



Education Select Committee Inquiry

Are prisoners being left behind?

January 2021

About Nacro

Nacro is a national social justice charity and registered not for profit training provider, with more than 50 years' experience of changing lives, building stronger communities and reducing crime. We house, we educate, we support, we advise, and we speak out for and with disadvantaged young people and adults. We are passionate about changing lives. We never give up.

Nacro is the largest independent not for profit training provider. We provide further education and skills to around 3,500 young people and adults each year, the majority of whom have experienced severe disadvantage and interrupted education. Around three quarters of our learners progress on to a positive destination in further education, training and/or employment. We are rated Good by Ofsted and we are a DFE and ESFA registered provider.

Nacro delivers resettlement services in prisons within the supply chain of four Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and runs a national resettlement helpline. Nacro have run the Bail Accommodation and Support Service (BASS) since 2018.

Nacro also delivers education in community and in secure settings. Since March 2020, in partnership with Novus, we deliver prison education contracts on behalf of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), comprising both adult education in three men's prisons and two Youth Offender Institutions (YOIs) in the West Midlands. This contract is for technical education delivered in several sectors and draws on Nacro's experience in delivering resettlement and progression for those leaving prison or moving across the estate.

We delivered high-quality education at Medway Secure Training Centre at the request of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) for over three years. We transformed the curriculum and turned around education provision from a low base (Ofsted Requires Improvement to Good) in challenging circumstances. We retained our Good grade at re-inspection and our achievement rates were above national benchmarks in English (85%), maths (94%), and vocational and technical subjects (90%). We have also successfully delivered secure education to 12-18-year olds in NHS secure forensic mental health and custodial units in Southampton and London from 2015-2020, acquiring CQC good from a low base in both cases, with excellent feedback from commissioners.

Our response to this inquiry is based on the experiences of our staff. Please contact Andrea Coady, Acting Policy Manager, for more information about our response: andrea.coady@nacro.org.uk.

Key recommendations

We make the following key recommendations:

- Incentives should be considered to encourage employers to hire and support prison leavers to ensure that employing prison leavers is an attractive proposition for employers. Programmes such as Kickstart should be developed specifically for prison leavers to encourage employer participation.
- Detailed assessment and planning of education and training is required, both at the prison level and across prison regions, to ensure that prison leavers are equipped with the skills and qualifications required in the local job market.
- Industry standard equipment and teaching is required across the estate in order to provide the quality of education required by employers.
- Prison leavers need to be equipped with the digital skills required for employment and access to services, and so investment in access to technology for all is required.
- There is a need for investment in apprenticeships and traineeships in prison as they have the potential to provide strong support for rehabilitation, and we advocate the greater use of ROTL to facilitate this.
- Further resource is required for learners with special educational needs, and prison and education staff should have the training, space, and time for identification and assessment of learning need.
- Education data should be shared at a local level to support the planning of education provision. This should be supported by investment in further research in to what works in technical and basic education in the secure estate.
- A Digital Prisoner Learning Passport should be introduced nationally to ensure that data on educational attainment is shared within the prison estate, following the learner within the secure estate and out into the community.

Our response

1. What is the purpose of education in prisons?

Education and training in prisons is often considered to be primarily focused on improving the employability of people in prison, and therefore contributes to a reduction in reoffending. Having a job makes re-offending less likely, and the right education, training, and work experience can help prison leavers to gain secure employment on release. We know that employment reduces the risk of re-offending by between a third and a half, and that prisoners who do not take part in education are three times more likely to be reconvicted than those that do.¹

However, the benefits of prison education should also be understood in broader terms. When a classroom is set in a secure facility, teaching and education become part of the rehabilitative process. As such the curriculum should include clear intent for personal success and progression beyond formal accreditation, and be focused on individual need that supports positive behaviour and attitudes to education and employment.

The level of expertise and flexibility to be able to respond appropriately to the diverse needs of the population should be a golden thread visible throughout the offender's time in education. For example, the co-development of integrated education and care plans; the balance of activity within the core day.

We believe that equality of opportunity and inclusivity should drive the curriculum offer. It should ensure that learning builds on the necessary skills, knowledge, and behaviours so that all those held in custody can make expected or better progress through the qualification levels and pathways and develop knowledge, skills and behaviours. This must be responsive to specific needs; for example, education in prison can build self-esteem, encourage self-motivation, and provide new opportunities on release. This is of particular importance for those who are beyond working age or who face barriers to work such as disability.

