

Welsh Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Prisons, Probation and Rehabilitation in Wales](#), HC 702

Wednesday 29 October 2025

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Ruth Jones (Chair); David Chadwick; Ann Davies; Ben Lake; Llinos Medi; Andrew Ranger; Steve Witherden.

Questions 37 - 68

Witnesses

[I](#): Jon Collins, Chief Executive, Prisoners' Education Trust; Anne-Marie Rogan, Cymru Business Development Manager, St Giles Trust; Jassa Scott, Strategic Director, Estyn.

[II](#): Nick Millington, Route Director for Wales and Borders, Network Rail; Scott Davies, Contracts Supervisor, Rowecord Total Access Ltd; Dawn Jevons, Social Value Manager for Wales, Galliford Try.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Jon Collins, Anne-Marie Rogan and Jassa Scott.

Q37 **Chair:** Good afternoon and welcome to this afternoon's session of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee. My name is Ruth Jones. I am the Chair of the Committee. Today is the second oral evidence session in this Committee's inquiry into prisons, probation and rehabilitation in Wales. On our first panel today, we are hearing from organisations delivering education and employment services to prisoners and those on probation in Wales and the scrutiny body responsible for inspecting education and training in Wales. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to say, officially, thank you very much for taking the time to appear before us today. Can I ask each one of you to very briefly introduce yourselves and outline the work of your organisation?

Jassa Scott: Prynhawn da. Good afternoon. My name is Jassa Scott. I am one of the strategic directors at Estyn. Estyn is the inspectorate of education and training in Wales. We have responsibility for inspecting. We join HMI Prisons inspections of prisons in Wales to look at the education and training provision.

Anne-Marie Rogan: Prynhawn da. Good afternoon. My name is Anne-Marie Rogan. I am the business development manager for Wales for St Giles Trust. We work across England and Wales within the portfolio. We are a lived experience-led charity working for 60 years across probation, prison and community-based portfolios.

Jon Collins: Good afternoon. I am Jon Collins. I am chief executive of the Prisoners' Education Trust. We are a charity that provides access to distance learning and associated information, advice and guidance to people in prison across England and Wales. Since 2015, we have had a team based in Wales providing support to staff in Welsh prisons and people held in Welsh prisons around distance learning. We have Welsh-based staff and an office in Cardiff.

Chair: That was my next question. Thank you very much for that.

Q38 **Andrew Ranger:** Thank you all for coming in today. This is a question for all of you, but I will start off with you, Jassa. What is the purpose of providing education and employment in prison, and is the current provision meeting that aim?

Jassa Scott: The purpose is to support a reduction in reoffending and enable prisoners, once released from prison, to access work or further education or training, and to also live purposefully in society. From that point of view, it has those longer-term benefits. In terms of where we see it working well in prisons, it can have a positive effect on the mental health, self-esteem and self-confidence of prisoners. It can develop their skills and help them gain qualifications that will open doors when they are released. The purpose is really clear and multifaceted in that sense.



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In terms of the second part, which was how well it is achieving that purpose at the moment, when we are going out and inspecting, we are certainly seeing some positive aspects of provision, but there are still some challenges. Certainly there are challenges in the consistency of that provision. There are challenges in terms of prisoners getting to access some even quite good-quality provision when it is in place for a number of reasons that are beyond our remit and beyond the control sometimes of education and training staff in prisons.

I do not know how much detail you want me to go into on the challenges and whether you want me to unpack them a little bit, or on what we are finding is working well. In a nutshell, we are seeing pockets of good practice. In probably half of the provision we are seeing some effective practice, but there are challenges and that inconsistency overall.

Q39 Andrew Ranger: We will come back to that in future questions. That is great as an introduction, thank you. Anne-Marie, it is the same question but also could I ask you what the benefits are of continuous employment as an offender transitions from custody into their community?

Anne-Marie Rogan: Thank you for that question. In terms of purposeful activity, it is about transferable skills and using time purposefully, and, as an individual, learning about your own aspirations, your value, your worth and what you can take forward and what you can utilise within the prison estate. For example, we very much focus on the lived experience model, using people's direct experience to help and support others, but also to come to terms with your role within society. We focus on, in prison, accessing training, skills and support and, while there, being able to gain accredited qualifications that are recognised outside by employers. That is to enable people to secure a positive future and build something towards looking after themselves and their families as they exit.

In terms of the challenges, they include making sure that people know what is available, that it is targeted appropriately to the right place at the right time, and that, if somebody is participating within the prison estate, that can follow them out through the gates and there can be follow-up provision within the community. That is what St Giles Trust does in terms of its lived experience peer model.

Q40 Andrew Ranger: Jon, I have the same original question to you, but also could you add in your thoughts? The Prisoners' Education Trust offers a variety of distance learning courses. What benefits does this method of learning offer and are there any notable trends that you have observed in demand for your courses across prisons in Wales?

Jon Collins: Broadly speaking, I agree with everything that the other panellists have said about the benefits and value of education. There is pretty extensive evidence that people going into prison are likely, on average, to have lower levels of literacy and numeracy than the general population. They are more likely to have had disrupted experiences of



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education at school. They are less likely to have formal qualifications than the general population. There is clearly a high level of educational need.

Aiming to meet that need while people are in custody will help to give them the skills and qualifications they need to get jobs on release or to move on to whatever they want to do next. Also, as people have said, there is the confidence, sense of self-worth and wellbeing, so there are broader benefits of education that can be realised for people in prison. It helps them to change their identity and think more positively and more hopefully about what they might be able to achieve on release.

The evidence that education works, for want of a better phrase, in terms of getting people into employment and reducing reoffending, is comprehensive and extensive. It is pretty undisputed in the academic literature now that, if you take part in education while you are in prison, you are less likely to reoffend on release and more likely to move into employment. It is all upside when it is delivered to a good standard.

The question is how you can get the most people into education in a way that meets their aspirations, their goals for when they are released and the level that they are currently operating at. It is about quality and breadth of provision and ensuring that people's individual needs can be met by what is available in the prison. That is at least partly where the Prisoners' Education Trust comes in, in that we look to offer a broad range of courses via distance learning that would not otherwise be available to people in prison.

At the moment we offer about 130 different courses by distance learning. They range from GCSEs and A-levels for people who want to go down that route to a broad range of vocational courses. Some people might be interested in something such as learning a language or creative writing. There is a whole range of different things to make sure that there is something that interests and meets the needs of anyone who is interested in doing one of those courses.

As I mentioned, we have worked in Wales over the last decade or so, as part of our offer across England and Wales. We see that there is a really broad range of interest in terms of the courses that people are interested in doing and that we are able to supply. A lot of the courses that we have most interest in are around things such as health and safety and construction, so things that are clearly linked to employment on release. Other courses that we do around things such as substance misuse, mentoring and coaching are also supporting people in the journey they want to take towards employment on release.

