

Digital Exclusion Profiling of Vulnerable Groups

Ex-offenders: A Profile



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Citizens Online and National Centre for Social Research
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Department for Communities and Local Government

The findings and recommendations in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department for Communities and Local Government

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Section 1

About the profile

This profile considers the group of 'ex-offenders who have recently left custody'. It aims to understand group members' actual and potential interaction with technology. The starting point of the profile is to understand the life circumstances of group members through desk-based research. Our understanding of group members' (potential) engagement with technology has been developed largely through primary research. In particular, focus groups were set up with group members and professionals working with the group.

Detailed findings from the primary research as well as further background to this profile are available from the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Section 2

Who does this profile include?

This profile is about adults in England (aged 18+) who have recently been released from custodial sentences by the Criminal Justice System. In order to gather information about this group, it has been necessary to scrutinise the characteristics of the prison population, with its high annual rate of turnover, and then extrapolate to those people recently released.

Section 3

Ex-offenders – why do they matter?

Ex-offenders are not just a modest minority of the population. As far back as 1998, a report¹ from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimated that they constituted up to one third of the working population, and that by the age of 30, one in three men has a criminal record for offences other than those connected with motoring, although far fewer actually have experienced custody. In the Home Office consultation report² on the 1974 Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, the proportion of the working population of ex-offenders was set as 25 per cent, with the annual costs to society of crime as £60bn, and the reduction in offending caused by getting ex-offenders into employment was stated as between one third and one half. In 2001, approximately 5 million of the UK population had a criminal conviction that could have involved imprisonment³.

In the last ten years, the UK prison population has soared by an additional 25,000 to around 82,000 in total, with around a quarter of a million people serving community sentences. The numbers of those sentenced to custody being released into the community, particularly those released early to try and relieve the resultant prison overcrowding, have become a thorny political issue.

If after release from prison, ex-offenders largely took up law-abiding lives, then the current multi-billions of expenditure on the Criminal Justice system might be seen as value for money. Sadly for everybody concerned, the reverse is the case and more than two thirds of ex-offenders re-offend and are returned to prison within 2 years⁴. This figure is a few percentage points higher for those ex-offenders aged 18-21.

Despite the findings in both the documents referenced above, which agree on and emphasise the link between employment and desistance from offending, unemployment is still the norm for most people as they leave prison, as more than two thirds who enter are already unemployed, and more than 80 per cent are unemployed on release.

¹ Fletcher D.L., Woodhill D., and Herrington A.(1998), *Employment and Training for ex-offenders*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

² Home Office (2002), *Breaking the Circle*, 2002

³ CIPD Quick Facts www.crb.gov.uk/PDF/cipd_quick_facts_guide.pdf

⁴ Prison Reform Trust website figures www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk

Section 4

Who makes up the group of ex-offenders?

The prison population is overwhelmingly male – latest England and Wales figures show that just over 5 per cent are female, although that population has nearly doubled in a decade. More than 11 per cent were younger prisoners, (age 18-20) and there were 2,300 older prisoners (60+) including 454 over 70. The 60+ group is the fastest-growing section of the prison population⁵.

Prisoners on remand either awaiting trial or prior to sentencing, numbered just over 13,000 in March 2008. Only half of all remanded prisoners go on to receive a custodial sentence.

Twenty-six per cent of the prison population is from a minority ethnic group, compared to one in 11 of the general population, and of these more than half are from an African or African-Caribbean heritage, and this proportion is said to be rising. Foreign nationals make up a further 15 per cent of prisoners.

Two thirds of females and 55 per cent of males have dependent children under 18, around 160,000 children in total. One in four men receives no visitors in prison, and half of all women receive no visitors. Women are much more likely than men to lose their homes and possessions due to imprisonment – up to one third.

Levels of literacy and numeracy are well below the general average, with 48 per cent being at or below the reading level for an 11-year old, and 65 per cent below the numeracy level for that age. General population figures are around 23 per cent in both cases. There is an even greater disparity in issues such as mental illness where for sentenced prisoners, 72 per cent of males and 70 per cent of females suffer from two or more psychotic disorders as against figures of 5 per cent and 2 per cent for the general population.

A majority of prisoners abuse illegal drugs – this was acknowledged by the Justice Minister, David Hanson, in announcing a review of illegal drugs use in prisons in March 2008: “With around 40,000 problematic drug users in prison at any one time, and an average of 55 per cent of new prisoners testing positive for Class A drugs (rising to 80 per cent in some instances) there is a high demand for drugs in prisons and therefore considerable pressure to smuggle drugs in.” Hazardous drinking habits are also nearly double the norm for the males and significantly more for females.

⁵ Most figures in this section are from the June 2008, Bromley Briefing. Prison Reform Trust www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk

Finally, there is a prevalence of HIV infection in prisons that is 15 times higher than in the wider community, and 9 per cent of men and 11 per cent of women in prison have hepatitis C (twenty times higher than the rate of 0.4 per cent in the general public)⁶.

A report⁷ prepared for the Anglican Church in 2006 noted that prior to sentencing individuals are “typically severely disadvantaged with regards to educational achievement, basic skills and employment, accommodation, financial support and debt.”

Imprisonment makes the situation of many offenders worse. A third lose their accommodation, two thirds lose their employment, over a fifth come out facing increased financial problems and over 40 per cent lose contact with their families.

Two thirds of prisoners released from prison have been serving sentences of less than 12 months, although the numbers of prisoners serving longer or indeterminate sentences are rising faster than any other category.

⁶ Survey of HIV and Hepatitis in Prisons, Prison Reform Trust and National Aids Society 2005.

⁷ Extract prefacing a paper on how the Anglican Church should be reaching out to ex-offenders. www.oxford.anglican.org/page/2887/2006.

Section 5

What are the causes of offending or re-offending?

Why do some people offend and others in similar circumstances do not? Contributory factors are going to vary with each individual, but the familiar list of low socio-economic group, poverty, living in a disadvantaged area, difficult home circumstances and uncaring family attitudes will usually be present to a greater or lesser degree in most cases. People who were taken into care as children make up more than a quarter of all prisoners. In addition, nearly half of all males and one third of females in custody were excluded from school, and half of males and 71% of females achieved no qualifications at all at school or college. Prior to conviction, two thirds of the prison population were unemployed, and one third were homeless.

Low levels of literacy and numeracy were noted in the preceding section, and nearly one third of the prison population truanted regularly from school. However, a variety of learning difficulties and disabilities are also evident – between 20-30 per cent of prisoners are thought to be affected – for example 7 per cent have an IQ of less than 70.

70,000 children and young people, enter the Youth Justice system for the first time every year, many of whom continue with repeated offences into adulthood.

The following paragraph is quoted directly from the PRT website⁸.

“Investment instead of treatment for (drug) addicts would lead to a measurable drop in offending. Much acquisitive crime, shoplifting and theft, is driven by drugs. Binge drinking fuels violence and public disorder offences. In a welcome move the government has commissioned Lord Bradley’s review of the scope for diverting the mentally ill and people with learning disabilities from police stations and courts into much-needed health and social care. The fact is so many of the solutions to crime lie outside prison bars.”

Young people are responsible for 40 per cent of crimes such as theft, burglary, robbery and violence and youth crime and fear of youth crime are blighting many communities.⁹

⁸ www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/subsection.asp?id=685

⁹ Quote from Nacro website 2008. www.nacro.org.uk/services/youthcrime.htm

Following release from custody, an ex-offender needs to find somewhere to live and money to live on. Homelessness for ex-offenders is a very significant issue, because if they cannot return to the family home, or were homeless prior to entry into prison, they may well become homeless on release, which exacerbates the likelihood of re-offending. It is also obvious that a person with only the Discharge Grant of £46.75 (a figure not increased since the mid-1990s) is unlikely to survive long if other sources of funds and support are not available immediately. For female prisoners with children, reuniting the family is their top priority on release, well ahead of finding employment, and having the means to sustain that family is vital.

Section 6

What barriers do ex-offenders face?

6.1 From barriers to pathways

Acknowledgement of the key problems that ex-offenders experience on release was considered in a Social Exclusion Unit Report¹⁰. This report identified seven 'pathways' to reduce re-offending:

- Accommodation (top priority)
- Education, training and employment
- Health
- Drugs and alcohol
- Finance, benefit and debt
- Children and families
- Attitudes, thinking and behaviour

The seven pathways are all seen as barriers and problems that ex-offenders face and require support with in order to integrate into communities and reduce the potential of re-offending. It should be borne in mind however, that if a prisoner was originally sentenced to less than a 12 month period, there is no post-release support or supervision from the Probation Service. It has already been stated that this tariff applies to two thirds of all prisoners.

There are a large number of organisations, local and national (see Section 15) supporting ex-offenders, but currently there is no effective umbrella or network joining up these services, and there are serious delays with the government's proposed new IT system called CNOMIS (Computer NOM Information System for Prison and Probation), aimed at providing up to date information to track and monitor people in the criminal Justice System.

Female offenders are often particularly disadvantaged – a study¹¹ by SOVA (Supporting Others through Volunteer Action) in 2005 noted that with only 18 prisons for women, the likelihood was that their time inside would be served a long way from home. This could have a particularly detrimental effect on family relationships, employment opportunities

¹⁰ SEU (2002), *Reducing Re-offending by Ex-prisoners*

¹¹ Toor, S. (2005), *Manual on tackling barriers to employment for women leaving prison*

and resettlement support because any work experience gained in the area near the prison may well bear no resemblance to the jobs available near the ex-offender's home post-release.