Education in prison therefore provides the following:

- Improving employability.
- Developing basic and life skills such as numeracy, literacy, communication, and IT, which enables individuals to access services such as housing, financial and health support.
- Building personal skills such as resilience (the ability to handle life both in and out of prison), supporting wellbeing, mental health and the development of social skills.
- Enhancing the ability to make positive contributions to their family and community, such as parenting and other family responsibilities, contributing to communities by volunteering or mentoring, or pursuing further studies or skills acquisition.

The aim of education to improve the employability of people on release from prison should always be connected and interlinked with the broader purposes of education through delivery to ensure engagement with education, and to promote a successful route to rehabilitation.

¹ <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/poverty/downloads/keyofficialdocuments/Reducing%20Reoffending.pdf>

For people serving long sentences and those serving life sentences, education provides support for personal progression, employment or roles within prisons, and opportunities for high level skills and learning.

In considering what the purpose of prison education is it is also important to reflect on what it is not. Prison education should not be a baby-sitting service, meaningless occupation or used as a punishment.

The key elements of successful education in prison include:

- Education in prisons should be supported by high quality induction including initial and diagnostic assessment. This should be reviewed again following the initial period of imprisonment due to the significant impact this initial period can have on people, and there should be a pragmatic approach to people held on remand. Induction should include some discussion around careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) as this can help to increase motivation and engagement with programmes and ensure the best possible fit of programme leading to improved attendance and achievement rates.
- Equality of opportunity and inclusivity should inform the curriculum offer, ensuring that all are able to build the necessary skills, knowledge and behaviours to progress into meaningful employment. The curriculum should therefore be designed to address social disadvantage and should support personal development and well-being as well as the pursuit of academic and technical qualifications.
- Learning should be enriched through practical and engaging activities such as competitions, arts, or cooking, with the vocational and enrichment aspects of the curriculum being adapted according to students' needs. There should be a strong emphasis on technical skills, and the curriculum should aim to meet the needs of both students and employers.
- A variety of high quality pathways and progression routes are needed, with an appropriate variety of curriculum at all levels, to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access the right pathway for them. Education should be of high quality and linked to industry standards. There should a range of meaningful progression pathways from prison to the community and to include those available in the external environment. Barriers to offering secure traineeships, secure apprenticeships and the full range of technical industry relevant qualifications need to be overcome by the government and its partners.
- In order for people to be able to attend and be fully engaged with education, the prison environment must be safe, and urgent action needs to be taken to tackle increasing levels of violence and self-harm. There should always be sufficient resources and staff to ensure that the entitlement to education is not compromised due to issues relating to security or the regime. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMIP) notes in the 2019-2020 annual report² that people's educational work showed substantial and sustained progress in only around half of prisons, and that too few prisoners completed their courses and achieved their qualifications successfully. This was often related to problems in their attendance.
- In addition to the availability of a high quality and broad-based academic and technical education for all people in prison, it is key that this is supported by high quality careers

² https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/10/HMI-Prisons_Annual-Report-and-Accounts-2019-20-WEB.pdf

education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) at each stage, including induction. This then ensures that the individual learner can capitalise on the skills and qualifications achieved and become competitive prospective employees in the jobs market. Transition support is needed to successfully enter the jobs market, and therefore we would highlight the importance of high quality through the gate resettlement work on education, training and employment.

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

In terms of the data available:

- Prisons now have their own management information systems to track and monitor data relating to education provision, and therefore there ought to be an authoritative and systematic data source for the analysis of the impact of provision.
- Further research is needed as to the impact of prison education. The most recent and large-scale national study reported a 7.5% reduction in one-year reoffending rates.³ More research is needed, particularly with regard to:
 - Which specific types of academic or technical education achieves the best outcomes;
 - What types of delivery method achieve the best outcomes.
- Providers in prisons are required to have robust data systems in place and therefore collect data at a range of levels for use in contract management. However, this ought to be collated and analysed nationally in the same way that schools and college data is used to drive performance and to seek further insight into trends and impacts.
- A key issue that impacts on the ability of people in prison to make progress is that the data does not follow the learner around the prison estate, and so records of individual progress are not passed on. This creates barriers for progression, and can mean that people are put through the same course(s) on more than one occasion, both within the secure estate and upon release. A Digital Prisoner Learning Passport should be introduced to ensure that information as to attainment is shared across the estate and shared with external agencies on release.

