be given that initial assessment again. Some of them have done the initial assessment twelve times. Some of them are improving as a result; they know the initial assessment inside-out. Some people with degrees are given the initial assessment. So they will be constantly tested but only on the basis of what the key performance target is in relation to what the prison is expected to achieve in relation to prison education.'⁶⁶

Identifying special educational needs

91. The superficial nature of initial assessments at present means that we do not have a comprehensive picture of how many people in the prison population have specific learning difficulties. Juliet Lyon of the Prison Reform Trust told the Committee:

64 Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Basic skills for offenders in the community*, 2004.

65 Q 26

66 Q 27

‘We know roughly how many had disrupted education because the Social Exclusion Unit did that piece of work in its report on preventing reoffending. There is no comparable work, say, in the mental health area, which I said earlier on. I have never seen a figure, for example, which tells you that in the prison population there are X percentage of people who have been statemented, which I know is not a fantastic measure but it is a measure of their need, whereas I do know the percentage who have been in care as children. I just do not think it is an area that people have bothered to look at in the way that it should be looked at.’⁶⁷

92. The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) have reported that existing assessment techniques ‘do not gauge offenders’ writing ability and understanding of number problems or identify specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.’ According to the ALI ‘what is needed is the use of a more comprehensive initial assessment technique, specifically designed for those who have complex and multiple learning needs.’⁶⁸ The ALI reports that the work of staff is ‘hampered by an initial screening process that is inappropriate for assessing the complex learning and support needs of offenders.’⁶⁹

93. The initial assessment of a prisoner’s education level is totally inadequate at present and we urge the Government to completely overhaul the existing system. There is an urgent need to put in place a system of assessment that can identify the learning needs, including any special educational needs, of each individual prisoner.

94. As a result of the increased investment through the Youth Justice Board, there is now a special educational needs co-ordinator in every young offender institution. In its Annual Report, Ofsted says that although assessment is still quite poor, ‘the quality of initial assessment has improved (in Young Offenders Institutions) because of the appointment of (special educational needs co-ordinators) to juvenile establishments.’

95. We have received evidence that the appointment of special educational needs co-ordinator’s in Young Offenders Institutions has improved the prison’s ability to focus on the individual through identifying the individual learning needs and learning styles of young offenders. Bill Massam HMI, Head of Prison Education Inspection at Ofsted, said:

‘With the appointment of the special educational needs co-ordinators we have identified some improvements in initial assessments over the last year because in some establishments we are seeing an attempt to look at the person in a much broader context, i.e., to look at their learning styles and other aspects of their particular needs.’⁷⁰

96. The Government needs to learn from the Youth Justice Board’s much more thorough approach to assessment, and how they act when a special educational need is identified. Professor Rod Morgan told the Committee:

67 Q 407

68 Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Basic skills for offenders in the community*, 2004.

69 Adult Learning Inspectorate press release, ALI 0804, 16 August 2004.

70 Q 494

‘if there is any evidence of special educational need, there is then a full assessment within the institution, so it is a sort of multi-stage process and there is a more detailed educational assessment within the custodial establishment which is on top of the ASSET (assessment) which will have been undertaken preparatory to a report to the court.’⁷¹

97. Providing a special educational needs co-ordinator in every prison to help identify and focus on the individual needs of a prisoner would be a significant step towards achieving a much better system based on the individual. Jen Walters, Assistant Director of Inspection, Adult Learning Inspectorate, told us:

‘there is an opportunity for a strategy to be put in place which becomes an elongated initial assessment and diagnostic assessment centre where you can put this special educational needs co-ordinator arrangement into place so that you are preparing the whole person rather than just dealing with the key performance targets.’⁷²

98. When asked by this Committee if he would consider establishing a special educational needs co-ordinator in every prison, Lord Filkin was interested in the idea and agreed to discuss this further with the DfES:

‘It is not a question I have put to myself before but it requires me to reflect on it because you are quite right. The scale of educational under-achievement for people coming into prisons is about as bad as it can get. ..what I need to do is to take that question and discuss it with LSC, because it clearly implies that the nature of the educational input they are putting in has to be informed by the best understanding of how you address special educational needs.’⁷³

99. From the limited evidence we have of the complex learning difficulties of many prisoners we believe that every prison should have a special educational needs co-ordinator specifically to support the special educational needs of prisoners. We urge the Government to extend the provision of special educational needs co-ordinators from Young Offender Institutions to every adult prison.

100. Another successful investment from the Youth Justice Board has been the introduction of learning support assistants working with teachers across the juvenile estate. Learning support assistants have been provided on a ration of one for every 10 juvenile offenders. They are able to provide one-on-one support to individuals that need additional help in classrooms and workshops. Robert Newman, Youth Justice Board, told us:

‘One thing that we have done at the Youth Justice Board is that we have developed a training programme for learning support assistants in the custodial environment and that has been very successful and we have at the moment about 100 learning support assistants, who actually work with the teachers, now undergoing this specific Youth Justice Board training.’⁷⁴

71 Q 124

72 Q 502

73 Q 769

74 Q 115

101. Learning support assistants are widely recognised as being a great success. Bill Massam HMI, Ofsted, told the Committee that they are producing major benefits to education provision because it enables a focus on individuals with particular learning difficulties, and allows broader pastoral support as well:

‘What we have seen over the last two to three years is a significant injection of funding from the Youth Justice Board through heads of learning and skills, and we have seen the appointment of learning support assistants on a ratio of one assistant to ten young people, and we are starting to see some major benefits stemming from those appointments. We are seeing, not only in terms of learning and support assistants helping out with basic skills but also in a one-to-one setting helping out with all sorts of pastoral support issues.’⁷⁵

102. The introduction of Learning Support Assistants to the juvenile estate has been a great success and has enabled a much greater focus on the individual needs of prisoners. We recommend the provision of learning support assistants in adult prisons.

103. We were told that more learning support assistants were needed and, more importantly, that an equal investment in such support staff was needed for young offenders, not just juveniles (currently, the Youth Justice Board funds learning support assistants across the juvenile estate, but this funding does not extend to young offenders (18 to 21). Ms Foster, a teacher at Feltham Young Offenders Institution that holds both juveniles and young offenders, told us that:

‘Juveniles are covered with learning support assistants and that works extremely well but there is an imbalance on the Young Offender side.’⁷⁶

104. We recommend that investment in young offenders is brought up to meet the level of additional investment that the Youth Justice Board has delivered to the juvenile estate. With some of the highest reconviction rates, young offenders represent a vital stage of any strategy to reduce recidivism, and this discrepancy in investment cannot continue. In particular, we recommend that the prescribed entitlement to education, and the introduction of special educational needs co-ordinators and learning support assistants are extended to young offenders.

Education in the context of wider needs

105. Educational needs cannot—and should not—be separated from a wider needs assessment. A significant number of prisoners have a history of substance misuse; many have mental health problems; and few have a job or home to go to on release. Education must be an integral part of an holistic approach to assessing and resolving prisoners’ needs.⁷⁷ The lack of any co-ordinated approach can form a barrier to effective education in some prisons.

75 Q 486

76 Q 967

77 Ev 2

An entitlement to education

106. The key recommendations in the 2002 PwC review of prison education funding were that ‘the system should be based around the needs of the learner’, and that ‘there should be a national entitlement for prison education that describes the key education services to be provided to prisoners serving different types of sentences (recognising the different learning needs that different types of prisoners have)’.

107. The very worst thing that the Government could do would be to define a prisoner’s needs and then not deliver the necessary programmes. Anne Owers, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Prisons, told us:

‘We are talking about people who have been failed many times in their lives and in some cases the worst thing you can do is to make assessments that you cannot carry out in prison or to offer promises about what is not going to happen later. That is almost worse than not doing anything.’⁷⁸

108. A key element of the success of the transfer of health care in prisons to the Department of Health, has been the thorough assessment of needs undertaken by the local health authority and the system of entitlement based on these needs assessments. Funding was allocated on the basis of a thorough assessment of needs, not a set budget. It is clear that little has changed in prison education since 2002, and as the PwC review recommended, there needs to be a thorough and robust assessment of needs and a national entitlement for prison education with provision and funding directed to meeting these needs. As Frances Crook told the Committee:

‘I do not think education should ever be seen as a privilege; education is always a right and should be encouraged.’⁷⁹

109. The Youth Justice Board has already defined entitlement to education and training for young offenders. David Singleton HMI, Deputy Director for Education, Ofsted, told us:

‘The Youth Justice Board has issued a specification nationally which defines an entitlement for young people’⁸⁰

110. Professor Augustin John, visiting Professor of Education, University of Strathclyde, told the Committee that he believed the issue of education in prisons as an entitlement is linked to the Government’s aim of prioritising the knowledge-base of the UK economy. He argued that this country cannot afford not to educate its prison population:

‘In the Foreword to the report, ‘Time to Learn’.. I made the point that if there is a prioritisation of the knowledge-based economy then education reforms should touch every part of the system, including prisons, for the simple reason that, as the statistics show, more than 50% of people in the secure state have had very poor education, certainly poor educational qualifications. It seems to me therefore that there must be issues around education in prisons as an entitlement, and an entitlement which can

78 Q 501

79 Q 190

80 Q 477

be delivered through structural organisation so that it does not become a lottery, it does not become a question of chance, it does not have to compete with other things, but, as part of a sentencing plan and indeed in relation to people who are on remand similarly, opportunities are created such that education cannot be interrupted, and where people have been out of education they could have their needs assessed and met.⁸¹

111. Prisoners should be given an entitlement to have their identified learning needs met. In principle, the Committee recommends that all prisoners should have an entitlement to have these learning needs met, but we recognise that this would be a long-term goal and that learning needs might have to be met on release for some prisoners.

112. The Government is introducing an entitlement to free level 2 education for all adults in their Skills Strategy White Paper⁸². Those serving their sentence in the community will have an entitlement to free level 2 education and training. **We believe that the entitlement to free level 2 education for all adults should be applied equally to the prison population.**

Individual Learning Plans and Sentence Plans

113. The desired model by the DfES is for individual learning plans as part of sentence planning, for every prisoner. Susan Pember told this Committee that it is the goal of the DfES that there should be individual diagnostic assessments of the individual as part of their individual learning plan which transfers with them when they leave prison:

‘Our goal is that.. once we have that individual diagnostic assessment of the individual, it transfers with them and we have an individual learning plan that goes with them and .. with the joint project between probation and the police, we would want the learning and skills council to be in that from day one in order that we can actually help that individual and that is the learning plan that goes with them.’⁸³

114. However, the Prison Reform Trust has shown that the bedrocks that should underpin education provision, sentence planning and personal officer schemes⁸⁴, are missing in many prisons, particularly the large local establishments which hold the bulk of the prison population. The Trust told us that ‘sentence planning which is extremely important if prisoners are to use their time constructively, is often haphazard and not carried through’.

115. Dan Taubman of NATFHE agreed:

81 Q 326

82 Department for Education and Skills, *21st Century Skills Social Exclusion Unit realising our potential*, July 2003

83 Q 662

84 The personal officer scheme is a scheme that allocates each prisoner a personal prison officer—similar to the concept of having a personal tutor.

‘Whatever happens, they (education and vocational provision) have to be much more integrated, and both of them integrated in sentence planning and other education, for instance offender behaviour programmes.’⁸⁵

116. The Adult Learning Inspectorate has also recommended to the Government that ‘The acquisition of employability and basic skills should form an integral part of a detailed offender supervision plan. The links between sentence plans, individual learning plans and supervision plans should be explicit.’⁸⁶

117. The Government must deliver on its commitment to implement a system of Individual Learning Plans linked to Sentence Plans. The haphazard nature in which this is undertaken at present cannot continue. This should be a priority for delivery.

Transfer of records

118. Prisoner-focused sentence planning has been notoriously patchy in the past, and has been hampered in part by the ineffective transfer of records between prisons. Research by NATFHE and the Association of College Lecturers has found that only one third of education managers say that they regularly receive prisoners’ records following transfers. A large number of our witnesses including the OCR, the Prison Reform Trust and the Forum on Prison Education all urged the creation of a framework for records transfer, which would enable the relevant authorities (and prisoners themselves) to track learning and achievements. Professor David Wilson said:

‘You then finally mentioned a system of reliable records of transfer. Well, there is none. That is one of the urgent things which needs to be put in place without any doubt at all.’⁸⁷

119. We also heard evidence that, as a result of the failure to transfer records, many prisoners are repeatedly undertaking initial assessments and Key Performance Target tests to boost prison statistics. Dr John Brennan:

‘We need to put some emphasis on trying to create a system in which, as prisoners move round the system, there is much more effective transfer of information about them, and they do not end up doing the same things over and over again - which may boost the key performance statistics, but do not do a lot in terms of taking those individuals forward.’⁸⁸

120. The new Offender Assessment System (OASys) is an information technology system that is designed to better record prisoners’ specific work skills, accredited qualifications, abilities and attitudes. Importantly, with OASys, prisoners’ employment records should be easily transferable if they move establishment.

85 Q 278

86 Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Basic skills for offenders in the community*, 2004.

87 Q 40

88 Q 270

121. The implementation of OAsys is very patchy, however, and at present there is no framework and system of records transfer. No such system exists on a statutory basis. 'It is widely felt that this should be created and instituted as a matter of urgency to allow educational records to come into prison with the prisoner, and then leave with him/her upon release. Each prisoner should have the facility to keep a record of his/her achievements as well as a copy of the courses being followed. Far too many records are lost in transit.'⁸⁹

122. The transfer of records across prisons is a disgrace. The overcrowding of prisons and movement of prisoners across the prison estate is no excuse. The fact that prisoners are repeatedly put through initial assessments and Key Performance Target tests because their records cannot be transferred is unacceptable. The Committee recommends the urgent delivery of an electronic system for the transfer of records. The refinement and implementation of the Offender Assessment System (OAsys) must be stepped up with no further delays.

The continuation of provision on release

123. If the purpose of prison education is to contribute to the rehabilitation of prisoners and their re-settlement into the community then the continuation of provision must be considered a key part of any strategy. The Ministerial foreword in the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) report referred to above stated that 'we must foster an approach to learning and skills that meets the resettlement needs of offenders.' As the ALI report points out, National Offender Management Service has 'great potential for marshalling all the services needed by each offender, including learning and job placement.'

124. For prison education to have an impact on the employment prospects of prisoners, it is essential that learning can continue after the release of a prisoner—especially if this is learning towards a particular qualification that will enable them to gain employment. Martin Narey, Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service, told us that the lack of continuation of learning on release was a major weakness:

'In my view that is the major weakness. The proportion of prisoners having succeeded in education or who have begun to achieve in education who follow up their education on release is far too small.'⁹⁰

125. Only 6% of prisoners continue with some form of education and training upon release. One obvious practical barrier is that the timing of registration for College courses usually does not tie in with a prisoner's release date, and there seems to be very little flexibility in the College system. Unless there is to be a consistent educational programme throughout England and Wales, prisoners will continue to struggle with this barrier.

126. The Youth Justice Board highlighted the fact that if suitable, full-time education training or employment placements are not available to young people on leaving custody then the likelihood of re-offending will be increased significantly and much of the work undertaken in custody will be wasted. It is essential, therefore, that every effort is made to

89 Ev 5

90 Q 563

prepare young people for sustained progress in education, training, or employment. It is also essential that there is continuity of subjects, coursework, learning materials and accreditation between the learning and skills experiences in the Young Offenders Institution and what is provided in the community.

127. It was the opinion of many of our witnesses that if imprisonment is necessary, then plans for a prisoner's rehabilitation should be set into motion from their very first day in custody, if not before. Merron Mitchell, Head of the Offender Learning Directorate, City College Manchester, told us:

'We were talking earlier about resettlement and the pre-release course. To me, resettlement and pre-release start on the day of somebody's reception into prison. I think that we should be working in education for the day that they are released.'⁹¹

Support on release

128. Support on release must involve a 'whole package' of support, including relocation support, accommodation, and other rehabilitation support in terms of re-entering society. We were told that for successful prison education schemes such as the Young Offender Programme, led by National Grid Transco, to have the desired effect on the secure employment of prisoners on release, there needs to be a complete system of care available for prisoners after release. Professor David Wilson said:

'It is common parlance and there are various organisations which are providing resettlement advice in relation to that full package, but what tends to happen is if one part of that package falls down then the whole house of cards fails. With some prisoners, education might be the most important thing that they want, or housing might be the most important thing that they want.'⁹²

Link to community / mainstream services for short-term prisoners

129. There needs to be a clear definition of the purpose of prison education across different categories of prisons and different types of institutions. For example, local prisons that hold short-term prisoners with average sentences as short as 6 weeks, cannot be expected to educate prisoners in such a short period of time. Instead, they should focus on linking prisoners to rehabilitation and education services available on release through providing information, advice, and guidance. As Professor Andrew Coyle told us:

'I think we tend to see prisoners as a homogenous group and in fact they are not. .. the needs of long-term prisoners (have) to be dealt with, but the majority of prisoners.. are actually short-term prisoners serving very short sentences. The point that I keep coming back to is that for people serving very short sentences, as the majority are, the Prison Service itself cannot deliver even, I think, the basic skills... what you do is you use that period to set up structures which will help them after release.'⁹³

91 Q 271

92 Q 10

93 Q 52

130. Focusing on linking short-term prisoners to mainstream community services is about the best use of limited resources. Professor Andrew Coyle argued that if the focus is on the desired outcome, rather than the institutional process of meeting Key Performance Targets, resources would be re-directed to identifying where a prisoner's needs could be best met on release:

‘...that might be a better use of the limited resources. I am not sure that the best use of prison resources—and it is not just in education—is simply to say that we are going to put people through X number of courses or X number of programmes. That is what I mean about concentrating on process rather than on outcome, and in focusing on the outcome if there are resources existing in the community then the short period that the prisoner is in prison would be best used by identifying where those needs can be met once he is released’⁹⁴

‘I think the best the Prison Service can do in the short period is to identify the need. I do not think it can meet the need. I think what it should then do is identify where these needs can be met so that there is the continuity. I imagine that one of the intentions of setting up a National Offender Management Service is that there will be this facility to make use of the resources.’⁹⁵

131. Professor Rod Morgan specifically made the connection between linking to mainstream services and reducing recidivism:

‘We think that access to mainstream services and, while we have got young offenders in custody, motivating them and starting them on this track with the hope of continuing it when they are released so that they are slotted into mainstream services is absolutely vital if we are going to reduce reoffending’⁹⁶

132. The Government should ensure that education provision is flexible enough to adapt to the different types of prisons and prisoners. Local prisons that hold prisoners with very short sentences, for example, should have their purpose clearly defined as being focused on information, advice, and guidance activity linking to rehabilitation and education services available in the community on release.