Much of the information that prisoners would find useful is on the Internet; for example information about jobs and training opportunities in their home area as well as careers websites. Bidding for social housing allocation is now almost entirely conducted over the web. Having access to the internet would enable prisoners to undertake their own research and explore numerous ETE opportunities. However, there are obvious security and risk issues associated with the use of the Internet in prison setting, and the general circumstances surrounding access in prisons are explained further in Section

A survey by Citizens Advice¹² looked at the number of times that prisoners are moved while in custody, and came out with an average of four. Concern was expressed that this disrupts links with the family, and affects the continuity of work and training in prison.

In consultation with ex-offenders the Prince's Trust looked at barriers, suggestions and programmes related to release, resettlement and intervention¹³:

- Most young people had not been met by a worker or family member at the time of release from custody and many had gone straight out to buy drugs and alcohol, resulting in re-offending.
- Suddenly being free of the routine and discipline of prison was a shock and a challenge
- Not having a clear plan at the point of release often resulted in re-offending
- The stigmatisation of a criminal record or prison history meant difficulty finding work, building relationships and accessing services

What was needed was:

- Advice and support from people who have been through the same experiences
- Access to courses and qualifications that can be continued in different places, including different prisons and in the community
- Incentives and rewards (eg privileges in prison for taking part in education)
- The same person providing support during the transition from prison to community
- Practical support with accommodation and independent living on release from prison
- An activity or programme to engage with immediately on release from prison, especially those that help with acclimatisation

¹² Citizens Advice Bureau (March 2007), *Locked Out: CAB Evidence on prisoners and ex-offenders*

¹³ Prince's Trust (2007), *Breaking the Cycle of Offending* www.princes-trust.org.uk/Main%20Site%20v2/headline%20news/whats%20in%20your%20region/youth%20offending%20summit.asp

Young ex-offenders felt that mentor support would make a huge difference. They also wanted more access to courses and pre-release programmes. On release from custody, they wanted an activity to engage with immediately and practical support with independent living.

6.2 Maintaining contact with families

Four charities collaborated to submit a Parliamentary briefing¹⁴ in 2007 to the Inter-Ministerial Group on Reducing Re-offending. It succinctly sets out the reasons why sustaining contact with families benefits both offender and family, but also states:

“Prisoners who received visits from their family were twice as likely to gain employment on release and three times as likely to have accommodation arranged as those who did not receive any visits.”

This Briefing also points out that 7 per cent of all children will experience a parent being in custody at some point during their school years, and that more children are affected by the imprisonment of a parent each year (around 160,000 pa) than are affected by divorce. Unlike virtually all other vulnerable groups of children, there are no statutory responsibilities to either collect information about or make special provision for such children, who have been shown to have a much greater incidence of mental health issues than the general population. This briefing contains many recommendations of both a practical and a policy nature to ameliorate these circumstances.

In June of 2008, there was considerable publicity, generated by the National Consumer Council supported by the Prison Reform Trust, about the excessive costs to prisoners of telephone calls to families, in some cases up to seven times the household rate. Set against the facts that many prisoners are held a long way away from families, have little access to cash and have no electronic means of maintaining contact, this must be seen as a significant barrier to the prospects of maintaining contact, with all the beneficial aspects that brings.

6.3 Employment and financial issues

In seeking a job, an ex-offender may or may not have to declare their conviction, dependent upon the length of sentence¹⁵, and the time elapsed since (Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974). These periods after which a conviction is considered as ‘spent’ vary according to the age when sentenced (under or over 18) as well as with the length of sentence. However, a prisoner who was sentenced to more than two and a half years can never have his sentence considered as ‘spent’ and must always disclose it to a potential employer.

¹⁴ Prison Reform Trust, CLINKS and Prison Advice and Care Trust (December 2007), *The children and families of prisoners: recommendations to government, Action for Prisoners Families* (www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk/uploadedFiles/Influencing_Policy/Agenda%20for%20Action%20Final.pdf)

¹⁵ Useful guide to the ROA on NACRO website www.nacrodisclosures.org.uk/Q66.htm#periods

Advice to employers on the website of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development¹⁶ states: “Evidence shows that of all things to put an employer off, a criminal record is the worst”. Hence the dilemma that faces many ex-offenders who want to work, even though they will be aware that if they hide their conviction(s) which subsequently come to light, they are likely to have lost the trust of their employer, and likely also their job.

For ex-offenders from minority ethnic communities, a report¹⁷ from Manchester University sets out an even greater set of barriers in terms of entry to employment, as they face a double discrimination from many employers.

Before finding employment there is usually going to be a period when the ex-offender needs to claim benefits – this process is as a rule not started in prison, although limited trials of ‘jobsearch kiosks’¹⁸ have been carried out in 2005 and recommended for further study due to their beneficial effects – and therefore once the ex-offender has signed on for benefits there is a wait until receipt. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some people can wait up to three months for first payments.

Perhaps a less well-known effect of imprisonment is that of the difficulties in gaining insurance. Most insurance companies will not provide insurance to ex-offenders, which means that they are unable to insure belongings at their home or if they start a small business, or even take out Employer’s Liability Insurance. If somebody takes an ex-offender into their home as a lodger, it could well invalidate their household insurance. Having had no fixed abode at which to have a utility bill, and being generally less likely than the average population to have had a passport or driving licence, means that opening of even a basic bank account can be problematic, and of course Direct Payments require that. Prisoners discharged to hostel accommodation equally face similar barriers for using that type of an address for financial purposes.

For some prisoners, who have spent some years in prison, the developments in technology can be baffling, and the sorts of operations that the general population now accept as part of normal life, eg the depersonalisation of banking and the access to cash via ‘holes in the wall’ can cause real problems (see case study by UNLOCK in section 13).

6.4 Qualitative research on barriers and issues

The remainder of this section is based on the findings of the interviews and focus groups with ex-offenders and some professionals who work with them, which were carried out during the development of this profile.

¹⁶ www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/dvsequ/exoffenders/crimrec.htm

¹⁷ Smith E., Haslewood-Pocsik I., and Spencer J. (March 2006), *Barriers to the Employment of BME ex-offenders*

¹⁸ www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/rdsolr2505.pdf

Professionals discussed issues facing ex-offenders on release from prison. The professionals that took part in the focus group were working with offenders before and after release from prison to help them to integrate back into society. According to professionals, offenders can be 'institutionalised' by imprisonment, becoming accustomed to a regimented life and finding it difficult to adjust to life outside of prison. Professionals reported a lack of sufficient support for ex-offenders during the transition back into the community. Probation officers were said to have large caseloads and insufficient time for individual cases, resulting in problems with release and resettlement. This, as well as prison transfers (which disrupt any training/resettlement programmes), insufficient resources and early release, lead to offenders being unprepared for leading an independent life in the community.

On release, ex-offenders not only need help with basic needs such as accommodation and finances (eg benefits and budgeting), but also additional disadvantages mean that ex-offenders may need support around learning difficulties, mental health issues and/or drug/alcohol addictions. Both ex-offenders and professionals described a desire held by ex-offenders to lead a 'normal' life. This aspiration may include living independently (not in supported housing), full-time employment, avoiding drugs and alcohol and being in a stable relationship.

Figure 1 summarises the issues facing ex-offenders as identified both by professionals and ex-offenders themselves. These are ongoing issues, as well as problems facing ex-offenders soon after release from prison. Professionals emphasised the importance of recognising that the ex-offenders attending these focus groups and others the professionals are working with are those receiving help and support. However, there are other ex-offenders who are not receiving such support, resulting in a more disadvantaged 'group' of ex-offenders whose needs are probably more acute than those covered here.

Figure 1: Key issues facing ex-offenders

Effect of prison:

- institutionalisation by imprisonment
- difficulty relearning how to live independently
- not sufficiently prepared for release while in prison

Housing:

- resettlement issues on release from prison
- 'independent living' considered to be a priority
- need for help with orientation in unfamiliar city if relocated

Figure 1: Key issues facing ex-offenders (continued)**Education/skills:**

- sense of 'failure' from previous negative educational experiences
- might need help with basic skills e.g. literacy and numeracy
- might need help with life skills e.g. social skills, cooking, personal hygiene
- poor educational attainment
- average reading age of prisoner is 6 years old

Employment issues:

- need help finding employment – writing CVs and interview skills
- might need help with childcare when working

Financial issues:

- might need advice on receiving benefits and help filling in benefit forms
- help learning how to budget
- might need help setting up a bank account

Additional disadvantages:

- not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- could also have learning difficulties
- might also be accessing mental health services or have mental health issues
- may have drug and/or alcohol addictions

Section 7

What do the numbers tell us?

Due to the complexity of discharges from and recalls to prisons, it has been difficult to get an exact annual number of offenders released into the community. Figures from the 2005 NOMS offender management caseload statistics¹⁹, show on p127, that there were 70,500 releases that year, of which 27,600, were from sentences of 12 months and more. The Probation Statistics Quarterly Brief, issued by the Ministry of Justice, gives the overall caseload of 93,660 offenders being supervised immediately before or after release in September 2007, representing a five per cent increase since September 2006, but of course this figure omits those offenders who have received less than a 12 month sentence, unless they were under 22 on release, in which case they receive a three month period of supervision provided they do not pass their 22nd birthday within that three months.

Overall the prison population is forecast to grow, by 2014, to nearly 102,000, largely due to the growth in longer and indeterminate sentences, therefore releases into the community will grow more slowly.

Prison costs the state many billions of pounds – the average cost for each prisoner²⁰ was given as £40,992 in 2006. The overall costs of the criminal justice system – prisons, youth justice, probation, courts – had risen to 2.5 per cent of our entire Gross Domestic Product by 2007²¹, which is a higher per capita cost than for the USA or any EU country.

