



House of Commons  
Education Committee

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**Not just another  
brick in the wall: why  
prisoners need an  
education to climb the  
ladder of opportunity:  
Government response  
to the Committee's First  
Report**

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**Second Special Report of  
Session 2022–23**

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
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## The Education Committee

The Education Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Education and its associated public bodies.

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The current staff of the Committee are Vanessa Donhowe (Committee Specialist), Dr Mike Everett (Clerk), Robert McQuade (Committee Operations Manager), Mariam Keating (Second Clerk), Charlotte McDonough (Committee Specialist), Rebecca Owen-Evans (Committee Specialist), Emily Pritchard (Senior Media Officer), Reshma Rajendralal (Assistant Inquiry Manager (Apprentice)), Steiner Teixido-Oroza (Committee Operations Officer).

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## Second Special Report

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The Education Committee published its First Report of Session 2022–23, [\*Not just another brick in the wall: why prisoners need an education to climb the ladder of opportunity\*](#) (HC 56) on 18 May 2022. The Government’s response was received on 20 July 2022 and is appended below.

## Appendix: Government Response

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### Government Response to the Education Select Committee report on Prison Education

**Recommendation 1:** *The job description and key performance measures used when assessing Governors must be amended to require Governors to ensure that providing adequate prison education and a culture of learning is part of their core responsibilities, and something on which they must be held to account for as part of their performance.* (Paragraph 21)

Responsible organisations: Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and HMPPS (Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service)

We accept this recommendation and are already strengthening the performance measures for governors as set out in the Prisons Strategy White Paper. New Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for education have been agreed, including progress in English and maths, attendance at education and numbers of prisoners attaining vocational qualifications.

To ensure governors are well equipped to deliver a high standard of education in prisons, we are reviewing current job descriptions, training, and assessment requirements to ensure they appropriately reflect this area of work.

More detailed performance data (covering attendance, levels of prisoner attainment and quality of teaching) is also used to hold providers and establishments to account. Data is shared with HMP (Her Majesty’s Prisons) Data Working Group to help identify establishments who are facing challenges and performance concerns are picked up by Prison Group Directors (PGDs) as part of regular performance conversations with governors.

**Recommendation 2:** *Prison officers should also receive training to ensure that they understand the importance of education in supporting prisoners to find employment and reducing reoffending, so they develop a positive attitude towards the role that education has to play in prisons.* (Paragraph 21)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation. As committed in the Prisons Strategy White Paper, we will comprehensively enhance the professional skills offered to our staff. As part of this, together with our education reform programme, we plan to introduce a range of staff training. We are working to ensure the new prison officer apprenticeship programme

contains relevant content on the importance of education, skills and work for prisoner rehabilitation within the training package. We are also exploring other opportunities to provide prison officers with CPD related to education, skills, and work.

**Recommendation 3: *There must also be a clear signal in each prison that education is an operational priority. We recommend that each prison has a Deputy Governor of Learning who is part of the Senior Management team, who is directly responsible for education audits and the educational outcomes of prisoners. The job description for this role must include qualifications and/or experience in prison education.*** (Paragraph 22)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation and are in the process of recruiting for the new senior role of Head of Education, Skills and Work who will have responsibility for overseeing prison and provider delivery of education, skills, and work. We are initially recruiting to 17 sites by December 2022, with roll out across the estate expected to be completed by January 2024.

These roles are a governor grade (Heads of Function rather than Deputy Governor) and will sit on the senior management team (SMT). The role requires a teaching qualification or demonstrable relevant experience.

**Recommendation 4: *Many prisoners have a negative view of education. Incentives therefore have a part to play in encouraging prisoners to engage, or re-engage, with education. We recommend that the Ministry of Justice ensures that pay for education is equal to the pay for prison work, to ensure that prisoners do not lose out by choosing education. In order to qualify for the equal pay, prisoners must be able to demonstrate progress within their studies.*** (Paragraph 28)

Responsible organisation: MoJ/HMPPS

We reject this recommendation. We accept the principle that governors should set pay rates that encourage engagement with education and expect that new KPIs for prison education will encourage governors to review pay rates. However, as set out in Prison Service Order 4460 (Prisoners' Pay), governors already have the necessary freedom to set local pay rates to reflect their prisoner population needs, type of prison and regime priorities, and the jobs / educational / vocational training that are available. We do not propose to set additional rules on pay which governors must follow.