Importance of resettlement strategy

133. The Time to Learn study found that prisoners had low expectations about the chances of finding employment or training and a general resignation about the inevitability of self-employment due to the burden of having a criminal conviction. The Prison Reform Trust found that prisons with good resettlement projects are the exceptions rather than the rule. This is supported by the findings of the Chief Inspector of Prisons who in her annual reports for the past two years has noted the ‘patchy’ nature of provision and the ‘absence of a coherent and effective resettlement strategy’.

94 Q 55

95 Q 53

96 Q 100

134. UNLOCK told the Committee that there is absolutely nothing provided for those who are discharged from prisons—around 110,000 a year—and that plays a large part in the high rate of recidivism⁹⁷. In his 1991 report into the riots at Strangeways and other prisons, Lord Justice Woolf said he welcomed the plan of the Prison Service to introduce pre-release courses in all establishments by the end of the financial year 1992-93; more than a decade later these courses are still to materialise.³⁴

Role of the National Offender Management Service

135. With the creation of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), we have the proposal of ‘end to end’ management of offenders across the prison and probation services. Whilst the concept has received much support, implementation is again proving more troublesome. The extent to which NOMS will be involved in education provision and individual learning plans as part of offender management is also unclear. NOMS has been charged with the very difficult task of co-ordinating the work of the prison service, probation service, Learning and Skills Council, Connexions, Youth Justice Board, local education providers, voluntary organisations – the list continues – as well as reporting to the Home Office (it does not report in any way to the DfES). The Home Office says that it will be working ‘in partnership’ with these organisations. As a result, it is unclear what authority NOMS will have to enable it to achieve its purpose of delivering successful ‘end to end’ offender management.

136. If the purpose of providing education and training in prisons is to reduce re-offending by enabling prisoners to gain secure employment, then the continuation of support and programmes on release is essential. The Government needs to: produce an overarching resettlement strategy for prisoners; commit to the continuity of provision of education and training on release; and deliver on its commitment to provide the full-package of support necessary through the National Offender Management Service.

97 Information from the UNLOCK campaign for pre-release courses.

5 The structures for delivery of prison education

National structures for delivery—the Offender Learning and Skills Unit

137. At national level it is the Offenders Learning and Skills Unit in the DfES which co-ordinates the development and delivery of prison education, working in partnership with the Home Office, the Prison Service, the National Probation Service, the Youth Justice Board, the Learning and Skills Council and others.

138. In principle, we welcome the creation of the Offenders Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU) and the transfer of responsibility for prison education to the DfES. However, as previously discussed, we believe that the OLSU has been hampered by a lack of any overarching strategy for prison education and a lack of drive within the DfES. The transfer of responsibility to the DfES has essentially been just a bureaucratic change at the national level, and there has been a limited impact for offenders in terms of their access to, or experience of, appropriate and effective prison education. We have not received any clear evidence that such system changes as have taken place have resulted in genuine improvements in prison education for offenders.

139. **We consider that changes in the formal structure for the delivery of prison education at the national level have yet to deliver a positive outcome for prisoners' experience of education and training because of the absence of an overarching strategy across the different Government departments and a lack of ownership and championing of prison education at the national level.**

Regional structures for delivery—the Learning and Skills Council

140. In January 2004, Ministers agreed to hand over responsibility for the funding, planning and delivery of prison education to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). It is planned that the LSC will take on this responsibility in full from 2006. Caroline Neville, Director of Learning, LSC said:

‘I think is very well placed to try to ensure that the shape of that provision is one which allows offenders and ex-offenders to progress. There are many advantages of the local nature of the Learning and Skills Councils.. I am not saying that it is going to be easy but I think our core purpose and our core mission and our experience in relation to post-16 learning and skills is unprecedented really.’⁹⁸

141. Given the wide ranging responsibilities of the LSC—much of which is high profile work that is high on the Minister’s agenda—it is unclear what level of priority the LSC will give to prison education. It is equally unclear what direction the Minister will give the LSC in terms of the priority they should be giving to prison education.

142. In ‘The Skills We Need: Our Annual Statement of Priorities’ by the LSC, prisons was not mentioned once: not in the 6 main priorities; nor in the list of targets and resources; nor the list of organisations to co-operate with as partners. **We are very disappointed that the LSC has not included prison education in its statement of priorities.**

143. High level delivery targets will shape the LSC’s activity, as Caroline Neville described to the Committee:

‘We will be measured by our performance. Obviously we will be responsible for increases in achievements of learners, for example, and we will be responsible for securing high levels of sustained performance. There will be key performance measures for which we are responsible and we will want to deliver on those.’⁹⁹

144. But targets alone will not be sufficient to drive all of the additional effort required to ensure that prison education gains what is hoped from joining the LSC—the end to the professional isolation of prison education staff, the application of mainstream approaches to funding methodology and towards special education needs provision, to name but a few. There is no target driving the LSC to bridge the gap between education inside and outside prisons and no specific funding has been allocated for this purpose. The Committee believe this to be a considerable oversight. Prison education may just be ‘bolted-on’ to the LSC and progress will not be driven as expected. There are numerous potential advantages in having the LSC funding, planning, and delivering prison education. Achieving these positive outcomes, however, will depend on who is driving the LSC to ensure they come to fruition. The Government must provide strong leadership to ensure the LSC achieves these positive outcomes.

145. We urge the Government to prioritise, and provide the necessary funding for, the process of bridging the gap between education inside and outside prisons through the involvement of the Learning and Skills Council. Prison education must not simply be ‘bolted-on’ to the LSC. The Government must take responsibility for making prison education a priority for the LSC.

Managing delivery through contracts

146. Since 1991, the delivery of prison education has been managed through contracts. Appendix 2 gives a chronological summary of contracting arrangements since 1991. We know that ‘in the past contracting had not worked well. Education (supplied under contract) and vocational training (undertaken largely by prison service instructors) had been split, and this schism had been unhelpful to staff and learners alike.’¹⁰⁰

147. The existing contracts have also led to a move away from local delivery in many cases, as well as a shift away from focusing on individuals. The nature of the contracts has taken away the flexibility prisons need to focus provision on individuals. Professor David Wilson said:

99 Q 712

100 All-Party Parliamentary Group for FE and Lifelong Learning, *Prison Education in 2004 and Beyond*.

‘It is no longer about the individual needs of that particular prisoner in terms of how he or she might need to learn skills or gain qualifications, it is simply about pile it high, sell it cheap.’¹⁰¹

148. It is widely accepted that existing contract arrangements need to be improved. Recent reforms, however, have resulted in a great deal of uncertainty for all those involved in prison education. In 2002–03, PwC undertook a review of prison education funding which recommended that prison education should again be re-tendered as a combined contract for prison education and vocational training—this was named Project Rex. In April 2003, notice was given to contractors of the re-tendering process and the date for the new contracts to come into force was April 2004—later changed to September 2004 (Existing providers had their existing contracts extended twice to meet these timescales). In January 2004 Project Rex was cancelled and the Offender Learning and Skills Unit announced that current contracts would be automatically extended for between 1 and 3 years from September 2004. However, all contracts now contain clauses which allow them to be terminated with 4 months’ notice.

149. Under current contracting arrangements in prisons education and vocational training continue to be organised separately. Furthermore, the recent reforms to contracts have created such uncertain working conditions that many experienced and highly qualified teachers have left prison education because of this.

LSC Proposals

150. New proposals would give responsibility to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The LSC are piloting 3 different prototype models in 3 areas at present. The prototypes started in January 2005 and new contracting arrangements are due to roll out nationally from August 2006.

151. We have concerns about the timetable for the implementation of the proposals. The three prototypes are very different indeed. It is unclear on what criteria they will be assessed and how a decision will be made as to how to roll out best practice by August 2006.

152. It is likely that there will be a whole new infrastructure of people that will have to gain expertise regarding the provision of education in prisons and managing various contracts. It is not clear what preparation the LSC is making to ensure appropriate training for their staff. Neither is it clear whether existing expertise in this area will be utilised to improve the effectiveness of the LSC or whether it will be lost.

153. Since the DfES took responsibility for prison education, the issue of contracts has been a communications disaster. There have been numerous delays and uncertainties, including the cancellation of project Rex. Janice Shiner said:

‘the trick, I think—and maybe some of the evidence says we have not done it as well as we might—is to keep people informed about what it is you are trying to achieve and keep them informed of progress along the way.’¹⁰²

154. The DfES have failed in their responsibility to inform those working in prison education of the guiding principles underlying the reform of contracts as well as the progress of implementation of the new proposals. The DfES must clearly outline the rationale behind the three prototype models for contracting, and the criteria on which they will be assessed. Finally, they must outline a detailed timetable of implementation for new contract arrangements and commit to meeting this timetable.

Funding

155. There has been a considerable under-investment in prison education for many decades. Martin Narey told us that funding for education in prisons was falling in real terms even through the 1990s:

‘In education terms, investment in education fell in real terms during the 1990s as the service concentrated on security and good order.’¹⁰³

156. Funding for offender learning, which is jointly administered by the DfES and the Home Office, has risen from £97 million in 2003–04 to £127 million in 2004–05. This increase has to be seen in the context of a dramatic rise in the number of people in prison. Dr John Brennan said:

‘We very much welcome the emphasis which government has given over the last few years to boost resources in prisons but, after you take account of inflation and the increased volume of people in the prison system, the real investment in learners and in prisoners is not that great.’¹⁰⁴

157. The DfES agreed that this increase in funding was not sufficient. Janice Shiner said:

‘No, it cannot possibly be enough, particularly when you think of the skills gap for the prison population. It is a significant step on from where it was, and it needs to move on, but it needs to increase, not necessarily by having people sitting in a classroom with a tutor, we need to extend the learning opportunities through a whole range of other ways.’

158. The Committee believes that the funding methodology for prison education must be fit for purpose. It should be flexible enough to fund the various forms of education and learning programmes that are suited to the type of establishment, to the prisoner population within it, and to the patterns of movement to and from that prison.

159. The LSC Funding and Strategy Learning Group put forward their proposed principles for the funding of Prison education and Skills to their Project Board on 7 October 2004. They propose ‘to establish a national funding and allocations framework. At a national level, funds would be allocated to local LSC offices, in accordance with wider regional plans and priorities for prison education. Locally, the appropriateness of provision and

102 Q 716

103 Q 558

104 Q 270

subsequent funding levels will be identified and agreed between the Heads of Learning and Skills, local LSCs and providers.¹⁰⁵

160. These proposals aim to achieve a greater level of coherence across provision in England by creating a clear and transparent national framework for funding. The arrangements at a local level would also increase flexibility to meet the specific learning needs of offenders.

161. According to the 'funding and targets strand' of the Funding and Strategy Learning Group, the LSC are proposing to explore the potential to base differentiated funding approaches around the activity undertaken in the prison. The example they give is that prisons that act as short-term 'holding centres' for offenders could be 'funded on the basis of Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) activity, rather than education provision'. Much of our evidence supported the idea of differentiated funding based on the activity undertaken in a prison. It is about giving prisons the flexibility to meet the needs of the individual offenders rather than making them dependent on funding for 'one size fits all' education provision that is unsuitable for their learners.

162. The LSC has well-established and understood funding methodologies in place for providing support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Additional Learning Support (ALS) funding approach, for example, takes account of the provisions in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995. An ALS funding approach requires that 'funding is determined by means of an assessment.' Many of our witnesses supported a thorough and robust assessment of needs that can be used as a basis for provision and funding. Vic Pomeroy from HMP The Verne said:

'I believe with the new contracts it will make it even more exciting by opening up financial frameworks which are mainstream frameworks by getting into the contractors. With the Learning and Skills Council it means that we link into their funding methodologies. Currently—and Peter will probably tell you in a minute—the contract is dead. We buy hours; and we cannot buy anything but an hour. The problem with the current contract is we buy an hour of education. If I want to deliver individual needs I have got to seek to get a teacher to deliver those hours. Under the funding methodology of the Learning and Skills Council we can pull down additional funding to support each individual learner. I think it is an exciting period of change.'¹⁰⁶

163. The LSC paper recognises that such an approach 'will have a significant impact upon the available budget' (because of the sheer number of offenders that would qualify under an ALS funding approach). The paper says that 'the group will model the financial implications..' and will make 'recommendations regarding the feasibility of introduction an ALS funding approach'.

164. We recommend that the LSC is given the appropriate resources necessary to apply its standard funding methodology so that prisons have access to all of the funding

105 Paper from the LSC Funding and Strategy Learning Group to their Project Board on 7 October 2004. Not printed.

streams available to mainstream Colleges. In particular, we wish to see the Additional Learning Support funding approach applied to prison education.

165. We have found that the level of funding of prison education is not linked to any particular purpose or outcome for prison education at present. Instead it is based on historical levels. In 2002, the PwC review of prison education funding was clear that the funding of prison education ‘is based primarily on historical spending patterns not a robust assessment of need.’ Michael Newell of the Prison Governor’s Association told us:

‘There has been a substantial amount of money put in, in the last few years, undoubtedly. In fact, both education and drugs and cognitive programmes have seen investment sustained now for several years. However, what is not clear is what level we are trying to fund for. In other words, we are not clear about what the future standards are that we are aiming towards and what the funding gap is. There is lots of money going in but there probably needs to be substantially more.’¹⁰⁷

166. The Committee is concerned that the Government is not funding prison education with any defined outcome in mind. At present, the budget is controlling policy instead of vice versa. Lord Filkin said:

‘It is a brutal question but it has to be because you have to say, "If that is the amount of money there, how is that money going to be most effectively used" to achieve the goals I talked about which were about maximising the numbers into employment.’¹⁰⁸

167. Certainly, if prisons are being assessed on an equal basis with mainstream provision by Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate, then they should be funded to provide equal resources. If the expectations for standards of provision are the same inside and outside of prisons, then the resources made available should be the same.

168. We recommend that the Government undertakes a fundamental review to come to conclusions on what it wants to achieve through prison education and then funds education provision at a level sufficient to meet this chosen outcome. Existing budget constraints, based on historical levels of provision, should not continue. A clear strategy for prison education should be costed and appropriately funded.

Local structures for delivery

Role of Heads of Learning and Skills

169. After the DfES took responsibility for prison education, they funded the post of Head of Learning and Skills in every prison, but the staff concerned are employed by the prison service. Their relationship to the DfES is unclear and their control over contracts is very limited.

170. It appears that, in many cases, the transfer of responsibility for prison education to the DfES has not produced clear benefit—and indeed has raised some questions about what

107 Q 535

108 Q 784

authority the DfES has to make changes. The appointment of the new Heads of Learning and Skills (HOLS) is a good example. Officially their role is:

‘to ensure that all offenders, whatever their individual requirements, can access learning and skills provision which will provide opportunities for them to progress, raise their self-esteem and gain qualifications as a route to employability and a positive lifestyle upon release.

