



Ministry  
of Justice

**Alex Chalk MP**  
Parliamentary Under-  
Secretary of State for  
Justice

**Robert Halfon MP**  
Education Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

**MoJ Ref:** 88881

29 June 2021

Dear Robert,

### **PRISON EDUCATION DATA IN THE ADULT ESTATE**

Thank you for your letter dated 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021 regarding the Prison Education Inquiry. As outlined in my previous letter (29<sup>th</sup> April 2021), until an integrated HMPPS data system is in place to track individual learners' progress, it is not possible to answer all your questions. However, I have provided further information where possible.

I am pleased to say that we plan to publish a statistical release next month which will enable us to share substantially more data with you and the wider public. I will ensure my officials forward this to you as soon as it is published and would like to reassure that improving the collection and use of data is a key part of my ambition to reform Prison Education.

#### **1. Assessment, participation, achievement**

In July we plan to publish the first report drawing on data spanning the first year of provision under the new Prison Education Framework (PEF) contracts from April 2019 to March 2020.

The report is expected to cover:

- Total assessed learners for initial assessments in English and maths
- Number of maths initial assessments by equality and diversity and level of outcome
- Number of English initial assessments by equality and diversity and level of outcome
- Number of English and maths initial assessments by ethnicity and learning difficulty
- Demographic summary of Adult (18+) FE and skills participation for all courses
- Number of learners on English and maths functional courses and achievement by level
- Number of learners participating in vocational training and achievement by level for all courses

The data we intend to publish is largely 'numbers of learners' registered to participate in courses. This is similar to that published by DfE under the OLASS contracts. We are not able to publish figures on attendance of individual learners at this time due to inconsistent data quality arising from a variation in local recording and collection methods. Officials are exploring what we can do to ensure prisons and providers collect this in a more reliable manner moving forward.

I am also unable to provide an accurate assessment of the overall percentage of total prisoners engaged on courses at this time. One of the key challenges here is that current education data is not integrated with the main prison data system, NOMIS, to enable the matching of learners to prisons, the tracking of when they move and the recognition that one learner may be simultaneously enrolled on a number of courses. I have asked officials to explore what would be required to integrate these data sources to make this task more straightforward in the future.

Although I cannot provide you with quality assured performance data by prison, development has started on a measure to track the proportion of prisoners initially assessed as being below Level 2 who make progress in English and maths during their time in custody. Subject to successful development this year, it is anticipated that the measure will be used internally during the 2022/23 performance year and published in July 2023.

## **2. Learning difficulties, disabilities, and specialist neurodiversity support**

HMPPS have improved their assessment process under current contracts with providers now being commissioned to screen newly sentenced prisoners for learning disabilities and difficulties (LDD), record assessment information and provide support for those who continue in education. We intend to publish data on participation rates of those with an identified LDD as part of the planned statistical release.

Data regarding the numbers of prisoners that have previously had an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) is not currently collected. Although EHCPs apply to under 18s in custody, there are no current duties on local authorities to continue to provide support for prisoners over 18. I have asked officials to speak to DfE to understand what more might be done to meet this challenge.

## **3. Data relating to education provided outside the main Prison Education Framework (PEF) contracts**

The four PEF providers deliver a core curriculum of English, Maths, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), digital skills and a range of relevant vocational training. Alongside this, Governors can choose to purchase additional specialist provision to meet learner needs *via* use of the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). The amount of funding a Governor chooses to allocate to the DPS varies by prison. DPS contracts are shorter and examples of commissioned services include careers guidance, arts and bespoke construction courses.

HMPPS hold central information on the number and value of DPS contracts but do not currently hold information on prisoner participation and achievement from these contracts. Going forward we have plans to develop the CURIOUS system to capture this data.

Each year some prisoners will engage in distance learning, e.g. through the Open University, learning *via* temporary release and learning delivered through a partnership approach with a local university. We do not hold information centrally on the number of prisoners currently enrolled in higher education. However, internal data provided by the Open University reports that around 1295 prisoners were registered for Open University courses in England in 2020/21.

Data on Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) is published quarterly and shows the number of releases for each purpose, but not the number of prisoners released for each purpose, as a prisoner may be released several times for the same purpose. There were 1,597 releases for education and training

purposes in Q2, 2020.<sup>1</sup> There was a sharp increase in the total number of temporary releases in 2019 when the policy changed to improve access to ROTL, particularly for workplace ROTL where specific restrictions on paid work placements were lifted. Overall, instances of ROTL fell sharply during COVID due to restrictions in prisons and the wider community.

#### **4. Workforce data**

Officials have written around to each of the major PEF providers (Milton Keynes College, Novus, People Plus and Weston College) and they have provided the following information:

- In total, they employ approximately 1640 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers.
- In total, the four major providers employ approximately 25 qualified Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs).
- Each provider also employs an additional number of education support and management staff

Prison education is commissioned based on outcomes rather than hours provided. These outcomes include enrolment, attendance and successful completion of courses provided, which are tracked and assessed as part of our contract management. The contract framework preceding PEF/DPS tracked teaching hours in 2005, but this was replaced with outcome-based commissioning during its development.

#### **5. Prisoner Outcomes on Release**

HMPPS collect data on employment outcomes for prison leavers generally, as opposed to only those who have engaged with education. Within the 12 months ending March 2020, 12.1% of those prison leavers who were available to work were confirmed to be in employment 6 weeks after release, down from 14.5% in the previous year.<sup>2</sup> A recent publication of employment outcome data by PMIU also found that 4% of a representative sample of prisoners moved on to an apprenticeship on release.

Data on post-release outcomes for prisoners who have engaged with prison education, including further education, higher education, apprenticeships, or other training placements is not available. This is again a gap I am keen to fix and exploratory work is underway to link in-prison data with other prison and probation data systems.

#### **6. Provision during COVID-19**

Face-to-face education has been restricted for some time within the prison estate but is now starting to recommence. Establishments provided “distraction packs” for prisoners in the early stages of the pandemic, but since late Spring of 2020, in-cell activity packs have become more widely used, with providers able to provide courses and other education, skills and work opportunities in-cell. Some partial data was collected on courses provided between April 2020 and March 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as prison education and the wider prison system were under exceptional strain during this time period, the data collected is incomplete. The statistical team therefore need to do further analysis before any decision about publication can be made.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Justice, *Offender management statistics quarterly: July to September 2020: Prison Releases* (2021)  
<[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/959357/Releases\\_Q3\\_2020\\_Final.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/959357/Releases_Q3_2020_Final.ods)>

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Justice, *Community Performance Quarterly: update to March 2020: Employment Circumstances tables* (2020)  
<[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/904936/employment-201920.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904936/employment-201920.ods)>

I hope that the above information is useful. I am grateful for the Committee's work in this area and look forward to the opportunity to speak with you later this year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Chalk." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

**ALEX CHALK MP**

June 2021