

Written evidence submitted by the Independent Monitoring Board HMP/YOI Isis

I am submitting this evidence from the standpoint of being the member with special interest for skills and training at HMP/YOI Isis. I hope that it answers the questions posed in the inquiry.

The purpose of education in prisons is to ensure that prisoners return to the community with an improved level of education and skills to support and enable them in making better choices and to find employment within the community thereby reducing reoffending.

As a member of the Independent Monitoring Board, and I believe as prison education staff, the data that we have to assess the effectiveness of education and skills training is woefully inadequate. We have very little base line data, only that chosen to be given by the prisoners and then we are unable to trace the effectiveness of the provision once the prisoner leaves prison. Therefore the impact of the provision and the impetus to improve is almost impossible to ascertain. Prisons should be able to access the prisoners academic records as held centrally by the DfE and to access the reoffending information that the justice system holds.

Additional needs are met very poorly. The Educational Health Care Plans which are held by some prisoners below the age of 25 are rarely picked up by prisons and therefore the method of assessing, making adaptations for and supporting these prisoners is lost. The only way that the education staff know about these is if the prisoners tell them. They then have to have the motivation to track those down. Why are these not sent to prisons as a matter of course for those prisoners who have them? Again it is the link between, education, social services and the justice system that is at fault and needs to be rectified.

Skills, other than functional academic, needed by employers offered in prisons is limited. This is mainly due to the lack of tutors to teach the skills as the salary for education in prisons is well below the salary that people can demand for actually doing the job i.e. brickwork, painting and decorating etc. There should be an expectation that all tutors in college have to teach the course 1 day a week in a prison. This would allow an improved working environment for the tutors and a way of moderating results and courses across institutions. The ability to offer courses links solely to the availability of tutors rather than reflecting the requirements of the business sector. This is a nonsensical situation.

Successful participation in skills and training is linked to the availability of jobs in the prisons leading from the courses. So, if a course leads to a job where money can be earned it will be popular. If prisons could be able to set up small enterprises to perform tasks for the wider community they would be more popular such as baking for cafes, making clothes, curtains, alterations for schools, hospitals etc. The possibilities are endless but require a specific small business leader to co-ordinate and manage.

Apprenticeships could only work with the staff in the prison I should imagine. Therefore the kitchen chef, PE/Gym officer, teacher, education manager, maintenance team. This could be possible.

Current resources for prison learning range in appropriateness. The outdoor learning i.e. horticulture, grounds maintenance is particularly poor in Isis but this is dictated by the budget priorities of the Governor.

Variability in the prison estate and infrastructure impacts negatively on prisoner's outcomes when they transfer as often courses cannot be continued and therefore are not completed. These issues

should be taken into consideration when setting transfer dates. There needs to be more joined up thinking across the estate in this regard.

There is very little flexibility as far as I can ascertain. The recent Covid outbreaks have shown this clearly. There seems to be very little ability to adapt courses and examinations from the standard face to face model which has not been possible during the pandemic.

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