**Recommendation 5: *We also recommend that the Government examines the potential of using Release on Temporary License (ROTL) as an incentive to encourage prisoners to engage with education. In order to qualify for the equal pay, prisoners must be able to demonstrate progress within their studies. We also recommend that the Government examines the potential of using Release on Temporary License (ROTL) as an incentive to encourage prisoners to engage with education.*** (Paragraph 28)

Responsible organisations: MoJ / HMPPS

We accept this recommendation in principle and intend to consult practitioners on the implications of any change to the current approach.

When prisoners become eligible for ROTL, governors must explain to them the sorts of behaviours expected of them to gain and maintain access to ROTL. Engagement with the regime, including education, is considered as part of this and we will consider how we can develop a culture of learning in prisons and demonstrate to prisoners that good engagement in education, particularly that which will support employment on release, will support applications for ROTL.

Increasing the weighting of this factor, and directly linking educational attendance or achievement to temporary release as a reward, however, could be counterproductive. The essential criteria are whether the temporary release applied for will further the prisoner's rehabilitation, and whether they can be safely released. As is demonstrated by our strengthened performance management metrics on prisoner attendance at education, we are keen to ensure that governors can take decisions as to how best to incentivise their prison population to engage with education and training.

***Recommendation 6: A high proportion of prisoners have learning needs. It is concerning that prisons have only had to screen for additional learning needs since 2019. This means that the majority of the prison population may never have gone through a screening process. It is clear that there is a lack of data around the numbers of prisoners with special needs and that the true scale of the issue is not known. Government figures currently rely heavily on prisoners self-identifying, and many may be unaware of their learning difficulties or too embarrassed to ask for support. The Ministry of Justice must re-design CURIOUS to better capture complete data on the levels of prisoners with learning difficulties across the prison estate. It must allow more than one condition to be clearly identified and recorded in the system, and its use must be extended to private prisons. This will enable the Government to properly identify and target funding and support to those that need it most across the prison estate. Assessment and resources for people with ESOL needs should also be considered.*** (Paragraph 42)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation. We are expanding the use of CURIOUS and developing our approach to capturing data around a full range of learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) and additional learning needs across the prison estate, including in private prisons. The system will capture assessment of those prisoners that are identified as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners or those that are bi-lingual. This will enable greater understanding of the level of need amongst our population, and better monitoring and evaluation of outcomes for these groups.

***Recommendation 7: The current screening process is not adequate to identify prisoners with additional learning needs. The Ministry of Justice must introduce a consistent assessment process for every prisoner when they enter the prison system. We believe there is a strong case for every prisoner to receive an assessment for learning needs from an educational psychologist, or at the very least a more intensive form of screening, and we recommend that the Ministry of Justice prepares a cost appraisal for implementing such an approach.*** (Paragraph 43)

Responsible organisations MoJ/HMPPS

We accept this recommendation. Systems to screen for learning needs are in place, but we are reviewing and exploring improvements. A review of LDD assessment and screening

tools has been commissioned by HMPPS and we are examining the findings and reviewing actions needed. We have begun engagement with the market about assessment and screening, and feedback will be used to design the future service and set the standard of LDD assessment we expect.

**Recommendation 8:** *There must be greater integrated working between different providers in custody—between education, health and offender management. The Government must amend legislation to enable data on prisoners to be shared so that prisons can access prisoners’ previous records of educational attainment from the National Pupil Database, and also to enable previous diagnosis on learning needs to be shared.* (Paragraph 44)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS / Department for Education (DfE)

We accept this recommendation in the context of sharing information across HMPPS. New or amended legislation is not necessary to allow data from the DfE national pupil database to be shared with prisons.

We have committed in our Prisons Strategy White Paper to invest in the digital and data platform needed to develop personal learning plans for prisoners, which will record clear career goals and the progress we expect prisoners to make towards them throughout their sentences—focusing on numeracy, literacy and qualifications that will improve their job prospects.

Digital personal learning plans, which have been launched in four pilot sites, will create a data-informed path through education and employment services in prisons to make sure prisoners are making the best use of their time in custody. These will include details of a prisoner’s goals (personal, employment, education); activity history (education and work within prison); attendance at classes; assessments; additional learning needs; and course history. As of May 2022, the plans now contain information on additional learning needs.