They will work with a range of bodies including local Learning and Skills Councils, Connexions Partnerships and voluntary organisations to develop learning opportunities throughout their establishment, plan provision which eases the transition of learners from custody into the community, and drive up quality standards.’¹⁰⁹

171. However, the exact nature of the HOLs position in relation to Education Managers, and other senior members of prison staff, remains unclear and their effectiveness varies a great deal between prisons. It is dependent on their acceptance by senior staff, their knowledge of the wider education agenda, their ability to link to outside provision, and their capacity to co-ordinate the work of a multi-disciplinary team that is not directly line managed by them. They have a very difficult set of responsibilities, and, just as with the previous system, the Heads of Learning and Skills are still dependent on the support of Governors to achieve them. Bill Massam HMI of Ofsted, said:

‘there is some confusion.. about the roles of heads of learning and skills. In some cases they do not actually sit on the senior management team within the establishment and would perhaps report to a head of resettlement rather than just being a member of the senior management team. The other confusion that comes through is that on occasions staff are unclear about the responsibilities of heads of learning and skills vis-à-vis the education managers.’¹¹⁰

172. The appointment of Heads of Learning and Skills is a welcome progression but, in many cases, they have not been able to fulfil their intended role. Instead they have highlighted the lack of clarity of ownership of prison education between the Home Office and the DfES and the lack of commitment and drive behind DfES policies. **We recommend that the DfES and the Home Office jointly champion the role of Heads of Learning and Skills and increase their profile within the senior management of prisons with clear direction and accountability.**

Prison education staff

173. The working conditions, job security, and professional development opportunities for the teaching staff in prisons are much poorer than for staff working in mainstream further education. The specialist skill of teaching in prison is largely unrecognised. Professor David Wilson said to this Committee:

109 Department for Education and Skills, Offender Learning and Skills Unit Action Plan.

110 Q 436

‘..prison educators have quite specialist skills and that is very important, I think, in looking at contracts. It is not like you can suddenly just pluck somebody who has been teaching maths in the community and put them in a jail and hope they will teach maths in a jail. There has been a real reluctance, I think, historically to recognise the very specialist skills that educators in jails have.’¹¹¹

‘..these are people who understand the nature of working in a total institution. They understand the pressures, the institutional pressures that are brought to bear on that person who enters the classroom. They understand that that person's experience of dealing with the classroom environment has in the past been absolutely awful and appalling. They understand that to teach a class is actually to teach a group of individuals rather than trying to impart information as if it was all the same. They have to be far more centred on the individual needs of the prisoners who engage in prison education. Some of the greatest unsung heroes in our criminal justice system are some of those prison educators’¹¹²

174. The turbulence of contract arrangements in recent years has led to an unacceptable level of uncertainty for staff. Many expert professionals have been lost as a result. Such conditions of employment, along with the difficult nature of the work, and limited progression opportunities, has also led to a major difficulty in the recruitment of staff. David Bell, HMI Chief Inspector of Schools told us:

‘there is increasing evidence that it is harder and harder to attract staff to come and work in prison education. I think.. that should really worry us, in other words, getting specialist trained teachers to come and do this.’¹¹³

175. At present, there is no enhanced pay for professional teaching staff in prisons to reflect the specialist nature of their work. Professor David Wilson told us:

‘I think, therefore, more broadly it goes back again to some of the questions placed earlier about the value that we have in people who teach in the specialist environment, and therefore that broadens out again to people being prepared to say that this is worthy of our attention and we should reward people who do this accordingly.’¹¹⁴

176. Another key area that must be given appropriate attention is the progression and development opportunities for prison staff. As a result of the isolation of prison staff from the mainstream teaching profession progression opportunities have been limited. Susan Pember told this Committee that the involvement of the Learning and Skills Council brings with it the opportunity to end this professional isolation:

111 Q 3

112 Q 33

113 Q 425

114 Q 39

‘the idea of the department for education being in charge of prison education is that the teacher in the classroom is not alone, is not isolated, is part of a family of educators in that area that can provide support and training.’¹¹⁵

177. The isolation of prison education staff must not be allowed to continue. The Government cannot afford to lose any more experienced professionals from prison education. Instead the DfES must properly reward and develop such valuable staff and attract new professionals to this area.

178. In order to prevent further loss of staff from the profession, and to help improve recruitment, the Government must ensure that the specialist role of teaching staff in prisons is properly recognised and rewarded. The professional isolation of these teachers must be remedied through the new role of the Learning and Skills Council in delivering education provision. At present there is no specific funding identified for this purpose. The Government should properly identify, fund, and drive this process forward.

Managing delivery through targets

179. The centralisation of prison education over recent decades has largely been supported by those giving evidence to this Committee. The circumstances where a Prison Governor could decide to ‘cancel’ all education programmes have been remedied. Nevertheless, there has been very little support for the new system that is delivered through Key Performance Targets. Anne Owers, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Prisons, told us:

‘the prison system, the Prison Service, has moved within the last decade or so from being one where prisons were almost the personal fiefdoms of governors where the governor decided almost entirely what happened in a prison to a much more organised and centralised system, but the mechanism for delivering or trying to deliver consistency across the piece has been targets, key performance targets, and, as I am sure colleagues will want to say, we have some issues with those about whether they are flexible enough and whether they really record what is going on.’¹¹⁶

Impact of existing targets

180. There are 19 Key Performance Indicators set by the prison service and then 43 more detailed Key Performance Targets. The basic skills targets are Key Performance Targets.

181. Offender Learning and Skills Unit statistics show that ‘offenders achieved over 46,000 qualifications in literacy, language, and numeracy in 2003–04, as well as nearly 110,000 qualifications in work-related skills which will prepare them for employment on release.’ Paul Goggins MP told this Committee that he believed targets were effective and that he was going to make no apology for setting targets:

115 Q 574

116 Q 439

‘I do not make any apology for setting targets because the evidence is that as we set those targets and fund the activity that goes behind those targets we see a substantial difference.’¹¹⁷

182. There is no question that Key Performance Targets have made a substantial difference. We know that setting targets for the number of prisoners achieving certain basic skills qualifications has skewed the education provision available to prisoners. While noting that the Prison Service has made significant progress in improving the basic skills of prisoners, The Prison Reform Trust suggested that “achievement [of targets in Basic Skills] masks significant shortcomings in the opportunities for learning available to all prisoners across the estate.”¹¹⁸

183. In a recent report, ‘Prison Education in 2004 and Beyond’, the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Further Education and Lifelong Learning suggested that in some cases prisoners are being encouraged to take examinations which would help prisons to meet the relevant Key Performance Targets; the prime consideration was therefore not what would be most suitable for the individual prisoner. In oral evidence, the All-Party Parliamentary Group heard from HM Chief inspector of prisons, that: “Key Performance Targets lead to a focus on numbers achieving qualifications, rather than meeting the needs of individuals. The classic is putting graduates through level 2 to ‘get your targets’”.¹¹⁹

184. The Committee heard evidence that one prison was even running ‘Key Performance Target classes’. Merron Mitchell, the contract manager of prison education at City College Manchester, told this Committee:

‘my saddest day was walking into a prison and seeing on the door of a classroom “KPT class”. I went in and asked the people what were they learning and they said, “KPT”. They did not know what it was but they knew the governor had to get KPTs—key performance targets. In fact, they were doing English and maths, numeracy and literacy - because that was the focus of education. Whether you needed KPT or not, you were in it. Thank goodness, we are moving towards this broader curriculum, this wider approach, but with the national skills strategy at the very heart of it. that, We must establish the underpinning knowledge to enable them to be eligible for work.’¹²⁰

185. Furthermore, there is no way on knowing what the target level should have been. How were the targets set? They are being met, but how do we know that they are at the appropriate level? Professor David Wilson explained:

‘there were 46,000 achievements in basic skills. Actually, 200,000 prisoners go through prison each year. The vast majority of them are short-timers. So we are actually only hitting about 25%.’¹²¹

117 Q 788

118 Ev 95

119 All-Party Parliamentary Group for Further Education and Lifelong Learning, *Prison Education in 2004 and beyond*, August 2004

120 Q 284

121 Q 18

186. John Brenchley of the OCR, told us:

‘The good news, I suppose, going through the figures, is that prisons are doing extremely well and hitting those targets, but whether or not they were the right size in the first place, of course, is anyone’s guess at the moment.’¹²²

187. Finally, it is not clear that these basic skills qualifications have any clear link to employability. The Independent Monitoring Board believes that ‘while basic skills are essential for employment, they are not sufficient to guarantee a job because prisoners are released without the additional skill and qualifications that are now needed in the job market.

The resettlement Key Performance Target

188. A more effective target in assessing the effectiveness of prison education would be the new target introduced by the Prison Service—a resettlement key performance target. In 2002-03 the target was for 28,200 prisoners to get employment, training or education places after their release. The outcome for the year was 32,993, just over a third of the 90,000 prisoners released a year and well above the target.

189. However, the Prison Reform Trust raised questions about the accuracy of this figure. They argued that the 32,993 includes 7,086 prisoners who only attended an interview at their local jobcentre—and that in fact it is not known what happened to these prisoners. The remaining 25,906 figure is based on a survey of prisoners interviewed in the last three weeks of their sentence about their expectations of finding education, training or employment. It is not known if they were actually successful.¹²³ Additionally, the Prison Reform Trust’s own research found that prisoners’ expectations of finding employment or training post-release were low, and concluded that “the achievements that the Prison Service would claim on resettlement are not reflective of the general practice on the ground in establishments across the country.”¹²⁴ **It is clearly extremely important to find a way to measure education, training or employment outcomes for prisoners soon after release, and the Prison Service or National Offender Management Service should make this a priority.**

Measuring the success of prison education against its purpose

190. If the purpose of education is to increase the opportunity for employment on release, and therefore reduce the likelihood of re-offending, then accurately recording recidivism is very important in recording the effectiveness of prison education. Accurately recording recidivism is extremely difficult because of regional movement of prisoners. Identifying the specific effect of prison education within the outcome measure of recidivism would also be extremely difficult—if not impossible. It would be very hard to single out the effect of education amongst other factors that had been a part of that prisoner’s rehabilitation process.

122 Q 353

123 Ev 95

124 Ev 96

191. The Adult Learning Inspectorate told this Committee that ‘targets should measure milestones of achievement rather than simply qualifications and should relate to employment and reduced reoffending.’¹²⁵

Value added targets

192. Professor Augustin John argued in favour of creating a Key Performance Target that measures added value:

‘Indeed, one of the recommendations we make in the ‘Time to Learn’ report is that key performance indicators for education and training should be based on the progression of individual prisoner learners and not on absolute performance as measured by exam results. I think the key issue here is how are these performance indicators going to be constructed? I take the point behind your question, surely it must be sensible for prisoners to know that the progress they make on all other indicators or indices is acknowledged because it goes to the issue of their overall social competence.’¹²⁶

193. The recommendation for a value added Key Performance Target also came from Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons. She told the Committee that:

‘what we ought to be measuring is value added, and we do not measure that nearly enough.’¹²⁷

194. A value added target would allow prisons to take an individualised approach to a prisoner’s education. Anne Owers said:

‘The first is to refer back to what I and others have said about value added. A sophisticated way of looking at it is what comes in the prison gate and what goes out the other end. That value added needs to be based secondly on an individual assessment of the needs of each person. At the moment we are adopting very much a one-size-fits-all approach.’¹²⁸

195. DfES plans for the short term future would seem to involve more qualification based targets. Caroline Neville, Director of Learning at the LSC said:

‘certainly we will be targeting those resources differently. An example of how we will be targeting those resources differently would be to lead to more qualifications.’¹²⁹

196. Susan Pember, Director of Apprenticeships and Skills for Life, DfES, told this Committee that she did not believe that targets up to 2010 would be changing:

‘One of the constraints people say now is that we are very target driven and the targets are generated top down. That has worked really well in the area of basic skills,

125 Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Basic skills for offenders in the community*, 2004.

126 Q 350

127 Q 469

128 Q 492

129 Q 740

literacy and numeracy and I have targets to work to until 2010 and cannot see them being moved.’¹³⁰

197. DfES plans for the long term future, however, look more hopeful in terms of providing the opportunity to take a very different approach. Janice Shiner told us:

‘You are raising a question that is the tension between what we do now and where we want to go. What happens now is that the targets are set for the prison and the prison governor is held responsible for those and we know whether they are achieved or not. What we want to move to is a situation where we assess an individual, we work out what the training needs are for that individual, whether it is dyslexia or basic skills or construction Level 2, and we create a learning journey for that individual. What you are trying to create is a seamless journey for that prisoner, who we see as a learner, properly assessed, properly diagnosed and that diagnosis, that template of that learner's needs, follows them wherever they go to the end of their sentence. That is what we are trying to create. ...we do not have that in place yet but what we believe we are building is the infrastructure to make that happen, that is one funding and planning organisation only, buying quality, and working at a local level alongside National Offender Management Service.’¹³¹

198. Paul Goggins MP, agreed that adding value was of key importance to targets:

‘Of course it is important that we are also adding value, that we are not just repeating things for the sake of hitting the right numbers in terms of those targets. They have to make a real difference. What we have to do is continually add value and link all these things together.’¹³²

199. We recommend that existing qualification-based targets, and their impact on education provision, are reconsidered. Key Performance Targets have distorted the provision of education and training within prisons leading to prisoners taking classes which maybe completely inappropriate for their needs. What is needed is a system of delivery whereby prison education is assessed against its stated purpose. We recommend that value-added targets are implemented to enable education provision to be focused on the individual needs of prisoners.

130 Q 621

131 Q 751

132 Q 788

6 The content of prison education

Delivering effective education and training programmes

200. Janice Shiner, Susan Pember, and Chris Barnham from the DfES have all described to this Committee the three main achievements of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit to date as being the achievement of targets for the number of basic skills qualifications amongst prisoners, the increased expenditure on prison education in the last three years, and the appointment of Heads of Learning and Skills within each prison. Whilst we recognise these achievements, as discussed previously, we believe that the Offender Learning and Skills Unit has yet to make a significant impact for the offender in terms of their access to, or experience of, appropriate and effective prison education (paragraph 138 and 139).

201. Achievements must be linked to the purpose of prison education. Professor Andrew Coyle said:

'What you really want to look at is what is being done. If you are doing the wrong thing first of all, then doing the wrong thing better is not necessarily going to improve things. We are back to this issue of an expansionist prison system and an expansionist criminal justice system.'¹³³

202. Lord Filkin told this Committee that Ministers are now beginning to ask the question of whether existing provision, including an emphasis on basic skills, is sufficient:

'The thrust to date has been quite clearly to significantly ramp up the increase in basic skills training. That increase in the number has been remarkable. The sort of questions that we are now asking ourselves—and the three Ministers are working on this together—are will that by itself, even if there were to be more money put in, be sufficient?'¹³⁴

Description of current provision

203. The Government made a manifesto commitment to 'increase dramatically the quality and quantity of education provision in prisons'.¹³⁵ The DfES have told us that 'Prisoners achieved over 46,000 qualifications in literacy, language and numeracy in 2003-04, as well as nearly 110,000 qualifications in work-related skills which will prepare them for employment on release.'¹³⁶ These achievements exceeded national targets in both areas.

204. The following graph, produced by the DfES, demonstrates the increase in the number of basic skills qualifications that have been achieved by prisoners against targets since 2002. The qualifications achieved are shown in detail in Appendix 1.

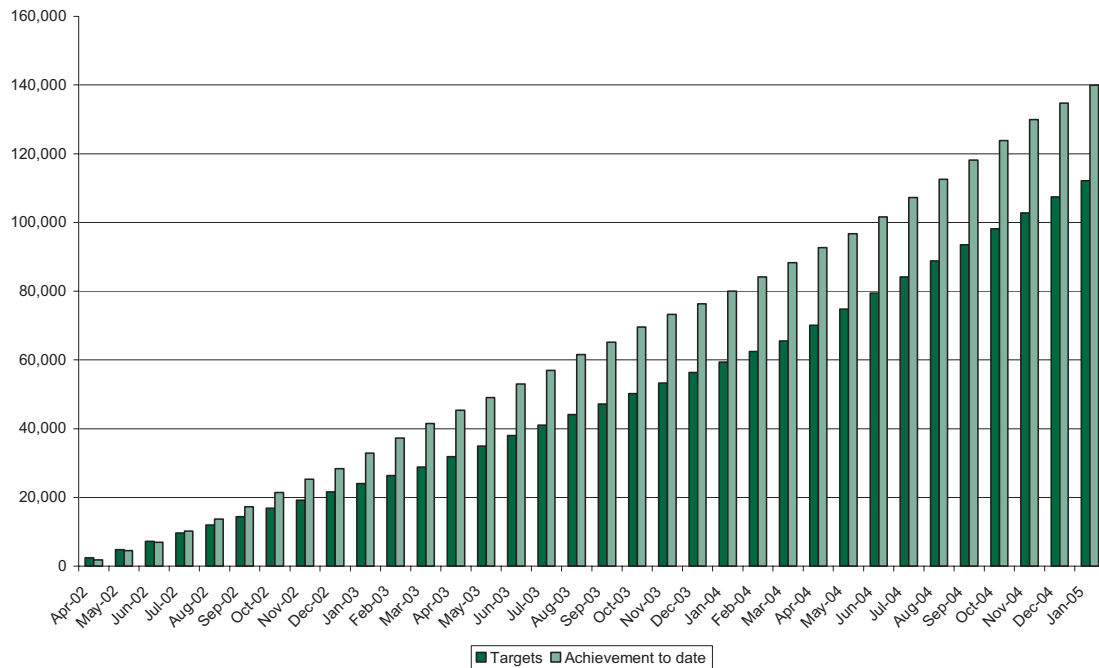
133 Q 46

134 Q 782

¹³⁵ Department for Education and Skills, Offender Learning and Skills Unit. www.dfes.gov.uk/offenderlearning/about_the_unit.cfm

136 Ev 148

Qualifications achieved against targets



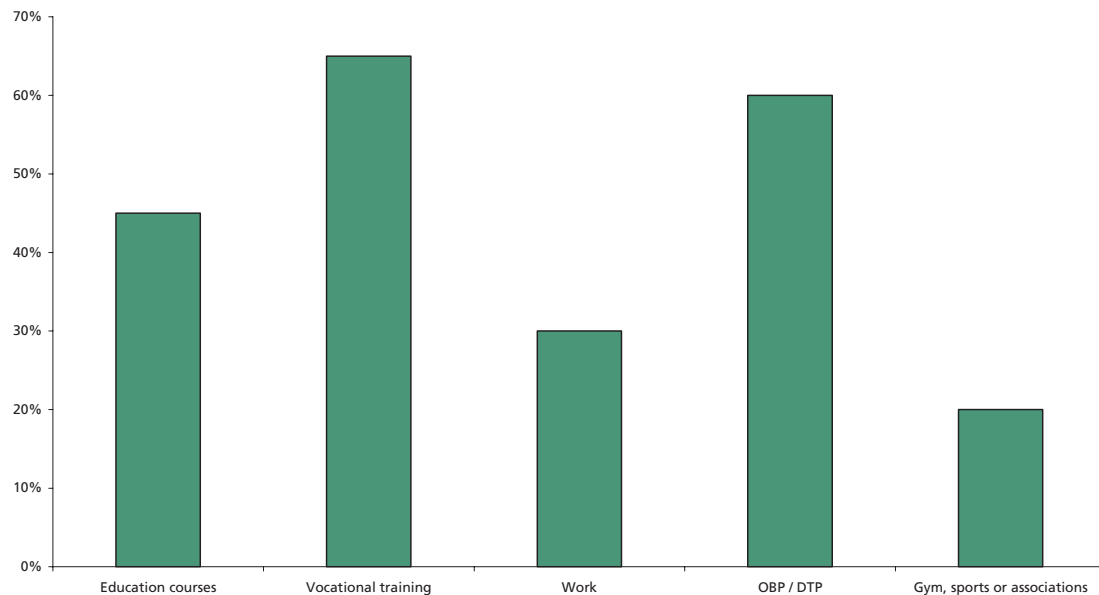
Source: Department for Education and Skills

205. Basic skills education is undeniably the focus of all prison education departments, largely due to these departments having targets set by the DfES and Prison Service. However, this focus on basic skills has been to the detriment of flexibility of learning opportunities that Heads of Learning and Skills can make available to prisoners.

