

## Written evidence submitted by Debbie Leach

- What is the purpose of education in prisons?

The purpose of education is to reduce reoffending and prepare the residents for successful integration back into society. Learning, skills and education is vital part of the prison service and is designed to meet the needs of the population in each establishment.

- What data exist to demonstrate the effectiveness of education and training in prisons and on prisoner attainment, and what international comparisons are available?

New MIS system called Curious is the only data that all PEF providers are mandated to use. However data is kept locally to record DPS provision or prison training.

- How well are additional learning needs met by the prison education and youth custody systems, including SEND and language and communication needs?

LDD needs currently is poorly met within the prison estate. It is only recently in the last 12 months that a LDD assessment has been agreed for all PEF providers to use so data can be captured nationally via Curious, however with the recent pandemic very little progress has been made to test the LDD assessment and its impact.

There seems to be very little knowledge or awareness of teaching strategies to support LDD needs and tutors lack LDD CPD and knowledge on how to differentiate within their curriculum delivery.

Within the prison regime there is little opportunity for the LDD resident to interact and offer ideas on how they think their needs can be met and how they have overcome them in the past, from research the individual has already developed some strategies to help them overcome and with some 'expert' support this could be extended if time and dialogue is allowed.

There is poor sharing of residents LDD needs with healthcare and partners and prison staff, which results in the residents having to explain themselves (or not) each time they engage with someone new. There is no central platform that is accessible to all for this information to be recorded. This then creates multiple 'assessments' from each providers/partners. If information is shared then the identified LDD need and suggested strategies to help the resident overcome their LDD could be used with multiple partners and staff.

There is little investment in LDD in the prison estate with resources to enable the resident to learn, specialised kit and learner support staff.

- Does education in prisons deliver the skills needed by employers, and what more can be done to better align these?

There has been an increase in introducing a curriculum based on LMI and meeting employers gaps over the last 4 years as the prison now designs the curriculum based on their population needs than the contractors staff skill set. There have been some good examples of working

with employers in designing a Programme to meet a supply chain need – Elmley with Wilmot Dixon WD with a dry lining skills gap with their supply chain- resulting in WD training prison instructors the skills set to run a dry lining workshop so successful learners can be employed with the supply chain on release; Ford prison working with their DPS Chichester college in setting up a school of construction to meet the construction set skills gaps in the south east and London, this has resulted in using the skills set of existing residents to build the workshop and gain qualifications in the process and identifying residents with experience of the building trade to then be employed as tutors on release to deliver these skills back in the prisons ; Rochester Railway track maintenance programme worked with an employer to deliver part of the training while in custody and then the final ‘ticket’ on release to allow them to be accredited and eligible to paid work on release.

What needs to be developed further?

- Through the flexibility of the DPS commissioning this can be responsive and timely to need which is required to meet skills gaps as they are ever changing.
- The role of DWP/JCP Work Coach needs to be clear so it is not duplicating existing support; they have links with employers that need to be introduced to prisons (via New Future Network regional brokers). The role of ‘work coach’ is not reflective of the current work they do in the prison, they do not find work and they are not qualified coaches. However the prisons need support from DWP/JCP to assist all residents at reception stage and on release with their universal credit and benefits and with the current prisons ‘work coaches’, they do not have the staffing in place to see all of this population. The support we would need is flexibility with funding to assist those on release that have gained employment on release through the training and links the prisons has, so they are not ‘forced’ to go onto UC to gain some funding for the first month of release to allow them to get work clothes and travel till their first wages comes in. In addition to the staffing issues of DWP Work Coaches, job referrals are not taking place.
- There are multiple agencies that offer support for employment on release but many duplicate- it seems every partner provides CV support but many do not explore the disclosure element, the practical interview preparation and the job searching skills required on line for majority of job vacancies.
- There lacks a central point of accountability as to who is responsible for the employment on release KPI target that the prison governor currently owns but has no control over. This is reliant on partners and NPS/CRC for licenses community individuals which their contract/service level agreement does not hold them to account.
- There are a number of residents in custody due for release that are ‘work ready’ who we could work with to signpost into jobs, but there is no central point for identifying who they are, when they will be released, where their skill set is and who would lead on this within the prisons. Creating an Employment hub within the prison would help that includes activity and work in the prison and uses this department to identify ‘work ready’ residents due for release to signpost the job offer linked to their area of release and skill set. This would require investment in staffing in the activity detail of staff. Using the keyworker system would also allow officers to signpost ‘work ready’

residents to the hub and those that require further support and skills to prepare them for release

- Greater collaboration with CRC and NPS for residents due for release is required. For example a resident who is 'work ready' has found employment on release via the prison contacts but cannot start as they are required to live in supported housing miles away from the job as part of their license conditions. In addition, if they are working while in supported housing they will need to pay for the full costs of their supported housing which is very high, so many give up their job so the state pay for their accommodation as working is not sustainable for them. Therefore all the work that has gone into this individual whilst in prison to prepare them for release and enable them to be independent and a valued member of the community is worthless and does not break the cycle of reoffending.