Further roll out of digital learning plans is planned to align with recruitment of support managers for prisoners with additional learning needs.

New, or amended, legislation is not necessary to allow data from the DfE national pupil database to be shared with prisons. Prisons are already able to access an individual’s personal learning record (PLR) via the Learning Records Service (LRS). A PLR is an online record of qualifications and achievements for learners aged 14 and above and includes information from the national pupil database, individualised learner record and awarding organisations. The learning providers able to access the LRS include offender learning providers (or prisons).

In addition, existing legislation governing the sharing of data from the national pupil database (namely the Education (Individual Pupil Information) (Prescribed Persons) (England) Regulations) includes regulation 3(6)(e) permits the sharing of data with learning providers registered with the UK Register of Learning Providers. This includes HMPPS, who are registered with the UK Register of Learning Providers, as a prescribed person with which DfE are permitted to share national pupil database data.

Further data sharing powers are also available to DfE and MoJ via the 2017 Digital Economy Act with part 5 chapter 1, permitting the sharing of data between specified persons to improve public service delivery. Both DfE and MoJ are specified persons covered by this legislation as are persons providing services to those authorities.

In light of the above, legislation should not be considered a blocker to prisons accessing previous educational records for prisoners as this is already permitted and mechanisms, such as the Learning Records Service, are available to provide that access to prisons.

In addition, there are proposals within the SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper, published 29 March, considering the standardisation and digitisation of EHCP (Education Health Care Plan) processes. These proposals are currently open for public consultation, which is due to close on 22 July. We will consider these recommendations further once we have analysed and taken account of the consultation feedback.

**Recommendation 9: *The Government must, in its response to this Report, provide greater clarity on the funding available to fund specialist support staff, how many will be appointed, where they will be distributed across the prison estate, with a minimum of one SENCO per prison, and the timescale for their introduction across the prison estate.*** (Paragraph 45)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation in principle. We are currently recruiting new support managers for prisoners with additional learning needs such as learning disabilities and conditions such as autism, acquired brain injury or ADHD funded from the £550m allocated for reducing reoffending in the recent spending review. These managers will be responsible for promoting a ‘whole prison approach’ to supporting prisoners with additional learning needs, enabling increased support for prisoners who do not attend formal education as well as those that do.

We are working towards recruiting 61 in the first year of the rollout and a further 61 in the second year, resulting in one support manager in every prison by 2024. These roles are not identical to SENCOs, who specifically focus on education needs. SENCO provision is currently supplied by our contracted education providers. The need to ensure good provision for prisoners with additional learning needs is an important part of our planning for future prison education contracts.

**Recommendation 10: *The Ministry of Justice must re-establish a National Careers Service across the prison estate in order to provide advice and support to prisoners in identifying education and employment opportunities.*** (Paragraph 52)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation in principle. We recognise the importance of good careers advice working to consistent national expectations in preparing prisoners for sustainable employment on release. Careers advice is currently commissioned through the Prison Education Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), commissioned rehabilitative services, and Department for Work and Pensions work coaches providing advice inside prisons. We are currently engaging with the market to explore the best long-term arrangements for our future Careers Information, Advice and Guidance Service, and will use feedback from



the market to design our approach, which may not take the precise form of the National Careers Service, but will seek to provide information, advice and guidance in line with best practice.

**Recommendations 11 and 12: Prisoners are often transferred with short notice across the prison estate. The loss or delay in the transfer of their educational records can have serious repercussions on their ability to continue their studies, and can in some cases cause prisoners to become disheartened and to give up on their learning. It is unacceptable that the effort made by prisoners in improving themselves can be so easily discarded.** (Paragraph 58).

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

Responsible organisation: MoJ/HMPPS

We accept both recommendations. We are developing Personal Learning Plans in line with these recommendations. The new digital system we are designing will record initial assessments and record a learning plan to be followed throughout the sentence. This will also record progress and act as a formal record of learning which can be shared with employers.

We will also introduce resettlement passports, which will be set up prior to release and will bring together the key information and services that an individual needs to resettle into society, such as bank accounts, CVs, and ID to prove right to work and rent.

Education, Skills, and Work (ESW) information currently forms part of Offender Assessment System (OASys) sentence plans. We will ensure this data is consistent with the information included in personal learning plans.