206. It is still the case that only a very small proportion of prisoners participate in education provision. According to the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit in the Department for Education and Skills, just under a third of the prison population is attending education classes at any one time.

207. The 'purposeful activity statistics' obtained from the Prison Diary Project undertaken by the Home Affairs Committee, demonstrate that nearly 50% of prisoners were not engaged in any sort of education programme, and 65% were not involved in any sort of vocational training programme.

Proportion of prisoners with no time in the following activities during the week



Source: purposeful activity statistics obtained from the Prison Diary Project undertaken by the Home Affairs Committee, House of Commons. (OBP refers to Offender Behaviour Programmes, DTP refers to detoxifying programmes).

208. For the period September 2002 to August 2003 the average number of hours per week prisoners undertaking education spent in formal learning activities was 9 hours.¹³⁷

209. Information collected by the Forum on Prisoner Education suggests that, on average, 31.5% of prisoners have access to education. Across the adult population an average of 28% of prisoners have access to education.

¹³⁷ House of Commons Written answer, December 2003.

Prison Type	Total Educ. Places	Total Population	% Access to Educ.	% on Waiting List
Adult Male - Cat A	1507	3622	41.6%	4.3%
Adult Male - Cat B	1370	4722	29.0%	5.1%
Adult Male - Cat C	3451	19370	17.8%	4.6%
Adult Male - Cat D	1548	4807	32.2%	6.8%
Adult Male - Local	7496	25009	30.0%	4.7%
Female - Open	310	552	56.2%	0.0%
Female - Closed	1785	3523	50.7%	4.1%
YOI Male	2839	5942	47.8%	2.7%
Juvenile YOI Male	1480	1624	91.1%	0.7%
Total	21786	69171	Average 31.5%	Average 4.5%

Source: Form on Prisoner Education (FPE). Statistics collected in preparation of the Directory of Offender Education in August and September 2004. Statistics were collated for the Committee by the FPE.

Note: Prison population statistics are based on the most recent edition of Prison Statistics, published by TSO. Some prisons did not supply this information, and these prisons have been excluded from the above statistics. The omitted prisons are Dovegate, Feltham, Lindholme and Swinfen Hall.

210. Such low levels of provision of education are not simply a reflection of a lack of willingness to learn. For the most popular training courses there are often queues of prisoners waiting to get a place. The table above demonstrates that on average nearly 5% of prisoners are on a waiting list for education, including nearly 7% of male prisoners in category D prisons. Part of the Government's manifesto commitment is to dramatically increase the quantity of provision available. Despite £30M extra investment in offender learning in 2004-05, the effects of such an increase in funding on capacity are difficult to observe.

211. In terms of physical capacity within prisons, the DfES have invested a further £4.5 M of Capital Modernisation Resources in 2003-04. However, there is a bidding process for individual projects; therefore facilities vary a great deal, and there has not been investment in physical space across the whole prison regime.

212. Despite some excellent educators working in prisons, we know from reports of the inspectorates that prison education falls far short of expectations. The Adult Learning Inspectorate has reported that 'much of the learning provision [in prisons] was found to be inflexible or inappropriate, and involved too narrow a range of teaching methods to hold the attention of people who have often been discouraged from learning.'¹³⁸

213. Most concerning was the evidence we received that prison education is failing to achieve its defined purpose; it is failing to provide real alternatives to crime for prisoners and it is failing to contribute to them not re-offending. David Singleton HMI, Ofsted, said:

'On the second question, which is essentially, are we effectively helping the young people not to re-offend and, if so, how are we doing it, what's working and what isn't, well, we think we are probably as far away as ever from getting a clear answer to that and on the whole it looks as though the fundamental difficulties about prison education are not being overcome and they are the prior experience of the young

¹³⁸ Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Basic skills for offenders in the community*, 2004.

people themselves with very short custodial sentences, quite often, it appears to us, not accompanied by effective support in the community outside the custodial bit of the sentence, variation in the priority given to education and difficulties in attracting and retaining key staff.¹³⁹

214. Current provision of prison education is unacceptable. Whilst the Government has provided a substantial increase in resources it is failing to fully meet its manifesto commitment to ‘dramatically increase the quality and quantity of education provision’. In 2004, still less than a third of prisoners had access to prison education at any one time. There needs to be a fundamental shift in approach to prison education and a step change in the level of high quality provision that is suited to meet the needs of individual prisoners to provide them with a real alternative to crime on release.

The quality of current provision in comparison to external standards

215. During 2001, Ofsted became responsible for inspecting all 16-19 education, including education provision in Young Offender Institutions and Secure Units and Training Centres ‘at the invitation of HMI for prisons’. The Adult Learning Inspectorate was established in 2000 and is responsible for the inspection of education and training in prisons ‘at the invitation of HMI for prisons’. Anne Owers said:

‘The Adult Learning Inspectorate and Ofsted, I think, have raised the game of the inspection of education and training in prisons quite significantly and I think they have also done a very important thing which we look for in all aspects of prison life, which is to demand that what is offered in prisons is equivalent to what is offered outside.’¹⁴⁰

216. But prison education is still a long way from achieving external standards. David Sherlock, Chief Inspector of the Adult Learning Inspectorate, said:

‘Last year ALI participated in 33 inspections of prisons and young offender institutions. In just over 60% of those, the overall education and training provision was found to be inadequate to meet the reasonable needs of those who were partaking of it and that is a substantially higher proportion obviously than you would find outside the Prison Service.’¹⁴¹

217. However, we have to recognise the need for external standards to be applied and this Committee supports the Government’s efforts to move in this direction. We should be moving towards a situation where the standard of provision is equal to that on the outside. In light of this, we welcome the role of the LSC in prison education provision and we also welcome the joint inspection regime of the Adult Learning Inspectorate and Ofsted.

218. The Youth Justice Board intends to alter the current approach to running secure institutions that provide education. The core principle underpinning this approach is that the education and training that are provided at all stages of the DTO (Detention and

139 Q 443

140 Q 428

141 Q 447

Training Order¹⁴²) should reach the standards provided for young people in mainstream schools and colleges. Education and training must operate as a coherent and integrated programme across the DTO and be targeted closely at the needs of young people.¹⁴³

219. Ofsted's Annual Report 'Standards and Quality 2002/03', concluded 'too many young people in young offender institutions and secure units fail to receive an education that meets their needs or prepares them for the transition from custody to the community.'¹⁴⁴

220. The Adult Learning Inspectorate has reported that 'much of the learning provision [in prisons] was found to be inflexible or inappropriate, and involved too narrow a range of teaching methods to hold the attention of people who have often been discouraged from learning.'¹⁴⁵

221. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) is responsible for inspecting all other parts of the prison regime that impact on prison education. In what it calls its 'expectations' for inspection, HMIP includes, as regards education, the following:

- a) Learning plans are integrated into individual sentence and custody plans
- b) Prisoners do not lose the opportunity for other activities because of an inflexible education programme
- c) prisoner pay structure does not financially disadvantage those who participate in education
- d) Prisoners are transferred to another prison that can meet their individual education needs if necessary.
- e) Prisoners on education / training programmes are helped to continue their courses on release, and are not transferred while undertaking a course
- f) The education and training department contributes to the creation of links with external agencies in prisoners' home areas.¹⁴⁶

222. Repeated evidence from written submissions, including that of the Independent Monitoring Board,¹⁴⁷ clearly demonstrate that none of these expectations are being met.

223. A joint Ofsted / ALI report¹⁴⁸ concludes that 'the Skills for Life initiative has been highly successful in increasing the number of literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers

142 This is the custodial sentence for 12-17 year-olds. It combines detention with training and is used for young people who commit a serious crime or commit a number of offences. Half the sentence will be spent in custody and the other half will be supervised by the Youth Offending Service, out in the community. The intention was that considerable time would be spent on training and education to help young people stop offending when their sentence is finished. DTOs were introduced in April 2000 and were a central component of a dramatic overhaul of the whole youth justice system in England. DTOs have replaced all sentences of detention in a Young Offenders Institution for young people up to 18 years.

143 Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, *National Specification for Learning and Skills for Young People on a Detention and Training Order*, April 2002.

144 Ofsted, *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, Standards and Quality 2002-03*.

145 Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Basic skills for offenders in the community*, 2004.

146 Home Office, *Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons: Expectations: Criteria for assessing the conditions in prisons and the treatment of prisoners*.

147 Ev 263-266

of Other Language learners and in raising the profile of this area of learning, but there needs to be a sharper focus on quality of the education and training that is available.’

224. The quality of existing education provision remains a major concern. 60% of provision inspected by the Adult Learning Inspectorate was inadequate. This is unacceptable. There must be rapid progress towards meeting external standards of provision of education and training in prisons.

Internet access

225. A significant failing of current provision is the lack of access that prisoners have to IT and the internet as a learning tool and as a key skill for employment. Professor David Wilson told us:

‘there is a barrier in that prisoners are not allowed access to Intranet. There are only 31 prisoners allowed out of the 75,000 access to the internet, 31. That surely is a barrier to learning.’¹⁴⁹

226. It is essential that prisoners have access to IT and the internet in terms of learning IT skills for employment, learning how to search for information using the internet, but also to access on-line learning programmes. IT facilities vary across the prison estate, but are generally poor and out of date and access to the internet is virtually non-existent.

227. To undertake higher levels of learning inside a prison, a student needs internet access. It is not clear why restricted access should be such a problem. Jeanne Harding, Principal of Dudley College of Technology, told us:

‘Internet access is not allowed in British prisons—the Open University programmes, a lot of distance learning programmes. Some of our prisons will not even allow us to take materials in on CD-ROM. A lot of modern education is provided using that type of technology, and that is a whole area of work where, for the more able students—and there are numbers who are more able, and numbers doing OU courses—it has to be transcribed, and they have to do the courses that are more paper-based. In order to do some of the work that might be more useful possibly to industry in the future, they have to have access to the internet.’¹⁵⁰

228. The Government has promised that this is in hand. Martin Narey, Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service, explained:

‘A number of establishments have already done this and work which we are doing in partnership with the DfES I am confident will open up access to limited sites in a controlled way.’¹⁵¹

148 Ofsted/Adult Learning Inspectorate, *Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages: a survey of current practice in post-16 and adult provision*, HMI 1367.

149 Q 40

150 Q 313

151 Q 668

229. We believe that lack of access to the internet is a significant barrier to learning. Access to the internet clearly must be controlled and properly supervised, but the internet is essential both as a learning tool and as a key skill for employment. We recommend that the Government prioritises progress in this area and sets out a clear timetable for implementation of access across the prison estate.

The Basic skills agenda—a broader curriculum is needed

230. There is little research available on what sort of education and training provision is most effective in enabling prisoners to gain secure employment on release (paragraphs 31 to 33). We have also established that the existing basic skills agenda in prisons was based on little more than a ‘hunch’ (paragraph 41). If it was working successfully against the defined purpose of prison education, this would not matter, but we have concluded that it is not (paragraph 213 and 214). Most of the evidence this Committee has received demonstrates that the current approach to prison education, with an almost exclusive focus on the achievement of basic skills qualifications, is not sufficient to enable prisoners to gain secure employment on release. Measured against the purpose of prison education, current provision is failing.

231. There is no question that the Government’s focus on basic skills, including the introduction of key performance targets for prisons, has concentrated provision, almost exclusively, on the programmes that meet these Key Performance Targets. NATFHE have argued ‘that basic skills provision needs to be placed within the context of a wider curriculum offer. We realise that not every establishment can or will be able to offer a wide range of subjects, but there must be a balanced educational programme offering a range of creative, practical and life skills and personal development programmes which can be studied in their own right as well as being platforms for delivering basic skills.’¹⁵²

232. There is an almost unanimous opinion across the evidence that we have received that there is an urgent need to broaden the curriculum of prison education. The importance of a broader curriculum has been identified both in relation to the motivation of learners, and their employability skills.

233. The importance of soft skills and a broader curriculum to engage disaffected prisoners was seen as key. Jen Walters, ALL, said:

‘we should not lose sight of those other soft things ... all of those things which give people, particularly young people, self-respect. I was at Brixton this week looking at something called the Dream Factory where young prisoners were performing Shakespeare with Sinatra. This is the sort of thing that gives them the kind of self-respect they had never had. Let us not be so focused on useful skills that we forget the routes that are needed to get people to drink at the trough once we have provided it.’¹⁵³

234. A broader curriculum was also seen as essential in terms of delivering the soft skills prisoners will need to gain employment. Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons said:

¹⁵² Ev 77

¹⁵³ Q 470

‘What we need is to make people employable so that they can hold down employment, and that is about the whole area of self-esteem. It is not about being able to hang on to a job for a day or a week. It is about being able to engage fully and properly in the job market which people have never properly done before.’¹⁵⁴

235. Professor Andrew Coyle believed that a broader curriculum would enable prisons to engage with prisoners as individuals and therefore impact on the likelihood that they re-commit crime:

‘I think for a period the pendulum swung too far to the purist approach. I think it is coming back now and that we do see more use of creative activities in prisons. If we helped to develop the prisoner as a person then I think we will reduce the likelihood of that person continuing to commit crime.’¹⁵⁵

236. Finally, for the 10,500 long-term prisoners in the system, basic skills and Key Performance Targets are wholly insufficient to meet their needs of purposeful activity over extended periods of imprisonment. Professor David Wilson told us:

‘What we have also got to remember is that there are 6,000 prisoners currently serving ten years or longer in the prison population and there are some 4,500 lifers. So there is a core 10,500 people who quite clearly have gone through basic skills and should be doing something more with their time.’¹⁵⁶

237. An over-emphasis on basic skills driven by Key Performance Targets has narrowed the curriculum too far. Whilst aiming to meet the basic skills needs of prisoners the Government must endeavour to broaden out the prison education curriculum and increase flexibility of provision to meet the much wider range of educational needs that exists within the prison system.

Embedded skills

238. We have been told that ‘very many prisoners have had a negative experience of education’.¹⁵⁷ A large proportion were regular truants, and many left school before 16. Despite this, a large proportion of prison education is still classroom based ‘chalk and talk’ method. The education sector in general has a great deal of knowledge and experience in embedding basic skills in more applied learning experiences. It is unclear why prisoners have been treated differently to the other students in this area. As Professor Andrew Coyle told us:

‘People who are in prison are no different from some of their cohorts elsewhere in society and the actual packaging of these tools is extremely important.’¹⁵⁸

154 Q 493

155 Q 4

156 Q 30

157 Ev 1

158 Q 6

239. Susan Pember described existing research findings as showing that embedding literacy and numeracy learning in areas that the learner is interested in is known to be the best approach:

‘for literacy and numeracy we do know our adults learn the best, and they learn best when it is actually embedded in something they are interested in or is embedded in a vocational area.’¹⁵⁹

240. Using embedded skills training in applied learning is part of the process of adapting education provision to meet the different learning needs of different prisoners. Dr John Brennan said:

‘We need to recognise that there are a variety of learning needs, and that often the motivation of learners, even where they have important basic skills requirements, can be better achieved through integrating and embedding those basic skills activities in a whole range of other learning opportunities.’¹⁶⁰

241. There are many examples across the prison regime where skills are being embedded in more practical learning experiences. In Feltham Young Offenders Institution, the Committee heard of an example where one-on-one teaching support of basic skills was being provided to individuals that were involved in a workshop and had achieved great success. But such examples are the exception rather than the rule. **We recommend that the Government gives further consideration to how basic skills might be embedded in more practical learning experiences right across the prison estate, on a much greater scale than is available to prisoners at present.**

A joined-up approach to education, training, and work

242. **Part of the difficulty in embedding basic skills in more practical learning is the separate nature of education, vocational training, and work in prisons. This cannot be allowed to continue.**

Job-related training

243. Many of our witnesses emphasised the importance of job-related learning. The Forum on Prisoner Education said that ‘with this purpose in mind, it is important that prison education increases a prisoner’s chance of secure employment on release. Prison education should therefore be job-related and must have clear vocational links. But vocational education in itself is not necessarily sufficient. Education, as the central focus of the prison regime, should be designed to feed into other regime areas such as work and the delivery of offending behaviour programmes. Vocational education in prison rarely offers the skills needed in today’s labour market, and incorporation education with work could overcome some of these problems.’¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Q 573

¹⁶⁰ Q 270

¹⁶¹ Ev 4

244. The concern is that the training and work opportunities in prison do not reflect those on the outside and that the skills and knowledge prisoners gain are outdated. The Howard League for Penal Reform believed that ‘prisoners often do training or work that doesn’t support their future plans. Some of the work, in particular, has remained unchanged over many years including catering and making furniture.’¹⁶² Bobby Cummines of UNLOCK, an ex-offender himself, told us:

‘Some of the training in prison is not appropriate for employment.’¹⁶³

245. Vocational training that does not offer the skills needed in today’s job market should not continue. Vocational training should be geared towards the needs of the prisoners, not the historic availability of provision at a given prison. A broader variety of vocational opportunities as well as work opportunities need to be offered that prepare prisoners for employment.