There is a consistent level of interest. We funded about 150 people in Wales last year, so it is not huge numbers, but it is a significant minority of people in prison. By doing this, they are able to access courses that would not be available to them otherwise, because you cannot provide everything for everyone in prison face to face, so distance learning looks to plug those gaps.



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Q41 Chair: Following on from that, your 150 come from all across the prisons across Wales. Are there any issues with hardware, wi-fi or those sorts of technical things?

Jon Collins: We are available across all prisons, including all prisons in Wales. We get different levels of applications from different prisons, partly because of the different make-up of the population. Some people will be on remand or on shorter sentences. Other people will be serving longer sentences.

In terms of your second question around facilities, unlike almost any distance learning in the community these days, the vast majority of our distance learning courses are still delivered on paper, because of the limitations in accessing laptops, secure access to the internet and digital learning generally. We are in the phase now where we are starting to make some more things available digitally as prisons are moving in that direction. By and large, it is still a paper-based offer because of the limitations in terms of people being able to consistently get access to a computer so they can study a course over an extended period.

Chair: Thank you for clarifying that.

Q42 Llinos Medi: This question is for all of you and there are three questions in it as well. Given that all criminal justice powers, alongside important levers for rehabilitation, such as health and education, are controlled by a single Government in England, have you found that this structure enables a more streamlined or effective service delivery compared with the situation in Wales? If so, would you support further devolution of the criminal justice powers to the Welsh Government to improve outcomes for Welsh offenders? Currently, is the collaboration effective enough between Welsh Government and the justice system? There are three aspects there.

Jassa Scott: I do not have a great detailed awareness of how Welsh Government and the UK Government work together in terms of co-ordinating those disparate responsibilities. In terms of how it works in practice on the ground, I also do not have a comparison between England and Wales, because I am only there looking at the Welsh system.

In terms of within Wales, there seems to be a really close relationship between HMPPS and Welsh Government. We see them working very collaboratively together and with the leaders of prisons in Wales to have quite a co-ordinated approach, and they include us in that. In terms of managing those different aspects, from that point of view, there are definitely some strengths.

There was quite co-ordinated work to develop the Better Learning, Better Chances policy about education and training in Welsh prisons between the two of them last year or the year before. That relationship also helps to bring in some of the other aspects of policy within Welsh Government, so things such as employability and so on. We see some quite good



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linkages across, which is leading to tangible initiatives within prisons in Wales.

The flipside of that is that we find sometimes that those initiatives, because of the way they are funded through things such as ReAct+, are limited to prisoners who would have a Welsh postcode. You sometimes see a kind of two-tier set of initiatives within a given prison. We see quite creative work so that it does not feel like that. Other pieces of funding are used to ensure that it is more of a seamless provision for prisoners, but it feels like, within Wales, because of that, there are sometimes those separations, which, from discussions with Ofsted and others, maybe do not apply for Welsh prisoners in English prisons in quite the same way as English prisoners in Wales.

That does not really answer your question, because I would not say that I am an expert on that relationship between the UK and Welsh Governments. It does not seem to have an overall negative impact on the provision within Wales in terms of co-ordination.

Anne-Marie Rogan: In terms of co-ordination and a consistent approach, in terms of devolved powers, we are an aspirational nation in terms of looking at rights-based, trauma-informed approaches and bringing in elements in terms of housing, education and skills. With those devolved powers, in terms of the impact of what we can actually do in prisons, it is all about relationships being clear and consistent and working well together. Quite often, in terms of the systems approach, it works, but it could be improved, and it is quite often down to relationships.

In terms of the Wales estate and looking at working closely with governors and local providers and ensuring that we do the best that we can for our people within the prison estate, attitudes are right. People want to work together, but it is knowing how best to do that. In terms of being a third-sector provider, it is about bringing resources and innovation with you and trying to work within the context of the confines that we find ourselves with in prisons to do the best that we can to respond to need. That is a challenge for us every day. It works, but it could be improved.

Jon Collins: I do not think I have a huge amount to add to what colleagues have said. There are some challenges with making it work, but in practice it seems to work reasonably well in terms of the relationship between HMPPS in Wales, the Welsh Government and the education providers in Wales, particularly in the two prisons where education is outsourced. By and large, they seem to have found ways to make it work relatively well.

There are some challenges around, as my colleague mentioned, particular pots of funding or areas of work. There are also some examples of good cross-border working around employability hubs, for example, which involve the Welsh prison service and Welsh training providers, but also



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UK Government Departments. There are examples of where it works well. There are some challenges, but generally our experience has been that, locally at least, ways are found to make those challenges work.

I guess there are two bigger-picture areas. We may come back to talk about the fact that there is not a women's prison in Wales, so you have particular challenges around the female population and moving them back across the border through the gates.

The other area is that Wales is not immune to the broader pressures on the prison estate as a whole. Wales does not have control over which people are sent to those prisons and the need to use prison capacity to its fullest extent at the moment. Welsh prisons, which might have initially been designed to hold primarily people from Wales, are actually now holding people from England. That creates additional challenges around, if you want a more person-centred approach, thinking about what jobs people might want to move into, resettlement needs, labour market information and that sort of thing. That is more difficult if people are being held in Wales when they are coming across from England, or vice versa. Those broader pressures on the estate have an impact. It is difficult to see a way around that throughout the current set-up.

Q43 Ben Lake: I will direct my questions to Ms Scott. I appreciate that Estyn does not have a statutory role in terms of the Welsh language provision in prisons, but I note that it is something that you often comment upon in your reports. I was wondering what you make of reports recently that prisoners at HMP Berwyn have been encouraged not to speak Welsh.

Jassa Scott: I was quite alarmed to see that in the news, although it does not entirely surprise me. When we inspected in Berwyn earlier this year, we found that, for a prison that was set up initially with the view of being a more Welsh prison to cater for particularly that north Wales population, which has a lot of Welsh speakers, there was really limited provision to support the promotion of Welsh and the opportunities for people to access education and training in Welsh. Probably the best we would see was some opportunities in terms of some more personal and social group developed activities and things that were bringing together first-language Welsh speakers to do that through Welsh.

We look at it as part of our inspection. We would look at all those elements in terms of how well people's Welsh skills are being developed if, for example, they have some Welsh skills as a starter. For Welsh people who speak Welsh as their first language, how well can they access support? Thirdly, how much is that language promoted generally to create a bilingual context?

It does not feel like a very bilingual context in Berwyn, but across the whole prison estate there are challenges. Even where there has been a more proactive policy for something such as induction to be available through Welsh, that is not always actively being provided, even though it has been stated that it is something. There is still some way to go.



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Certainly our reports would reflect that we have not come across any Welsh-medium education and training in the prison. There are opportunities perhaps once you get into beyond the gate and are working with local employers, local training providers and so on further down the line. We are seeing a few more opportunities there, but it is really limited, so I was not surprised necessarily to read that report and those comments last week.

Q44 Ben Lake: Would you say that the experiences at Berwyn are reflective of the general experience in the prison estate in Wales?