**Recommendation 13: The quality of prison education is of huge concern and has been deemed "inadequate". The vision of Governor autonomy, as set out by the Coates Review, has not been realised by the new contracts and we are disappointed that the new contractual arrangements resulted in the same four educational providers being appointed. The new contracts were meant to encourage partnership between prisons, prison educators, the further education sector and the voluntary sector, but in practice bureaucratic contracts undermine this vision and make educational provision transactional, rather than rooted in the needs of the individual and the local area. The Government must ensure that there is a greater emphasis on working with the Further Education sector.** (paragraph 70)

Responsible organisations: MoJ/HMPPS/DfE

We accept this recommendation. The government has taken significant steps in giving governors autonomy in this and other areas: since the budget for prison education was moved to MoJ from DfE, governors are now responsible for setting the curriculum, and, through the introduction of the Dynamic Purchasing System, they can purchase bespoke local provision and have local plans in place with providers: the DPS has shown success at creating diverse contracts at local level.

We recognise the challenge of getting commercial arrangements right so that we can hold providers to account while at the same time allowing them the flexibility to shape provision which best meets the needs of learners. We are keen to go further as part of our reforms, and are introducing Heads of Education, Skills and Work to support Governors to deliver improvements in education with their providers. We are also engaging with the DfE FE Commissioner, and through ongoing market engagement, participation is being encouraged from a wide range of providers across the learning and skills sector, including FE.

**Recommendation 14:** *We have concerns about whether the Prison Education Framework contracts are able to deliver the improvement in prison education that is desperately needed. The Government must carry out a wholesale review of the current prison education framework by the end of 2022, with a view to improving the current contract structure, before the contracts are considered for extension in 2023. The review should examine how the contracts could be improved to encourage partnership working, how to ensure that Governors have the autonomy to choose their education providers and to work with the further education sector, and how to develop a focus on engaging with local employers, including SMEs.* (Paragraph 71)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation in principle. We accept the need for a review of the prison education framework, but it would not be feasible to complete this within the timescales provided.

We are reviewing the contract management system and structure for the Prison Education Framework to ensure consistent support, advice and challenge is being provided to governors and education providers. We have also started discussions with current providers and those on the Framework about the terms of any extension.

As part of the first phase of market engagement on future education contracts we held webinars with stakeholders late April/early May 2022, with over 1000 registrations to the overall programme of events. This stage of market engagement is due to be completed by July 2022. Governors currently have a reasonable amount of autonomy in how they shape provision, and they can already commission bespoke provision to meet identified prisoners needs through our dynamic purchasing system (DPS). We will ensure governors are central to the decision making in any new system. Collaboration with education providers and the New Futures Network (NFN) regarding employment will be a key part of our strategy.

Governors currently have considerable autonomy in how they shape the curriculum, and they can already commission bespoke local provision to meet identified prisoners needs through our dynamic purchasing system (DPS).

We are also planning for the future and will ensure governors are central to the decision making in any new system. Collaboration with education providers and the New Futures Network (NFN) regarding employment will be a key part of our strategy. As part of the first phase of market engagement on future education contracts we held webinars with stakeholders late April/early May 2022, with over 1000 registrations to the overall programme of events. This stage of market engagement is on track to be completed in July 2022.

**Recommendation 15:** *We also recommend that all prison Governors are given the appropriate training by the Ministry of Justice to acquire the skills to manage the contracts with their education providers more effectively.* (Paragraph 72)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation in principle. We want governors to be more involved in performance discussions with education providers and our current approach is to ensure they have the support of specialist trained and accredited staff to manage the prison education contracts and provide advice and guidance.

In addition to support from trained contract managers, new Head of Education, Skills and Work posts are being trialled in up to 17 prisons. These will play a key role in supporting governors by leading and setting strategic direction for education within prisons, while holding providers to account. Candidates will be required to have significant middle or senior leadership experience within an education setting, as well as substantial teaching and curriculum development experience. Training will be provided to all of these post-holders on the structure of prison education from a contract management perspective (PEF/PES/DPS), alongside training on working with the commercial sector.

The current contract management structure is being reviewed to ensure consistent coverage across the estate.