We would therefore recommend that the Committee seeks assurance from government that it will:

- Ensure that data is shared at a local level to support the planning of education provision.
- This should be supported with investment in research in to what works in technical and basic education in the secure estate.
- Ensure that outcomes-based data is analysed and utilised at both the local and national level.
- Establish a Digital Prisoner Learning Passport.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-prisoner-learning-initial-impacts-and-delivery>

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

The level of need

In the adult estate the data consistently shows that around one third of people in prison have a learning difficulty and/or disability. This is likely to be an underestimate of actual prevalence because, as HMIP note in their Annual report 2019-2020⁴, prisons rely heavily on prisoners declaring themselves to have learning needs.

In the youth estate, MoJ data shows that children in prison are twice as likely to have special educational needs as those in the general population.⁵ 30% of children who entered custody over 2018-19 were assessed as having special educational needs or disabilities, compared to less than 15% of children nationally. From our experience in delivering education in Medway Secure Training Centre, we see that a significant proportion of the children entering the youth justice system have Statements of Special Educational Needs/Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP), but there is a higher proportion for whom learning needs have been masked by behaviour and remain unidentified. We also saw an increasing proportion of young people with complex social emotional mental health needs (SEMH) and with language and communication difficulties either identified in their EHCPs or identified by us through assessment. Many also have other specific learning needs or global developmental delay identified in their EHCPs or identified by us. The vast majority of the children have had a disrupted education, with many experiencing changes of school, and permanent and fixed term exclusions which can negatively impact their confidence and skills.

Staff expertise and direction

The HMIP annual report also notes that staff may not have the experience or expertise to identify accurately those who had additional support needs but who did not declare them and they are not being asked to do this or report on this.

Allocation of learners to classes/sessions

HMIP also highlight the fact that adults with identified additional learning needs often do not have access to specialist learning support to help them make the expected progress. Ofsted also reports that, in many cases, prisoners are allocated to education, skills and work activities that do not best meet their employability and development needs.⁶ Prisoners with additional learning needs receive insufficient support and the range of education, skills and work activities that vulnerable prisoners can access is poor.⁷

⁴ https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/10/HMI-Prisons_Annual-Report-and-Accounts-2019-20-WEB.pdf

⁵ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/children-prison-special-educational-needs-jail-uk-a9034846.html>

⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/859422/Annual_Report_of_Her_Majesty_s_Chief_Inspector_of_Education_Childrens_Services_and_Skills_201819.pdf

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-201920-education-childrens-services-and-skills/the-annual-report-of-her-majestys-chief-inspector-of-education-childrens-services-and-skills-201920>

Provision of support

In our experience delivering adult education in the West Midlands adult prisons and YOIs, we have seen some improvement in the provision of support for people with special educational needs. This was a key part of the recent tender exercise for the Prison Education Framework. However, there remains a lack of parity with community provision:

- We know that some additional learning needs are addressed by the teachers in the classroom, and that this is often possible because of smaller class sizes which can allow for additional individual attention. However, this falls short of what is required to address the more complex needs of many people in prison.
- Often prisoners with additional learning needs are not identified and prison staff are not trained or directed to ensure proper assessment, and provide the required support to individuals through the process. We know that some people are screened out by establishments as not suitable for education.
- Pressures of targets and regime management can mean that the time or space is not available to ensure individual learning needs can be met.
- It is difficult to offer a differentiated curriculum to cater for need due to contracting pressures. The contracting process has been to the detriment of this cohort, because the bidding process leads to providers reducing cost, which leads to a reduction of investment in the specialist expertise needed to support teachers where there are particular needs.
- There is also a lack of specialist provision, and we know of no higher need provision in prisons.

Insufficient education places and lack of engagement

In the adult prison estate, additional learning needs are often not met by the prison education system because many simply do not engage in any education during their sentence. There are a number of reasons for this.