Jassa Scott: Yes, generally. We were particularly disappointed about even some of the basics we see being done elsewhere in terms of staff identifying themselves as Welsh speakers. There is a challenge for prisons in terms of recruiting education and training staff generally, but across the estate there is a challenge in recruiting Welsh speakers to be able to fulfil some of those ideal commitments to provide that support through the medium of Welsh for prisoners.

Q45 Ben Lake: There has been a suggestion that His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons should introduce a more systematic survey of prisoners' Welsh language skills and abilities. Is that something that would be useful in terms of your work and would it be something that you would support?

Jassa Scott: Absolutely, yes. I would hope that, in an ideal world, people's first language would be being captured on entry into the system. At least that could help to plan and deliver provision where needed, so it is anything that moves us in that direction in terms of better care. I think that some of that happens now, but I am not sure that that information is then used well enough to actually put into practice some of those services. Yes, anything that moves us in that direction would be helpful.

Q46 David Chadwick: Good afternoon and thank you for joining us. I have three questions and I am sure the Chair would appreciate it if we asked for succinct answers, please. The first two questions are for all three of you. How satisfied are you with the level of education and employment support available to prisoners in Wales and Welsh prisoners serving sentences in England?

Jassa Scott: We do not inspect in England, so I will just focus on the evidence from our inspections in Wales. We see some aspects of really effective practice. Maybe I will pick out some of those we have seen over the last year. We inspected four prisons in the last year, which is quite a big evidence sample for us.

There are some really good relationships with partners to develop the curriculum, so we are seeing more varied curriculums. We are seeing some really high-quality vocational environments, particularly in Berwyn and Prescoed. Learners that we were talking to—prisoners—really valued some of the personal and social development opportunities that they had. We were seeing generally that, where prisoners were accessing education



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and training, they felt safe and valued the relationships they had with staff.

In terms of progress, particularly where there is vocational education being delivered, we are probably seeing better progress on some of those programmes when they are in place. We are definitely seeing some improvements in the overall self-evaluation and how people look at that.

As I said at the start, it is quite an inconsistent picture. There are some things we are seeing that could definitely be improved, such as perhaps the more personalised approaches. You have a lot of neurodivergent prisoners. We are not always seeing that there is enough understanding across staff, including with education and training staff sometimes, of what the best approaches are with those particular prisoners and how best to support them to develop some of those independent living skills that will serve them well when on release.

We are seeing that most of the prisons have reading strategies, but although they may have thought about that overall approach, in practice that is not being delivered very well. Particularly where there are non-readers, the skills of staff to develop reading skills, which I think my colleague mentioned earlier, is a really important factor in terms of future employment and so on.

The biggest challenge in allowing prisoners to access some of that effective provision is just getting them there. In half of the provisions we were seeing that attendance was nowhere near good enough. The actual time out of cell for education, training or other activity is not good enough. We are really grappling with some of those other issues that would impact on prisoners accessing what could be, if they got there, some education and training that was going to support them. I will stop there because I am sure other people have some other things to add.

Anne-Marie Rogan: I would like to endorse everything that you have said. In terms of individual learning plans and targeted approaches, assessing individuals' needs, being able to align that as they come in and have pathways and progression routes for them is really important.

However, in terms of St Giles Trust and our peer-led, lived experience model and trauma-informed approaches, with level 3 qualifications we take the opportunity to provide higher levels of qualifications where appropriate. That takes longer to deliver, so we align that with gaps in local labour markets. Progression routes for bite-sized learning are married in with those higher base qualifications. We very much believe in using the power of the lived experience and trauma-informed approach in order to make changes in people's perceptions and aspirations and provide a value-driven approach in terms of the education that is available to them within the prison.

Jon Collins: I agree with everything that has been said already. I have some pretty brief points. There is some really good provision there. There



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is some high-quality teaching and really important work being done. It is always important to recognise that. There is some inconsistency. There are some places where there could be some improvement.

You need to think about higher-level learners and people who want to progress with their learning and how you meet their needs in a prison environment and then out through the gate into the community. There are always some challenges there, particularly given that people are not always being held close to where they will be resettled to.

The last point, which echoes what Jassa said, is that prison education does not operate in a vacuum. It operates within a prison regime. There are some very overcrowded prisons in Wales. Swansea is always one of the top 10 most overcrowded prisons across England and Wales. There are some real pressures on prison regimes at the moment. You can have an excellent education department offering a really good variety of education and training, but if people cannot get out of their cells, off their wings and into that department, that is not going to help anyone. Part of it is about having the right offer and part of it is about making sure that the right people can get to that department on a consistent basis, and there are challenges with both.

We have heard a lot in recent months and years about the amount of pressure the prison system is under. Wales is not immune to that. You visit prisons and realise that they are struggling to get people consistently into education departments. Where people are transferred, you then have challenges around making sure that their learning records, what they have done and what they were working on, follow them round the estate.

Q47 David Chadwick: Following on from that question, are the education and employment opportunities available to prisoners in Wales appropriately aligned with the needs of employers and the abilities of the learners?

Jon Collins: It is going to be a bit of a yes and no. As I said, there is some really good work going on there. There are particular challenges around ensuring that the level of education that is available takes people to the point that employers are actually looking for. In lots of cases, employers are looking for level 3 qualifications that are not always consistently available. You need to make sure that it is not just about the subjects and areas that people are looking for, but that you get them to the levels that employers are looking for.

There are real challenges, as I have already mentioned, around labour market information, given that people are often dispersed. We have heard about people being held in Berwyn who are not necessarily local to the prison. You need to make sure that you have accurate information about where they are going back to.

The last thing that is important in terms of employment opportunities is ensuring that there is a record of what qualifications people have



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achieved in prison that is accessible to them once they have left, so that people can demonstrate the qualifications that they have that employers may need. Often, people do not have access to all that information when they are in prison, or they do not manage to take it with them through the gate. You need to have a clear record of what people have achieved so that they can demonstrate the qualifications they have, particularly if they are qualifications that you need to have to participate in an industry, such as construction, for example, that will need you to have particular qualifications. Having them is one thing that is really important. Being able to demonstrate them is the second thing that is really important.

Anne-Marie Rogan: In addition to that, having a network and a pipeline of employers that are prepared to work with people who are coming out of the criminal justice system is important. For example, placements are needed when people are released on temporary licence in order to enable people to translate the skills that they are learning within the prison estate and have real-life experiences, breaking down those barriers and perceptions of what it takes for an employer to be able to accommodate learning and opportunities for people with criminal records coming into the sector.

ROTL, pipelines, networks and support are needed in order to support the individuals. If you train, secure employment and then sustain employment, people need to be able to be supported in that transition where they are going from training, education and skills out into the community. We need to ensure that, if they identify and secure employment, they can retain it. We can work with employers and the individual to ensure that we can overcome that as well. It is really important to have that wraparound support as well going forward.

Jassa Scott: There is a little bit of an issue with the initial assessment in terms of therefore matching. The KPIs drive people to do a lot of the initial assessment very early, and sometimes prisoners are not in the right place to do that. That means that the programmes they are matched to do not necessarily reflect their actual skills and prior qualifications.

