



Working Up the Offender Learning Campus Model

Report of an Ideas Building Event at

St. George's House, Windsor Castle, 8th – 9th June 2006

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Our focus for this event was to build on our recent thinking and consultations on the proposals in the Green Paper, 'Reducing Offending through Skills & Employment'. In particular, our goals were to:

- confirm the relationship between two of the 'big ideas' in the Green Paper: the Offender Learner Campus and the idea of some sort of Employment Contract;
- draw up a 5 year framework highlighting key milestones of development in the introduction of both the campus and the employment contract. We also firmed up how their development could fit within the implementation of other major public reform and policy implementation, including the Home Office's Five Year Strategy for protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending and the establishment of the new Corporate Alliance;
- agree what needs to happen within the next 6-12 months to test out and continue to develop our thinking and ideas, and that should be included in the Green Paper's Next Steps Action Plan.

This report begins with an outline of our vision for 2010 (pages 1 – 2) and the benefits of the model we propose to society, offenders and employers (page 3).

It continues by describing what we felt will need to be key features of the model (pages 3 – 4) and areas of development that will be essential for its successful introduction (pages 4 – 5). We end with a brief 4 – 5 summary of the actions we agreed are needed over the next 12 months to begin to move towards making our vision a reality (pages 5 - 6).

This report aims to reflect the ideas and action points put forward in the event, with the understanding that not everybody involved in the discussions endorsed all of the ideas included. Nor should they be viewed as a policy statement on behalf of the Department for Education & Skills, the Home Office, Learning & Skills Council, or anyone else! A list of participants is included at the end of the report.

2010 – Our vision

We looked forward to 2010, bringing together the building blocks of a vision for offender education, education and training in the context of major changes already planned and under way for offender management, skills and the employment agenda. This medium term vision is rooted in practicalities, not a blue sky exercise.

Looking ahead to 2010, we found that a compelling vision could be built up for an education, training and employment model that built upon existing practice and was strengthened by the 'campus model' and 'employment contract' ideas in the Green Paper.

Key to the model was wide recognition that education, training and employment have an important role in stopping offending by helping to change people's lives. Planning for this approach would be developed to meet skills shortages in regions, improving the likelihood that skills development would lead to employment and reducing re-offending. The approach would contribute to a culture of entrepreneurship and business start up in disadvantaged communities (where many offenders originate) through a fully-developed self employment option.

We emphasised that the education, training and employment model should not be viewed in isolation but sits alongside the other six pathways, with offender management able to make informed decisions to match needs of both offenders and employers to the provision available. A central feature of the improved model would be a wider and more focused choice of provision: offender and offender manager benefiting from a prospectus to source provision from private, public and voluntary sector sources alike.

From the offender's perspective we emphasised the value of a sense of belonging to a 'club' with privileged status while they are serving their sentence. Membership of the club confers responsibilities (to engage with the programme and act) as well as benefits, and a consequent loss of privileges for those not in the club - but without any stigma of being labelled as part of an offender's club once they are learning/training and working in the community. Therefore the transition needs to be carefully managed.

In 2010, with NOMS fully functioning, and access to offender records, including learning records, available electronically, we will be well on the way to seamless progression for offenders in prisons, across prisons and in the community.

Recognising the evidence base that links the reduction of re-offending with having a job, our model would include support for employers recruiting ex-offenders based around their needs and interests. This would include a risk-assessment guarantee for employers and a differentiated offer between small and larger firms. The employment focus would be reinforced by all work in prison including a training element.

Different starting points

At the same time, we were clear that the model should work on national principles, regional needs and targets, and local delivery. Therefore depending on their characteristics, the starting point for some regions might vary.

For some the starting point would be a focus on provision aimed at employment and self-employment as a primary goal; for others it might be a broader approach and include provision for citizenship, mental health, social skills (including coping with finance, housing and relationships). In all regions, the education training and employment strategy has been built from up from the key elements of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service.

Benefits of the model

From the beginning of our discussions, we recognised that the case needed to be made for the benefits of going beyond the 2006 system of offender management and an Offenders' Learning and Skills Service in the early stages of implementation. There should be clear benefits to society, to offenders and to employers.