For most prisoners, unemployment is the norm before entry – two thirds are unemployed at that point. Inside prison, there are only 24,000 work places for prisoners, mainly in workshops, catering, cleaning, land-based activities and day-release programmes – the majority is low-grade menial work for which a weekly wage of a minimum of £4 is paid. On the other hand, around 1500 people from open prisons go out to work in fulltime paid employment; these are generally long-term prisoners in the final stages of their custody. Altogether, only about 30 per cent of those in custody could be employed if they wanted to be.

A Home Office Study²² which followed up ex-prisoners between 2 and 12 months after release found that only half had done some paid work; two per cent were on a government training scheme and 48 per cent had not found any work. Of those who had done some paid work, nearly two-thirds found it after leaving prison. Only nine per cent arranged a job whilst in custody.

¹⁹ www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/hosb1806.pdf

²⁰ Hansard House of Commons written answers 18 April 2006

²¹ Lord Falconer, Today Programme, 23 January 2007

²² Stewart D. (2005), *An Evaluation of basic skills training for prisoners*, Home Office

A Report from Matrix²³ The Economic Case for and against Prison estimated the savings in costs of to the taxpayer and in crime reduction of various supportive interventions while offenders were in prison and gives detailed costs and savings for various scenarios. All resulted in substantial savings and some reductions in re-offending rates.

Since the homelessness status of ex-prisoners was highlighted a few years ago, new measures have been put into place to help prisoners into suitable accommodation on release. The Home Office now claims that in the year ended March 2006, 90 per cent of the total number of prisoners released in that year were found suitable accommodation²⁴. Entitlement to Housing benefit stops for all sentenced prisoners expected to be in prison for more than 13 weeks. Therefore many prisoners with a tenancy on entry are likely to lose their accommodation while in prison.

The figures on re-offending are worth repeating here – that within two years of release, more than 67.4 per cent of ex-offenders re-offend, and the figures are even higher for the 18-20 year group at 75.3 per cent. The figure quoted in the Social Exclusion Unit Report of 2002²⁵ for the costs to society of re-offending was £1.1bn – it has undoubtedly risen substantially since then!

Prison population Friday 20 June	83,245
Prison population previous Friday (13 June)	83,171
Prison population same Friday 2007	80,948
Weekly change	+74
Yearly change	+2297
Number of women and girls	4,502
Number in police cells	64

²³ www.matrixknowledge.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/the-economic-case-for-and-against-prison_web.pdf

²⁴ Hansard, House of commons Written Answers, 9 January 2007

²⁵ SEU (2002), *Reducing Re-offending by Ex-prisoners*

Section 8

Who provides support to the group?

8.1 Post-release support

'The Probation Service' is probably the reply that most lay-people would give to the above question, as offenders move from the custody of Her Majesty's Prison Service to the outside world. Certainly the Probation Service has the main direct responsibility for supervising offenders released on licence, overseeing in particular those offenders who are considered to potentially be likely to re-offend and constitute a continuing danger to the public such as sex-offenders, and overseeing some ex-offenders through specific programmes of support with substance abuse. The Probation Service also has a 'tariff' of length of support for prisoners released from longer sentences, working with each ex-offender to draw up and implement a personal plan aimed at assisting resettlement into the community. This reflects the Probation Service's priority remit of managing risk for public protection.

However, as has been clarified above, the majority of ex-offenders, those who are over 21 and are released having been sentenced to less than 12 months in custody, receive no continuing support or contact from the Probation Service at all. Such support as is available is delivered by a large number of third sector organisations, large and small, local, regional and national, almost all of whom raise their funds from local or national charitable sources. It is significant that no organisation has a statutory duty to provide help to ex-offenders.

The following figures from the CLINKS website²⁶ are food for thought:

- 73 per cent of prisoners would be willing to do voluntary work if it were available.
- Over 900 voluntary organisations are responsible for more than 2000 projects that provide services to offenders.
- Over 600 voluntary organisations work with offenders in the community.
- More than 7000 prison volunteers contribute to the rehabilitation of offenders.

The voluntary or third sector organisations that work with ex-offenders can range from those providing befriending and mentoring, information advice and training, helping with finding accommodation and signing on for benefits, to those who offer full residential accommodation in small units, often to ex-offenders who have a range of very complex problems.

A helpful listing of support agencies can be found on the Prison Service website²⁷.

²⁶ [www.clinks.org/\(S\(00nxjs45ul4xj3vldnoxwke0\)\)/index.aspx](http://www.clinks.org/(S(00nxjs45ul4xj3vldnoxwke0))/index.aspx)

²⁷ www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/adviceandsupport/azofsupportgroups/

A list of key public sector agencies and third sector organisations that operate nationally to support is given in section 15.

8.2 Education and training inside and out

One of the seven pathways to reduce re-offending is the ETE route (Education, Training and Employment), so it is useful to briefly look at the current provision in prisons, particular from the IT perspective of this study.

The main training provision inside prisons is provided by the Offender Learning and Support Service (OLASS), which is commissioned jointly by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). The range of provision, from Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to the course content, is governed by a document called the Offender Learning Journey²⁸, published in 2004. OLASS is actually delivered by 22 different training providers, from all sectors, who either have a geographic or a topic responsibility, and the contracts are let across the English regions. The content of OLASS provision is heavily weighted towards basic skills and Level 2 provision.

Discussions with a leading OLASS provider brought out the fact that in the main, individual prisons still operate fairly independently, and therefore cooperation with external training staff could be variable. IT equipment could be quite elderly, and in many cases PCs in a training room were not internally networked; there was no web access and so interactive CDs were used for some purposes. This situation may improve as the funds for purchasing equipment are being transferred to the training providers from 2008-09. Further difficulties were evident in the lack of internet access even for training staff – it was common for staff from 3 different training providers to be queuing to use the one machine with web access in their lunch hours, for the purposes of trying to track down a learner who had been transferred to another prison with no prior warning. It was clear that in cases like this, contact was often lost, meaning that learning records did not follow the offender, and therefore credits towards achievement, that might otherwise be transferred to an external course, could be lost. Efforts are in hand, in partnership with the NIACE to develop an e-learning strategy for offenders, broadening the curriculum and assuring the access of all offenders to achieve at least basic IT skills, but engaging the institutions and the NOMS in the process has not yet been achieved.

Once an offender leaves custody however, the picture changes totally. The expectation is that offenders will participate in college courses alongside the general public, picking up where they left off if their course inside prison was not completed. There is no specialist learning provision funded by the state services. This inevitably presents enormous barriers of timeliness – most college courses run on inflexible annual timetables, cost, access and transfer of credits as previously mentioned, not to mention the lack of confidence and self-esteem that will mean many ex-offenders do not re-engage with their learning.

²⁸ www.dfes.gov.uk/offenderlearning/uploads/documents/adult_OLJ_V0.5a.doc

Change is in progress however, and the measures set out in the document²⁹ *Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment: next steps 2006* which should be fully implemented by 2009 will tackle many of these weaknesses, engage closely with employers to develop a ‘campus’ model for prisons, and draw up a ‘rights and responsibilities’ agreement with ex-offender participants.

There are some pilot projects that have brought either internet-based courses (learndirect) or higher education courses into selected prisons. The Open University currently has some 1,500 students on its books (see also the Open University case study in section 13). The Offender Information Service (a division of the NOMS) is running a pilot in some London prisons called POLARIS (also described in section 12).

8.3 Partnership working at local authority level

Local authorities are working with many local partners in a variety of structures, tackling re-offending in a number of ways. At the Local Authority Beacon Awards Ceremony in London on 4 March 2008, the winners of the Reducing Re-offending Beacon Theme were announced.

The winners were:

- Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- Sunderland City Council
- the joint application of Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council, Melton Borough Council, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council.

As a typical example, here is a summary of why Bolton was successful:

“Bolton has a well-developed and successful re-offending strategy underpinned by an evidence-based approach, community involvement and well-founded partnerships. The use of data and software is impressive, and supports the work of the co-located police and probation Offender Management Unit. Housing partners and the voluntary sector provide a wide range of services for vulnerable groups such as sex workers, as well as impressive multi-agency partnership action with priority and prolific offenders”.

²⁹ www.dfes.gov.uk/offenderlearning/uploads/documents/Reducing%20Re-Offending%20Through%20Skills%20and%20Employment%20Next%20Steps.pdf

8.4 Qualitative research about who helps this group

The organisations participating in the research provided a broad range of services to ex-offenders. These included:

Help with accommodation

- direct provision of accommodation (eg supported housing – single units and shared accommodation)
- help finding appropriate accommodation (may be part of moving on from supported accommodation)
- important in order to prevent homelessness

Providing learning and training opportunities

- help with organising learning and training opportunities, such as Personal development programmes through local colleges

Help with benefits and budgeting

- help filling in benefit forms and understanding official letters
- advice around money and debt management
- setting up bank accounts and using chip and pin technology

Finding and gaining employment

- help with job searches via the Internet
- writing a CV
- preparation for employment, such as interview techniques and practice

Support with accessing other services

- signposting (eg mental health services, GPs, dentists, opticians)
- help arranging appointments
- reminders sent via text or phone calls

Health and well-being provision

- enabling clients to access addiction and rehabilitation programmes
- support around spiritual needs
- emotional support and mentoring
- learning how to cook

Social/leisure activities

- providing opportunities for social interaction and fun through for example, arranging Christmas parties
- leisure activities (eg getting passes for local gym and swimming pool)

Personalised support by key workers

- give clients the confidence to move forward towards independent living
- accompany client to appointments
- provide encouragement to get out of bed and leave the house
- phone services on behalf of clients (eg Housing Benefit, JobCentre Plus etc)
- listen to clients problems
- warn clients if behaviour is unacceptable

For more information about national organisations that provide support services to ex-offenders, please see the listing in section 15 of this profile.

Section 9

Access to helping services

The content of this section is derived from the interviews and focus groups carried out for this research.