We have mentioned the fact that qualifications can be quite big chunks. There is still a bit more work to do to find more bite-sized pieces that can be then put together over time to give bigger qualifications that are more nationally recognised on release. That would help mitigate some of the challenges where prisoners are transferred between prisons as well. Quite often, that progress that they are making just stops and they have to almost pick up from the start again because that does not transfer with them. There is maybe an opportunity for prisons in Wales, for example, to work more collaboratively to at least try to ensure some greater curriculum coherence in terms of the offer, so that when they are transferred, there might be more opportunity to continue rather than start again on something.



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Q48 David Chadwick: Ms Scott, what powers does Estyn have to compel prison leaders to address inadequate education and training findings? As a liberal, I find this a very interesting question. Particularly, as a party, we are very interested in powers and the extent of an organisation's powers. It would be helpful if you could expand on this as well in terms of the context of the powers you have in relation to other authorities.

Jassa Scott: In a nutshell, we do not have a lot, or we have none. In relation to prison education, we do not really have any powers. We go at the invitation of HMI Prisons to look at education and training there.

In terms of those powers where we see inadequate provision generally, they range across other sectors that we inspect. Across colleges and things like that, which we would say are the most similar to prison education and training, there would be statutory requirements for them to produce an action plan as a result of an inspection and so on. I assume that some of those powers are in relation to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

The only place where we have more formal powers is in relation to schools, where there are formal categories of concern, special measures and in need of significant improvement, some formal definition of what that means and some steps that can be taken. We would welcome a clarification of our powers and an alignment with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

Q49 David Chadwick: Can you tell local authorities what to do?

Jassa Scott: No, not what to do. They are required to produce action plans on how they will address our recommendations. We will say, "Yes, that action plan is suitable", or not. Then we have formal powers to monitor their progress until we feel that they have adequately addressed them.

Q50 David Chadwick: You cannot do that to prisons.

Jassa Scott: We do not have the same formal powers in terms of prisons, no.

Chair: Thank you for clarifying.

Q51 Steve Witherden: As a teacher of 19 years, it is very nice to be asking Estyn questions, not the other way round, so I will start with Ms Scott, if I may. What is the impact of the lack of data regarding participation and achievement by learners in Wales, and why is equivalent data available in England?

Jassa Scott: I do not know. The impact is that there is less data available. I think that some of that data exists, but it is not used and published in the same way as MOJ does. From our point of view, it is an aspect that we have asked about. It is definitely an area where it would be great to have a higher-quality dataset that was accessible to everyone



who is involved in education and training in prisons to help ensure a bit more of that comparability.

In terms of what we would like to see in that, it is challenging, given the fragmented nature of some of that provision that we have been talking about. Certainly a bit more expectation about the expected programmes, the expected number of learning hours perhaps that we would be expecting prisoners to access for some of those and more detailed data about attendance, withdrawals and all that kind of stuff would be really helpful. Occasionally it pops up in reports, so I can only assume that it is there somewhere. It is certainly not as forensically analysed and published as some of the UK-level data.

Anne-Marie Rogan: In terms of access to data, we need to ensure that training is relevant, targeted appropriately, accessible and impactful. In order to assess that, we need to have access to that data. If we are going to co-produce, co-design and look at quality provision, we need to be able to analyse data to do that, and gather and share the data.

Jon Collins: To echo, there is now pretty extensive data available on education in public-sector prisons in England. It is not as much or as comprehensive as we would like, but it enables you to triangulate between what you see on the ground in prisons, the data that is published and what Ofsted finds as part of its programme of inspections in England. There is not that comparable data published on Wales. As Jassa said, this data must be gathered, so we do not see any particular reason why it should not be published.

If we had the equivalent data for Wales that we have for England, that would give us a starting point across the board to think about how we can build on and develop that to give a more comprehensive picture. A lot of what we are saying today is based on impressions of what prison education in Wales is like and our view on it. Without all that data being published, it is quite hard to get a sense of whether those impressions are accurate.

We do not have the other angle to look at it, alongside the Estyn inspections, to be able to get a sense of whether it is delivering as well as we think it is and to what scale and how much progress people are making. It is even things such as attendance, which is not be-all and end-all, but knowing how many people are in each class and what proportion of classes are filled is not a bad starting point to get a sense of what is going on. You read about it in inspection reports, but in England that data is published. We know what proportion of education places are taken up and it varies hugely by prison. We do not have that data for Wales and it is a real gap.

Q52 **Steve Witherden:** For my follow-up question, I was going to ask what particular dataset you would like to see more than any other, but that has been addressed in the responses, so I will move to my final question. Ms Scott, how do Estyn and Ofsted ensure that inspection methodologies



enable effective comparison?

Jassa Scott: We have quite a close working relationship with Ofsted. We have recently gone through a process to update our approach and guidance, which I am hoping I will be able to share with you as a Committee. We are just finalising the guidance. We piloted it in some of the inspections earlier this year. As part of that, we joined an Ofsted inspection. We are fairly confident that our expectations are comparable across.

The way that we report and certainly the way we use summative judgments has diverged. In our latest round of inspections under the new guidance, our agreement now is that we will use our evidence to propose a judgment based on HMI Prisons' grading scale for the purposeful activity element. They are slightly different approaches in the way that we would report, but I am confident that we are looking at similar expectations. We meet fairly regularly with it to share any challenges or emerging themes. We obviously would look at each other's annual reports and so on, as well as the links that we have with HMI Prisons.

Clearly His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons has a role there, because it is working with us both. As part of any inspection there is a meeting to moderate the findings. In a similar way, they would be seeing the evidence from us and from Ofsted, which is another layer of helping to ensure that consistency across. There are a couple of things we do differently. As part of any of our inspections, we would have a nominee, so the head of education and training would be part of all our discussions. Again, that helps to challenge.

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

On resuming—

Q53 Llinos Medi: This is a question to all of you about women's prisons. The review has highlighted that education was a particular concern for women. I will start with you, Jon, because you raised it earlier on. Have you raised this with Welsh Government and what was the outcome of those conversations?

Jon Collins: We have not specifically raised it with Welsh Government ourselves. It has been a well-known issue for a number of years and was flagged up in David Hanson's review of prison education in Wales and elsewhere in recent years as an issue. There is no women's prison in Wales. I do not think that anyone is necessarily advocating to build one, but that creates some particular challenges.

We know now from the data that has been released more recently that the majority of women from Wales who are in prison are held in Eastwood Park. We have some in Styal and some right across the estate. We know that that creates some challenges. Ofsted judges that education provision in Eastwood Park requires improvement, which is not unusual



for prisons across England, or across the women's estate, but it is clearly a prison facing some significant challenges.

It is worth noting that, in the immediate future, the contracts for delivering education in England have just changed over. Eastwood Park is one of the prisons where there will be a new provider. We know from experience in other prisons that, where there is a change in provider, that causes some quite significant disruption. Across prisons in England, that will affect particularly Welsh women, but also Welsh men who are held in prisons in England. There will be some particular short-term challenges.