- A prison of 600-700 people may only have 200 education places (100 in the morning and 100 in the afternoon), and so these places are easy to fill with low need individuals, which often means that people with higher need are not pro-actively engaged in education. Ofsted confirms that only a third of prisons inspected since September 2019 deliver an appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of their prisoners, and that in many cases, the number of activity spaces is insufficient for the number of prisoners, or spaces are poorly allocated and used.⁸
- Many people with additional learning needs make the choice to work rather than engage in education (or do neither) as they may feel that education is 'not for them', and this is often not considered by staff to be an issue to be addressed.
- Education in prison is often something that only touches a minority of people in prison, and those with the greatest need, for example with the lowest levels of attainment and ability are often missed. If they do engage in education, they are more likely to be engaged in more

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-201920-education-childrens-services-and-skills/the-annual-report-of-her-majestys-chief-inspector-of-education-childrens-services-and-skills-201920>

technical programmes as academic education is usually delivered to learners at levels 1 and 2.

There is more that can be done to ensure that all staff appreciate that engaging with education is of benefit to all people in prison, and to develop a culture which encourages all prisoners to be drawn into learning activities that are relevant to their interests, abilities and aspirations. Providing appropriate incentives plays a part in this, but there is also a cultural element which endorses and encourages participation.

We would therefore recommend that the Committee shows support for the following calls of government:

- Building resources into contracts and/or providing additional financial resources into contracts per learner for special educational needs.
- To make more use of specialist call off agencies via the Dynamic Framework to support the main contractors in delivering specialist support.
- To ensure that appropriate prison staff and education staff have the training, space, and time for identification and assessment of learning need.
- To ensure that there is adequate timetabling and allocation for learner support.

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

Annual Prison Performance Ratings 2019/20⁹ show that the target for employment at six weeks following release was the poorest performing measure, with only 4% of prisons meeting this target. Although this is not the only measure of success for education, it is certainly indicative that there is much more that needs to be done in this area.

Education in prisons delivers the skills needed by employers where there are:

- Clear curriculum pathways linked to demand for skills in release areas:
 - To assess local demand, it is important to have meaningful engagement with local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) which help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within the local area.
- Willing employers:
 - Whilst there are good examples of employers who proactively engage with prisons and employ and support people leaving prison, there is a need to expand this much further. The New Futures Network was established by the MoJ to build partnerships with employers and prisons and work in local and regional labour markets. We would like to see a significant drive to build on and expand this approach.
 - It is important to engage with employers of all sizes. Larger employers are already in the market, but there remains a need to engage with small and medium sized employers.

⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/913004/annual-prison-performance-ratings-2019-20-bulletin.pdf

- Incentives to encourage employers to hire and support prison leavers should be considered to ensure that employing prison leavers is an attractive proposition for employers. Programmes such as Kickstart should be developed specifically for prison leavers to encourage employer participation.
- Local partnerships are important, and relationships with employers should be kept under constant review.
- Industry standard facilities, experience and teaching:
 - The technical skill or vocational area needs to be understood by the provider.
 - The teaching facilities and standard of teaching needs to meet industry standards, and more investment is required to achieve this.
 - Investment in IT and digital exposure. This needs to become the reality in prisons as it is a significant barrier in the workplace for prison leavers.

There are some really good examples of prison education delivering the skills needed by employers. Nacro delivers foundation and high level vocational and technical qualifications within the adult prison estate, operating as a subcontractor to Novus on the MoJ's Prison Education Framework. Courses include L2 motor vehicle, tyre filling, car valeting, carpentry, bricklaying, and scaffolding. The qualifications on offer mirror those available in the community through Further Education Colleges and training providers and present real opportunities for employment into entry level and semi-skilled roles in the construction industry.

Anomalies and issues

We know from our own experience of delivering education in prisons across the West Midlands that education delivered in prison can mirror what is delivered in the community in further education colleges. The resources and facilities, particularly for vocational courses, are in some places of high standard and at the same level as we see in the community. The key difference is that in prison a two year full-time college course is delivered in less than 20 weeks which means that although prison-based learners get the same amount of teaching time, they do not get the protracted period of practice, development and mastery of those skills during the course. This can be key to refining and cementing the skills to take forward into employment. Additionally, if there is a delay between the completion of a course and release from prison (with the potential then to gain employment), skills learnt can be lost (and this is compounded by the lack of time for practice during the course). Skills can be taught at the wrong time in someone's sentence, and therefore are not as valuable as they could be.

We would also highlight that there are some anomalies in funding which cause issues for prison education. For example, to obtain a forklift truck licence in the community it is necessary to attend a two day training course. This is not possible in prison as the course is delivered as a two week City and Guilds course. Unfortunately, this qualification is not recognised by employers, and so people still have to complete the two day training course once they leave prison. It also the case that prison education sometimes does not always keep pace with what is happening in industry.

