

## PRD project – case study

Building effective practice in partnership working to support young adults (18- 24) to progress to employment, including apprenticeships



**Project title – How can Offender Learning respond to the needs of Young Offenders by linking the education offer in custody to opportunities for Apprenticeships on release from custody?**

### Contact information

**Main contact:** Diane Koppit

**Name of Peer Review and Development (PRD) group:** KB1,KB10

### Participating organisation(s):

HMP Bullwood  
HMP Chelmsford  
HMP Bedford  
HMP Peterborough  
HMP The Mount  
HMP Wellingborough

### What the PRD group set out to do and why

The aim of this study was to assess the suitability of the education curricula offered in participating prisons to support learners for possible entry onto an apprenticeship programme. The prisons represented are: HMP Chelmsford, Bullwood Hall, Bedford, The Mount, Wellingborough and Peterborough.

The main intended outcome was to identify a link from each prison to the training providers within the local area of each prison, in order to build pathways between offenders' education inside to training programmes available on release.

- review and where necessary restructure the curriculum offer within custody to accommodate these links in the future;
- build capacity within the PRD group to start the process of training apprentices in prison, providing a clear route to complete this study on release in line with Government policy.

### What has been achieved so far

The following actions were taken:

1. A list of training providers was compiled that offered a range of apprenticeships that were located near to each establishment.
2. A link person in each prison was identified to continue working with the apprenticeship providers.
3. A telephone questionnaire was compiled and training providers were contacted by phone.

A list of training providers was researched and identified those that offered apprenticeships in construction, catering or business administration.

A link person within each prison establishment has been identified to continue working with apprenticeship providers.

A telephone questionnaire was compiled and training providers were contacted by phone and results analysed.

A copy of each prisons curriculum has been sourced.

A brochure outlining local training links to each prison has been produced which identifies how the prison curriculum offer supports the learners and the requirements of those training providers.

The following questions were asked of training providers:

1. What criteria do you use to pre-select candidates?

The nationwide criteria required for eligibility onto an Apprenticeship programme is:

- a. Residency in the EU for 3 years or more.
- b. Employment of 30 hours a week.
- c. Academically being under Level 4.

In addition to complying with the above criteria, the National Apprenticeship Scheme website requires an on-line application to be completed. This needs to fit the job description and be of a suitable length. Most providers commented that, in their experience the application is minimal in length, with incorrect punctuation, wording and spelling mistakes.

Most employers require GCSEs in English and Maths Grades A-C, for Engineering apprenticeships GCSE Science would be an advantage. All training providers assess candidates for their levels in English/Maths and some require an additional written assessment. Most training establishments conduct aptitude tests in the chosen vocational areas before a panel or individually conducted interview.

2. Would non-academic skills compensate for a lack of academic skills?

Some employers are quite adamant that they require GCSEs A-C in English

and Maths others will look for life skills, loyalty, punctuality, enthusiasm, a willingness to work, an interest in the subject to be studied, motivation and commitment.

3. What additional skills have you found that need to be taught in order for the candidate to achieve?

For candidates who are unsuccessful at interview, most training providers offer a pre-employment course which offers job search skills, CV writing and interview techniques. Punctuality and attendance on courses is closely monitored and reviewed.

Work-based assessors identify any additional skills that candidates need to cover. This would include specialist tuition for dyslexia or other learning difficulties or a vocational skill that requires further practice.

4. If learners drop out, what would be the most common reason?

Most employers cited a lack of commitment or attendance at college. In the construction trades employers often released an apprentice because of financial difficulties. Travel costs were cited by providers as too expensive and often lead to candidates dropping out. There were those who started an apprenticeship and then decided that it was not the correct career path for them.

Although some apprentices earn a reasonable wage – Engineering £250pw others are paid the minimum wage of £2.50ph (construction).

5. How best could we support learners for possible entry onto an apprenticeship programme?

All providers agreed it was necessary to teach functional skills and employability. In addition the following were cited:

- a) Provide information about career possibilities and try to match candidates to their career choice eg. hands-on or academic.
- b) Level 1 qualification in their chosen vocation.
- c) Encourage learners to progress and learn new skills.
- d) Prepare learners to take responsibility for their own learning.
- e) Ensure that learners have a record/portfolio (log book) of what they have achieved that could be presented at interview.
- f) Prepare learners for the interview, stressing their need to show enthusiasm, commitment and reliability.
- g) Ensure that learners have a good CV well punctuated with correct grammar, showing any enhanced skills.

### **What still needs to be done**

Going forward we would like to take this project further by being able to work with the training providers, with individual prisoners and forge the links required for them to

be able to start an apprenticeship on release from custody. If we are able to secure additional funding to support the further development of this project in this way we would look to introduce another Young Offenders Institute in the second phase.

## **Resources to be shared with the sector**

The information that has been gathered has been collated into brochures for each establishment to inform prisoners of training opportunities and the requirements of training organisations on release from custody. This information can also be used to inform the sentence planning of prisoners at the start of their journey within custody to support their ultimate aim of gaining employment on release and to reduce their risk of reoffending in the future.

## **Key learning points**

### **Conclusion**

This project has confirmed that the main requirements of the curriculum to support opportunities in the future from prison education onto apprenticeships on release are currently available.

The impact of this project has been a clarification that the learning and skills offer within prisons is on the right track to meet both government objectives and widen opportunities to the offenders in custody on release.

All the prisons currently provide Functional Skills in English and Maths from Entry 1 to Level 2 and a City and Guilds qualification in Employability and Personal Development, which are the primary requirements for acceptance onto an apprenticeship.

The focus within prisons on gaining and developing employability skills in recent years has meant that there has been a change in the approach to the delivery of education and training. There is now a more holistic approach to changing the attitude and thinking skills of a prisoner. The undertaking of learning and skills activities are recognised by the training providers who were interviewed and seen as an asset to their future opportunities.

In addition the prisons offer a wide-range of Level 1 qualifications in vocational subjects that link to the apprenticeship offer. Attendance on one of these courses enables learners to show motivation and commitment towards their chosen vocation.

Initially there was a reluctance within the training sector to engage with us on this project and a great deal of perseverance was required to obtain the information that we needed to support the project proposals. There appeared to be some confusion regarding the access to funding for different groups of learners which may need clarification to prevent complications in the future regarding access to funding for apprenticeship schemes.

### **Recommendations**

It is suggested that the following should be discussed and possibly implemented into the current curriculum offer:

1. Learners are released with a grammatically correct CV, which shows their skills development and any enhanced skills.

2. Learners are adequately prepared for a panel interview, which usually includes the prospective employer.
3. Learners should record the skills that they have achieved in a portfolio or logbook for presentation at interview.