You will probably have seen in the media that there are some concerns at the moment around funding for prison education. The prisons inspectorate has highlighted some quite significant cuts to education provision in some prisons in England. As a result, that will impact Welsh women, but also Welsh men, who are held in prisons.

There are some real barriers and there are some real challenges. Some of them are just geographical. People are not held close to their home. That creates some real problems. That is the reality of not having a women's prison in Wales.

It is really important that as much is done as possible to support women who are resettling into Wales, particularly if they want to continue with educational training or move into employment, and make sure those prisons have access to that information. Like a lot of what we were talking about earlier, they often do it well, but it does not mean they could not do it better and focus on it more.

Particularly for Eastwood Park, where you have that quite significant proportion of women who are going back to Wales, it is important to make sure that that support, advice and guidance is as good as it could be. In terms of the work that we do to support distance learning co-ordinators in prisons in Wales, we also extend that to Eastwood Park, for example, because we know that so many women from Wales are held there.

Anne-Marie Rogan: In terms of women's and female gender-based approaches, in terms of ensuring that women are supported, overcoming that isolation and looking at those barriers, it needs to be targeted specifically for them. Through the gates, when we are coming back and looking at rehabilitation and coming back into the community, we need to ensure that there is some consistency of approach. We have female-based boost hubs in Wales in Newport and Cardiff. We have a female hub in Colwyn Bay. We are looking at supporting women in order to integrate back in and overcome the complexities and the challenges that sometimes come with particular lifestyles. That supported, wrap-around casework to enable people to overcome those challenges when they are coming out is really important.

Q54 **Llinos Medi:** Jassa, because Estyn obviously does not inspect in prisons



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in England, how aware are you of the situation for women prisoners? How are the training skills and the rehabilitation skills given there? Do you have any influence or any input?

Jassa Scott: In short, no. It is quite interesting. In our discussions with Ofsted, we do sometimes pick this up. When we inspect, we do not distinguish whether prisoners are from Wales or England. In terms of our inspection reports, even in somewhere where there might be a substantial number of Welsh prisoners, that would not necessarily be obvious. Their experience would not be obvious in a report. It is an interesting question as to how the Welsh Government assure themselves of the quality of provision for Welsh prisoners per se, wherever they may be. I do not know. We have not been asked to do any particular work on it.

Q55 **Llinos Medi:** Following on from the discussion we had around the Welsh language earlier on, would you say that women are affected worse than men? Obviously there is no Welsh language provision in those English prisons. If your first language is Welsh, would you say that women are finding that even more difficult to navigate around?

Jassa Scott: In theory, potentially yes, although interestingly the report that Ben referred to earlier found that for some prisoners there was actually a more positive experience in terms of respect for their first language in some of the English prisons. I do not have evidence, because we do not do that work, to say one way or another. Your assumption might be that there would be a different experience because they are having to go to England for that prison, but as we have heard earlier, it is not great in Wales either.

Anne-Marie Rogan: In terms of isolation and the Welsh language, being away from your family and away from the norm, in terms of trauma and the impact that that would have on women away from home and away from Wales, it would be significant, yes. In terms of overcoming that and the challenges, how do we do that? That is the question we have to ask ourselves.

Q56 **David Chadwick:** A recent review by the Chief Inspector of Prisons found that prisons have failed in their duty to make prisoners less likely to reoffend through the provision of purposeful activity. To what extent do you share the chief inspector's assessments?

Jon Collins: The inspectorate's report on this is a comprehensive piece of work. It looks at a range of prisons, including two, I believe, in Wales, as part of the field work. There is a significant concern about the quality of training and education provision. That report looked more broadly at training and work, as well as education.

There are obviously serious concerns about the quality, the range and the breadth of what is available. It particularly highlighted some really important issues around the breadth of what is available and curriculums that are too narrow, and around the regimes of prisons and the extent to



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which they are able to facilitate people accessing education, training and work, which we already talked about. It highlighted some issues around attendance, which we know is a real problem in prisons in England. As I mentioned earlier, we do not really know if it is a real problem in prisons in Wales, because we do not have that data, but the assumption from that piece of work is that it is a problem there as well. It highlighted some really important issues.

For me, it is important to get the balance right. There is some really good-quality, important work that is going on in prisons in Wales and in England, around education and training, which is enabling people to transform their lives. That is work that is done by third-sector organisations, by education providers and by the prison service itself. There is a lot of important work being done.

There are some teachers doing fantastic work, but it is variable. Significant improvements could certainly be made, both to the physical prison estate, the facilities that are available, access to digital devices and digital learning, but also to the breadth and quality of the provision that is available. I share a lot of the chief inspector's concerns, but I do not want that to obscure the fact there is also a lot of really good work being done, and that people are really benefiting from that.

Anne-Marie Rogan: I agree. In terms of purposeful activity and giving people access to that within the prison estate, as well as infrastructure, staff attitudes and leadership, in terms of recognising that and making that available, that comes out in the report. It is also about appropriate targeting in terms of the data, understanding the needs across neurodiversity and mental health, and being able to ensure adequately that people can access appropriate education and training, can be released from their cells and can have access to an environment where they can purposefully participate. Then, if they are moved and transferred, that can follow them as well, with that record. We have talked about that.

It is about giving people access to education, training and skills in terms of a values-driven approach, where people understand it is an assets-based approach, looking at their strengths and their ability to have control over their life. It is about being given that and being able to look towards what you do when you leave the prison estate. It is important that people recognise that it is everybody's responsibility to make that happen. That does come across in the report, and that is why we are here today.

Jassa Scott: I agree overall with the findings of that report. The picture in Wales is potentially ever so slightly more positive. Certainly, if you look at inspection outcomes in terms of prison inspections, they tend to be slightly safer overall in Wales, and there tend to be slightly better outcomes in terms of that purposeful activity. It is potentially not quite as negative, but, as I have highlighted earlier, it is still way too inconsistent.



One of the things that we have not really touched upon today is that there was definitely an impact of covid and the pandemic, which we have come through now, but education and training did just completely stop for quite a while. What we have seen is it has taken a couple of years for prisons to rebuild some of the staff expertise and the continuity of provision there.

There are some positive aspects that we should highlight as well, particularly some of the vocational environments and vocational programmes that are in place in some of the prisons in Wales. There is some really positive practice there that we have highlighted in our reporting in recent years, but there are those things that we have already talked about earlier: that actually, even where there is some really good provision, quite often it is only half-full. Attendance from even the prisoners who are due to be attending is too low. Those challenges echo what is said in that report.

Chair: Thank you very much. I am going to finish there. Thank you very much to the first panel. Thank you to Jassa Scott, Anne-Marie Rogan and Jon Collins for your patience with us today, but also for the really useful information that you have given us. Thank you so much for your time today.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Nick Millington, Scott Davies and Dawn Jevons.