**Recommendation 16:** *The Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) was meant to allow Governors to contract bespoke training, including with voluntary organisations, for their prisons. However, the current length of contracts is making it difficult for smaller organisations to bid. The length of DPS contracts should be extended beyond the current two years.* (Paragraph 76)

Responsible organisation: MoJ/HMPPS

We reject this recommendation. The maximum length of DPS contracts was reviewed in 2019, and it was determined at that point that any extension beyond two years was, on balance, inappropriate as it would limit Governor flexibility. The aim behind the DPS was to widen education provision and enable more bespoke short-term projects to be funded (for example enabling a governor to commission a specific course to meet employer need). Increasing the length of contracts beyond two years would undermine this aim.

We are carrying out market engagement to inform the design of future education contracts and are using lessons learned from our Prison Education Framework (PEF) and DPS to inform our future design work.

**Recommendation 17:** *It is key that civil society is allowed to engage with prisons. To ensure that prisons fulfil this aim, a criteria must be added to the evaluation framework of Ofsted inspections to ensure that they examine how prisons engage with civil society.* (Paragraph 77)

Responsible organisation: Ofsted

We reject this recommendation. We agree with the principle that Ofsted should make a specific comment about the education provider in inspection reports. However, the overall responsibility for the quality and effectiveness of education, skills and work activity sits

with the governor. To grade individual providers would dilute the level of accountability provided by inspection. This approach is the same as that applied in community education settings, where Ofsted inspects the main provider and comments on outsourced provision.

Ofsted's inspection framework in prisons is the same as that used in other further education and skills settings, contextualised for a secure setting. Inspections already include an assessment of how well the curriculum promotes personal development that includes engagement with civil society. We therefore do not believe that any amendments to the inspection framework are required.

**Recommendation 18: *We recommend that prisons have clear and meaningful KPIs related to education, training and employment which are monitored by Ofsted. The Ministry of Justice must also reform the inspection regime so that Ofsted is able to give a grade for the education provider within the prison.*** (Paragraph 83)

Responsible organisation: MOJ/HMPPS/Ofsted

We accept this recommendation in principle. We accept the need for meaningful KPIs to be in place to measure education and training and HMPPS have recently introduced new KPIs for prison education provision including for progress in English and maths, for attendance at education activities, and for the number of prisoners attaining vocational qualifications.

Ofsted will have access to this data as well as a full range of additional detailed information on assessment, participation, and achievement rates that are already used as part of the evidence base to inform its inspections and judgements.

**Recommendation 19: *We recommend that Ofsted is given the legal tools to allow it to take regulatory action against individual prisons, including, where necessary, changes to the prison leadership.*** (Paragraph 83)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS/Ofsted

We reject this recommendation. We agree that education provision and education inspection findings should be taken seriously and have an increased focus within the prison regime. We fully agree that Ofsted inspections should have impact and that prisons should demonstrate how they are responding to concerns raised at inspection. Education is an important function but not the sole function of prisons, and a prison's overall performance needs to be considered in the round. Accordingly, Ofsted inspects in prisons as part of wider inspections by HMIP.

We also believe that it is for the prison service and other agencies to take appropriate action to improve provision, based on inspection findings. This parallels the model for other education settings where Ofsted is the inspectorate, not the regulator. Where serious concerns about a prison are established, HMIP, as the lead inspectorate, can send an Urgent Notification letter to the Secretary of State so that appropriate action can be taken.

**Recommendation 20: *When considering moving prisoners, the position of where they are in a course or qualification should be considered. The ability of whether they would be able to continue their qualification where they are moved to, should also be a factor.*** (Paragraph 89)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation. To ensure we have a system in place that allows for flexible and portable learning, a prisoner's education journey is already taken into account when considering potential transfers. Of course, where public protection or safety issues result in a move, such as to a higher security setting, we will need to ensure that this is given priority.

The introduction of KPIs for governors will ensure they are incentivised to ensure more prisoners make progress and achieve qualifications.

Subject to negotiation, new contract service levels aim to incentivise providers and prisons to collaborate on learner allocation to courses. Establishments will be supported to use CURIOUS to ensure prior attainment is considered.

There has been standardisation across the estate, which means that all providers are working towards the same qualifications using the same awarding bodies, to enable ease of transfer between courses if an individual is moved to a new prison.

**Recommendation 21: *The Government must set out, by the end of the year, a date for when all prisons will be able to support broadband.*** (Paragraph 103)

Responsible organisation: MoJ/HMPPS

We reject this recommendation. In the Prisons Strategy White Paper, we set out the ambition for the next decade and beyond to meet our aims on skills and employment by making the estate digitally enabled for prisoners.