9.1 Barriers and facilitators

Figure 2 provides an overview of factors identified by ex-offenders and service providers in the qualitative research, which encourage or discourage the use of helping services.

Figure 2: Barriers and facilitators to service use among ex-offenders

Barriers

- **Lack of access to computer/Internet at home** restricts access to online services such as social housing bidding systems
- Possible **difficulties using a telephone**. Telephone based service delivery requires telephone skills and patience. Automated phone systems can be frustrating for ex-offenders if have problems using the phone
- **Poor literacy skills** and limited reading ability result in text based delivery being problematic
- Any **costs** associated with service use, such as using mobile phones to call services (often ex-offenders don't have landlines and using mobiles is more expensive); paying for travel to services
- **History of failure** which inhibits learning in traditional settings and fear of learning
- Lack of **confidence** to approach service providers due to history of failure
- Some offenders are **banned from the Internet** such as paedophiles
- Not being **aware** of what services are available

Figure 2: Barriers and facilitators to service use among ex-offenders (continued)**Facilitators**

- **Access to Internet** at the library, Jobcentre Plus, employment agencies
- **Intermediaries** who work with the client to help access services e.g. a key worker rings telephone based services on behalf of the client
- **Signposting** and advice about services from support worker, Jobcentre Plus and librarians
- **Personal advisers** providing individual help and support
- **Encouragement** from support workers to access services; increase confidence in ability to access services
- **Free access to services** – no cost involved in accessing service; no travel costs; free Internet access
- **Flexibility of online learning** can overcome barriers to traditional learning e.g. modular courses, exams can be taken when ready
- **Being given a mobile phone by helping service** e.g. support workers give old work phones to ex-offenders; employment agencies provide mobile phones so can contact client if a job comes up
- **Funding** for laptops and Internet access (Open University, Community Care Grants, Access to Learning)

9.2 Preferred methods of accessing services

Channel preferences (or preferred methods of accessing services) among the ex-offenders that attended the focus groups varied from one participant to another. There was a discussion in both groups around the importance of having a choice of methods, and how preference might vary depending on the service and information being accessed.

All of the ex-offenders that took part were currently residing in supported housing. The support workers employed by the supported housing services were often viewed as the principal reference point for finding out about things and access to helping services. Although they may be aware of more direct methods of accessing services, there was often a preference for working through these intermediaries. Participants said this was because it was easy to speak to their support worker face-to-face and they would expect to receive a clear and non-judgemental response. Although not explicitly discussed by the ex-offenders attending the groups, concern around receiving a non-judgmental response suggests the importance of service providers avoiding stigmatising ex-offenders.

Some preferred to access services in person, visiting a local office and having a discussion face to face. This was particularly so for more complicated issues where the answer to a question may depend upon personal circumstances, such as for benefits and housing advice. Those with learning difficulties especially expressed difficulties in understanding information provided in written form or over the phone.

Others preferred to access services online. Those with the knowledge, skills and access to a computer liked the ease, anonymity and low costs associated with using the Internet to access services. This was particularly the case when participants were feeling low or depressed and lacking in self-esteem, as using online services meant they were able to hide their facial expressions and body language so that people could not tell they were upset.

Additionally, the library was commonly noted as a source of information about services and was a place that some ex-offenders visited regularly, e.g. for access to the Internet. However, participants with reading problems reported avoiding libraries because going into a library made them feel ashamed. Others said libraries were old fashioned and they would rather look something up on the Internet.

Figure 3 provides an overview of 'contact points' used by ex-offenders who attended the focus groups. These are venues, online sites, telephone services and other points of reference that are used by ex-offenders and could be used for advertising or accessing services of relevance to them.

Figure 3: Contact points for ex-offenders

Venues:

- Health care services such as GPs, hospitals, mental health services, 'well man' clinics
- Libraries
- Leisure centres
- Local colleges
- Training centres
- JobCentre Plus
- Employment agencies such as Work Directions
- Supported housing services
- Probation service
- Social services

Figure 3: Contact points for ex-offenders (continued)

Online sites:

- Facebook
- Friends Reunited
- Employment websites used for job searches
- Social housing

Telephone services:

- GP appointment line
- Travel line
- Help lines such as Samaritans

Other points of reference:

- Yellow Pages
- Teletext
- Leaflets received through letterbox
- Newspapers/magazines

Section 10

Views on and use of ICT

The content of this section is derived from the interviews and focus groups carried out for this research.

10.1 Types of ICT used by clients

There were varying levels of skills and knowledge in Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) use among those that attended the focus groups. Some were using digital technologies regularly and others not at all. Everyone had used a computer at some point, although the frequency and regularity of use varied quite considerably. For example, one participant was the administrator for an online chatroom, whereas another said that he did not know how to turn a computer on. There were also some ex-offenders learning basic computer skills through the local library and colleges.

The majority of ex-offenders that attended the groups had a mobile telephone. Reasons for not having a mobile phone included cost, a belief that phone calls are impersonal, and not having anyone to contact. Professionals discussed the common use of mobile phones among ex-offenders as few have landlines. However, professionals said that ex-offenders frequently change mobile phone numbers, making it hard for service providers to keep up.

There was limited use of digital television among the ex-offenders that took part in the focus groups. Some ex-offenders in the groups had bought 'digi-boxes', but were unable to use them because their aerial reception wasn't very good. According to professionals, some supported housing schemes for ex-offenders are currently installing digital television.

Figure 4 provides an overview of the types of ICT used by the ex-offenders in the focus groups and what each was used for:

Figure 4: Forms and nature of ICT use among ex-offenders

Mobile phones are used for:

- Phone calls – keeping in touch with family and friends/support worker; applying for benefits; emergencies
- Texts – cheaper than calls so preferred; problems with reading/ writing make texting problematic for some; text travel line to find out bus times; texts received from support worker as appointment reminders
- Music
- Games
- Internet – not commonly used as expensive
- Clock/alarm

Computers are used for:

- The Internet:
- Job searching
- Social networking: Facebook and Friends Reunited
- Online shopping
- Downloading music and films
- Research
- Websites for recipes and cooking advice
- Booking tickets for cinema, festivals
- Booking holidays
- Playing games
- Open University – studying degrees online
- Email used for staying in touch with relatives (especially those who live abroad)
- Word processing – for writing letters to employers, CVs etc

Games consoles (X-Box, Playstation, Wii) used for:

- Exercise
- Social interaction through interactive games
- Brain games
- Escapism – one participant said he uses an X-Box to cut himself off from the world when going through traumatic times
- Accessing the Internet
- Watching DVDs

Figure 4: Forms and nature of ICT use among ex-offenders (*continued*)

Digital TV (and interactive 'red' button) used for:

- Extra sports coverage
- Checking weather reports
- Entering competitions
- BBC and Channel 4 'On Demand'

MP3/MP4 players (less commonly discussed) used for:

- Listening to music
- Watching films

10.2 Factors affecting clients' views and use of ICT

Various factors were discussed as affecting the views and use of ICT among ex-offenders. These factors described by both professionals and ex-offenders are discussed below.

10.2.1 Availability and access

Generally, ex-offenders that took part in the focus groups did not have access to a computer or the Internet at home. However, there were ex-offenders that did have access which on occasion had been supplied by a service provider for educational purposes. Commonly, library computers were used as access was easy and cheap or free. However, some of those with reading difficulties discussed how going into a library made them feel ashamed of their literacy problems and so they avoided using them. Library access was also described as restrictive as time limits are given, they might all be in use and software is not allowed to be installed. The computers have to be booked in person which some found inconvenient and travel to the library could be expensive.

Professionals linked digital exclusion through lack of access to a computer to financial disadvantage. Not having access to the Internet could mean paying more for products that are available cheaper online. Not having an online bank account could make paying bills more difficult and possibly more expensive where online discounts are available. Ex-offenders themselves also made this link. One participant said that pre-paid credit cards could now be bought from newsagents and used to shop online, although lack of access to a computer could still prevent this. There was also a discussion about the sensitivities of using bank account details online due to fraud and identity theft. Although not explicitly discussed in the groups, using public computers could also be considered to increase these risks.

10.2.2 Offending behaviour

Prison was discussed by professionals as an institutional context that is 'anti-computers'. Prisoners have restrictions on use of the Internet as this is seen as a security risk. It is illegal for some prisoners (and ex-offenders) to use the Internet due to the predatory nature of their previous offending behaviour (eg paedophiles) and the security risk they are currently thought to pose. Professionals discussed a lack of investment in the ICT infrastructure in prisons meaning prisoners do not have access to newer models of computers. Short-term prisoners (12 months or less) were said to have little or no access to learning while in prison; and completion of courses was problematic for long-term prisoners due to prison transfers and early release. Some ex-offenders in the focus groups had accessed computer courses in prison, although they reported that places on such IT courses in prison were limited.

Both professionals and ex-offenders themselves discussed how on release from prison the change in the ICT landscape can be culture shock. According to professionals, a history of failure results in a reluctance to embark on learning, which in turn creates a barrier to learning about ICT. The ex-offenders that took part reported that pre-release courses were available to some but not all prisoners, depending on the length of their sentence. Restrictions on use of the Internet may also apply post-release, preventing access to ICT training courses after leaving prison. Some ex-offenders were discussed by professionals as needing constant supervision when using computers to stop offending behaviour, making ICT training difficult.

10.2.3 Cost

Cost of computers and connectivity was one of the main reasons participants did not own a computer. The Internet was considered to be good because it was thought to be cheap to access, but it meant buying a computer in the first place which is expensive. Participants discussed funding that could be accessed to help with the cost of a buying a computer and connectivity through Community Care Grants, Access to Learning and Open University. Professionals also discussed ex-offenders not having the money to buy computers to access the Internet and access via mobile phones being too expensive.