The importance of vocational training and meaningful activity

We would wish to see greater promotion of vocational training. Contracts were designed to procure core education with some wider curriculum areas included with vocational provision, and Governors

then have the autonomy to procure (through the Dynamic Purchasing System) other, more bespoke, vocational provision. This means that, in some prisons, there is less focus on vocational provision.

Meaningful activity, regardless of whether people are going to use those skills in employment, can have enormous therapeutic value, and has a really positive impact on levels of self harm and violence. This can support successful rehabilitation, and enable people to leave prison with the skills needed to pursue meaningful and fulfilled lives. We would suggest that there should be more provision of education which is directed at those people who have a desire to develop knowledge and skills outside accredited and formal learning. This would have an additional benefit, as it is more likely to engage people in education who may consider that education is 'not for them', and this initial engagement may then lead to the pursuit of further education.

Governor autonomy and regional coordination

We agree that Governor autonomy is important in respect of the provision of education and training which meets the needs of an establishment's population, but we believe that there is more work to be done to ensure that the training offered is suitable for both the cohort in the prison, and the local employment market. Stronger links with communities and employers is key to achieving this success. It is also important that there is co-ordination across prisons to ensure that prisons in an area are offering training which fits together across the estate, and to ensure that every prison is not offering the same training which then means that the employment market is then saturated. We would also note that training and education in prisons can be directed towards those skills that are needed to keep prisons running smoothly, as they perform valuable functions in the prison routine (such as bio-cleaning or barbering). Yet the skills learnt are not necessarily aiming to fill a gap in the employment market in the community.

In our experience, Governors need to have clear assessments of local need and a clear plan as to how the provision within their establishment will address particular skills gaps. We would wish to see clear, concise plans around vocational provision across prisons within a particular area, with a clear link to the local LEP's priorities so that the education provision across those prisons works as a whole, and links well into the local employment market.

We also believe that there is more work to be done in planning and facilitating pathways into training across the prison estate (as set out below in our answer to question 6 on apprenticeships).

We would recommend that the Committee calls for:

- Incentives to encourage employers to hire and support prison leavers to ensure that employing prison leavers is an attractive proposition for employers. Programmes such as Kickstart should be developed specifically for prison leavers to encourage employer participation.
- Assessment and planning, by individual prison governors, and across prison regions, with engagement with the LEP as a key part of this.
- Within the changes to probation in 2021 and the new contracts there needs to be clarity as to who holds the responsibility for the pathway through release and engagement with employers in order to ensure focus on this area and accountability.

- New providers should be brought into the market that are industry specific and specialist to support education contracts which can ensure the appropriate education is provided which meets the needs of the local market.
- Pro-active engagement of a wider range of employers.
- Engaging with each industry area, and working with employers to ensure that the qualifications offered in prison are those that are required in the industry. This will require continuous monitoring in order to sure that the education offer in prisons remains what is required.

5. How can successful participation in education be incentivised in prisons?

We know that many people do not engage in education during their time in prison. This is a result of a number of factors, including poor previous experience of education, a lack of appreciation of the benefits that education can have, and the availability of less challenging ways to spend your time in prison (which can be at least as equally financially rewarding). It is also worth noting that successful participation can mean different things for different people, from some attendance at formal learning through to successfully completion of a course.

Incentivising participation in education includes, in our view, cultural, curricular, and financial elements:

- **Cultural:** All staff working in an establishment should have a positive and supportive attitude towards engagement in education, and understand the potential benefits for all people engaging in learning that is suitable for their needs. This means that education should not simply be viewed as the pursuit of qualifications and (ultimately) employment post-release, but that it builds skills, knowledge and behaviours to enrich lives. Engaging in education should be seen as the norm for all, and the prison culture should encourage all prisoners to be drawn into learning activities.
- **Curriculum:** In order to ensure that a pro-education culture can be established and maintained, it is important that the curriculum offers courses that are relevant to the interests, abilities and aspirations of the people in the establishment, and that there are sufficient places for all. Non-accredited subjects such as creative arts or Personal and Social Development courses, can be important in engaging and supporting the more reluctant learners, and act as a gateway to further learning. A sense of achievement is important, and this means different things to different people. Understanding what the drivers are for an individual, such as having the ability to read to children or assist with homework, can be important to open up an understanding of the importance of education. As stated above, less formal routes into education are more likely to engage people in education who may consider that education is 'not for them', and this initial engagement may then lead to the pursuit of further education.
- **Financial:** Providing appropriate incentives has a role to play in incentivising engagement in education, and any disparity in terms of rates of remuneration will certainly act as a disincentive. It should be adequately paid so that it is not the poor relation of other activities in the prison. There can also be other advantages to some employment, such as additional time out of cell or single cell occupancy. It would be possible to research the

attractiveness of different types of employment versus different types of education to people in prison and then reward them appropriately in order to create a more level playing field.