We are working to ensure prisons have the digital infrastructure they need to provide prisoners with a strategic, managed in-cell laptop service which features transactional services (such as prison shopping) and curated content, such as access to the Virtual Campus online learning platform.

We have started to deliver this, and services will be in place in 15 prisons by the end of October 2022 (including Young Offender Institutions and two Women's Prisons). However, rolling this equipment out across the whole prison service is subject to continued and long-term resourcing so at present we cannot set a timetable for deployment across the whole estate.

**Recommendation 22: *The Ministry of Justice must ensure that prisoners are taught the digital skills necessary to live in a digital age and those necessary for employment and life skills. If security can be assured and access can be monitored and tightly restricted to educational purposes, we recommend that the Ministry of Justice provide in-cell laptops, such as Chromebooks, to prisoners only when undertaking education.*** (Paragraph 104)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation. We teach basic digital skills in all prisons, and 60 laptops have been introduced in accelerator prisons for accessing digital content in-cell.

An additional million-pound investment has been made towards introducing laptops across the prison estate. 41 establishments are now using Chromebooks to deliver remote

learning. In addition, we are working to provide prisoners with a managed in-cell laptop service which features transactional services (such as prison shopping) and curated content, such as access to the Virtual Campus online learning platform, which will be in place in 15 prisons by the end of September 2022. Rolling this equipment out across the whole prison service is subject to continued resourcing.

**Recommendation 23: *The Ministry of Justice must undertake an audit across the whole prison estate on the quality of physical infrastructure necessary to provide a high level of education, such as libraries, classrooms and workshops. The Ministry of Justice must establish clear guidelines about the minimum standards of provision for education across the prison estate.*** (Paragraph 107)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation in principle. A programme of survey work is currently underway to assess the condition of the fabric and critical assets of prison buildings, including education and workshop facilities, within the next 12 to 18 months.

**Recommendation 24: *The Ministry of Justice must, by the end of this year, set out a clear budget for prisons for the next 10 years, which sets out a long-term strategy for prison education, and a minimum expected spend on prison education.*** (Paragraph 108)

Responsible organisation: MOJ/HMPPS

We reject this recommendation. The Prisons Strategy White Paper sets out our 10-year vision to deliver a transformed Prisoner Education Service with a focus on giving prisoners the skills and opportunities to secure a job on release. With the investment agreed at the Spending Review, we are injecting £550m over the next three years to support prison leavers' transition back into society and reduce reoffending. This includes additional budget to support investment in a digital and data platform needed to develop personal learning plans for prisoners; better support for literacy and numeracy and building stronger links with employers. We have already started this work through the recruitment of new Education, Works and Skills Specialists and Support Managers for prisoners with conditions such as learning disabilities, autism, acquired brain injury or ADHD. However, budgets for future years are subject to future Spending Review negotiations so we are unable to set out a 10-year budget.

**Recommendation 25: *Whilst aiming to meet the basic needs of prisoners with numeracy, literacy and IT, the Ministry of Justice must introduce a broader prison education curriculum which supports prisoners' sentence and learning plans. The provision should also enable prisoners to embed these basic skills in more practical learning experiences. Where practical, prisoners should also be offered the chance to study wider subjects, including arts, and gain employability skills which will be crucial for them as they progress into society and the world of work.*** (Paragraph 115)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation. We are developing annual curriculum guidance to support governors in identifying the best curriculum for their prison population.

The next iteration of the curriculum guidance, due to be published in Autumn, will focus on guiding prison course choices via both their PEF provider and the DPS to get the most

out of education provision. Education DPS further supports the delivery of wider subjects such as arts programmes and enables governors to broaden their curriculum offer beyond what is offered via their PEF provider.

As part of our recent market engagement activity, we have been engaging with a range of prospective providers, with a view to broadening and diversifying the future curriculum offer.

**Recommendation 26:** *We also recommend that the Ministry of Justice introduce modular courses in prisons for education and skills qualifications. This would allow prisoners to “bank” units of a qualification as they complete them, thereby reducing the disruption caused by prison transfers.* (Paragraph 116)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation. Most courses on offer are already unit or module-based to allow ease of transfer.