Sending texts rather than making phone calls was said to be a good way of keeping mobile phone costs down. Some ex-offenders had received mobile phones for free from employment agencies to keep updated on job opportunities. Others had bought mobile phones very cheaply (eg for a pound) or been given mobile phone via the supported housing scheme where they were living. Pay-as-you-go was said to be preferential by some in order to keep track of spending. Others considered contract phones to be a better option so they could receive free minutes and text messages.

Freeview television was discussed as being great because it's free. Those who had yet to buy what they termed 'digi-boxes' discussed whether a grant would be made available to those on Job Seekers Allowance when all TV 'goes digital', in order to make it accessible to everyone.

At times participants seemed to base their contributions to the discussion on presumptions and bits of information they had gathered, rather than a fully informed understanding of the costs associated with ICTs. For example, participants did not discuss ongoing charges for Internet access or free minutes via pay-as-you-go mobile phones. When discussing digital television, participants became confused as to what this actually meant, what the differences were between eg freeview, cable and 'digi-boxes' and what the associated costs would be.

10.2.4 Fear of being left behind as a motivating factor

Fear of getting left behind was a motivating factor to learn how to use ICTs for some of the ex-offenders that took part. Technology was said to be changing rapidly, with one ex-offender describing this as 'evolution'. Adverts give web addresses now rather than phone numbers and shopping online presents opportunities for discounts. One participant discussed how all his peers were using computers and so he had started a basic computer skills course so as not to be left behind. Positive role models in peer groups might therefore encourage ex-offenders to overcome their fear of learning and have a go at using ICTs.

10.2.5 Staying in touch

A key motivating factor for ex-offenders in using technology was to maintain social contacts. Mobile phones were used to keep in contact with family and friends, although text messages were preferred over phone calls as these were cheaper. Those without mobile phones said that they had no reason to own a phone as they did not have any family to contact.

Email was discussed as useful for staying in contact with relatives that lived abroad. However, there were also respondents that did not know what email was or had email addresses that had been set up by service providers but had never used them.

10.3 ICT access and skills among professionals

One theory explored in this piece of research was that frontline professionals working with ex-offenders may lack access to technology and ICT skills themselves. If this were the case, it would limit the extent to which these professionals were able to help their clients to engage with and use ICT. As noted earlier, this research is qualitative, so cannot provide any indication of the prevalence of ICT use and skills among service providers working with ex-offenders.

Staff working with offenders in prisons were said to have limited access to ICTs. Prison staff rely on a specific system called 'Quantum' with limited use (eg can only access specific sites; cannot use links to other sites). Resettlement services rely on prison staff to act as intermediaries to inform offenders about provision available to them after their custodial sentence and to access online services (eg to help offenders to make arrangements for accommodation, benefits and employment on release from prison). However, the

professionals at the focus group reported that prison staff are not very skilled with ICT. Due to security risks, no laptops are allowed in prisons and access to the Internet is restricted making it difficult to train prison staff on using ICTs.

However, among the non-prison based staff that took part in the focus group, ICT appeared to be widely used, for example, in their administrative work for the organisation and in order to stay in touch with colleagues and clients. Types of ICT commonly used by staff included: mobile phones, PCs, palmtops and laptops. Specific applications regularly used by staff included: email (Outlook), Internet (Broadband and Wi-Fi), databases, spreadsheets, Microsoft Word and other Office applications. The Local Inmate Database System and the Offender Assessment System are tools used in risk management of offenders by both prison and non-prison staff to assess their own safety when working with ex-offenders. Organisations reported being dependent on ICT access, one participant said that ICT is a *'major part of my life'*. As IT was regularly used at work it was considered to be an essential skill. However, volunteers for organisations working with ex-offenders do not all have computers.

10.4 Factors affecting service providers' views and use of ICT

Service providers described a range of ways in which ICT was used in their work.

Key factors identified as encouraging ICT use among professionals were:

- To maintain **contact** with clients and with colleagues both within their own organisation and in other organisations to whom clients might be referred
- To enable colleagues to **track staff movements** through online diaries
- The use of databases to **record client details** and progress
- The use of databases to keep a **record of other service providers** for potential referrals
- To enable staff to **share data securely** with colleagues and other service providers e.g. encrypting and emailing information
- **Helping clients** to job search, apply for jobs, apply for housing and benefits
- To **supervise high risk offenders** when using the Internet to make sure they don't commit an offence
- For client **risk assessment**
- For **resettlement information** and guidance
- To **save money** on packaging and posting by emailing information

Factors which currently hinder ICT use were also noted. These included:

- **System down-time** in relation to databases means that they cannot rely totally on them. Need to back-up with paper records to avoid disruption to work.
- Volunteers do not always have **access to computers**. Paper records are therefore relied on in preference to solely computer-based data storage.
- **Filters on Internet** to restrict access for security reasons mean that service providers sometimes can't access sites needed eg Sex Offenders Act.
- Due to **security risks**, no laptops are allowed in prisons at all, meaning that staffs outside of prisons are not allowed to bring laptops into prisons to deliver resettlement services or to work with prisoners on their ICTs skills pre-release.

10.5 What works

Ex-offenders were asked to think about the types of services that they had used and found particularly helpful. A summary of their responses is provided in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Examples of 'what works' in delivering services to ex-offenders

Supported housing schemes: providing ex-offenders with accommodation and also a support worker to help meet their individual needs

JobCentre Plus: provides a Personal Advisor (so you can ask questions), local and free access to Internet to search for jobs

Work Directions: provide a key worker, help with job searches, help applying for passport so able to work, Internet access and a mobile phone

Samaritans helpline: helpful for confidential advice and someone to listen to problems when feeling depressed

Zephyr course: access to computers, bus fares paid for, help with drug addictions

Library: access to computers and the Internet is free or cheap, easy to get to local library, able to access ICT courses, help available when needed

Open University: allow ex-offenders to study in own time, at own pace; provide laptop and Internet access whilst studying

Chat rooms: allow people to contact others in similar situations, a way of maintaining social interaction when feeling depressed and don't want to leave the house, a form of 'counselling online'

**Figure 5: Examples of ‘what works’ in delivering services to ex-offenders
(continued)**

Text messages as appointment reminders: good because can’t lose a text as might do a letter; but not appropriate for everyone, some people prefer verbal communication as have literacy problems

Pre-paid credit cards: allow those without credit cards/bank accounts to shop online

Free/cheap mobile phones: currently supplied by some services providers e.g. supported housing staff

Non-judgemental support and advice: to make sure ex-offenders feel comfortable accessing services and not concerned about stigmatisation

Section 11

When is the best time to help?

If efforts to divert somebody from crime have failed, then while that person is serving a custodial sentence, this time can be used to address their problems, and in particular, ensure that there is an adequate 'safety net' for the critical period from a few weeks before release to a few weeks afterwards. At present, the importance of this period does not seem to be fully recognised by the statutory services, as it is for example, for young people leaving care. The highest rate of re-offending is within three weeks of leaving custody.

A very good overview that embraces the policy and legislative context as well as pointing the way ahead for provision, is of the Equal Projects³⁰, funded from the European Social Fund between 2001 to 2008. Under 'Matching Messages to Policy' it offers the following five key points of guidance:

- Adopt an offender-centred approach, that includes wrap-around services in prison and beyond the prison gate
- Ensure services are geared to preparing offenders for the job market, by equipping them with work and life skills that start in prison with a focus on vocationally-appropriate learning
- Ensure all stakeholders are effectively engaged and supported, and provide on-going workplace support to both ex-offenders and employers
- Design relevant policies to assist offenders into employment (including close alignment of strategies and funding). This also concerns supporting short-term prisoners and restorative justice models.
- Ensure all agencies have provision for women, young people and ethnic minorities

³⁰ www.equal.ecotec.co.uk/ezoneassets/ezone7/innovative_approaches.pdf

Section 12

What is the Government doing?

12.1 Policies and programmes

Prison policy and reducing re-offending have both been rising up the political agenda for the past decade. In 2004, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) was established, originally with the vision of merging the Prison and Probation Services, but after a rather shaky start, that route was abandoned, and the Probation Service remains an independent organisation.

Based in the Ministry of Justice, NOMS will develop a regional structure over the next two years – currently only London is fully operational with a Regional Manager. Central to the NOMS method of operating is the concept of commissioning, which will see a broadening of services to support ex-offenders, breaking the monopoly of the Probation Service, through service level agreements and contracts established with the public, private and third sectors.

(NOMS) is working towards a 10 per cent reduction in re-offending by the end of the decade. The *Five Year Strategy for Protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending*³¹ was published in February 2005. It sets out in detail the way forward for offender management in this country, breaking the strategy down into four distinct strands:

- protecting the public
- punishment, reparation and rehabilitation
- managing offenders better to stop them re-offending
- creating a vibrant system which values its staff

Regional Reducing Re-offending Partnership Boards³² are now in place in every region. Their purpose is to develop and deliver regional reducing re-offending plans to support the delivery of the national strategy.

³¹ Home Office (February 2006), *A Five Year Strategy for Protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending* www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/five-year-strategy?view=Binary

³² National Offender Management Service – http://noms.justice.gov.uk/managing-offenders/reducing_re-offending/re-offending-performance/

In 2006, and Inter Ministerial Group (IMG) was established, as a further initiative to support re-offending reduction. Some of the main challenges the IMG covers are:

- increasing the skills base employability of ex-offenders
- increasing employment
- preventing homelessness
- improving offender health.

The IMG is also responsible for reducing youth re-offending which is led by the Youth Justice Board (YJB)³³.

A listing of key items of the relevant legislation and policy is given in the table below.