246. Prisoners themselves recognise the importance of the relationship between training and employment. Mohammed Saleh, a young offender in Feltham Young Offenders Institution, told this Committee that the popularity of training courses was directly related to employment prospects:

‘Most of the people in this prison, all the inmates, the only thing they can think of every time when I ask them, even people that are first time landing into jail, the first thing they will say is a mechanic or bricklaying or painting or decorating. That is what us teenagers think about as being employed—mechanics, painting and decorating and bricklaying. That is the only thing we can think of. It is easier to get employed by them jobs than being employed in other things like with a BT company.’¹⁶⁴

Links to employers

247. Companies such as Transco and Toyota have received much praise for the successful training schemes they have set up in prisons. We would agree with the Forum on Prisoner Education that ‘Such projects and initiatives are undoubtedly the way forward in vocational education in prisons’¹⁶⁵.

248. We would like to see much more involvement of employers in prisoners’ training and work. The well-documented Transco initiative, for example, which is now the Young Offender Programme led by National Grid Transco involving over 50 businesses, demonstrates how prisoners can be trained to fill predicted vacancies. We have visited the original Transco project in Reading and have taken evidence from National Grid Transco regarding the increased scale of its work with a broader range of companies and prisons across the country. **We fully support the excellent work of the Young Offender Programme, led by National Grid Transco, and recommend that the Government should take steps to enable and encourage many more of these partnership**

¹⁶² Ev 36

¹⁶³ Q 248

¹⁶⁴ Q 845

¹⁶⁵ Ev 4

arrangements with employers. The Government should be 'encouraging employers to invest in prisoners' education and training as part of their corporate social responsibility policies, not purely for philanthropic reasons but because there is a strong business case too.'¹⁶⁶

249. As with the Young Offender Programme, led by National Grid Transco, the Committee would like to see more identification of skills shortages within areas local to the prison, and partnerships developed with businesses to meet these skill shortages.

250. The question of how to move from pockets of excellence to mainstream provision of such employer-led partnerships is a very difficult one, to which the Government needs to give careful consideration. As Professor Andrew Coyle told us:

'the Prison Service is very bad at learning from its own successes and it has had a number of successes but tended to deal with them by marginalising them, ... there is a danger of saying, "Well, Transco, that's Reading. It happens in Reading." I think there is a danger, as in any large organisation, of people reinventing the wheel, of not learning from past successes, for example such as may well happen now with the Offender Management Services, rather than looking at the pockets of excellence (and there are some pockets of excellence) and saying, "How do we convert that into the mainstream of the prison setting?" We have been very bad at that in the past.'¹⁶⁷

251. Working with employers has to be the future of vocational education provision and this has to be driven and funded by the Government. The direct relationship between the private company that is providing the training and the prison, including the prisoners themselves, is of vital importance and needs to be maintained.

252. As Ms Crook explained:

'I think the Prison Service should concentrate on it more. I think if they worked more constructively with employers inside prisons they could form better relationships with employers outside and I think the public would be more supportive of it as well.'¹⁶⁸

Workshops

253. In 2003–04, fewer than 10,000 prisoners out of 74,000 were employed in prison workshops. The total number of prisoners in any kind of work is below 50% and the majority of this is low grade, menial work¹⁶⁹.

254. The Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit emphasises the need for a focus on skills for employment. However, there is a huge missed opportunity within prisons to create learning/training opportunities from the work that goes on in workshops. Investment is

¹⁶⁶ Ev 36

¹⁶⁷ Q 84

¹⁶⁸ Q 166

¹⁶⁹ Home Affairs Committee, First report of session 2004–05, *Rehabilitation of Prisoners*, HC 193–I.

needed to train those running these workshops so that they can enable offenders to gain qualifications through the work they are undertaking.

255. This is not just about training workshop instructors, but also about prisons taking a joined up approach to work and education. It is often the case that work opportunities are low skill, repetitive, and do not generate opportunities for gaining qualifications. Prisons need to be encouraged to be more creative in the type of work they offer and in linking this to educational opportunities. There are some excellent examples of good practice, but these are unfortunately the exception rather than the rule.

Real work—real pay

256. We have heard much evidence of the benefit of offering prisoners the chance of a full day's reward for a full day's work. Being given the opportunity to be employed under the same terms and conditions as their outside counterparts would enable them to support their families, save for their futures, donate to Victim Support and contribute towards prison upkeep (although not their board and lodging because this is prohibited by EU law). They would also be paying tax and national insurance.

257. The Howard League for Penal Reform told us that they are 'planning a social enterprise in prison with the aim of demonstrating that it is possible to provide meaningful work and training in prison. The Real Work enterprise proposes establishing a print firm in the Mount Prison, that will operate like any outside business, offering prisoners the chance of a full day's reward for a full day's work. They will be employed under the same terms and conditions as their outside counterpart, from which they will be expected to support their families, save for their futures, donate to Victim Support (if they wish) and contribute towards prison upkeep. They will also have to pay tax and national insurance.'¹⁷⁰

258. In his evidence to this Committee, Martin Narey was dismissive of the idea that prisoners should be receiving real pay for real work and claimed it would act as a disincentive to education:

'in giving people real work and real money, perhaps £60 a week to work in an industrial production workshop, then we are providing, it would be argued, a disincentive to going into education.'¹⁷¹

259. We disagree. Firstly, there is no reason why prisoners should not receive education and training in the workplace if they are working. Secondly, where such schemes do exist, for example in Finland, they provide those prisoners earning real wages (the 25% in open prisons) with expense allowances for participating in education or rehabilitation programmes.

260. In evidence given to the Home Affairs Committee, Paul Goggins MP said that he thought this would just create a huge 'bureaucratic exercise in paying people imaginary money so that they can pay imaginary board and lodging'. However, if prisoners were working in real business enterprises, this would not have to be 'imaginary money'.

170 Ev 37

171 Q 692

Furthermore, the advantages in terms of self-esteem and re-integration into working society should not be underestimated. Such a system can work well in conjunction with education and training programmes.

261. In evidence given to the Home Affairs Committee in May 2004, Paul Goggins said that ‘at present there are 1,500 people in our open prisons that go out to work during the course of each day. They work full-time, they earn a wage through doing that and that can help them in their long-term rehabilitation.’ **This Committee recommends that the Government considers placing a much larger proportion of short-term prisoners in open prisons so that they can continue their links in the community with a full week of work or education or both.**

262. Frances Crook, Howard League for Penal Reform told us:

‘So these are young people and adults being received into prison who have no experience of real work, who do not have national insurance numbers in the sense that they have never been employed, they have never paid tax and do not know how to do it, they have not been in school for many years so they are completely outside what I would call real life. They go into prison. They may do a little bit of education... It is pretty "chalk and talk" stuff in adult prisons. They will be employed within the establishment maintaining the establishment earning £5 to £8 a week. They are not paying tax, they are not paying national insurance, they are getting no training, and this means that the Prison System is reinforcing the view that it is acceptable not to pay tax or national insurance or to work or to have a steady and organised life and to take responsibility for your life and to be engaged in being what we would like people to be, which is responsible citizens. I think in many cases the prison system is perpetuating the view that crime pays better, is more exciting and they do not have to worry about when they are released because they can go back to this informal economy from which they came.’¹⁷²

263. And arguing that real work, real pay requires a much smaller prison system, Frances Crook added:

‘That is the kind of vision for the Prison Service I would like to see but you can only achieve that if you reduce radically the numbers of people in prison so that only people who need to be there are held there. Then the Prison Service could do something useful with those who have to be held in custody for public safety reasons. It is a completely different vision, it is turning it round on its head.’¹⁷³

264. Such changes would require a complete revision of the management of prisoners in this country. It is a radical proposal, but with recidivism as high as it is, some far more radical solutions need to be considered. **The Committee urges the Government to give ‘real work, real pay’ proposals full consideration as a possible solution to reducing recidivism.**

265. The Committee was shown an excellent example of a working print shop being run as a viable business in HMP Albany on the Isle of Wight. Along with the example of the

¹⁷² Q 161

¹⁷³ Q 163

original Transco project which originated in Reading prison, the common link between such projects was an entrepreneur within the prison who was willing to drive the project forward and forge links between people working inside and outside the prison.

266. Another example of the importance of entrepreneurial activity within prison education is where Further Education Colleges and Universities have been particularly successful at creating links with prisoners and have helped ex-offenders to join mainstream courses on release. Goldsmiths University, for example, have had great success with encouraging ex-offenders to undertake degree programmes through their work with the charity UNLOCK.

267. We would like to see the Government encouraging a great deal more entrepreneurial activity within prisons both in terms of business enterprises to provide real work for prisoners and in terms of forging much closer links with local Further Education Colleges, Universities, and employers.

Motivation to learn

268. A key area of prison education that must be considered is the prisoners' motivation to learn. The Forum on Prisoner Education said: 'when talking of "needs", we need to consider motivation. Very many prisoners have had negative experiences of formal education, and simply shutting them in a classroom is unlikely to have any positive effect. In assessing "needs", an assessment should be made of the styles of learning likely to work for that prisoner. Very low self-esteem is common, and education must be "sold" to many of these prisoners. Prisoners need to be encouraged to learn, and shown that they can learn, and can change and enrich their lives through learning.'¹⁷⁴

269. We took evidence from the Dialogue Trust which runs discussion forums with prisoners. They emphasised the important link between prison education and the broader rehabilitation needs of a prisoner that cannot be separated out. 'We are aware that a prime de-motivating force for many prisoners is that for them education has been a negative experience. We believe that experiential work such as ours can overcome some of these anxieties. We feel that this kind of experiential learning and development should be incorporated into prison education and rehabilitation. Ideally, these two components, education and rehabilitation, would be provided in a seamless service that is integrated with prisoners' sentence plans.'¹⁷⁵

270. Professor Rod Morgan of the Youth Justice Board told us:

'...what we are very keen for is that they gain motivation and one of the ways of doing this is that they start to engage in activities which they enjoy, which they find fun, which, if they are on vocational training, offer the prospect of some employment in the community which is essential and having gained some motivation, you then smuggle in the basic skills on the back of the motivation. We have evolved various

174 Ev 1

175 Ev 58

techniques, various schemes that we can describe to you to try and achieve that end, but we need to do more of it.’¹⁷⁶

271. Motivation of the learner in prison is extremely important. Much more needs to be done to provide a wide range of high quality education programmes that should be available for prisons to meet the needs and different learning styles of prisoners to engage them in learning.

Equal pay

272. In relation to the motivation of a prisoner to engage in learning, the Committee has heard very concerning reports of lower rates of pay being offered to prisoners who are choosing education programmes. Statistics provided to us by the Forum on Prisoner Education show that nearly half of prisons pay more for work than for education with an average of £8.27 a week paid for education and £10.47 for work. Pay for education varied from just £3 a week to £18 a week, whilst pay for work varied from £6 a week to £35 a week. Around 45% of prisons had already taken the step to equalise the level of pay for education and work.¹⁷⁷

273. Both Phil Wheatley, Director General of the Prison Service, and Martin Narey, Chief Executive of National Offender Management Service told this Committee that they did not believe that offering a lower rate of pay acted as a disincentive for prisoners to undertake education programmes. Phil Wheatley told us:

‘In my experience, and I have a lot of prison experience ... prisoners are not deterred from entering education by the vagaries of the pay system because education is a very attractive thing for lots of prisoners to do, particularly part-time education, which normally does not much interfere with their ability to earn because they are doing part time work, and because there is not enough work to give everybody full-time work. So prisoners are not normally deterred by the pay system.’¹⁷⁸

274. Martin Narey agreed with Phil Wheatley’s comments and told us:

‘I have been more than once to every prison in the country and I have never been stopped by a prisoner who has said to me that wages are preventing him from wanting to go into education.’¹⁷⁹

275. However, a large number of witnesses told this Committee that lower pay was acting as a disincentive to participation in education. NATFHE said that ‘the Social Exclusion Unit Report, the NATFHE/AoC “Shared responsibilities”, and the recent Prison Reform Trust report on the perceptions of prisoners of prison education¹⁸⁰ all reported that the disparity in the payments prisoners received when attending education programmes, as

¹⁷⁶ Q 99

¹⁷⁷ Information has been collated from the returns provided to the Forum on Prisoner Education in preparation of the Directory of Offender Education in August and September 2004. Information was collated for this Committee by the Forum on Prisoner Education. Information on pay was provided by 89 prisons.

¹⁷⁸ Q 572

¹⁷⁹ Q 692

¹⁸⁰ Prison Reform Trust, *Time to Learn*, Julia Braggins and Jenny Talbot, 2004.

compared to the payment received for other prison activity, was a serious disincentive to participation in learning in prisons.¹⁸¹

276. The difference in pay of just a few pounds a week might seem insignificant, but given that it is the prisoner's only expendable income for items such as phone cards, cigarettes, and food snacks, it is possible to understand why being unskilled, but highly paid, might seem more appealing than education. Janice Shiner recognised that this was going on in our prisons:

'If people are wanting to go into the workshop because it gives them phone cards and cigarettes or whatever, we need to make sure that when they are in that workshop they are learning and they are clocking up some NVQ modules.'¹⁸²

277. The difficulty with proposing that prisoners in the higher paid workshops should be gaining qualifications through their workshop experience is that, largely speaking, it is the very low-skill, repetitive workshops that pay the most and these types of workshops would not provide opportunities for gaining qualifications.

278. The Committee has heard evidence from some witnesses, including Phil Wheatley, that has justified the higher rates of pay given for some workshops on the basis that the work is highly repetitive and tedious and would not be undertaken if pay was not better than for other options. Phil Wheatley told us:

'What we do have to do, however, with some of them is the most repetitive work, and a lot of prison work is essentially repetitive work ... unless there is some decent reward for it, we cannot get prisoners to do in a co-operative and productive way, so we do need to make sure we can reward people in that sort of work appropriately. Education ... if I did pay high pay-rate there, I would have to drop somebody else's pay-rate and I would probably have the person in the 'mindless shop' doing the repetitive work feeling very upset and annoyed, thinking, "I am not being paid properly for this. Why should I do it", and I cannot afford that.'¹⁸³

279. But why are such workshops, described by the Director General of Prisons as 'mindless', being run in the UK prisons? How will such unskilled and tedious work help these prisoners to gain secure employment on release? The fact that such unskilled workshops are run to the financial benefit of the prison, and to no benefit to the prisoners, says a lot about existing priorities.

280. We recommend that pay must be equalised across all activities undertaken in prison with immediate effect. There must be equal pay for education as for all other activities. Workshops that offer tedious, unskilled work should be phased out as they contribute nothing to the employability of a prisoner on release.

181 Ev 76

182 Q 752

183 Q 572

Mentoring

281. Another approach to learning that has impressed the Committee is the mentoring activity that is being undertaken in prisons, largely by charitable organisations such as the Toe-by-Toe scheme that teaches prisoners to read. Christopher Morgan MBE, Director of the Shannon Trust, described the success of the Toe-by-Toe scheme to us:

‘... once we got started, we discovered just the size of the problem because there are 30,000 prisoners in our prisons at any one time who cannot read (above the standard of an 11 year-old). There is no way that they can get given the one-to-one attention of professional teachers and a number of them refuse to go to the professional teacher because they have bad memories of school.. but they will learn from another inmate. ... we started to make a great deal of progress 18 months ago and we have now reached something over 100 prisoners in England.’¹⁸⁴

282. A survey by the Forum on Prisoner Education showed that 116 out of 139 prisons that returned information to them were offering peer mentoring in some form¹⁸⁵. The Committee would like to highlight the excellent work of two mentoring schemes in particular; the work of the Shannon Trust that runs the Toe-by-Toe mentoring scheme teaching prisoners to read, and the Trailblazer mentoring programme being run as a charitable project at Feltham Young Offenders Institution, which has had remarkable success in reducing rates of recidivism amongst participants in the programme. The projects are both outlined further in appendix 3. Professor Andrew Coyle told us:

‘I referred earlier to the fact that prisoners were not a homogenous group and that they themselves have many skills, and I think what we have failed to do by and large up until now is to make use of the skills which some prisoners have to help other prisoners. I think if you tried to see education within a narrow box then that will be much more difficult. We have traditionally in England and Wales shied away from involving prisoners in anything like this with the exception.. of the listener scheme and I think we could look with some benefit to new initiatives where we might encourage prisoners who do have skills (and many of them do) to help other prisoners who do not, because very often prisoners will respond better to that sort of encouragement.’¹⁸⁶

283. We have been impressed by the success of various mentoring programmes run by charitable organisations and urge the Government to look at significantly increasing the role of mentoring in prison education, including supporting existing successful programmes on a national basis.

Work of charities in prison education

284. The work of charities in prison education is well established, broad ranging, and often very successful. Information from the Forum on Prisoner Education showed that 72

184 Q 207

185 Information has been collated from the returns provided to the Forum on Prisoner Education in preparation of the Directory of Offender Education in August and September 2004. Information was collated for this Committee by the Forum on Prisoner Education.

186 Q 83

different charities were listed as being involved in prison education—many in just one prison, but some in as many as 118 different establishments¹⁸⁷. But prisons should not have to rely on charities to plug gaps in mainstream provision. In evidence to this Committee, Merron Mitchell, contract manager for prison education at City College Manchester, said:

‘We all will need the voluntary sector, but we cannot devolve our responsibility to the voluntary sector. We still have to be accountable and get outcomes for teaching people to read and have the social skills to resettle.’¹⁸⁸

285. We welcome the significant contribution to prison education that is made by the voluntary sector. However, we strongly believe that the Government cannot devolve its responsibility to provide education and training to the voluntary sector. We recommend that the Government undertakes a thorough review of the different charities working in the prison sector and those that are successful are given national recognition, funding, support, and enter the quality assurance regime.