Q57 **Chair:** Welcome to our second panel of the afternoon. We are still the Welsh Affairs Select Committee and I am still Ruth Jones. We are very pleased to welcome you. We are now joined by businesses operating prisoner training and recruitment schemes in Wales. Could I ask you briefly to introduce yourselves, your organisation and your role in the training of prisoners?

Nick Millington: Good afternoon. My name is Nick Millington. I am the route director for Network Rail in the Wales and Borders route. I am also a director of a not-for-profit organisation called the Rebuilding Futures Alliance. My normal job—my day job, if you like—is running the railways in Wales and Borders. I work very closely with Transport for Wales doing that.

With regard to our work with prisoners, we have an objective to return social value to the communities that we serve. Last year, that was £11 million worth of social value. We are increasing that this year. Two years ago, we were approached by the Ministry of Justice at a UK level, at network level, and we entered into a memorandum of understanding to explore what we could do in terms of providing training and meaningful employment for offenders.

My HR director—a lady called Gemma Thomas, who is also a director of the Rebuilding Futures Alliance—and I have worked closely with HMP



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Prescoed. We have tried a number of models to engage with offenders. We now have a model that works for those on temporary licence. We have worked in collaboration with organisations such as Merseyrail and Transport for Wales. They also have a model for care leavers and also for those that are on early release as well. As I stand here today, we have Alfie and Tom from Prescoed. We are looking at scaling up, and we need some help with that. Perhaps we can explore that today.

One thing that the Rebuilding Futures Alliance has learnt over the last two years is that there are a number of laudable initiatives to help, but if you look at the continuity and sustaining that, right the way through the process of selection, helping with basic things such as bank accounts, applications, interview practice, integrating with teams and then proper skills training in the workplace, it needs a sustained effort. Currently, my team, as well as running the railway, are putting in that effort. The Rebuilding Futures Alliance is our vehicle, if you like, to scale up.

Q58 Chair: I am sure we will cover areas of this in a little while, but let me go on to Scott Davies. Could you briefly introduce yourself and your organisation, and talk about how you interact with the prisoners in terms of training and education?

Scott Davies: I am Scott Davies. I am a contracts manager for a company called Rowecord Total Access. We are based in south Wales. We give scaffold access to various supply chains. We have come into this through a company called Willmott Dixon. We are going through social value with them, and then a company, Fulcrum Scaffold Safety, is going into the prison and doing the training, and then they come to Rowecord. In a brief sentence, that is where we are.

Dawn Jevons: I am Dawn Jevons. I am the community and social impact manager that covers south Wales for Galliford Try, for my business unit, which is the west midlands and south-west. The reason we have been working so much with prisons is we have a large project in Cardiff. As part of the social value on that, I wanted to make sure that we were including ex-offenders and people on ROTL. Do you want me to keep it that short, or do you want me carry on?

Chair: We will elucidate more from you during the questioning, I am sure. Thank you for that.

Q59 Llinos Medi: Dawn, what experience have you had of training and recruiting prisoners in Wales?

Dawn Jevons: We have worked with a lot of the prisons in Wales as well. The project where we are based at the moment is Guildford Crescent in Cardiff. It is a large project, but I wanted to reach out to the prisons, so we have worked with Prescoed and with Cardiff prison. We have work in Eastwood Park as well; 50% of the women there are Welsh, so we are looking at that. At the moment, we have a ROTL placement on our project.



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We have tried to run some training hubs with DWP, the Probation Service and Cardiff Council on the project in Cardiff. The idea of that is that we would get people who are ex-offenders, who we have met through going to the Probation Service and DWP, where we do jobs fairs. They would come to our site and use our space as a collective. They would bring their cohort of people with them, and then we would give them the space free of charge. We would organise for them to take part in the training that is being run by the council and the DWP, and then we would do a site visit for them, and then we would offer work experience.

We have done two of these arrangements. Unfortunately, they both fell apart. For the first one, we had a couple of issues with two of the offenders who were in there having a bit of argy-bargy. The lady from the DWP and I had to part them. Then what happened was, in terms of the funding for the health and safety that is done, which is funded by the council, there have to be at least seven people taking part. Not everybody turns up for the training, and when that number of people do not turn up, that training stops, so it fell apart there.

We tried again fairly recently. Again, we had another issue with two of the prisoners. The project that we have in Cardiff is a flagship project. We have a boardroom there. We gave them the space in the boardroom to do the training. On this occasion, two of the ex-offenders that walked in obviously knew each other from prison and started throwing chairs around. We are in the middle of a huge project with the project management team, with a site that has our CEO coming on it. I put the stop on it there, because they were running through our facilities and it was just a bit chaotic. It is not to say that we will not try it again. We will, because we realise the cohort of people that we are working with can be challenging.

The other thing that we have done is we have VR headset training, which we use for our staff and our supply chain. It won the Princess Royal award about two years ago for innovation for health and safety training. We thought it would be a great idea to take these into the prisons and to deliver this training to the prisoners. If you have a prisoner that has been in prison for quite a while, they might not realise that we are using digital technology as training, and they might not have had access to that. That has gone down really well. We did it at Eastwood Park with the women. We have done it a couple of times now.

The result of that was the women said to the prison employment lead, "We love this, but why do we not have any training around construction?" They have nail courses and things that are typically female-oriented. We are now working now with another partner. Our aim is that, yes, we want to employ people who are on ROTL and ex-offenders who need work, but we need to look holistically at it in a bigger way, because we are doing one project there. When that project finishes, we are up and we are gone. We may have employed a few people, and that is great—they will



go on hopefully to carry on working in construction—but we want to try to find more of a lasting legacy.

We are working with a company called Genpower, which is the licensee holders for JCB tools. It is based in Wales. Funnily enough, Nicola from Genpower was here a couple of days ago on one of the director forums that you have.

Chair: Can I ask for some brief responses? We do have a lot of questions to get through, and we do need to keep it tight.

Q60 **Llinos Medi:** Can I just ask for different experiences from you both? What experiences have you had in working with ex-offenders? Have you seen a change over the years that you have been doing this? What change have you seen?

Scott Davies: It is my first experience this year. I got invited to Willmott Dixon's main office in Cardiff through Jackie Uphill, who is their supply chain manager. We got introduced with a guy called Joe McNabb, who is an ex-prisoner himself. He had gone through the process, come out the better end, and now he is working for a company called Fulcrum Scaffold Safety and Training.

The process that I am involved in is that Joe would go and vet everybody. Fulcrum then go into Cardiff prison. They train guys up in scaffolding, just to be a basic labourer, with a COTS card, and then he contacts myself. I go into the prison as a visitor and watch the training for one day, have very brief interviews with six to eight prisoners who are due to be released, with a view then of Rowecord employing them when they come out, depending on logistics. It is working fantastically at the moment.

Nick Millington: From the railway side, three or four years ago we set up training facilities inside Prescoed. Obviously we can give them skills, but if you look at what you then do with those skills in terms of getting proper sponsorship into meaningful employment, there was a disconnect there, so we learnt from that. We have done work experience, where we have taken cohorts out on to a part of the railway when it is closed, a planned closure, and we have shown them what we do and how we do things to maintain and inspect the railway.