To society Reinforcing the focus on reducing offending through skills and employment should result in a significant cost saving to the exchequer through a drop in custodial costs. Reduced re-offending should lead to safer communities and greater public confidence in the justice system. Helping offenders find work rather than a life on benefits should also contribute to building more prosperous communities.

While we recognised that these benefits apply to an effectively functioning justice system overall, there was a strong sense that our agenda could help move thinking on, changing the 'narrative' around offending so that members of the public could see way beyond sentencing to reduced re-offending, safer communities, and offenders playing a useful role in society.

To offenders We identified some areas where offenders could also identify benefits from the model. Within a structured approach to education, training and employment, it might be possible to offer access to intermittent custody or a faster track to a spent conviction in recognition of an offender's commitment to learn, gain skills and find work.

It was also suggested that in some cases the current system operates perverse incentives and that pay parity between training and employment in custodial settings would make a real difference.

Of course, the main benefit for offenders would be a better chance of finding and keeping work, whether as an employee or self-employed. Offender managers, learning providers and all those involved in operating the model would reinforce the economic and social value of employment as the key goal of the model.

To employers In many sectors, employers are looking for recruits, and there are skill shortages in all regions. Therefore the main benefit to employers would be a supply of potential recruits.

At the same time we recognised that some employers may be put off seeking to employ offenders because of doubts about their reliability or indeed prejudice against them. Continuing support until the new recruit has settled in and is in stable employment would therefore be a key benefit for employers, together with on-going access to funding for training (perhaps through Train to Gain), further reinforcing the seamless progression that is a feature of the model.

Key features of the model

We were keen to see the development of a model that put some renewed energy behind the education, training and employment agenda. It was important that within the model both accountability and levers

were clearly identified. We agreed that we were looking for a coherent and resilient approach, with the appropriate elements defined at national, regional and local levels.

The idea would be for the new model to be implemented through regional joint commissioning. The current partnership boards should develop rapidly to become commissioning boards, procuring a range of learning activities available to offender managers across custody and community in the region.

Joint commissioning

The work of the joint commissioning board would be informed by a two-way knowledge strategy. It would draw on information from the seven pathways relevant to all groups (not only offenders). In turn, the outcomes of the model would inform expertise in areas such as housing, drug rehabilitation, etc. for offenders. The knowledge strategy would be one guarantor that the new model would not work in a silo. Education, Training and Employment would either connect to other pathways, or maybe even 'straddle' them given that learning is an intrinsic part of all pathways. This would open the way for custodial settings, if appropriate, to become centres of rehabilitation expertise, or 'secure colleges'.

We recognised that there was scope to use current resources more effectively, but that additional resources would be required to fulfil the potential of this model to achieve real results in reducing re-offending and, therefore, benefits for the public purse.

We recognised the need to develop an overall proposition that would be attractive to employers, speaking their language, and addressing their interests and concerns, and that would also motivate and encourage offenders to learn. Like other learners, offenders would have the opportunity to have access to an individual skills account, with the offender manager in this case effectively deciding on how the account might be used.

Key areas of development

In a crowded environment, with many public sector initiatives under way, we identified three areas of work where activity was needed to make real progress on the model:

- Stimulating employer demand

- The detail

- Getting buy-in

- **Stimulating employer demand**

The two main themes in stimulating employer demand were an integrated approach from Government, and a diverse offer to employers.

We were clear that Jobcentre Plus, the Small Business Service, the Corporate Alliance and other players should **speak with one voice** around a simple and prioritised agenda to engage employers to recruit offenders.

Sector skills councils have a focal role, and we agreed that each sector skills agreement should commit to improving recruitment of offenders in the sector. More over, there was a strong view that the public sector should lead the way in offender recruitment.

Within this framework it will be important to recognise that the needs of employers differ depending on their size, skill needs and market. A tailored and targeted approach is needed.

➤ **The detail of an employment agreement or contract**

The agreement should make clear the rights and responsibilities for the offender, but a number of elements need to be clarified – in particular, the relationship with the sentence plan.