**Recommendation 27:** *Reoffending is lower in prisoners who participate in higher education. The Government must remove the “six-year rule” so that prisoners on long sentences can apply for higher education courses earlier in their sentence. This would give them motivation during their sentence and keep them focused on their potential employment opportunities following release.* (Paragraph 123)

Responsible organisation: DfE

We reject this recommendation. Loan support is available only for prisoners who are within six years of their release date, in order to strike a balance between supporting prisoners reasonably close to their release date and ensuring that the taxpayer has a reasonable expectation that the prisoner benefiting from the loan would be able to repay it.

We support the principle of prisoners having access to the high-quality training they need to progress and build a brighter future. In doing so, we need to prioritise initiatives that will make the greatest difference to rehabilitation and reducing reoffending - in particular, apprenticeships and skills bootcamps which will ensure prisoners have the skills and experience they need to move onto secure employment in the longer-term.

We consider these initiatives will benefit many more prisoners than an amendment to the six-year rule. Evidence shows that prison leavers in work are significantly less likely to re-offend as indicated by the Education Committee’s Report in paragraph 126.

**Recommendation 28:** *Our Report makes it clear that education should be at the heart of the prison regime. The Government must look at innovative ways to make this a reality. We recommend that the Government establish a pilot scheme establishing specialised prisons with a focus on education, run in partnership with a local university, a further education college, or other recognised quality educational providers.* (Paragraph 125)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation. There are already good examples of best practice in partnerships between education and training providers and prisons and we will continue to build further relationships through our Employability Innovation Fund. HMP Thorn

Cross in Warrington, for example, has introduced new courses to meet changes in the labour market and offers a specialised level 3 rail track course, and HMP Leeds has a construction academy, supported by Kier and with training delivered by London-based charity Bounce Back.

We are also committed to developing strong partnerships with universities. There are numerous examples of prisons forming strong partnerships with higher institutions. HMP Swaleside, for instance, has partnered with Goldsmiths, University of London to deliver a bespoke course with content drawn from Humanities, Creative Arts and Social Sciences disciplines, with 30–36 prisoners participating each year. The course aims to serve as a pre-university ‘foundation year,’ preparing individuals for undergraduate study.

**Recommendation 29: Employment has been shown to reduce reoffending. Getting prisoners into employment therefore makes economic sense for society, easing the current burden on prisons, and allowing former prisoners to re-enter society. The low number of prisoners finding long-term employment following their release from prison is stark. The Ministry of Justice must improve its vocational skills offer to prisoners, ensuring that it is preparing prisoners for the current job market with qualifications that meet industry standards.** (Paragraph 138)

Responsible organisation: MoJ/HMPPS

We accept this recommendation. We are changing the legislation to enable apprenticeships for prisoners to start in the autumn. In addition, we will be establishing an Employability Innovation Fund to deliver new sector specific skills training and work experience for prisoners.

In the longer term, through our market engagement activity, we have been engaging with a range of prospective providers, with a view to broadening and diversifying the future curriculum offer, including vocational qualifications. We have reinforced the need for industry standard qualifications to the market, and we will further develop this once we know the capabilities of future providers.

**Recommendation 30: *The prison estate has a role in supporting prisoners in finding employment. We welcome the employment hubs that are currently operational, such as that in HMP Thorn Cross, but believe that the scheme must be extended. The Government must, by the end of the year, set out a clear timetable for the roll-out of employment hubs across the prison estate, where appropriate.*** (Paragraph 139)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation. By April 2023, all resettlement prisons will have an employment hub in place—the equivalent of a ‘job centre in a prison’—where prisoners can find out about job opportunities, as well as access support with applications.

**Recommendation 31: *The Ministry of Justice must in its response to our Report set out clear timetables for the changes announced in its White Paper on Prisons Strategy.*** (Paragraph 140)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS



We accept this recommendation. By April 2023, all resettlement prisons will have a Prison Employment Lead and Employment Advisory Board in place, who will act as a link between prisons and employers, making sure that prisoners use their time behind bars to gain the skills and links to job opportunities they need to head straight into work upon release.