Again, that does not provide that bridge into meaningful employment, but where we have got to now is we provide a managed service right the way through to meaningful employment. The training comes on the journey with the individual. They get put with a team. If you look at the proportions of people from Prescoed to the team numbers, it is really important that we carefully integrate them into those teams. We have been successful with that.

I spoke with Ian this morning, who is my delivery unit manager in north Wales. He has recently had a conversation with Tom. We cannot give Tom a job at this time because he is released on temporary licence; we



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are not allowed to employ people on temporary licence. We are going to overcome that. We have kept vacancies open and ready, but Tom's words to us were that he has reoffended already. He has a family. We have been pretty straightforward in our conversations with Tom to say, "What do you do now? What is your choice? What do you want to do?"

He does not want to go and deal drugs anymore, or whatever it is that he was doing. He wants to see his family. We have given him that bridge now out of that reoffending cycle into meaningful paid employment, and structured employment with discipline. That is our experience. That is a model we are going to scale up.

Q61 David Chadwick: How did you become a member of the New Futures Network? Are there any ways in which the Government could improve that process and make it easier for businesses to train and recruit prisoners?

Nick Millington: Do you mean the Rebuilding Futures Alliance?

David Chadwick: I mean the New Futures Network.

Nick Millington: I am not involved with the New Futures Network. The Rebuilding Futures Alliance sounds like it is a similar thing. It is a number of transport executives. We are not paid to do it; it is something that we believe is morally the right thing to do. We have influence. We have a belief. We have the network in order to get this off the ground. That is how we have been involved with it so far, but we are now at a tipping point now. Merseyrail, Transport for Wales, other people in the transport sector and I have the opportunity to employ, but we now need to scale up. Perhaps that is a different question, but that is how I have been involved.

Scott Davies: It is pretty similar to what Nick has said. I am not involved in the New Futures Network. I was invited by Willmott Dixon. I am part of the source of value, because Jackie Uphill is an ambassador of something—I do not know what it is; I will be honest with you. She has asked for help from a supply chain. I echo what Nick has just said.

Dawn Jevons: We came to New Futures Network via the regional employment leads from the midlands and from Wales. Lynsey Morris, who wears many hats, is with the MOJ and with the New Futures Network.

Q62 David Chadwick: Do you have a view on how to make it easier for businesses to train and recruit prisoners?

Dawn Jevons: The honest answer is that it is a numbers game. We have had lots of people come through our business on the projects. Some of them will come back and some of them will not. Some of them are great and some of them are not. The issue is that we are working with people here where a good proportion of them have gone all the way through school, into adulthood, without reading and writing, and have done other



things in their lives to end up in prison. It is not an easy fix, but we have to keep trying to engage with people and give people a second chance and the opportunity to retrain and find out about construction, in particular, as an industry.

Q63 Andrew Ranger: Thank you all for coming in today. This is one for all of you. Why did your organisation decide to work with prisoners and ex-offenders in the first place? What would you say to businesses in Wales that are considering working with prisoners or ex-offenders?

Dawn Jevons: Part of our role as a construction company, depending on whether we are on an MOJ framework or any framework, or are working with councils, is that they are quite often the lead in terms of who they want us to work with. It is also the right thing to do. It does not matter where it comes from; it just needs to be done.

We are a tier 1 construction company like Willmott Dixon, so we rely really heavily not only on our own team but on our supply chain to engage with us. We put targets into packages for contracts, saying, "We want you to commit." That could be for all sorts of different things. On the whole, most people are willing to engage. Some people are a bit nervous about it. We do have issues where it does not always work, but it is the right thing to do.

We also work with all of the other agencies that we can find. In Wales, for instance, we are working with Careers Wales and Working Wales. We pick people up in the most bizarre places. They come to recruitment fairs and all sorts, but I have had them contact me. We recently had a young woman in Wales on our project. She wanted to get her life back in order. She came to work, via the recruitment consultants, as a cleaner for us. It was going swimmingly for a couple of weeks, and then the ex-partner turned up. Drugs and alcohol came back in, and then it all fell apart again. It is hit and miss. It is a numbers game, and we have to keep trying.

Q64 Andrew Ranger: You would recommend to other businesses to give it a go.

Dawn Jevons: Yes, absolutely. We have met some amazing people. The man that we have in Cardiff at the moment is released on temporary licence. Once he is finished, the supply chain that he is with will be keeping him on, because he is excellent.

Scott Davies: From a personal point of view, it is a big difference. Fulcrum Training is going into the prisons and training up prisoners who are due to be released. When they get released from prison, that allows them to go straight into full-time employment, whereas usually, if they come out not trained, it may take them four to six weeks. Within that four to six weeks, they could reoffend; you don't know.

I have one guy working with me at the moment now. We took him on about six months ago. I do not think he has missed a day. He turns up.



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He is very eager. Like you said just now, it is hit and miss. You could have a very good one released from prison; you could have a bad one. From our point of view, it is about how eager they are when they want to come out and work.

Nick Millington: Our involvement started with the Ministry of Justice approaching us. If you look at the moral reason for it, if you look at the chance of reoffending, if we can provide meaningful employment, the likelihood of reoffending decreases considerably. In the transport sector in the UK, we are looking for 130,000 people in the next five years. That is over and above the strategic workforce planning. We have meaningful employment. One of my worries running the railway in Wales, which I have mentioned quite a few times, is, "Where am I going to get the people to run it after I have finished?" We therefore have to work harder, because it is not naturally easy. Therefore, we have a compelling need.

From our side of things as well, it has been a really interesting exercise, because our people in our teams have learned an awful lot about those hidden barriers for people that have offended, and what creates that downward cycle or repeat cycle. It has been quite a meaningful exercise for our teams as well. There is a learning exercise both ways. We will be writing very similar things into our supply chain contracts.

Through Wales alone, we put £250 million worth of capital expenditure into the railway just on renewal work, never mind the enhancement work and other work. Transport for Wales does similarly. Also, if you look at train operators, Great Western Railway, Avanti and the other operators, the Rebuilding Futures Alliance brings that transport sector together. My advice would be to get involved but to do it with your eyes open. There will be problems, but so far our experience has been enlightening. It has been positive. We have got some very hard workers out of it, which is really useful because there is a lot of work to do on the railway. We are not naïve; we know that there is going to be a bump in the road, as it were, but my advice would be to get involved.

Q65 Llinos Medi: You might have touched on this already, but what are the main challenges you encountered when delivering the prisoner training schemes? What do you think are the challenges that ex-prisoners face going into the workforce? What could the Government and prison leaders do to overcome those challenges? I will start with Nick, because of the experiences that he has had.

Nick Millington: In our early engagement, there was almost false hope. We gave false hope. You turn up as a big corporate entity and you do some training or you do something, and there is an impression that they have a job. They do not have a job, but they think that they will get a job. We have learnt from that. What we have been able to do is iterate and fine-tune. Could you repeat the question, sorry?