Chronological Legislative and Policy Framework Relevant to Adult Offenders

Name and Date	Relevance	Department and Link
Crime and Disorder Act 1998	The Act places a statutory duty on chief police officers and local authorities to work together to develop and implement a strategy for reducing crime and disorder. The strategy must cover a district, borough or unitary authority area. Amended by Police Reform Act 2002	Home Office www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/cdact1.htm
Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000	An Act to consolidate certain enactments relating to the powers of courts to deal with offenders and defaulters and to the treatment of such persons, with amendments to give effect to recommendations of the Law Commission and the Scottish Law Commission.	www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/pdf/ukpga_20000006_en.pdf

³³ Youth Justice Board (YJB) Youth Justice Board

Name and Date	Relevance	Department and Link
<p>Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners <i>July 2002</i></p>	<p>There is now considerable evidence of the factors that influence re-offending. Building on criminological and social research, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) has identified nine key factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • education • employment • drug and alcohol misuse • mental and physical health • attitudes and self-control • institutionalisation and life-skills • housing • financial support and debt • family networks. <p>The evidence shows that these factors can have a huge impact on the likelihood of a prisoner re-offending. For example, being in employment reduces the risk of re-offending by between a third and a half; having stable accommodation reduces the risk by a fifth.</p>	<p>Social Exclusion Unit www.thelearningjourney.co.uk/file.2007-10-01.1714894439/download</p>
<p>Police Reform Act 2002</p>	<p>The Government published the White Paper, Policing a New Century: A Blueprint for Reform (CM 5326) in December 2001. The white paper set out the Government's intentions for the future of policing in England and Wales. It followed an extensive period of consultation with the police service, representative organisations and others. The key principles of the reform programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to continue the reduction in crime • to tackle persistent offenders more effectively • to improve detection and conviction rates • to tackle anti-social behaviour • to reduce the fear of crime • to provide support to victims of crime and • to rebuild public confidence in key aspects of the police service. 	<p>www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020030_en_1</p>

Name and Date	Relevance	Department and Link
The Criminal Justice Act <i>November 2003</i>	The Act includes making provisions for mental health treatment, drug rehabilitation and alcohol treatment.	Office of Public Sector Information www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2003/ukpga_20030044_en_1
Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan <i>2004</i>	Sets out the actions needed along seven 'pathways' to offenders rehabilitation and resettlement , ie accommodation; education, training and employment (ETE); health (mental and physical); drugs and alcohol (substance) misuse; finance, benefits and debt; children and families; attitudes, thinking and behaviour.	Home Office
Prolific and Other Priority Offender Strategy (PPO) <i>2004</i>	It is estimated that approximately 10% of the active offender population account for half of all crime and that a very small proportion of offenders (0.5%) are responsible for one in ten offences. The Prolific and other Priority Offender (PPO) strategy was announced by the Prime Minister in 2004 to provide end-to-end management of this group of offenders through three complimentary strands of the strategy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent and Deter • Catch and Convict • Rehabilitate and Resettle 	Home Office www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/ppo/ppominisite01.htm
Reducing Re-Offending through Skills and Employment <i>2005</i>	The <i>Reducing Re-offending through Skills and Employment: Next steps</i> (2006) identified three key areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Into work and away from crime • Gaining skills and improving employability • Motivated to work, skilled for employment 	OLASS (Offender Learning and Skills Service) www.dfes.gov.uk/offenderlearning
Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion <i>Sept 2006</i>	Setting out steps to tackle social exclusion at all stages in a person's lifetime	Cabinet Office www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/publications/reaching_out/reaching_out.aspx

Name and Date	Relevance	Department and Link
Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006	Concerning the ownership and use of weapons	www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2006/pdf/ukpga_20060038_en.pdf
Reducing Re-Offending through Skills and Employment: Next Steps 13 December 2006.	The new plan for resettlement intended to cut re-offending rates by some 15% by 2010	www.thelearningjourney.co.uk/news_item.2006-12-20.0115594973
The Corston Report: a review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System	The Corston Report sets out how women prisoners differ from men, both in the types of their offences, their adverse reaction to custody in many cases, and their poor experiences inside a penal system that was developed by and for men. It advocates many changes, including the closure of all current prisons for women, and the development of more and smaller units across the country, plus many other more practical recommendations, none of which have yet been implemented.	www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/corston-report/
Offenders Management Act 2007	Aims to reduce re-offending and better protect the public by improving the way in which offenders are managed. The main sections of the Act set out new arrangements for the provision of probation services, and the development of Probation Trusts, which in most areas are expected to develop from Probation Boards, although an element of 'contestability has been introduced.	www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070021_en_1

Name and Date	Relevance	Department and Link
National Drugs Actions Plan, Drugs: protecting families and communities. 2008–2011	<p>The 2008-2018 drug strategy comprises four strands of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting communities through tackling drug supply, drug-related crime and anti-social behaviour • preventing harm to children, young people and families affected by drug misuse • delivering new approaches to drug treatment and social re-integration • public information campaigns, communications and community engagement 	<p>Home Office http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/drug-strategy/ http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/drug-strategy/drug-action-plan-2008-2011?view=Binary</p>
Working Together to Cut Crime and deliver Justice a strategic plan for 2008-2011 <i>November 2007</i>	<p>The plan defines how we aim to achieve the vision, identifying how criminal justice agencies – police, prosecution, courts, probation, prison and youth justice services – will work together with other partners to improve efficiency and effectiveness in bringing offences to justice.</p> <p>It also sets out how the Criminal Justice System supports Government's wider drive to make communities safer through reducing crime and re-offending.</p>	<p>The Strategic Plan has been produced by the Office for Criminal Justice Reform (OCJR) on behalf of three Government departments: Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Attorney General's Office. www.cjsonline.gov.uk/downloads/application/pdf/1_Strategic_Plan_ALL.pdf</p>
Securing the Future: proposals for the efficient and sustainable use of custody in England and Wales, Lord Carter, Dec 2007	<p>Proposals for moderating the demand for custody and accelerating the prison-building programme.</p>	<p>www.justice.gov.uk/docs/securing-the-future.pdf</p>

Name and Date	Relevance	Department and Link
Criminal Justice and Immigration Act May 2008	This Act introduces a raft of various measures aimed at reform of the Criminal Justice System.	Ministry of Justice www.justice.gov.uk/publications/criminal-justice-bill.htm
Youth Crime Action Plan July 2008	A comprehensive cross-government analysis, and actions based on triple-track approach of 'enforcement and punishment' 'support and challenge' and 'better and earlier prevention'.	http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/15_07_08_youth_crime_action_plan.pdf

12.2 Measures and targets

Government targets are structured around Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSO). These high-level objectives steer local government targets through the system of Local Area Agreements (LAAs).

The key measure for reducing offending is contained in PSA 23, *Making Communities Safer*³⁴. It has four priority measures, all of which are about the reduction of various types of crime and disorder, but number four *Reduce re-offending through the improved management of offenders* is the most pertinent and will be measured by a reduction of the re-offending rates for youths and adults, and a reduction in the serious re-offences, all using 2004 as a baseline.

In selecting their 35 priorities from the list of 198 LAA indicators, 83 local authorities have selected the reducing re-offending measure, making it the thirteenth in the priority listing³⁵.

Further details on all 198 LAA indicators, and their relation to PSAs and DSOs can be found in the spreadsheet *Targets and Measures*. This document summarises the relevance of each target to the group and collects further information, where available, on the rationale behind the indicator, its precise definition, what data is collected and by whom.

³⁴ www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/9/4/pbr_csr07_psa23.pdf

³⁵ www.publictechnology.net/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=16424

Section 13

Case studies

13.1 Sheffield Youth Offending Service – Mission Maker Programme

Sheffield Youth Offending Service has developed a programme to re-engage young offenders through educational gaming sessions. The programme has worked across a spectrum of young offenders including some of the most entrenched such as those on Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes. The programme begins with a session evaluating widely available games and moves on to allow the participants to create their own games using Immersive Education's Mission Maker programme. All participants were either enrolled at Pupil Referral Units or had not attended their host school for a significant period. As such the prognosis for continuing education or training, or securing employment was bleak. A significant proportion had diagnosed learning difficulties such as ADHD, learning disabilities such as Autism, behavioural disorders and even Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

All those who completed the programme achieved two credits towards an ASDAN qualification. At the project completion an awards event was held where each young person demonstrated their game on the whiteboard in front of an audience of up to 20 including parents/carers, support workers and an industry representative who presents each with certificate. Each young person completing the programme receives a letter from Immersive Education. A senior representative of Immersive, who saw the work of the first four to complete, expressed his view that they had each equalled or exceeded the progress he would have expected from teachers on an equivalent training programme. The work of the subsequent participants was of at least equal, if not higher, standard.

Observations

- The young people remained calm and cooperative with each other and with staff both during the session and during the informal lunch and refreshment breaks.
- They stayed focussed on the task and were quietly keen to return to continue after their breaks.
- The young people progressed to the point where they took ownership of their games-making and tried out their own ideas. They were willing to improve through trial and error – and learned from their mistakes.
- All improved significantly in their ability to articulate the processes required to build actions into the game.

- The games produced have been of a high quality and have involved complex construction on the part of the young people.
- On separate occasions two young men added guns into their games. One removed them from his game after a discussion with the session leader and the other removed his before being confronted. Policy on this has now evolved and they may add guns but only if they add a consequence such as incarceration. The gaming was, thus, a useful vehicle for opening a discourse about the consequences of carrying weapons.
- They appreciated and respected the comfortable and professional surroundings at the City Learning Centre.
- Feedback from the young people was distinctly positive showing engagement with the gaming and a willingness to analyse and put forward contributions.