We acknowledged that the agreement would be much more effective as an enabler of change within an integrated offender management system where other changes were under way, for instance in relation to the work experience in prisons, and a more diverse range of learning opportunities in the community.

➤ **Getting buy in from front-line staff (providers, probation, prison staff, offender managers, local authorities)**

This was identified as the key success factor for the new model. Timing is critical – on the one hand, it is important not to overwhelm front-line staff with too much change, while at the same time clear sense of momentum needs to be established.

For this to succeed, the message needs to be that change is about growth and building on good foundations, a sensible progression from the base of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service. Communication and support, including for skills development through sector skills councils, will encourage front-line staff to work for change.

Getting Started – actions for 2006 / 7

Reviewing the prospects for progress, we identified a 'long list' of possible actions for the year ahead. We were clear that these will need to be further prioritised, but they are all included in this report to provide a platform for further discussion about engaging all the key partners for change.

NATIONALLY

➤ **Revive the Ministerial group to lead on re-offending**

- Develop further the new model for education training and employment that is outlined here
- Link this concept with the work under way in developing the Corporate Alliance
- Review the seven pathways four years on from the Social Exclusion Unit report: What have we achieved? Are we adding value? What more do we need to do, do differently, stop doing?
- Appoint an 'offender learning tsar' – to champion change to drive down re-offending
- Encourage all sector skills councils to demonstrate commitment to training and employing offenders as part of their sector skills agreements.

REGIONALLY

- Begin the move for regional delivery boards become joint commissioning boards
- Pull together a regional resources action plan (including how this ties in with the three alliances)

LOCALLY

- Work with local authorities through local area agreements to align with regional needs and targets and local delivery
- Work with frontline prison and probation staff to get their buy in. What needs to happen to create energy, confidence and appetite for change?
- Create a joint effective and two-way communication strategy for frontline staff (providers/prison/probation/other key organisations)
- Join up at a local level education plus other interventions for rehabilitation
- Involve more training providers to open up the market

End word

Undoubtedly the most significant shift in our thinking at Windsor was in stitching together the campus model with the idea of some sort of employment contract for offenders. The next stages of development will be to explore with employers and offenders how best to address the following questions:

- What sort of skills are needed by employers (both generic and specific to different types and sizes of companies with skill shortages in different sectors)?
- How should we support offenders wanting to move into self employment?

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- What would employers wish to see included as part of an employment contract – types of support and 'contract breakers'.
- Is there a need for different features to be included in an integrated campus employment contract model to ensure that it is relevant and meets the needs of different sizes of company?
- How well does the campus employment contract model meet the needs of different groups of offenders? For example, could the model be adapted to meet the needs of women offenders? How could it be developed fit well with new types of sentencing, such as community payback?

Over the next few months, we will be focusing on sharpening up the model still further by addressing these questions and others. In doing so, we will continue to consult with those who have been involved in taking forward these ideas – and more, in our commitment to helping offenders leave behind their history of offending and become valued members of society. Many thanks to all who have shared their experience and ideas in helping us carry out this commitment.

Participants

Phil Hope MP	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Skills, Dept. for Education & Skills
Jane Bateman	Offender Learning & Skills Programme, Social Inclusion & Offenders Unit, Dept. for Education & Skills
Steve Murphy	Deputy National Offender Manager Service & Regional Offender Manager, London
Mitch Egan	Regional Offender Manager, North East, National Offender Management Service
Adrian Scott	Deputy Head, Community Integration Unit, Home Office
John Podmore	Head of Transitional Facilities & Communities Prisons Projects, National Offender Management Service
Sharon Barrett	Head of Interventions, Sheppey Prisons Cluster
Sandra Fraser	Head of Learning & Skills, HMP Wealstun
Terry Kenyon	Head of Learning & Skills, HMYOI Huntercombe
Jill Shaw	Head of the Community Re-Integration Team, National Probation Directorate
Keith Waldman	Education, Training Employment (ETE) Manager, Hampshire Probation
Robert Newman	Senior Policy Adviser, Education, Training & Employment, Youth Justice Board
Matt Logan	Chief Executive Officer, Leaf Systems Ltd.
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