¹⁸⁷ Information has been collated from the returns provided to the Forum on Prisoner Education in preparation of the Directory of Offender Education in August and September 2004. Information was collated for this Committee by the Forum on Prisoner Education.

¹⁸⁸ Q 290

7 Delivering prison education in the context of the wider prison regime

286. Existing barriers to the successful delivery of prison education include overcrowding, movement of prisoners (churn), pay, timetabling, physical space and equipment, the physical environment, training of prison officers, drugs and mental health issues, sharing of information, location of prisoners etc. It is not for this Committee to make specific recommendations in many of these areas, but we concur with many of the recommendations in the recent Home Affairs Committee Report. Improvements in prison education cannot be achieved in isolation from the wider prison regime. This has to be driven from the top down, and without a strong commitment to change, these barriers will continue to prevent the effective delivery of prison education.

Barriers to the effective delivery of prison education

Mobility/churn

287. In the last 12 years, the number of people in our prisons has increased from 43,000 to 75,000. Last year there were 100,000 transfers within the prison estate. This is the context in which the delivery of prison education must be considered. As Professor Andrew Coyle said to the Committee:

‘The Prison Service has made, I think, tremendous strides both in terms of testing and in terms of trying to deal with the lack of basic skills, but I think it would be important for your Committee to remember the context of all of this. We have gone from a situation where twelve years ago there were about 43,000 prisoners to the one today where there are 75,000 prisoners with some increase in resources but not a proportionate increase in resources. I think the Prison Service has not done itself great favours by masking the pressures it has been under. The Prison Service has taken pride and the Prisons Board has taken pride in being able to cope and I do not think that has done itself and I am not sure it has done society many favours. The reality of life in prisons, and we are talking primarily about the 70,000, those who are in the local prisons, who are there for a short period, who are churning over (the phrase which the Director General uses is "the churn of prisoners"), who are not only going in and out of the prison system but who are actually moving from one prison to another so that the governor of Brixton is phoning the headquarters each night to say, "I've got ten prisoners coming in. I've got nowhere to put them," and he is told, "We've got ten places in Swansea. Send them down to Swansea," or "Send them up to Liverpool," and so it goes round. That is the context within which both the assessment is taking place in the local prisons and the training and I think it is very important always to keep this at the front of one's mind.’¹⁸⁹

288. The mobility of the prison population is widely seen to be a significant barrier against effective prisoner education and other programmes of rehabilitation work. It is considered

to be a result of overcrowding. The movement of prisoners is decided by a central Government body, but it is unclear what the policy is based on.

289. In evidence given to the Home Affairs Committee in May 2004, Paul Goggins said ‘I do not think it is necessarily the total numbers (of prisoners) that is the real challenge, I think it is the amount of movement within the prison system. It is that movement around that makes it difficult to work effectively on rehabilitation and resettlement.’¹⁹⁰

290. In their memorandum (and other research publications), the Prison Reform Trust have argued that the frequent transfer of prisoners between institutions has a detrimental impact on prisoners’ educational prospects. This caused problems for prisoners in terms of pursuing qualifications or courses through to the end. It also reduced prisoners’ motivation for training and study.

291. The Prison Reform Trust said that particular problems arose when prisoners were transferred between prisons with markedly different curricula and were thus unable to recommence or rejoin their programmes of study.

292. The movement of prisoners at existing levels has to stop if the prison service is going to provide the stability required to deliver prison education and wider rehabilitation programmes. Without significant changes in this area, reform of prison education will not be effective.

Short sentences

293. The average sentence length was 12.6 months in 2003, that is for all courts and all offences (3.1 months at magistrates’ courts and 26.3 months at the Crown Court). That would suggest that the average time served in prison is about 6 months (half).¹⁹¹ For young offenders, we were told that average sentences were as short as 4 months.¹⁹² In Feltham Young Offenders Institution, where two thirds of prisoners are on remand, we were told that the average length of stay was 4 weeks amongst the juveniles (15-17) and just 2 weeks amongst the young offenders (18-21). There are fundamental questions about the appropriateness of the curriculum and expectations of learning gains within such short sentences.

294. It is clear that the length of sentence ought not to be a barrier to learning¹⁹³. This should also apply to remand prisoners and community sentenced prisoners who often do not have access to prison education. Prisoners should be able to begin courses that they will be able to continue and complete after release.

295. In evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, Paul Goggins MP described the problem of the high number of short-term prisoners in the system ‘with whom we can do very little’. He said that ‘it is not really surprising that many of them come out and re-offend.’ He said that what was needed was robust alternatives to prison for short-term prisoners so that

¹⁹⁰ Home Affairs Committee, First report of session 2004–05, *Rehabilitation of Prisoners*, HC 193–I.

¹⁹¹ Ev 178

¹⁹² Q 479

¹⁹³ Ev 4

they are dealt with more effectively in the community, and so that longer-term prisoners can be dealt with more effectively in prisons.

296. There is a widely held misconception that there is a very close connection between the crime rate and the proportion of a country's population in prison. It has been clear for some time from research findings that this is not the case¹⁹⁴, and international comparisons demonstrate the validity of such research¹⁹⁵. What determines the proportion of the population in prison is much more closely connected to the sentencing policy. The increase in the prison population from 43,000 to 75,000 in just 12 years does not reflect an equivalent increase in crime rate, but instead is largely a result of sentencing policy. We now have a much greater number of prisoners serving very short sentences in our prisons for relatively minor offences. As Paul Goggins MP told this Committee:

‘We have enormous pressure arising from the increasing population. This is largely because of the increased severity of sentencing and so very many of the people going into prison are going for fairly short periods of time. Prison should be reserved for the serious and dangerous offender.’¹⁹⁶

297. Martin Narey concurred with this view that it has been changes to sentencing policy for minor offences that has significantly increased the number of short term prisoners and has resulted in overcrowding:

‘There has been the most astonishing change in sentencing policy in the last ten years. First-time offenders did not used to go to prison when they committed minor offences. ... custody has been (in the last ten years) almost the first choice for many sentencers and we need to turn that around in order that we can use prison for what it is best for, which is for dangerous people who are going to be there for long periods.’¹⁹⁷

298. There was widespread agreement with Paul Goggin's and Martin Narey's views amongst our witnesses that sentencing policy should be changed because prisons should be a place of last resort only. Professor David Wilson argued that:

‘Prison actually has been expanded, and works worst when it is expanded, it works best when it has been reduced and then works best after it has been reduced with positive things filling it, of which prison education is clearly one of the things I believe in passionately.’¹⁹⁸

299. Progress is being made towards changing sentencing policy, but it is slow. Professor Rod Morgan from the Youth Justice Board told us:

194 The Carter Report on Correctional Services and its response, *Reducing Crime; Changing Lives* Home Office, January 2004

195 For example, we know that the significant decrease in the rate of imprisonment in Finland since the 1950s was the result of deliberate, long-term, and systematic policy choices. Lappi-Seppälä Tapio 2001, “Sentencing and Punishment in Finland: The Decline of the Repressive Ideal.” In *Punishment and Penal Systems in Western Countries*, edited by M. Tonry and R. Frase. New York: Oxford University Press. New York. Törnudd Patrik, 1993, *Fifteen Years of Decreasing Prisoner Rates in Finland*. National Research Institute of Legal Policy. Research Communication 8/1993

196 Q 760

197 Q 6940

198 Q 45

‘we are constantly talking to the courts, to sentencers, about the possibly counterproductive and unproductive use of short sentences and we have devoted a good deal of our effort to developing more intensive community-based sentences in an effort to persuade them not to use short detention training orders which can be for as short as four months. If they go for four months, they are going to be in an institution for two months and we agree with everything you say, that when they are first received, that may not be the trauma of being received if it is their first time, and the idea that you somehow within the first few days do a full educational assessment and start grappling with the issues and start a programme is not feasible, so what a lot of our staff say in the institutions is that we should discourage the use of very short sentences and we are doing our best.’¹⁹⁹

300. It is clear that reforms to prison education cannot take place in isolation from wider reforms including addressing the existing sentencing policy in relation to short-term prisoners. The Government needs to ask the fundamental question of why the courts are sending these people to prison for such a short period and what is being achieved by doing so.

Physical space

301. Physical space is a significant practical barrier to effective education in prisons. Only a small proportion of prisoners can be learning at any one time because of the physical restrictions of classroom and workshop space. A lack of space for quiet study for prisoners on distance learning and other courses is also a practical barrier to learning. In-cell study is often not easy. Prison wings can also be noisy places. Professor David Wilson told us:

‘Some of Wandsworth's education department has no windows. North Sea Camp, their education is so-called temporary portakabins which have actually been there for forty years. So sometimes the space is not appropriate as well, which is certainly a barrier to learning’.²⁰⁰

302. Information provided to the Committee by the Forum on Prisoner Education (FPE) showed that out of the 139 prisons that returned information to the FPE, 68 prisons had ‘study space’ available for prisoners (just under 50%)²⁰¹.

303. There has been some investment in physical space for education in prisons but, based on a bidding process for individual projects, facilities vary a great deal across the prison estate. Capital funding is currently under a separate budget to the rest of education provision. **We believe there should be a capital element to prison education funding, and that a significant investment needs to be made to improve facilities across the prison estate.**

199 Q 106

200 Q 40

201 Information was sent to the Forum on Prisoner Education in preparation for the Directory of Offender Education. The FPE collated this information for this Committee.

Conflict with other regime areas

304. The wider prison regime can sometimes work against effective education. In many prisons, for example, two sessions run each day, —one all morning, and one all afternoon. Progress needs to be made in breaking up these sessions to avoid boredom. Research by NATFHE and the Association of Colleges found that 45% of governors and 43% of education managers said that ‘conflict with other regime areas hindered education in their establishment.’²⁰²

305. It is not surprising that education is hindered by other demands within the prison regime because it holds a very low position of priority. Professor David Wilson said:

‘Promoting education firstly, you are quite right to have picked up that prisons operate both as formal hierarchies and informal hierarchies and there are certain people in jails who will be seen by different groups as being more important than others, and I think you are quite right to say the prison education comes well down the bottom of that list.’²⁰³

306. The profile of prison education needs to be raised. This goes back to a previous recommendation that a high level commitment needs to be given to drive forward the purpose and importance of prison education.

Prison Staff

307. Prison staff—from governors through to officers and operational support grade staff—have a pivotal role in supporting educational activities. We learnt from the evidence we received that prison staff play a key role in education—in terms of escort duties, information, advice, and guidance given to offenders, encouraging disaffected learners, encouraging individual schemes such as Toe by Toe, and working directly as trainers in some workshops.

308. Although several of the submissions acknowledged the commitment and dedication of many prison staff, it has been suggested that some are not always as supportive of prisoners’ education as they might be. The Forum on Prisoner Education “acknowledges that attitudes toward prisoner education have improved over recent years, [but] we are still aware of some staff who are unsupportive and sometimes even downright dismissive of prisoner education.”²⁰⁴ A Joint NATFHE/ AOC survey found that 34% of governors and education managers reported a lack of commitment to prison education among uniformed staff.²⁰⁵

309. Brian Caton, General Secretary of the Prison Officer’s Association outlined the importance of discipline and order to Prison Officers:

²⁰² Ev 79

²⁰³ Q 7

²⁰⁴ Ev 3

²⁰⁵ Ev 4

‘that is a fact. What we have got to have in the Prison Service is order and discipline because if you lose order and discipline you can have as many good educational courses as you like you are not going to get them to do it.’²⁰⁶

310. This attitude is rational and appropriate. **We must keep in mind the fact that a prison is a prison and not a secure learning centre. Nevertheless, an investment in staff education and development would pay dividends to a prison service with chronic staffing problems, particularly in terms of developing a more positive attitude towards the role that education has to play in prisons.**

311. The Forum on Prisoner Education argued that prison should offer educational opportunities for all who spend time there, including prison staff, officers, civilian staff and Governors. This, they suggested, would help instil a ‘learning ethic’, benefiting both staff and prisoners.²⁰⁷ Evidence given by Brian Caton, demonstrates how far we are from having a ‘learning ethic’ amongst prison officers:

‘You cannot do that by sitting and talking nicely to them in the first instance. They have got to understand they are in a disciplined environment. If they do not understand that you may as well pack in and go home.’²⁰⁸

312. This Committee believes that the Prison Service has not done enough to bring prison officers on board with prison education programmes. Professor Andrew Coyle told us:

‘(we) need to bring prison officers on board in all of these initiatives and I think the Prison Service could have done more in recent years to bring the prison officers themselves into these initiatives.’²⁰⁹

313. Tom Robson, of the Prison Officers’ Association described to us the positive role that prison officers can play in encouraging prisoners to be motivated to learn:

‘I understand that and we do not want to be rivals with education, we need to integrate together. I think that we need to pitch our time, as prison officers, to try to help those who are less able to push themselves forward, people who have lacked confidence, who are ashamed of the fact that they cannot read and write, and they are the people that my members generally are needed to be involved with.’²¹⁰

High turnover of staff

314. The Prison Reform Trust note in their memorandum the implications of staffing shortages for prisoners’ opportunities to participate in education. Retention figures for new prison officer recruits are low, with 60% of those who signed up between 2000 and 2003 leaving the service within two years. Turnover at Governor level is also significant, with the average tenure for Prison Governors standing at one year and nine months.

206 Q 1042

207 Ev 4

208 Q 1042

209 Q 63

210 Q 378

315. The Prison Reform Trust described the consequences as follows: “Staffing shortages mean that prisoners do not get unlocked and taken to education or training programmes simply because there are not enough staff on the wing to escort them to another part of the prison. PRT has received anecdotal evidence from across the estate that this is happening in prisons on a regular basis”²¹¹

316. Similarly, the All-Party Parliamentary Group, in their interviews with prisoners and prison staff, were told that there were “problems getting unlocked, and getting prisoner-learners escorted to classrooms. ‘on a list of eleven who’ll say they want to come, we get two, for whatever reason’”²¹²

Escort duties—a Key Performance Target

317. The NATFHE/AoC research and the Prison Reform Trust research on prisoners’ perceptions demonstrate clearly the crucial role that prison staff, especially prison officers, have in relation to prison education. One of the key tasks is escorting prisoners from the wing to prison education, and then being on duty in prison education centres for security purposes. The NATFHE/AoC survey found that 51% of prison education managers reported regular difficulties getting students to classes. NATFHE acknowledges that these problems stem from circumstances that are not always in the control of Prison Services or prison governors. However we do suggest that some of the problems might be overcome and there might be a greater willingness for prison officers to undertake these duties if prison education had an allocation of resources for the undertaking of escort and security duties. At the very least escort duties, the percentage of prisoners attending learning programmes and the reasons why they do not, should be part of any new specification for prison education and be part of key performance indicators for prisons.

Prison Officers are working under considerable pressures

318. The Prison Officers are under a great deal of pressure from over-crowding, churn, and short-staffing. There is a question of how much can be asked from prison officers in this position. Their priorities are driven by the pressures the system puts on them. Professor Andrew Coyle stated:

‘I think this is all indicative of the pressure which the prison system is under. You translate that further down, I think, to the staff who are in the prison, the prison officers, who are there on a daily basis making sure that it works. Success in the prison setting by and large is measured by absence of failure, “Let’s not get it wrong,” and you have got to make sure that people do not escape, you have got to make sure that there is not disorder, you have got to make sure that there is not a ministerial question, or whatever, and that is really what drives people.’²¹³

319. The culture of prison officers is, largely speaking, to see education as outsiders coming in to do the easy work. Brian Caton explained why he thought it was difficult for prison officers to respect professional teachers coming into the prison. He said:

²¹¹ Ev 94

²¹² All-Party Parliamentary Group for FE and Lifelong Learning, *Prison Education in 2004 and Beyond*

²¹³ Q 41

‘Prison officers in the main come to work to look after prisoners, to make sure prisoners are looked after, to make sure the security of the establishment happens, and it is very difficult for a prison officer whose feet are firmly planted on the ground to deal with this floating academia that drifts in and drifts out.’²¹⁴

320. There is definitely no commitment to a reform in education provision from prison officers at present, except in some individual cases. In Professor Andrew Coyle’s words:

‘There is another element which has been there for many years, which is that prison officers see themselves as having to do the hard, difficult part and other people come in and do the nice part. I think, in fairness again, the Prison Service has been working hard to bring the disciplines and the skills together, but that is made more difficult when the people who are delivering this are actually not part of the system, they are coming from elsewhere. The prison officers know what their priorities are. They know what is going to lead to a black mark on their record and it is not primarily about education.’²¹⁵

Training of Prison Officers

321. We know from evidence given to this Committee that the initial training period given to a Prison Officer has been reduced from 11 weeks to 8 weeks. Paul Goggins MP told us that:

‘...it was the case that officers received 11 weeks’ training. They now receive eight weeks training and that focuses mainly on security and resettlement.’²¹⁶

322. Evidence taken from the Prison Officers’ Association confirmed that further mandatory training has been abolished and that training to encourage and motivate prisoners to learn has never been a part of their training:

‘The initial training (for a prison officer) is 7 weeks. There is no minimum qualification to become a prison officer. The mandatory training which took place for prison officers throughout their career has now been abolished and it is down to each individual governor.. how they utilise their budget. There has never been an element of prison officers’ training that would give the skill to impart skill to others.’²¹⁷

323. Brian Caton agreed that the seven week initial training period for prison officers is inadequate. He said:

‘I do not believe that seven weeks is adequate for the training of a prison officer. I do not believe that 12 or 16 is; I really do not. I would like to see the training more challenging. I would like to see the training longer.’²¹⁸