- **How can successful participation in education be incentivised in prisons?**

Incentives vary between establishment based on the available budget, needs of the prisoners and overall engagement. There is no "one size fits all" approach that would benefit. PIN credit, monetary incentives and in open prisons access to ROTL are used currently with varying degrees of success.

- **How might apprenticeships work for those in custody?**

The funding model needs to change so any training provider can draw down the funding (outside of the PEF contract and in line with community providers) and the learner is employed and earns a wage as part of the training.

The apprenticeships trainees would need to be sequenced for those due for release so the training is recent and timely linked to their area and date of release.

Through using NFN and prison industries there are currently workshops and areas of work-kitchens, grounds, recycling and cleaning etc. Where this model would fit well if there was investment in the band 4 instructors training and skills and links with employers to support.

- **Are current resources for prison learning meeting need?**

Within the last 10 months it is very clear that our residents have been disadvantaged with no digital learning in their cell. It has highlighted total lack of ICT infrastructure not only for residents but also staff who are unable to facilitate a call with a residents in their cell. In cell TV is very limited with many prison not having the facilities to download material for learners to use in their cell. We also should not be reliant on one provider Way Out TV to dominate the market.

Virtual campus in lot 8 has had no investment within OLASS so we are working with out of date machines and licenses. There is existing limited VC machines for learners to access, historically they were placed in areas where we would now prefer to place elsewhere to ensure that access is not reliant on the PEF staff 'supervising' its usage. If VC plans are to enable its use to support resettlement and partners have access, there will be future barriers if the PEF provider 'own' the VC though the risk and ISO. During the covid restrictions we

have tried to enable some residents to access their distant learning course access to VC in a safe secure way with prison staff supervising but were blocked as the PEF needed to supervise it usage and they were unable to do any face to face delivery, therefore if VC is owned by HMP we should have better control of the usage and access. The future needs to plan held hand tablets and digital ICT in cell linked to VC so access is available to every resident.

If we are to provide an education that is of similar quality offered in the community then access to secure internet for all residents is paramount if we are to prepare our residents for their release and a successful resettlement to enable them to have the skills required for the 21st century.

May prison tutors have very little digital skills as the environment has not required them so investment in CPD to up skills tutors is paramount.

- **What should happen when prison education is assessed as not meeting standards?**

The barrier need to be explored and identify what needs to change- is it the space, staff, Leadership and then address .This may require investment in CPD, resources and staffing.

- **How does the variability in the prison estate and infrastructure impact on learning?**

This affects learning greatly. I will use an example of two prisons- Rochester is a large training prison with space and grounds and a number of interesting vocational workshop as they have the staff and space. As a result they have wide varied curriculum to meet the needs of the population. Comparing this with Lewes prison a local Victorian prison with very little space to develop anything vocational via workshops or grounds. If the delivery of learning is limited to classroom learning then we are aware that this type of environment may prevent our excluded and hard to reach residents to participate as they prefer to learn 'hands on' via practical skills. Therefore Lewes has a limited curriculum delivered via classroom learning and therefore is hard to engage in the population to those that most require it.

- **How does provision compare in public sector and privately run prisons?**

- **How effective and flexible is prison education and training in dealing with different lengths of sentences and the movement of prisoners across the estate?**

With the reconfiguration of the estate, it is vital that the curriculum is developed to ensure that the residents within their sentence requires the skills set that can be suitable for release. So the last few years of their sentence the investment needs to be vocational and linked to LMI and populations resettlement need. Ofsted have made an emphasis on memory skills and remembering and practice of the skill . If you offer someone at the beginning of their 10 year sentence a vocational course then it likely those skills will be lost at time of release and maybe no longer a LMI need. This is poor use of public money.

However all prisons including the long stay estate want to offer vocational training (that is the most expensive) as this is easier to engage with the population and usually is more interesting and the expectation from Ofsted to offer a varied curriculum. Alternatively in a local prison with a high turnover it is pointless to offer a 6 month vocational courses if most of the population have short sentences under 12 weeks.

From experience many long stay residents arrive in the open estate with a portfolio of vocational qualifications that is totally the opposite to their long term employment goals. Too many arrive at open prisons and want to return to be a LGV driver regardless of their expensive portfolio of qualifications!

Through the IAG contract there is scope to use the careers advisors to link the long term employment goals with the residents and plan how they use their sentence and time in each prison in a sequenced manner to meet the employment outcome ready for release. The education and employment targets agreed need to share with the OMU and probation so the sentence plan is holistic.

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