6. How might apprenticeships work for those in custody?

Successive governments have placed a strong emphasis on apprenticeships as providing a pathway into employment, and the lack of apprenticeships in prison is a huge obstacle to improving employment opportunities for prison leavers. Apprenticeships could lead to the creation of an employment pathway for people in prison. This would benefit both people in prison and potential employers, but it has not been explored and developed sufficiently. There are legal barriers that need to be addressed in order to make this a reality, and financial investment and a multi agency approach involving the MoJ, HMPPS, DWP, employers and others would be required. There needs to be no financial disincentive for employers in taking on apprentices from prisons, and consideration should be given to developing something similar to the Kickstart scheme to ensure this is incentivised.

We recommend that there be a renewed focus on developing apprenticeship pathways across the prison estate. We believe that apprenticeships can and should be developed in partnership with the contractors currently working within establishments, for example, facilities and maintenance contractors, in addition to employers in the community. This would ideally involve co-ordination across prisons, with a view to facilitating the classroom-based element of an apprenticeship in one prison, with a planned move to, say, a category D prison at a point in the apprenticeship in order to enable attendance at employment, utilising release on temporary licence (ROTL). This will require co-ordination between prisons, employers and education providers but could revolutionise the rehabilitative power of a prison sentence for those people who are able to take part. ROTL is under underused, and could be a valuable tool in developing pathways into employment.

We would therefore recommend that the Committee provides strong endorsement of investment in apprenticeships and traineeships in prison as they have the potential to provide strong support for rehabilitation. In particular:

- Enabling them to start them in prison with a clear pathway into employment upon release, using a formal status card to enable this.
- Promote the greater use of ROTL for apprenticeships.
- Endorse the use of incentives for employers as above (see our response to Question 4).
- As part of engagement with employers, ensure there is specialist expertise to do the brokerage work between employers and people in prison.

7. Are current resources for prison learning meeting need?

Physical facilities

In our experience, many prisons have good resources in terms of workshops, classrooms and other physical facilities. For example, at HMP Featherstone sponsorship by Bridgestone has supported the setup of a motor vehicle specialist tyre fitting workshop. Nacro are working with Bridgestone to

deliver the REACT license. REACT is Roadside Emergency Action Concerning Technicians – Licence to Work Safely at the Roadside – this is the industry leading accreditation for working safely at the road side and a key employability skill linked to this industry. This is a really good example of innovative practice in a prison as it is not a funded course, but the prison were approached and took the opportunity to deliver a unique initiative.

The quality and variety of facilities differs across the estate, and generally we would say that modern establishments with purpose-built education and training facilities are the most suitable, as sometimes education and workshop facilities can be making use of older buildings that were built for another purpose. We would like to see equally high quality facilities across the estate.

Access to technology

It remains the case that most people in prison have very little access to the technology that could fundamentally change their access to learning. The lack of availability of technology in prisons deskills people as they enter prison, and fails to prepare people for release. There are, of course, security issues that need to be managed but computing technology allows every key stroke or internet search to be monitored and access can be risk-assessed and limited. For prisons to truly offer rehabilitation and opportunities for future employment then we must address this digital divide, and give people in prison access to the tools they require. During the global pandemic, the digital divide in our prisons has been highlighted, as have the benefits that technology can bring, for example with the introduction of virtual visits. Access to appropriate technology is of value in terms of education, and has additional benefits of enabling better communication with other services, such as treatment programmes or resettlement providers, and provides opportunities to maintain links to family and communities. We know that maintaining contact with friends and family is really important for people in prison, as links to the outside world can really help with the transition back into the community and strong family and community connection can support a reduction in reoffending.