Screen shot from a Mission Maker game



A Mission Maker session in progress



Conclusions

This was a very ambitious project set as it was in a landscape studded with risks. In the event there were remarkably few significant issues and no real intractable crises. That this is due in no small part to the high ratios of high quality support does not vitiate the engagement value of the gaming software. The young people are positive about the programme and there have been some notable individual success stories where it is difficult to identify an alternative which would have had the same impact. The development of a shorter, more flexible, rolling-programme is being investigated and looks likely to be of even more relevance to a greater number of young offenders and disengaged young people. The programme team believe the approach would work equally well with offenders and ex-offenders aged 16+ years.

The potential to introduce and address issues of actions and their consequences is powerful. The project would appear to be well placed to meet the demands of recent central government policy developments (most notably the *Youth Crime Action Plan 2008*) combining as it does accredited skills development, supported progression to further education or return to education and developing links with employers and concepts of restorative justice. Testimony to this is the one young person of school leaving age from the second phase of the project – he has now secured a place at college to study ICT and also wishes to come back to Mission Maker programme to mentor other participants.

13.2 Northampton Probation Service – Using IT to encourage offenders on drug treatment and testing orders to take part in learning

Learners develop the IT skills they need to continue in education through an innovative programme in which they study in pairs. They develop skills and gain new confidence.

The improvement needed

Offenders on Drug Treatment and Testing Orders often lack skills they need to take advantage of opportunities in mainstream education. This is compounded by a lack of confidence that prevents offenders from being open to learning opportunities. The Probation Service sought to use IT as a tool to:

- engage learners in skills development
- provide a successful learning experience to bolster the learners' confidence
- provide opportunities for learners to develop their personal skills.

The aim is to help learners become sufficiently motivated to pursue their learning objectives independently and take advantage of public services which are widely available, but which these learners rarely access.

The approach

A flexible, non-accredited programme introduces learners to IT and gives them the confidence and knowledge to use the computer technology available at public libraries and other access points. Not only does this promote learning, but it also makes learners aware of the facilities at their disposal and more likely to take advantage of them.

Learners are invited to join the course if they are interested in learning IT skills. The one-hour sessions cover:

- an introduction to hardware and software, using Microsoft Word to type basic documents and setting up and using free e-mail addresses
- using search engines to find information, e.g. transport timetables, street maps, news items and issues of interest to the learner
- using public libraries including an introduction to the conventions and a code of conduct; this includes keeping one's voice down and demonstrating consideration for other users.

Training is for a maximum of two learners at any time and comprises a weekly one-hour session for up to 12 weeks. Learners are encouraged to use their learning in a practical way by, for example, sending their tutor an e-mail and using library facilities to arrange travel arrangements to an interview.

What's next?

The programme depends on the support of a volunteer tutor and the Probation Service is hoping to attract external funding to safeguard and develop the course.

Impact – outcomes and benefits

- Retention on the programme is 100 per cent.
- Of the 21 learners who started the pilot programme, 11 have now completed the course, five have progressed into mainstream education (such as Learndirect) and five are still on the programme.
- Offenders have gained valuable IT skills and their overall confidence and behaviour have improved.

13.3 Investigating the digital divide for the Open University (OU) distance learner in prison

E-learning is a vital component of 21st century education but the OU students in prison, and the staff who are supporting them, have very limited access to the Internet. The prison service remains highly sceptical of any form of Web access, no matter how secure. This research is a qualitative study, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) of the experiences of OU distance learners in prison, including the developing on-line initiatives and alternative solutions, identifying facilitators and barriers to new pedagogies for ODL students with limited on-line resources.

Between April and August 2007, in-depth, face-to-face, interviews and some longitudinal studies, took place with 35 OU students in 10 prisons across England. The aim was to determine what influenced their decision to study and how technology, or the lack of it, was affecting their learning, choice of study and future decisions. The prisons included all security categories, male and female, public and private. Views of more than 50 prison and OU staff were also acquired through questionnaires and interviews.

Analysis, using grounded theory, shows that the amount and type of technology available to students in prison varies greatly. Access to computers varied from one hour/week to a full Open Learning suite. Access to storage media was a major barrier to study; variation in what was allowed and why, was not necessarily related to security category but was often depended on the IT literacy of those in authority. Students valued personal visits by tutors but their isolation from society was increased by the lack of electronic communication with tutors and other students. However, students were empowered by their new knowledge and optimistic about the future.

Results from this research along with other e-learning and on-line initiatives have led to:

1. a growing awareness among prison managers and
2. pilot studies to investigate alternative pedagogies, using off-line open source information and interactive assessment material on prison intranets.

13.4 UNLOCKing Financial Capability (UFC)

UFC is a training resource that helps offenders create positive banking relationships, enhance their money skills and enter the financial mainstream.

It was developed and is delivered by the ex-offenders charity UNLOCK, and is funded by a mix of private and charitable funders, and by prisons themselves. UNLOCK can deliver the course directly to offenders, but in order to get a multiplier effect, has been working mainly with staff from prisons, third sector organisations and others, who then go on to deliver to offenders or to ex-offenders.

The course can be delivered to offenders in a variety of ways, and uses a mix of PowerPoint, printable material and digital technologies. It covers:

- choosing and opening a bank account
- completing an application form
- using a bank account successfully
- receiving benefits and salary
- managing money/budgeting
- dealing with debt
- securing insurance with convictions

Here is a typical still from one of the presentations, which explains the workings of an ATM.



13.5 Enabling Internet Access in Prison – POLARIS

POLARIS (Programme for Offenders And Resettlement Information System) is a 'proof of concept' project commissioned by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), across seven prisons in London. It is currently operating at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, the Young Offenders Institution at Feltham, and two other prisons.

The three remaining prisons involved in the project will be going 'live' very soon.

At HMP Wormwood Scrubs, 10 dummy terminals are linked through the ORAL infrastructure. This allows learners to gain access to security cleared training sites, employability tools and other materials necessary to support rehabilitation.

While there have been some initial challenges in its implementation, the project has been positively received. Independent evaluation currently indicates that POLARIS is a worthwhile venture. When the evaluation is complete, a national solution to the concept is planned. This should be implemented as funds become available. (Information taken from the website of the Prisoners Education Trust³⁶).

³⁶ www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/index.php?id=42

13.6 Storybook Dads

Storybook Dads³⁷, an independent, registered charity has been based at Dartmoor Prison for four years and has been steadily expanding across the prison estate. Although the concept of prisoners recording a story for their children is not a new one, they are using digital technology in an innovative way to enhance the stories, which results in a very special product.

The aim is to maintain family ties and facilitate learning for prisoners and their children through the provision of story CDs. The children love these stories because they can hear their parent's voice whenever they want and the feedback from prisoners and their families is overwhelming. The dads feel that they are doing something for their children and this goes a long way towards strengthening family ties.

Storybook Dads (and now Mums) can be a lifeline for families and plays a key role in helping to maintain the family unit during the period of separation. The beauty of the scheme is that any prisoner can take part regardless of their reading ability. The editing process eliminates any mistakes, and also any unwanted noises that often occur in a prison environment (gates, keys etc). They can take part on its simplest level (just reading a story) or embark on one of the other more ambitious aspects of the scheme such as making a book to send out with the audio story.



Prisoners are recorded telling a story with the use of a microphone and a minidisk recorder. The story is downloaded onto a computer and any mistakes are edited out. Music and sound effects are added (from a database of many hundreds) and the final story is put onto a CD. The result is very professional; the children and the parents are always amazed at the results. Digital editing makes all the difference as this makes the stories come alive for the children; they can't work out how the sound effects got there.

³⁷ www.storybookdads.co.uk/indexnext.htm

We have equipped two editing suites at Dartmoor prison and selected prisoners are trained to be editors. A story that takes ten or fifteen minutes to read can take two or three hours to edit, especially if there have been many mistakes. The editors have to be scrupulous in their work, with a great deal of attention to detail and also incorporate a certain amount of artistic flair. They gain extremely valuable skills in digital audio editing and they can gain an OCN qualification in Sound and Audio production which is very useful for those who are looking to carry on with further training in this area upon their release.

The service is being offered to other prisons so that more families can benefit from the project. All they need is a minidisk recorder, a microphone and some books, and they send their recordings to Dartmoor where they are edited and enhanced before being returned. Currently this service is provided for twenty-five other prisons (and still growing). Over 1,700 prisoners have taken part.

Section 14

Pointers for the future

The above sections give detailed information on various themes that allow us to gain a better understanding of the group. Here we capture pertinent messages that cut across many of the above sections. These are drawn out from the desk-based and primary research as well as expert opinion given at the validation workshop. We also capture here suggestions for the future.

Timeliness of support

A review is needed of the support requirements of short-term prisoners as they leave prison. People leaving custody after short (up to 12 month) sentences, who currently receive no state support services on release, would evidently benefit from appropriate support before they leave and as they leave the prison, to ensure that they have accommodation, access to cash, job search and to other services via the web or otherwise, in the crucial first weeks following release. This should be followed by ongoing sustained support from a trusted individual to help them overcome challenges as they arise.

IT in prisons

It seems that in many prisons, with some notable exceptions, there are systemic and institutional barriers concerning access to IT for both prisoners and trainers, stemming from an innate mistrust of IT as a security risk. It is obvious that to assist longer-term prisoners and thereby reduce re-offending, investment is needed to allow prisoners to both learn about the advances in digital technologies, and then learn how to use technologies for learning, life and leisure, both preparing for their release, and once they are back in society.

IT needs to be regarded as a key skill requirement for everybody, and therefore learning to use computers to communicate, find information, using the same packages that are in common use in general society etc should be offered to all prisoners who do not currently have that opportunity, including shorter-term prisoners.

More attention needs to be given to the importance of allowing the learning records of prisoners to be properly recorded, and to follow them electronically as they move prisons, and on release, particularly when an accredited course is being followed.

