

Supplementary written evidence submitted by Milton Keynes College

In terms of the 'sanctions', the Provider produces a Teacher Quality Management Plan (TQMP) for each prison monthly. Each prison will then review this and make a judgement on the quality of the provision within a specific month. These are then reviewed quarterly, and if not content, a prison can withhold up to 5% of the quarterly payment.

For Milton Keynes College, we have had very few sanctions on our TQMPs. However, during the period January to March 2021, all TQMPs were authorised apart from HMPs Bullingdon and Whitemoor where the TQMPs were partially approved. As a result, we had a partial penalty which amounted to just over £18,000.

Are there currently differences in the provision of education services offered in women's and men's prisons. If there is, should there be?

Currently, Milton Keynes College does not deliver education services in the female estate. However, we did deliver at HMPs Foston Hall and Drake Hall under the previous OLASS 4 contract.

Our view would be that there is definitely a difference in the cohort, with female prisoners often being highly vulnerable with a range of concerns, including mental health issues and drug dependency, particularly on entering the custodial system. They are also often primary carers, which puts a huge strain on their mental wellbeing bringing concerns on a regular basis with risk of suicide. As a result, female prisoners often need robust wrap around care to support them within the custodial system and then to engage in any intervention.

Once in a position to engage in learning, as with any learner, it is essential to assess their starting points and motivation, and create a pathway that will support them on release, whether that is back into the workplace or returning to a primary caring position in their communities. It is important to not 'gender stereotype' the type of provision on offer but to also understand that learning in terms of parenting, care, managing finances as well as key skills such as maths, English and digital literacy will be essential in many cases.

As with all learning in custody, it is key to link the learning pathway with the work carried out by the prison Key Workers and Resettlement Teams, as each prisoner approaches release into the Community.

We have heard that qualifications at Level 3 or above are scarce. What are you doing to address this?

The provision that Providers offer is based on an initial assessment of need, with the majority of learners assessing at Entry to Level 1. The curriculum that is offered is then commissioned by each individual prison (not set by the Provider) within a specific financial remit.

There will then be a range of provision on offer from Entry Level upwards, reflecting the need in the prisons and the vision and intent of each Governor. The demand for Level 3 provision is not high, and for each classroom course that is offered, we need critical mass in terms of learner numbers per subject to make it viable; as a result, there are not a wide range of Level 3 programmes offered. One programme that is popular is supporting prisoners who have completed programmes to develop the skills to teach and/or offer support in the classroom, and we are often able to offer this option. Where feasible, we have also 'infilled' Level 3 students into Level 2 programmes.

As numbers are not high across single subjects to enable dedicated classes, we therefore support learners at Level 3 and above through distance learning provision. We employ staff to engage with

these learners and to support their self-study, which can take place in their cells, on the Virtual Campus and in study centres/libraries within the prisons.

Milton Keynes College currently sits on the HMPPS Higher Education Working Group, to review and support the delivery of higher-level provision across the estate.

How can the Government ensure that the educational achievements of offenders are recorded as they move across the prison estate, and that they are recognised once released?

Since the start of the PEF in April 2019, all of the learning that takes place within custody is recorded on the HMPPS data system 'Curious'. This system records data about all learners from all providers, and so enables all achievement to be recorded and shared across the estate as required. The new digital PLP that is being rolled out will also assist in this process.

Learners' work is also recorded on the Virtual Campus, and this can be accessed once a learner has been released from custody through the Virtual Campus' community portal.

As in the community all learners will receive a certificate on achievement of a qualification which they can take with them across the estate or on release – this certificate will state 'Milton Keynes College' as the learning institution and not HMP X.

How would better data collection on prisoner destination help improve your services?

We are aware that data collection on destinations is a challenge, as once released prisoners mostly do not want to engage. However, data on destinations would be extremely useful in terms of judging which programmes have supported learners to achieve their end goal, be that further learning, work or settled in their local communities. Any engagement with learners post-release would be supportive in terms of advising and supporting on delivery of provision, taking into consideration their lived experience.

After the Select Committee meeting, Robert Halfon asked for support/input in terms of work he wanted to do to review Apprenticeship delivery in custody. We would be very happy to engage in any discussions, with our experience of both 30 years working within custody and as an FE College with a diverse and award-winning apprenticeship provision.

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