We therefore recommend that the Committee provides strong support for the following:

- Industry standard equipment and teaching across the estate in order to provide the quality of education required by employers.
- Provision of technology to ensure that prison leavers are equipped with the digital skills required for employment and access to services and in cell learning.
- With adequate technological investment, it then opens the possibilities for in cell learning and distance learning opportunities. Not all learning needs to be classroom based, and with adequate technology available to people in prison it will then be possible for government to invest in distance learning opportunities.

8. What should happen when prison education is assessed as not meeting standards?

It is important to ensure that steps are taken so that areas for improvement are effectively identified and addressed. If education provision is failing there must be consequences, and we would call for stronger accountability. We believe that where education is identified as inadequate then providers should be subject to a special measures board for closer monitoring and scrutiny of progress and to

provide expert support. Where progress is too slow then the contracts should be either retendered or adapted and broken up to allow other providers to step in. Contracting must be robust enough to ensure quality, but must also guard against the creation of perverse incentives for providers.

We would therefore recommend to the Committee that:

- Education providers are subject to a 'special measures' board for closer monitoring and scrutiny of progress where education provision is failing. Where progress is too slow then the contracts should be either retendered or adapted and broken up to allow other providers to step in.

9. How does the variability in the prison estate and infrastructure impact on learning?

As stated above in the answer to question 6, older establishments tend to have poorer quality facilities due to their restrictions in terms of space and design. In general, more modern prisons are built with education and training in mind, and fit for purpose facilities are important to be able to deliver high quality education. However, there are older prisons where thought and consideration has been given when adaptations or new building work has been done in order to ensure that it is a suitable investment. This can have a significant impact on the ability to deliver high quality education. In prisons where the Governor has high expectations of education within the establishment, it is often reflected in the quality of the facilities.

Security issues impact on the provision of education and the movement of people to and from classrooms and workshops can be more difficult depending on the layout of the establishment. Officer staffing levels and the stability of the establishment can have a significant impact on learning, as many hours of education can be lost due to the fact that people are not unlocked and/or escorted to their lessons.

We would recommend that the Committee provides endorsement for the movement of people around the secure estate to always take into account learning needs.

10. How does provision compare in public sector and privately run prisons?

In our experience there are examples of good practice and innovation in both publically run prisons and private prisons and areas which require improvement in both.

There are a number of factors which impact including the quality and appropriateness of the facilities; the priority education is given within the estate; and the appetite and incentives provided to innovate and continuously improve. The purpose built education and training spaces in newer prisons tend to offer higher quality facilities to support learning.

Investment in high quality, purpose built facilities across the estate should be seen as a priority, particularly to upgrade the older Victorian prisons which are often further behind in the appropriateness of facilities. And we believe that far more could be put in to place systematically to ensure that good practice and innovation is shared across prisons whether they are public or private.

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

The following issues are relevant:

- Issues of security and population management take precedence over ensuring that a person's education journey is being best served. We would like to see transfers being actively managed so that people are transferred to prisons where continuity can be maintained, and that transfer to facilitate the pursuit of a particular educational route becomes the norm. In our experience, people are transferred to the next available place at the prison within the region with little, if any, consideration given to the impact on education.
- There has been standardisation across the estate, which means that all providers are working towards the same qualifications using the same awarding bodies, and this is definitely helpful in terms of transferring between courses if someone is moved to a new prison.
- However, problems do still arise with transfers as people may be moved to a new prison which does not offer the same course, or there may be no available spaces on the course at the new establishment and there will inevitably be some disruption even where a transfer to a new course is possible.
- Information sharing also remains problematic, because digital personal learning plans are not used in all prisons, and national roll out of this is important to facilitate better sharing of information.
- Multi agency working for resettlement is essential. We have seen good working examples, but also still see examples where services don't work collaboratively and individuals fall through the gap and education is lost and wasted. As stated above, we would recommend that a Digital Prisoner Learning Passport is introduced to facilitate the sharing of educational attainment information and prevent unnecessary waste of resource.
- Prison sentences of 6 months or less really create very little opportunity for meaningful engagement in education and we continue to call for short sentences to be replaced by community alternatives as they are more effective at reducing reoffending.¹⁰

We would therefore recommend that the Committee gives support to:

- Seeking a commitment that educational outcomes and progression pathways will be given higher priority in decision making around transferring people around the estate.
- The introduction of a Digital Prisoner Learning Passport to ensure that data on educational attainment is shared within the prison estate and out into the community.

¹⁰ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/814177/impact-short-custodial-sentences.pdf