214 Q 1054

215 Q 41

216 Q 770

217 Q 329

218 Q 1032

324. The importance of appropriate training for prison officers to bring the UK in line with international standards, was highlighted by Professor Andrew Coyle:

‘The key people in prisons remain uniformed prison officers. They are the key to a successfully managed prison and I think, again using my international experience, we have one of the shortest and most basic forms of training for prison staff of any country, certainly in Western Europe. The initial training of prison staff was recently within the last year or so reduced from something like eleven weeks down to eight or nine weeks now. So we take someone in off the street, we give them eight or nine weeks’ basic training and then we ask them to go to deal with young offenders, to deal with high security prisoners or to deal with women, or to deal with long-term prisoners. Now, that passes a message about what our priorities are and what we expect of our staff. The staff, I think, in reality deliver much more than we are entitled to expect and one could contrast that with a number of other countries in Western Europe where the training of prison officers equates to the training of a nurse or a teacher, a two or three year course, because if that is really what we want the staff to deliver then we have to give them proper training. So while the Prison Service has, I think, made significant improvements in the processes, there are these basic underlying needs which do not contribute to what you call a learning environment. Most prisons are not learning environments.’²¹⁹

325. Professor David Wilson added:

‘It therefore concentrated on security, security, security, and in the same way that Andrew (Coyle) has been reflecting that it has been reduced, that is in a sense to reflect the external pressures that have been placed on the Prison Service at a time of expansion where prison officer numbers are needed.’²²⁰

326. When asked if there should be a minimum entry requirement for prison officers, Brian Caton said:

‘Test them and give them a qualification that is unique to that particular role. Being a prison officer is a unique job. Is not something that is easily learnt and I do not think it necessarily follows that if you can get through a Masters degree or get an honorary doctorate in the study of mental health and crime like me that you necessarily would make a good prison officer.’²²¹

327. If the Government is to recognise the important role played by prison officers in relation to prison education, then it must invest in prison officers appropriately, to enable them to undertake the sort of behaviours and activities we have recommended. As Professor Augustin John said:

‘it seems to me that the conditions have got to be created wherein prison staff could have an investment made in them so that they could acquire the capacity to assist offenders and aid the rehabilitation process ... so that, while they may not have

219 Q 65

220 Q 70

221 Q 1047

expertise in particular areas of education provision or delivery, they should have some general competences in terms of facilitating people's development.'²²²

328. Paul Goggins MP agreed that if the Government wants to get the most out of Prison Officers, they will have to properly invest in their training. He told this Committee that Prison Officers should have an entitlement to receive appropriate training:

'I think that staff do have an entitlement to expect to receive appropriate training. In the end, what are they being trained for? They are being trained to work with and motivate the prisoners who are in their custody and care. What we are trying to do in prisons is to change lives and that requires tremendous skill on the part of an officer who has to be responsible for security and safety but also has to be able to motivate and help people change their behaviour and attitude. That is a highly skilled job.'²²³

329. The initial training period of 8 weeks for prison officers is totally inadequate. The Government must encourage the development of prison officers if prison staff are to be expected to encourage the development of prisoners. The initial training period must be significantly increased to a level that reflects an appropriate investment to enable prison officers to play a key role in the education and training of prisoners. Furthermore, prison officers should have an equivalent entitlement to training and development once they are in post.

Such changes are outside the remit of the DfES

330. Professor Andrew Coyle told the Committee that it is the very nature of prisons that result in these barriers to prison education:

'I think by definition the prison environment does not lend itself, obviously, to the sorts of things that we have been discussing today. In many respects what it achieves it achieves despite its environment. Prison is a coercive environment. People who are there do not want to be there. I think one has to see all of the positive activities which go on in prison within this overall context.'²²⁴

331. Paul Goggins MP told us that the scale of reform that would be required to remove such barriers is being considered at present:

'The second comment is simply to emphasise that this discussion, this inquiry and the work that we are doing to develop further education and skills training in prison is happening within the biggest reform of prisons and probation that has been undertaken for decades as we develop the National Offender Management Service'²²⁵

332. The barriers to prison education that exist within the regime itself, including overcrowding, churn, staffing shortages, and staff attitudes to education, cannot be overcome by the DfES alone. These are complex and long-established barriers that need

222 Q 405

223 Q 773

224 Q 41

225 Q 757

tackling from within the prison service itself if the provision of prison education and training is to be significantly improved. The Government should be aiming to develop a culture within prisons in which education and skills are a priority. The Home Office must take the lead in the large scale reform that is necessary to remove these barriers, and we encourage them to be bold in the reform of prisons and probation that is reportedly taking place at present.

Appendix 1

Supplementary 2: Basic skills awards achieved in prisons

Breakdown of awards by level:

	April 2001 - March 2002	April 2002 - March 2003	April 2003 - March 2004	April 2004 - October 2004	Total
Entry level	3,104	9,120	13,431	12,521	38,176
Level 1	6,028	17,208	18,905	14,039	56,180
Level 2	16,168	15,190	14,181	8,941	54,480
Total	25,300	41,518	46,517	35,501	148,836

The number of awards achieved in each subject has only been recorded reliably since April 2004:

Level	Awards
Entry ESOL	721
Entry Literacy	3783
Entry Numeracy	8017
Level 1 ESOL	89
Level 1 Literacy	7170
Level 1 Numeracy	6780
Level 2 ESOL	34
Level 2 Literacy	5355
Level 2 Numeracy	3552

These figures are the number of qualifications achieved (not the number of people who achieved them). Not all of these count towards the PSA Skills for Life Target, which does not include entry levels 1 and 2 or those achieved in Wales and counts the number of people rather than qualifications.

Achievements that count towards basic skills targets are given below. These have been accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and approved by the Secretary of State. These qualifications are mapped to the national standards for literacy and numeracy and will replace all existing awarding body qualifications in Basic Skills.

Qualifications in ESOL also contribute to targets. National qualifications will be available from 2005.

Qualification	Awarding Body	Levels	Assessment method
Key Skills - communications	OCR, City and Guilds, Edexcel and any other accredited by QCA	1, 2	End test and portfolio of work
Key Skills - application of number	OCR, City and Guilds, Edexcel and any other accredited by QCA	1, 2	End test and portfolio of work
English for speakers of other languages - ESOL	Any award approved by QCA	All levels. New qualifications available from 2005	As specified
GCSE Maths	Any awarding body accredited to offer GCSEs	A - C (2) D - G (1)	Examination
GCSE English	Any awarding body accredited to offer GCSEs	A - C (2) D - G (1)	Examination

Qualification	Awarding Body	Levels	Assessment method
National Literacy Test	OCR, City and Guilds, Edexcel and any other accredited by QCA	1, 2	Test
National Numeracy Test	OCR, City and Guilds, Edexcel and any other accredited by QCA	1, 2	Test
Literacy	OCR, City and Guilds, Edexcel and any other accredited by QCA	Entry Level, 1, 2 and 3	Varied according to qualifications
Numeracy	OCR, City and Guilds, Edexcel and any other accredited by QCA	Entry Level, 1, 2 and 3	Varied according to qualifications

Appendix 2

Background of contract arrangements for prison education since 1991 (provided by NATFHE).

1991 Until 1991 prison education was funded by the Home Office and delivered under contract by LEA adult education services and FE colleges. Contracts for prison education services were then put out to tender. Contracts were issued for five years and went to a variety of providers, largely FE colleges. Some colleges had multiple contracts geographically spread across the country. Mostly there was a reasonable proximity to the prison and the education contractor, but some contractors were anything up to 150 miles away from the actual prison.

Prison education budgets were placed in the hands of prison governors who could “vire” money to other areas of the prisons.

1991 – 1996 Prison education was subject to decisions by governors often made for non-educational reasons and suffered large cuts in provision with losses of many full-time prison education lecturers.

1996 Prison education contracts were re-tendered. Contracts went to FE colleges, two LEAs and one private provider. Some colleges had developed a considerable expertise in prison education.

2001 Responsibility for prison education was shared between Prison Services and the DfES. A separate unit was established - the Prisoners Learning and Skills Unit (PLSU), now the Offenders Prison Learning and Skills Unit. The PLSU had a network of Area Managers who had a geographic and lead responsibility for an area of work. Recently the Prison Service appointed a Head of Learning and Skills with a responsibility for all learning in prisons. They are directly employed by Prison service and are part of management of prisons.

With the establishment of the PLSU, the funding for prison education was transferred from the Home Office and Prison Service to the DfES and ring fenced for education work

2002/3 The PLSU commissioned Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) to review the funding of prison education. This review found little connection between the vocational training that went on in prisons (in workshops with directly employed instructors) and other aspects of prison life such as offending behaviour and management programmes, sentence management and resettlement. The Review took the broad line that funding should be more closely aligned to individual prisoners’ learning needs and the characteristics of their sentence and the actual prison.

Numerous options were put forward for the future of funding and contracting of prison education. The outcome of the review was that a new re-tendering process would be undertaken and a new specification for such contracts would be drawn for prison education providers. The proposals made it clear that new providers would be encouraged to participate in the tendering process. The project was titled

Project Rex. It recommended that prison education should again be re-tendered as a combined contract of prison education and vocational training.

- 2003 Notice to contractors of the re-tendering process was given in April and the date for the new contracts to come into force was April 2004 - later changed to September 2004. Existing providers had their existing contracts extended twice to meet these timescales).
- 2004 In January 2004 Project Rex collapsed and the Offender Learning and Skills Unit announced that current contracts would be automatically extended for between 1 and 3 years from September 2004.

Appendix 3

Mentoring

1. Toe by Toe scheme—The Shannon Trust is a charity devoted to the development of literacy in our prisons through peer to peer mentoring. The charity encourages prisons to develop mentor teams of inmates, who run daily one-on-one lessons for illiterate fellow prisoners.

2. After several years of testing and development of this simple idea, the Trust is now driving an expansion of the successful system it has developed, across the entire prison estate. The given statistic is that 67% of all adult prisoners have a reading age below the age of 8. This equates to over 30,000 prisoners at any one time, and it is a moving parade. The aim of the Shannon Trust is for every prison to be running the Toe by Toe literacy scheme on every wing and for the probation service to provide continuity in the months after release for those who have not completed their training. By this means, we can begin to tackle one of the significant causes of crime.

3. So far, the Shannon Trust's plan has produced 350 new readers and is currently teaching over a thousand. This is far short of its aim to reach all 30,000. To do that, the Trust will need far stronger support from the authorities. This is available in Scotland and is hopefully coming in England but some political interest would be of great value. We hope that the Plan will one day become embedded and standard on every wing of every prison so that, wherever a prisoner is sent, he/she can continue Toe by Toe.

4. Currently the Shannon Trust meets all the costs, relying on grants from Charitable Foundations. Everyone involved works voluntarily and 75% of its funds goes on manuals. We are convinced that the Plan works best when everyone is voluntary, especially within the prisons. However, we recognise that, even at £50 per new reader, 30,000 illiterate prisoners will constitute a considerable burden on the charitable sector. If it does become embedded, therefore, we would hope that the government might pay for the manuals, leaving the Trust to concentrate on the motivation.²²⁶

Background information about the Trailblazer programme at Feltham

Mission

5. "Trailblazers²²⁷ is committed to improving the lives of young offenders in custody by developing their abilities and self esteem, through mentoring, to enable them to make positive choices."

²²⁶ Ev 56

²²⁷ www.trail-blazers.org.uk

What is Trailblazers?

6. Trailblazers is a mentoring programme based inside HMYOI Feltham, providing Mentors to male young offenders in custody aged between 15 and 21. Mentees are linked to a Volunteer Mentor from the community for approximately one year. Visits take place inside the prison every 2 weeks during the last 6 months of his sentence then continue for a further 6 months post-release to help ease the transition back into society. In addition Trailblazers also offer a life skills programme for prisoners, topics include careers advice, job search skills, interview techniques, drug and alcohol awareness and making choices, which all help prepare for their release.

So why Mentoring?

7. There are many reasons why young people commit crimes, however the lack of positive role models, knowledge of the opportunities available to young people and a lack of self-esteem are major factors. Mentors aim to encourage young offenders to think about their future while they are still in custody. They spend their visits discussing the options available after release, while challenging previous patterns of behaviour. Post release the Mentor is available for information and assistance in applying to colleges, for jobs etc as well as general support, guidance and encouragement. Someone who actually cares about them and with whom they can share when things are going both good and bad.

The Success Rate

8. 210 young offenders have benefited from mentoring via Trailblazers. Of those, only 17% have re-offended so far. Home Office statistics show that 76% of Young Offenders re-offend within 2 years of leaving custody. A direct comparison with Trailblazers mentees shows that of the 210, 55 mentees have been released for over 2 years and only 31% have re-offended. A reduction of 45%, which is unparalleled by other offending behaviour initiatives.

NMN Approved

9. Trailblazers training programme is accredited by Surrey Open College Network (see training page). Mentees can also gain OCN qualifications while participating in the mentoring programme.

10. The National Mentoring Network is the umbrella body for mentoring organizations in the UK. In January 2002, in conjunction with the Government's Active Community Unit, they launched the Approved Provider of Mentoring Award. Trailblazers was one of the first 150 organisations to achieve this award, when they were announced in March 2002.

Trailblazers Aims for the Future

11. To share our knowledge and expertise to ensure as many disadvantaged young people who have served time in custody have the tools and motivation to turn their life around and feel valued in society.

- a) To expand to other young offender prisons. (We are currently only in Feltham)
- b) To provide consultancy and training to enable other organisations to set up mentoring programme

Patrons: The Right Honourable Sir John Dyson, PC, Sir David Ramsbotham GCB CBE
(Chief Inspector of prisons 1995-2001) Professor Tim Newburn

Conclusions and recommendations

The purpose of prison education

1. The purpose of education and training in prisons should be to play a key role in improving the employability of prisoners and therefore contribute to reducing recidivism. However, we would wish the purpose of prison education to be understood in broader terms than just improving the employability of a prisoner. We would emphasise the importance of delivering education also because it is the right thing to do in a civilised society. Education has a value in itself and it is important to develop the person as a whole, not just in terms of the qualifications they hold for employment. The breadth of the education curriculum is important and employability skills should not be emphasised to such an extent that the wider benefits of learning are excluded. (Paragraph 22)
2. We urge the Government to give priority to undertaking the necessary research to demonstrate the impact of education and training on recidivism. It is unacceptable that this research has not been undertaken previously. It is essential to the future of prison education. (Paragraph 34)
3. We are concerned that existing prison education policy, with its heavy concentration on basic skills qualifications, is based on little more than a ‘hunch’. While basic skills are vital, they are not by themselves sufficient to ensure employment on release. We urge the Government to undertake thorough and robust research to identify what type of education and training provision will have the greatest impact on meeting the individual learning needs of the prisoner and providing them with real alternatives to crime on release. (Paragraph 47)

More investment is needed in preventative measures

4. We urge the Government to focus on improving education provision for the almost 50% of students who do not achieve 5 A-Cs at GCSE, and particularly the 5% that leave school without any GCSEs. (Paragraph 52)
5. We wish to highlight the importance of the Government’s Every Child Matters programme of reform, on which we will be publishing our recommendations to Government shortly. (Paragraph 53)

The need for a clear purpose and overarching strategy

6. We concur with the findings of the Home Affairs Committee which said it was ‘disappointed with the elementary nature of many of the National Action Plan’s action points’, and that ‘the National Action Plan should be re-issued in an expanded form .. setting a clear timetable for implementation.’ The National Action Plan fails to providing an overarching strategy for the rehabilitation of prisoners in which the role of prison education can be clearly identified. (Paragraph 62)

7. Neither the Government nor the media have done enough to communicate the importance of prison education to the general public. This Committee believes this is unacceptable. A change in public attitude must be driven by political leadership. The Government must act on its responsibility to inform the general public of the purpose and importance of prison education as part of a broader strategy to rehabilitate prisoners in order to reduce recidivism for the benefit of the wider community. (Paragraph 77)

Flexible and learner-centred provision

8. If the system of prison education is intended to be learner-centred, there needs to be much more flexibility. Learning needs to be relevant, learner-centred, and key skills should be embedded in employment-focused training. (Paragraph 81)
9. A learner-centred system of prison education should deliver a programme of assessment to identify learning needs, including special education needs. This assessment should then be clearly linked to a defined entitlement to provision to meet those needs. This should be delivered through an Individual Learning Plan, owned by the individual, and embedded in their overall Sentence Plan. (Paragraph 82)
10. The initial assessment of a prisoner's education level is totally inadequate at present and we urge the Government to completely overhaul the existing system. There is an urgent need to put in place a system of assessment that can identify the learning needs, including any special educational needs, of each individual prisoner. (Paragraph 93)
11. From the limited evidence we have of the complex learning difficulties of many prisoners we believe that every prison should have a special educational needs co-ordinator specifically to support the special educational needs of prisoners. We urge the Government to extend the provision of special educational needs co-ordinators from Young Offender Institutions to every adult prison. (Paragraph 99)
12. The introduction of Learning Support Assistants to the juvenile estate has been a great success and has enabled a much greater focus on the individual needs of prisoners. We recommend the provision of learning support assistants in adult prisons. (Paragraph 102)
13. We recommend that investment in young offenders is brought up to meet the level of additional investment that the Youth Justice Board has delivered to the juvenile estate. With some of the highest reconviction rates, young offenders represent a vital stage of any strategy to reduce recidivism, and this discrepancy in investment cannot continue. In particular, we recommend that the prescribed entitlement to education, and the introduction of special educational needs co-ordinators and learning support assistants are extended to young offenders. (Paragraph 104)
14. Prisoners should be given an entitlement to have their identified learning needs met. In principle, the Committee recommends that all prisoners should have an entitlement to have these learning needs met, but we recognise that this would be a

long-term goal and that learning needs might have to be met on release for some prisoners. (Paragraph 111)