Some of the above difficulties may be addressed by future plans for delivery of services to offenders that are currently being piloted in test bed regions under the *Next Steps*³⁸ strategy:

- **Virtual Campus** – an online facility offering access to Education, Training and Employment Services for offenders and ex-offenders.
- **Mentoring Toolkit** – software to be used by mentors to build up an action plan for ex-offenders. There are currently problems with this being part of the virtual campus due to a need for website links that are on the mentoring toolkit and Internet restrictions in prisons (as the virtual campus is available to both prisoners and ex-offenders).

IT not the only answer!

The key message from professionals working with ex-offenders was that policymakers and service providers need to be aware that not everybody is computer literate or even wants to be. Therefore facilities should still be in place for people who want face-to-face contact with service providers. The danger of making services available exclusively online is that the needs are not being met of those with reading and computer literacy problems and those who lack access to computers and the Internet on release – this is particularly relevant for ex-offenders, with their much lower than average reading age and higher prevalence of learning difficulties and disabilities.

Short term funding

Short term funding is causing problems for professionals working with ex-offenders. Professionals described setting up new programmes for ex-offenders, just getting them up and running efficiently and starting to see results, when the funding runs out. The programme then comes to an end even though people are still accessing it, causing loss of confidence and reducing the return on the funds invested.

³⁸ DfES (2006), *Reducing Re-offending Through Skills and Employment: Next Steps*. Following consultation, *Next Steps* outlines how an ambitious strategy will be taken forward for improving offenders' skills and employment outcomes with the ultimate goal of reducing re-offending.

Section 15

Want to know more about ex-offenders?

The list of organisations below directs readers to websites from which further information can be obtained relevant to ex-offenders. Alongside each organisation a short description of the organisation and the types of information one could expect to find is given.

Name	Contact	What They Do
Statutory Organisations		
NOMS – National Offender Management Service	Phil Wheatley, Chief Executive Ministry of Justice Selborne House 54 Victoria Street London SW1E 6QW Tel: 0207 210 8500 www.noms.homeoffice.gov.uk/	NOMS is part of the Ministry of Justice and has responsibility for reducing re-offending and public protection. It is developing offices in the 9 English Regions over the next two years.
The Probation Service	Roger Hill Director Tel: 020 7217 0650 www.probation.homeoffice.gov.uk/output/Page1.asp	Based at the Ministry of Justice; duties are to protect the public, reduce re-offending, supervise community sentences, and service the courts. 38 local offices in England
Third Sector Organisations		
NACRO	Paul Cavadino, Chief Executive Head Office Park Place 10-12 Lawn Lane London SW8 1UD Tel: 020 7840 7200 Fax: 020 7840 7240 www.nacro.org.uk/about/directory/index.htm	Nacro has over 200 projects across England and Wales working with ex-offenders

Name	Contact	What They Do
YMCA	Rosi Prescott, Chief Executive YMCA England Holborn London www.ymca.org.uk/default.asp	The YMCA led groundbreaking work with young people in prisons and ex-offenders and continues to work vigorously to help reduce the risk of young people either turning to crime or becoming victims of crime. Numerous local centres
Rainer	Joyce Moseley, Chief Executive Rainer Crime Concern Rectory Lodge High Street Brasted Kent TN16 1JF Tel: 01959 578 200 Fax: 01959 561 891	The national charity for undersupported young people – works with young people leaving custody or care. Rainer and Crime Concern merged in April 2008.
CLINKS	Clive Martin, Director 25 Micklegate York YO1 6JH Tel: 01904 673970 www.clinks.org	Clinks is a national membership body that supports the involvement of voluntary and community organisations in the Criminal Justice system.
APEX	Godfrey Allen, Chief Executive Apex Charitable Trust Ltd 7th Floor, No.3 London Wall Buildings London Wall London EC2M 5PD Tel: 020 7638 5931 Fax: 020 7638 5977 www.apextrust.com	Apex Charitable Trust seeks to help people with criminal records to obtain appropriate jobs or self-employment by providing them with the skills they need in the labour market and by working with employers to break down the barriers to their employment
UNLOCK	Bobby Cummins, Chief Executive 35a High Street Snodland Kent ME6 5AG Tel: 01634 247350 Fax: 01634 247351 www.unlock.org.uk	UNLOCK is the National Association of Reformed Offenders and exists to achieve equality for reformed offenders

Name	Contact	What They Do
Tomorrow's People	Debbie Scott, Chief Executive 4th Floor, Rothermere House 49/51 Cambridge Road Hastings East Sussex TN32 1DT Tel: 01424 718491 www.tomorrows-people.co.uk/index.htm	We help break the cycle of unemployment so that people can take positive control of their lives and build a brighter future. We also save employers time and money by finding them the right people for the right jobs.
Howard League for Penal Reform	Frances Crook, Director 1 Ardleigh Road London N1 4HS Tel: 020 7217 0650 www.howardleague.org/index.php?id=2	The Howard League for Penal Reform works for a safe society where fewer people are victims of crime. The Howard League for Penal Reform believes that offenders must make amends for what they have done and change their lives. The Howard League for Penal Reform believes that community sentences make a person take responsibility and live a law-abiding life in the community.
Prison Reform Trust	Juliet Lyon, Director Prison Reform Trust 15 Northburgh Street London EC1V 0JR Tel: 020 7251 5070 Fax: 020 7251 5076	Provides a comprehensive information service on all aspects of the Prison Service.
The Griffins Society	Dr Kate Steward, Director 77 Holloway Rd London N7 8JZ Tel: 020 7607 2304 www.thegriffinsociety.org	Researches and promotes best practice in the care and resettlement of female offenders in prison and in society.

Name	Contact	What They Do
Action for Prisoners Families	Lucy Gampbell, Director Unit 21, Carlson Court 116 Putney Bridge Road London, SW15 2NQ Tel: 020 8812 3600 Fax: 020 8871 0473 www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk	The national voice of organisations supporting the families of prisoners
Prisoners Education Trust	Pat Jones, Director Wandle House Riverside Drive Mitcham Surrey CR4 4BU Tel: 020 8648 7760 Fax: 020 8648 7762 www.prisonerseducation.org.uk	Since 1990, Prisoners Education Trust has been providing learning opportunities for offenders in custody to broaden their horizons and to focus on a more positive life on release, whenever that may come.
The Langley House Trust	Chief Executive Langley House Trust PO Box 181 Witney Oxon OX28 6WD Tel: 01993 774075 Fax: 01993 772425 www.langleyhousetrust.org	Helps ex-offenders to live crime-free lives by providing a range of support services including accommodation
Addaction	Deborah Cameron Addaction Central Office 67-69 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6PU Tel: 0207 251 5860 Fax: 0207 251 5890 www.addaction.org.uk	Britain's largest specialist drug and alcohol treatment charity
New Bridge Foundation	Chris Thomas, Chief Executive 27A Medway Street London SW1P 2BD Tel: 020 7976 0779 www.newbridefoundation.org.uk	New Bridge offers a wide range of programmes to help prisoners keep in touch with the outside world and prepare themselves to rejoin it

Name	Contact	What They Do
Women in Prison	Suzanne Sibillin, Director 1a Aberdeen Studios 22 Highbury Grove London N5 2EA Tel: 020 7226 5879 www.womeninprison.org.uk	Working with women at risk of going to prison, in prison and after release to promote their resettlement, personal development, education and training. We educate the public and policy makers about women in the criminal justice system and we promote alternatives to custody.
Revolving Doors	Julian Corner, Chief Executive The Turnmill Units 28 and 29 63 Clerkenwell Road London EC1M 5NP Tel: 020 7253 4038 Fax: 020 7553 6079 www.revolvingdoors.org.uk	Revolving Doors Agency is the UK's only charity dedicated to improving the lives of people who are caught up in a damaging cycle of crisis, crime and mental illness
WISH	WISH London & South 18 Borough High Street London SE1 9QG Tel: 0207 407 5191 www.womenatwish.com	Wish provides long-term, gender-sensitive support and services to women with mental health needs in their journey through the secure system and into the community.
European Offender Employment Forum	Mike Stewart www.eoef.org	Promote links between different employment providers across Europe Lobby and advocate on offender employment issues Provide a central information source for policy makers and providers
Shelter	Adam Sampson, Chief Executive Tel: 0808 800 4444 www.england.shelter.org.uk	National charity for housing and homelessness – provides services for homeless ex-offenders

Name	Contact	What They Do
Bridging the Gap	Bridging The Gap PO Box 783 Croydon CR9 1BT Tel: 0844 482 0480 Fax: 0844 482 0481 www.btguk.org	BTG aims to help reduce re-offending by helping discharged prisoners settle into their communities after release.
Prison Fellowship of England and Wales	www.prisonfellowship.org.uk	Helping local Christian communities respond to the needs of the prison population
Partners of Prisoners	Valentine House 1079 Rochdale Road Blackley Manchester M9 8AJ Tel: 0161 702 1000 Fax: 0161 702 1000 www.partnersofprisoners.org.uk	Aims to provide a variety of services to support anyone who has a link with someone in prison, prisoners and other agencies. POPS provides assistance to these groups for the purpose of enabling families to cope with the stress of arrest, imprisonment and release.'
Prisoners Families Helpline	Tel: 0808 808 2003	A free and confidential service for anyone who is affected by the imprisonment of a close family member or friend.
Supporting Others Through Volunteer Action (SOVA)	Gill Henson, Chief Executive SOVA Head Office 1st Floor Chichester House 37 Brixton Road London SW9 6DZ Tel: 020 7793 0404 www.sova-uk.org/index.htm	SOVA is the leading national volunteer mentoring organisation working in the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales.