**Recommendation 32: *The New Futures Network was established by the Ministry of Justice to build partnerships with employers and prisons. However, there is no published data as to what success it is having. The Ministry of Justice must publish annual data showing the number of employment opportunities it has found for former prisoners. The data must show the size of the companies the Network is engaging with to ensure that it is engaging with employers of all sizes, including small and medium sized employers.*** (Paragraph 141)

Responsible organisation: HMPPS

We accept this recommendation in principle. NFN is part of HMPPS, which already publishes data on employment outcomes for prison leavers. Further, the network works with over 400 employers, many of which are SMEs. Auditing the size of individual employers would be administratively challenging both for NFN and the employers.

Further, NFN is only one source of employment opportunities brought to prisons. Other sources include the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) Prison Work Coach, Education Providers, CFO3 providers, Employment Advisory Boards, and others. Therefore, data focusing on roles secured through NFN would only provide a partial view of the employment opportunities for prison leavers.

We will explore ways to better demonstrate the work and impact of NFN.

**Recommendation 33: *Release on Temporary Licence allows relationships to develop between prisoners and employers and allows prisoners to require vital employment skills. The Government must ensure that greater use is made of Release on Temporary Licence for work placements, thus enabling prisoners to receive employment experience towards the end of their sentence.*** (Paragraph 144)

Responsible organisations: MoJ/HMPPS

We accept this recommendation. Work is ongoing to maximise workplace ROTL in the open and female estate. This will require development of a strategy for reshaping the regime, primarily in open prisons, to divert prisoners from current activities, such as workshops serving the internal market, into ROTL, or workshops serving the external, commercial market.

**Recommendation 34: *The Ministry of Justice must confirm by the Summer that the necessary changes to legislation to allow prisoners to take up apprenticeships will be made later this year.*** (Paragraph 148)

Responsible organisation: DfE

We accept this recommendation. Apprenticeships offer prisoners a life-changing chance to gain the skills they need to secure a rewarding career. Evidence shows that prison leavers in work are significantly less likely to re-offend and that businesses benefit from hiring ex-offenders.

Together with the MoJ, DfE is working at pace to introduce apprenticeships for those in prison and who are close to being released. We expect to make the necessary changes to legislation by the autumn to allow the first apprenticeship starts in the autumn. Initially, up to 100 prisoners a year will be supported to begin an apprenticeship in custody.

**Recommendation 35: *In any future review of the Apprenticeship Levy, the Government must change the rules to allow businesses to direct it towards prisoner rehabilitation schemes.*** (Paragraph 151)

Responsible organisation: DfE

We reject this recommendation. The apprenticeships levy was created to support the uptake and delivery of high-quality apprenticeships including allowing levy-paying employers to use their funds to support apprenticeships for those in custody. Levy payers can already employ prisoners as apprentices upon their release and can use their levy funds to support these apprenticeships. Later this year we plan to change the law to enable serving prisoners to start apprenticeships and will continue to explore what more can be done to incentivise and reduce barriers to employers taking on prisoner and prison leavers.

**Recommendation 36: *Businesses may have some reservations about employing former prisoners, which the Government must work to overcome. The Government must introduce incentives to encourage businesses to employ former prisoners, such as national insurance holidays for the first year of employing former prisoners.*** (Paragraph 154)

Responsible organisation: MoJ

We accept this recommendation. MoJ is setting up Employment Boards and an Employability Innovation Fund that will explore the sorts of incentives we can provide business to recruit prisoners. This might include tailoring training to meet their needs or providing the opportunity to set up some workshops within prisons. We will continue to keep this area under review.

**Recommendation 37: *The Ministry of Justice must carry out a longitudinal study of prisoner destination data, comparing the prisoner outcomes of those who have received prison education with those that have not. This information should be shared with education providers, which would allow them to refine their education offer to best support the vocations and careers that former prisoners are pursuing.*** (Paragraph 157)

Responsible organisation: MoJ

We accept this recommendation in principle. We are currently developing personal learning plans for prisoners and developing measures of progress. We are very keen to capture outcome data and use this to inform curriculum choices to make sure we are delivering the right skills and training to get prisoners into work.

We are also considering our monitoring and evaluation strategy for planned initiatives such as the Employability Innovation Fund and will explore the potential for longitudinal research as part of this, alongside other potential evaluation methods. Data on the impact of interventions and the effect on the proven reoffending rate (against a matched comparator group who did not receive the intervention) is also possible via the Justice Data Lab (and this was used recently by the Prisoners' Education Trust to evidence the impact of their study grants).