Q66 Llinos Medi: What are the challenges you face? What are the challenges that the ex-prisoners face? What can Government and prison leaders do



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to overcome them?

Nick Millington: What we have done is we have joined that process up. If you look at that selection process, if you look at working with the charities and the community support enterprises, there may be a question on Welsh language, but we have support enterprises in Wales that can help with that as well for applications. It is just simple things like setting up a bank account, which I know sounds simple, but if it is not done, it is not done; we cannot pay people. We now have a method to overcome those factors.

In terms of meaningful employment that is sustained, engaging our people with the recruitment and selection process and preparing the workplace for arrival, what to expect, how to act and do not be different, we have done a lot of work with that. That has really helped us integrate into the workplace effectively. That is my lived experience of it.

Scott Davies: It has been quite an easy process for me, to be honest, because Jackie Uphill from Willmott Dixon and Joe from Fulcrum have dealt with everything behind the scenes, so when they come to us they are ready and they are prepared. The only thing that I find hard is that nine times out of 10 they come out of prison without a driving licence, so it is just getting to and from work. We are all over Wales. We are down in Plymouth. We are up in Chester at the moment. Buses and trains can only do so much to get you to work, so the driving is probably holding a lot of prisoners back when they get released.

Dawn Jevons: Similar to my colleagues here, one of the things that can be an issue is the accommodation. If they do not know where they are going, or if they are released with short notice, then without accommodation some of that is really difficult. One of the other things that is really simple to fix is that a lot of prisons do CSCS card training. You need a CSCS card to work on a construction site. For a tier 1 and tier 2, it has to be CITB training, but a lot of prisons are delivering something called GQA. That is not the same card. The reason they are doing it is because it is probably £10 cheaper; instead of £32 or whatever, it is probably £22.

I had an example today. We did some stuff at HMP Birmingham yesterday with the VR headsets. They were doing the CSCS card training today. The PEL there contacted me and said, "We are doing CITB. Is that okay?" I said, "Yes. Don't do the other one, because otherwise those guys cannot work with the big companies". Even the supply chain that work with us needs that card. That is costing the taxpayer twice as much. He has one guy that has done it somewhere else in another prison, but it is the wrong one, so he is putting him on this course. It is simple things such as that.

Q67 **Llinos Medi:** Can I come back on what you have mentioned? You mentioned the bank account, the driver's licence, accommodation and training. Do you have a direct contact so that you can influence on those



changes, to make sure that that training model has the right outcome, that you have the accommodation, that there are skills around the bank accounts and the driver's licence, and that there is a package in place to offer support? Can you influence in any way? Do you have that? Nick, you have been doing this longer.

Nick Millington: I mentioned the Rebuilding Futures Alliance, which is the bridge across the top, and then working with the community support organisations and the charities. If you look at some of those basic things, they are done. We work with Prescoed, but we have meetings with Cardiff and Berwyn as well to make sure that, for those candidates who are likely to come into the transport sector, those basic things are done. It is just simple things like, "Where are you going to live? How are you going to get to work?"

I know it sounds basic, but it is an important thing to have a plan for, otherwise there is a significant chance that the relationships break down. We have worked with the VCSEs to do that. The other transport organisations will replicate that, so they know that they are going to get an assured candidate that has had all those basic needs dealt with. With regard to the railways and the Sentinel scheme, which is the skills scheme to bring them into the railway industry, we can look after that. We can deal with that training once they have arrived.

Scott Davies: I will be honest with you: I have been quite lucky in this, because when the guys have come to me, Willmott Dixon has put them through to Fulcrum; Fulcrum has gone into Cardiff prison. They have done a five-day scaffolding course. Within those five days, which we touched upon just now, they do the CSCS card, so when they come out they are fully prepared to start full-time employment.

Dawn Jevons: We have had similar experiences. By working with all the other agencies that support them, either within the prisons or when you get out, that makes sure that the people that you are finding are coming almost fully formed, most of the time.

Q68 **Chair:** One final question from me. You have highlighted some very practical obstacles to people being able to come out, go straight into employment and stay in employment. If you had a magic wand, what is the one thing you would ask of the prisoners coming out of prison in terms of their skills and abilities? What would you say is the major thing that would help them to stay and work with you?

Scott Davies: They just need to be communicated with. If I am going to take an ex-prisoner on, I cannot just take him on, put him on the site and leave him to get on, on his own accord, with other scaffolders. Obviously, from a senior management point of view, I will visit him once or twice a week, make sure everything is okay, see if he is enjoying it and see if there is anything else I can do differently, because it is not just a one-way thing; it is a two-way thing. Other than that, you just need to



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keep an eye on them and make sure they are doing okay. That is about it for me.

Dawn Jevons: I would like to see more vocational things done in prison. As I alluded to earlier, we are trying to do something with the women now, where Genpower will provide some tools and the women will be taught how to use the tools. We would like to try to set up a workshop in the prison where they can actually do meaningful work. For instance, at HMP Exeter they make brooms. That is giving people occupation while they are in prison, but is it really setting them up for a future?

We will hopefully have some work in Prescoed going forward. It might have the space there, according to the New Futures Network and Lindsay, who we have been working with. We are looking to try to see if we can find some of our supply chain partners that would actually set up something within the prison that is manufacturing, then bring in Genpower, supply them with the tools and give them the training; they do the CSCS card. One of our employees can do accreditation work around training that would support the CSCS card. It is a bigger piece of work, so that when people leave, they have something that they are trained to do and will turn into a meaningful job.

Nick Millington: At the moment, if you look at ourselves in Network Rail or Transport for Wales, we have fixed funding arrangements. At the moment, we are employing on what skills and what work people from Prescoed, and so on, want to do. For instance, for Neil at Merseyrail, one of the candidates had a particular previous experience in communications. Neil has put them in the communications team as an extra over, and they are flying. It is about finding something, first, that they are comfortable with and, secondly, that they think they can do well at.

There is a bit of a dilemma about how much over your establishment can you go. At the moment, we are in the foothills, and therefore we are able to do that. There will be an appetite somewhere about where that balance is struck, about where we provide and what skills we need, versus what careers ex-offenders want. There is a balance there. We can take a view about what the right balance is.

I would say to offenders coming into the organisation that patience is important. We have also had real value out of that ongoing caseworker support. Plonking someone into an organisation and then saying goodbye means that the likelihood is there is going to be a problem, whereas if you get a minor problem and the caseworker can then help, our people, the VCSEs, then sort the problem out and you just carry on again. It is about managing those small issues so that they do not become big ones after they have come into the workplace. I would say to be patient.

Chair: Thank you very much. I just want to thank the three of you for coming in this afternoon. It has been really useful to have your lived experience of working at the ground level. The emphasis on the social



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value that you have placed is really helpful. I just want to say thank you to Nick Millington, Scott Davies and Dawn Jevons. Thank you very much. I will now bring this session to a close.