15. We believe that the entitlement to free level 2 education for all adults should be applied equally to the prison population. (Paragraph 112)
16. The Government must deliver on its commitment to implement a system of Individual Learning Plans linked to Sentence Plans. The haphazard nature in which this is undertaken at present cannot continue. This should be a priority for delivery. (Paragraph 117)
17. The transfer of records across prisons is a disgrace. The overcrowding of prisons and movement of prisoners across the prison estate is no excuse. The fact that prisoners are repeatedly put through initial assessments and Key Performance Target tests because their records cannot be transferred is unacceptable. The Committee recommends the urgent delivery of an electronic system for the transfer of records. The refinement and implementation of the Offender Assessment System (OAsys) must be stepped up with no further delays. (Paragraph 122)
18. The Government should ensure that education provision is flexible enough to adapt to the different types of prisons and prisoners. Local prisons that hold prisoners with very short sentences, for example, should have their purpose clearly defined as being focused on information, advice, and guidance activity linking to rehabilitation and education services available in the community on release. (Paragraph 132)

The continuation of provision on release

19. If the purpose of providing education and training in prisons is to reduce re-offending by enabling prisoners to gain secure employment, then the continuation of support and programmes on release is essential. The Government needs to: produce an overarching resettlement strategy for prisoners; commit to the continuity of provision of education and training on release; and deliver on its commitment to provide the full-package of support necessary through the National Offender Management Service. (Paragraph 136)

The structures for delivery of prison education

20. We consider that changes in the formal structure for the delivery of prison education at the national level have yet to deliver a positive outcome for prisoners' experience of education and training because of the absence of an overarching strategy across the different Government departments and a lack of ownership and championing of prison education at the national level. (Paragraph 139)
21. We are very disappointed that the LSC has not included prison education in its statement of priorities. (Paragraph 142)
22. We urge the Government to prioritise, and provide the necessary funding for, the process of bridging the gap between education inside and outside prisons through the involvement of the Learning and Skills Council. Prison education must not

simply be 'bolted-on' to the LSC. The Government must take responsibility for making prison education a priority for the LSC. (Paragraph 145)

Managing delivery through contracts

23. Under current contracting arrangements in prisons education and vocational training continue to be organised separately. Furthermore, the recent reforms to contracts have created such uncertain working conditions that many experienced and highly qualified teachers have left prison education because of this. (Paragraph 149)
24. The DfES have failed in their responsibility to inform those working in prison education of the guiding principles underlying the reform of contracts as well as the progress of implementation of the new proposals. The DfES must clearly outline the rationale behind the three prototype models for contracting, and the criteria on which they will be assessed. Finally, they must outline a detailed timetable of implementation for new contract arrangements and commit to meeting this timetable. (Paragraph 154)
25. The Committee believes that the funding methodology for prison education must be fit for purpose. It should be flexible enough to fund the various forms of education and learning programmes that are suited to the type of establishment, to the prisoner population within it, and to the patterns of movement to and from that prison.. (Paragraph 158)
26. We recommend that the LSC is given the appropriate resources necessary to apply its standard funding methodology so that prisons have access to all of the funding streams available to mainstream Colleges. In particular, we wish to see the Additional Learning Support funding approach applied to prison education. (Paragraph 164)
27. We recommend that the Government undertakes a fundamental review to come to conclusions on what it wants to achieve through prison education and then funds education provision at a level sufficient to meet this chosen outcome. Existing budget constraints, based on historical levels of provision, should not continue. A clear strategy for prison education should be costed and appropriately funded. (Paragraph 168)

The role of Heads of Learning and Skills

28. The appointment of Heads of Learning and Skills is a welcome progression but, in many cases, they have not been able to fulfil their intended role. (Paragraph 172)
29. We recommend that the DfES and the Home Office jointly champion the role of Heads of Learning and Skills and increase their profile within the senior management of prisons with clear direction and accountability. (Paragraph 172)
30. In order to prevent further loss of staff from the profession, and to help improve recruitment, the Government must ensure that the specialist role of teaching staff in prisons is properly recognised and rewarded. The professional isolation of these teachers must be remedied through the new role of the Learning and Skills Council

in delivering education provision. At present there is no specific funding identified for this purpose. The Government should properly identify, fund, and drive this process forward. (Paragraph 178)

The resettlement Key Performance Target

31. It is clearly extremely important to find a way to measure education, training or employment outcomes for prisoners soon after release, and the Prison Service or National Offender Management Service should make this a priority. (Paragraph 189)

Value-added targets

32. We recommend that existing qualification-based targets, and their impact on education provision, are reconsidered. Key Performance Targets have distorted the provision of education and training within prisons leading to prisoners taking classes which maybe completely inappropriate for their needs. What is needed is a system of delivery whereby prison education is assessed against its stated purpose. We recommend that value-added targets are implemented to enable education provision to be focused on the individual needs of prisoners. (Paragraph 199)

Delivering effective education and training

33. Current provision of prison education is unacceptable. Whilst the Government has provided a substantial increase in resources it is failing to fully meet its manifesto commitment to ‘dramatically increase the quality and quantity of education provision’. In 2004, still less than a third of prisoners had access to prison education at any one time. There needs to be a fundamental shift in approach to prison education and a step change in the level of high quality provision that is suited to meet the needs of individual prisoners to provide them with a real alternative to crime on release. (Paragraph 214)
34. The quality of existing education provision remains a major concern. 60% of provision inspected by the Adult Learning Inspectorate was inadequate. This is unacceptable. There must be rapid progress towards meeting external standards of provision of education and training in prisons. (Paragraph 224)

Internet access

35. We believe that lack of access to the internet is a significant barrier to learning. Access to the internet clearly must be controlled and properly supervised, but the internet is essential both as a learning tool and as a key skill for employment. We recommend that the Government prioritises progress in this area and sets out a clear timetable for implementation of access across the prison estate. (Paragraph 229)

The Basic Skills Agenda

36. An over-emphasis on basic skills driven by Key Performance Targets has narrowed the curriculum too far. Whilst aiming to meet the basic skills needs of prisoners the Government must endeavour to broaden out the prison education curriculum and

increase flexibility of provision to meet the much wider range of educational needs that exists within the prison system. (Paragraph 237)

37. We recommend that the Government gives further consideration to how basic skills might be embedded in more practical learning experiences right across the prison estate, on a much greater scale than is available to prisoners at present. (Paragraph 241)

Embedded skills

38. Part of the difficulty in embedding basic skills in more practical learning is the separate nature of education, vocational training, and work in prisons. This cannot be allowed to continue. (Paragraph 242)

Job-related training

39. Vocational training that does not offer the skills needed in today's job market should not continue. Vocational training should be geared towards the needs of the prisoners, not the historic availability of provision at a given prison. A broader variety of vocational opportunities as well as work opportunities need to be offered that prepare prisoners for employment. (Paragraph 245)

Links to employers

40. We fully support the excellent work of the Young Offender Programme, led by National Grid Transco, and recommend that the Government should take steps to enable and encourage many more of these partnership arrangements with employers. (Paragraph 248)
41. As with the Young Offender Programme, led by National Grid Transco, the Committee would like to see more identification of skills shortages within areas local to the prison, and partnerships developed with businesses to meet these skill shortages. (Paragraph 249)
42. Working with employers has to be the future of vocational education provision and this has to be driven and funded by the Government. The direct relationship between the private company that is providing the training and the prison, including the prisoners themselves, is of vital importance and needs to be maintained. (Paragraph 251)

Real work—real pay

43. This Committee recommends that the Government considers placing a much larger proportion of short-term prisoners in open prisons so that they can continue their links in the community with a full week of work or education or both. (Paragraph 261)
44. The Committee urges the Government to give 'real work, real pay' proposals full consideration as a possible solution to reducing recidivism. (Paragraph 264)

45. We would like to see the Government encouraging a great deal more entrepreneurial activity within prisons both in terms of business enterprises to provide real work for prisoners and in terms of forging much closer links with local Further Education Colleges, Universities, and employers. (Paragraph 267)

Motivation to learn

46. Motivation of the learner in prison is extremely important. Much more needs to be done to provide a wide range of high quality education programmes that should be available for prisons to meet the needs and different learning styles of prisoners to engage them in learning. (Paragraph 271)

Equal pay

47. We recommend that pay must be equalised across all activities undertaken in prison with immediate effect. There must be equal pay for education as for all other activities. Workshops that offer tedious, unskilled work should be phased out as they contribute nothing to the employability of a prisoner on release. (Paragraph 280)

Mentoring

48. We have been impressed by the success of various mentoring programmes run by charitable organisations and urge the Government to look at significantly increasing the role of mentoring in prison education, including supporting existing successful programmes on a national basis. (Paragraph 283)

Work of charities in prison education

49. We welcome the significant contribution to prison education that is made by the voluntary sector. However, we strongly believe that the Government cannot devolve its responsibility to provide education and training to the voluntary sector. We recommend that the Government undertakes a thorough review of the different charities working in the prison sector and those that are successful are given national recognition, funding, support, and enter the quality assurance regime. (Paragraph 285)

Mobility/churn

50. The movement of prisoners at existing levels has to stop if the prison service is going to provide the stability required to deliver prison education and wider rehabilitation programmes. Without significant changes in this area, reform of prison education will not be effective. (Paragraph 292)

Short sentences

51. It is clear that reforms to prison education cannot take place in isolation from wider reforms including addressing the existing sentencing policy in relation to short-term prisoners. The Government needs to ask the fundamental question of why the

Courts are sending these people to prison for such a short period and what is being achieved by doing so. (Paragraph 300)

Physical space

52. We believe there should be a capital element to prison education funding, and that a significant investment needs to be made to improve facilities across the prison estate. (Paragraph 303)

Prison staff

53. We must keep in mind the fact that a prison is a prison and not a secure learning centre. Nevertheless, an investment in staff education and development would pay dividends to a prison service with chronic staffing problems, particularly in terms of developing a more positive attitude towards the role that education has to play in prisons. (Paragraph 310)
54. The initial training period of 8 weeks for prison officers is totally inadequate. The Government must encourage the development of prison officers if prison staff are to be expected to encourage the development of prisoners. The initial training period must be significantly increased to a level that reflects an appropriate investment to enable prison officers to play a key role in the education and training of prisoners. Furthermore, prison officers should have an equivalent entitlement to training and development once they are in post. (Paragraph 329)

Barriers to education

55. The barriers to prison education that exist within the regime itself, including overcrowding, churn, staffing shortages, and staff attitudes to education, cannot be overcome by the DfES alone. These are complex and long-established barriers that need tackling from within the prison service itself if the provision of prison education and training is to be significantly improved. The Government should be aiming to develop a culture within prisons in which education and skills are a priority. The Home Office must take the lead in the large scale reform that is necessary to remove these barriers, and we encourage them to be bold in the reform of prisons and probation that is reportedly taking place at present. (Paragraph 332)

Formal minutes

Monday 21 March 2005

Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Jeff Ennis

Mr Kerry Pollard

Mr Nick Gibb

Jonathan Shaw

Paul Holmes

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report (Prison Education), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

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

Paragraphs 1 to 332 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

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

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That the provisions of Standing Order No. 134 (Select committees (reports)) be applied to the Report.

Several papers were ordered to be appended to the Minutes of Evidence.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee be reported to the House.

Several Memoranda were ordered to be reported to the House.

The Committee further deliberated.

[Adjourned until Wednesday 23 March at 9.15 am]

Witnesses

Wednesday 30 June 2004

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Professor Andrew Coyle, Director, International Centre for Prison Studies, King's College London and **Professor David Wilson**, Chair, Forum on Prisoner Education and Professor of Criminology, University of Central England. Ev 6

Wednesday 15 September 2004

Professor Rod Morgan, Chair, and **Mr Robert Newman**, Head of Policy for Education and Training, Youth Justice Board. Ev 25

Ms Frances Crook, Director, Howard League for Penal Reform and **Mr Robert Newman**, Head of Policy for Education and Training, Youth Justice Board Ev 38

Wednesday 20 October 2004

Mr Christopher Morgan MBE, Director, **Mr Bob Duncan**, Member, Management Board, Shannon Trust, **Ms Ruth Wyner**, Director, Dialogue Trust, and **Mr Bobby Cummines**, Chief Executive, UNLOCK. Ev 59

Dr John Brennan, Chief Executive, Association of Colleges, **Ms Merron Mitchell**, Head, Offender Learning Directorate, City College Manchester, **Ms Jeanne Harding**, Principal, Dudley College of Technology, **Mr Dan Taubman**, National Official (Education) and **Ms Christiane Ohsan**, National Official (Further Education), NATFHE Ev 80

Wednesday 27 October 2004

Ms Juliet Lyon, Director, Prison Reform Trust, **Professor Augustin John**, Visiting Professor of Education, University of Strathclyde, **Mr Tom Robson**, National Executive Committee Member, Prison Officers' Association, **Mr Paul O'Donnell**, Public Affairs Manager and **Mr John Brenchley**, Regional Manager, South Region, OCR. Ev 100

Wednesday 3 November 2004

Mr David Bell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, **Mrs Miriam Rosen**, Director, Education, **Mr Robert Green**, Director, Corporate Services, **Mr Maurice Smith**, Early Years Directorate and **Mr Jonathan Thompson**, Director, Finance, Ofsted. Ev 119

Wednesday 10 November 2004

Ms Anne Owers CBE, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, and **Mr David Singleton** HMI, Deputy Director for Education, **Mr Bill Massam** HMI, Head of Prison Education Inspection, Ofsted, and **Mr David Sherlock**, Chief Inspector and Chief Executive, and **Ms Jen Walters**, Inspection Manager, Adult Learning Inspectorate. Ev 123

Mr Michael Newell, President, Prison Governors Association Ev 139

Wednesday 17 November 2004

Mr Phil Wheatley, Director General, Prison Service, **Mr Martin Narey**, Chief Executive, National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and **Ms Susan Pember OBE**, Director of Apprenticeships and Skills for Life, Department for Education and Skills. Ev 152

Ms Trances Crook, Director, Howard League for Penal Reform and **Mr Robert Newman**, Head of Policy for Education and Training, Youth Justice Board Ev

Monday 6 December 2004

Ms Caroline Neville, National Director for Learning and **Mr John Gamble**, Director of Adult Learning, Learning and Skills Council, **Mrs Janice Shiner**, Director-General, Lifelong Learning Directorate and **Mr Chris Barnham**, Head of Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit, Department for Education and Skills. Ev 187

Lord Filkin CBE, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, Department for Education and Skills and **Paul Goggins MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Correctional Services and Reducing Reoffending, Home Office. Ev 196

Tuesday 8 February 2005

Mr Levi Smith, **Mr Afrim Mahmuti**, **Mr Mohammed Saleh** and **Mr Lasells Hazel**. Ev 210

Ms Anne Loveday, Head of Learning and Skills, **Mr Dayo Adeagbo**, Education Manager and **Ms Jane Birch**, Juvenile Education Manager, Feltham YOI, **Mr Vic Pomeroy**, HOLS, HMP The Verne, **Mr Peter Blunt**, Contract Manager, Strode College and **Ms Fiona Dunsdon**, Education Manager, HMP Littlehey. Ev 220

Ms Emma Flook, Numeracy Team Leader, **Ms Lizzie Foster**, Literacy Team Leader, **Ms Francesca Hinchcliff**, ESOL Tutor, **Ms Pat Sandom**, Instruction Officer, BICS, **Mr Ian Hinds**, Principal Officer, Physical Education and **Ms Karen Chaffey**, Librarian, Feltham YOI. Ev 229

Mr Brian Caton, General Secretary, Prison Officers' Association. Ev 238

List of written evidence

Forum on Prisoner Education	Ev1:1 Ev 24
Howard League for Penal Reform	Ev 35
Youth Justice Board	Ev 46
Shannon Trust	Ev 56
Dialogue Trust	Ev 57
Association of Colleges	Ev 70: Ev 90
NATFHE	Ev 73
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Martin Narey	Ev 177
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Peter Blunt, Strode College, Somerset	Ev 219
National Grid Transco Young Offenders' Training Programme	Ev 245
HMP Stafford	Ev 251
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Michael Rice	Ev 254
HM Young Offenders' Institute, Rochester	Ev 257
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Independent Monitoring Boards	Ev 263
Disability Rights Commission	Ev 265
learndirect	Ev 266
Public and Commercial Services Union	Ev 268
ECOTEC Research and Consulting (Plus Team)	Ev 268

List of unprinted written evidence

Additional papers have been received from the following and have been reported to the House but to save printing costs they have not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons library where they may be inspected by members. Other copies are in the Record Office, House of Lords and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to the Record Office, House of Lords, London SW1. (Tel 020 7219 3074) hours of inspection are from 9:30am to 5:00pm on Mondays to Fridays.

John Hudson
Nord Anglia Education plc
David Flusfeder
SEMTA
Public and Commercial Services Union
National Foundation for Educational Research
VT International Services Limited
Business Enterprise Support Limited
Learning and Skills Council, North Yorkshire
VT Education

Reports from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2004–05

First Report	Public Expenditure on Education and Skills	HC 168
Second Report	Education Outside the Classroom	HC 120
Third Report	UK e-University	HC 205
Fourth Report	The Work of the Committee in 2004	HC 359
Fifth Report	Secondary Education	HC 86
Sixth Report	National Skills Strategy: 14–19 Education	HC 37
First Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2003–04: Secondary Education: Teacher Retention	HC 85
Second Special Report	Government's and Ofsted's Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2003–04: The Work of Ofsted	HC 206
