

FACTSHEET- Education in Prisons

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1) INTRODUCTION

There is a proven correlation between illiteracy, innumeracy and offending. Most prisoners have access to educational courses and training while in prison. The objective is to enable them to gain skills and qualifications that will help them find employment on release. Research shows that prisoners who gain employment after release are far less likely to re-offend.

2) KEY FACTS

Before custody:

- 52% of male offenders and 71% of female offenders have no qualifications whatsoeverⁱ
- 48% of prisoners have literacy skills at or below Level 1 and 65% have numeracy skills at or below Level 1. More than one three people in prison have a reading level below Level 1 and 75% for writing.ⁱⁱ Level 1 is what is expected of an eleven year old.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Studies suggest that 23% of people who go into prison have very low IQs of less than 70^{iv}
- 49% of prisoners throughout the system have been excluded from school^v
- 67% of offenders (more than two thirds) were unemployed at the time of imprisonment^{vi}

Education/training in prisons:

- In 2004, less than a third of prisoners had access to prison education at any one time.^{vii}
- A recent PET survey showed that only 18% of offenders felt supported by prison officers in their learning.^{viii}
- One third of prison courses are not completed, half of which are a direct result of the release or transfer of prisoners, wasting an estimated £30m annually.^{ix}
- Around two thirds of those who do have a job lose it whilst in custody
- The Prison Service started setting targets for employment, training or education outcomes for released prisoners: in 2003-04 this was 31,500, representing a 5,000 increase over two years. After a further survey conducted in April 2004, the target was increased to 38,000 for 2004/05.^x
- The average rate of pay for employed prisoners is £8 per week
- 1 in 14 prisoners participate in an activity to help other prisoners, eg. the Samaritan Listeners

What needs to be done:

- Almost half of all prisoners say that employment (48%) and skills deficits (42%) are most important to their sentence plan^{xi}
- A recent PET survey showed that only 18% of offenders felt supported by prison officers in their learning.^{xii}
- 76% of prisoners do not have paid employment to go to after release^{xiii}
- Half of all prisoners do not have the skills required by 96% of jobs.
- Only one in five prisoners are able to complete a job application form

- Almost 90% of prisoners under the age of 21 re-offend within 2 years and almost two thirds of adult prisoners re-offend within 2 years^{xiv}
- 45,600 offenders were released from sentences of 12 months or more (including indeterminate sentences) in 2008^{xv}
- The total cost of recorded crime committed by re-offenders is estimated at around £11billion per year^{xvi}
- According to the Prisoners' Education Trust, a large proportion of offenders said that having access to the internet (62%) and a simple word processor (48%) were the most important requirements for making learning easier.^{xvii}
- Employment is said to reduce re-offending between a third and a half^{xviii}

3) DETAIL

(i) Legislation on Prison Education^{xix}

Prison Service Order 4205: Education in Prisons^{xx}

<i>Topic Covered</i>	<i>Legislation Rule</i>	<i>Description</i>
Education	Rule 32	Every prisoner able to profit from the education facilities provided at a prison shall be encouraged to do so.
		Educational classes shall be arranged at every prison and, subject to any directions of the Secretary of State, reasonable facilities shall be afforded to prisoners who wish to do so to improve their education by training by distance learning, private study and recreational classes, in their spare time.
		Special attention shall be paid to the education and training of prisoners with special educational needs, and if necessary they shall be taught within the hours normally allotted to work.
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Library	Rule 33	A library shall be provided in every prison and, subject to any directions of the Secretary of State, every prisoner shall be allowed to have library books and to exchange them.
Young Offenders	Rule 35	In the case of a prisoner of compulsory school age, arrangements shall be made for his participation in education or training courses for at least 15 hours a week within the normal working week.
		Provision shall be made at a Young Offender Institution (YOI) for the education of inmates by means of programmes of class teaching or private study within the normal working week and, so far as practicable, programmes of evening and weekend educational classes or private study. The educational activities shall, so far as practicable, be such as will foster personal responsibility and an inmate's interests and skills and help him to prepare for his 'return to the community'.
		In the case of an inmate aged 17 or over who has special educational needs, arrangements shall be made for education appropriate to his

		needs, if necessary within the normal working week.
		In the case of a female inmate aged 21 or over who is serving a sentence of imprisonment or who has been committed to prison for default, and who is detained in a YOI instead of a prison, reasonable facilities shall be afforded if she wishes to improve her education by class teaching or private study.
Education departments	4.1 Where circumstances reasonably permit, prison education departments must ensure that:	all prisoners, including juveniles under the age of 18, Rule 45s, segregation and hospital unit prisoners have the opportunity to participate in educational activities
		A current Basic Skills Agency (BSA) Quality Mark is in place
		BSA screening tests are undertaken as part of the induction process, with the results recorded on the LIDs database at establishments
		An annual self-assessment report is completed in line with the Quality Assessment Framework produced by Prison Education Services
		individual learning plans are completed with specific targets, using the Progress File, for every full and part time prisoner following a formal course. This should inform the sentence planning process
		a modularised core programme of accredited basic and key skills is in place *
		delivery of education is prioritised for those who have been assessed as having basic or key skills at level 1 or below
		Education is delivered on a predominantly part time basis to multiple sites, five days per week for 50 weeks per year.
Outcome Targets	5.1	All education and training, and where possible PE, undertaken during the core day will be aimed at reducing offending behaviour as part of a prisoners' sentence plan. Course details will therefore, explicitly and routinely identify the criminogenic factors being addressed and should also identify measurable outcomes
	5.2	The education programme must enable prisoners to achieve nationally accredited qualifications in key and basic skills up to level 2, which will enhance their employability on release. The <i>Prison Core Curriculum</i> (PSO 4200) must be in place to facilitate this
	5.3	Opportunities for achieving key and basic skills in workshops, PE, catering and other vocational training will be provided by establishments, supported by the advice and guidance of the education department
	5.4	The establishment will need to ensure that education departments operate equal opportunities policies that are congruent with that of HM Prison Service and pay particular attention to the requirements of the RESPOND programme
Monitoring Arrangements	6.1 Education Services will rigorously monitor outputs by undertaking:	The monthly collection of management information relating to the implementation of the education contract
		The monthly collection of national accreditation and Basic Skills Agency induction results
		Audit of education provision in accordance with Standard Audit requirements, based on a two yearly cycle, and against the performance standard for education provision

		Quality Assessments, to review the performance of each education department on a four-year cycle, based on the format used to inspect colleges and training agencies
	6.2	Education departments must produce an annual self-assessment report based on the Quality Assessment framework document entitled Assessing the Quality of Education Provision within Prisons
	6.3	Governing governors will undertake self-audits of education provision against performance management standards for education
Resources	7.1 Staffing	Education programmes are contracted out, so staffing should never be significantly impacted
	7.2 Finance	Improvements to prison education, as set out in this order will largely be financed through existing contract arrangements. In addition, Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) funds have been allocated**
	7.3 Regimes	The regime in some establishments may change significantly as part time education combined with work becomes more common and more prisoners have access to educational activities
	7.4 Materials	The establishment must provide funds for materials which will include consumables, textbooks and accreditation fees, this must not conflict with any existing contractual arrangements

*Modularised Core Programme

- Literacy and numeracy
- Key skills
- English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
- Social and life skills units (accredited by the Open College Network)
- Generic preparation for work (accredited by the Accreditation Syndicate for Education and Training)
- Information Technology

**Areas prioritized by the Comprehensive Spending Review

- Improving key and basic skills
- Young offenders
- Improving impoverished regimes

(ii) Measures Taken

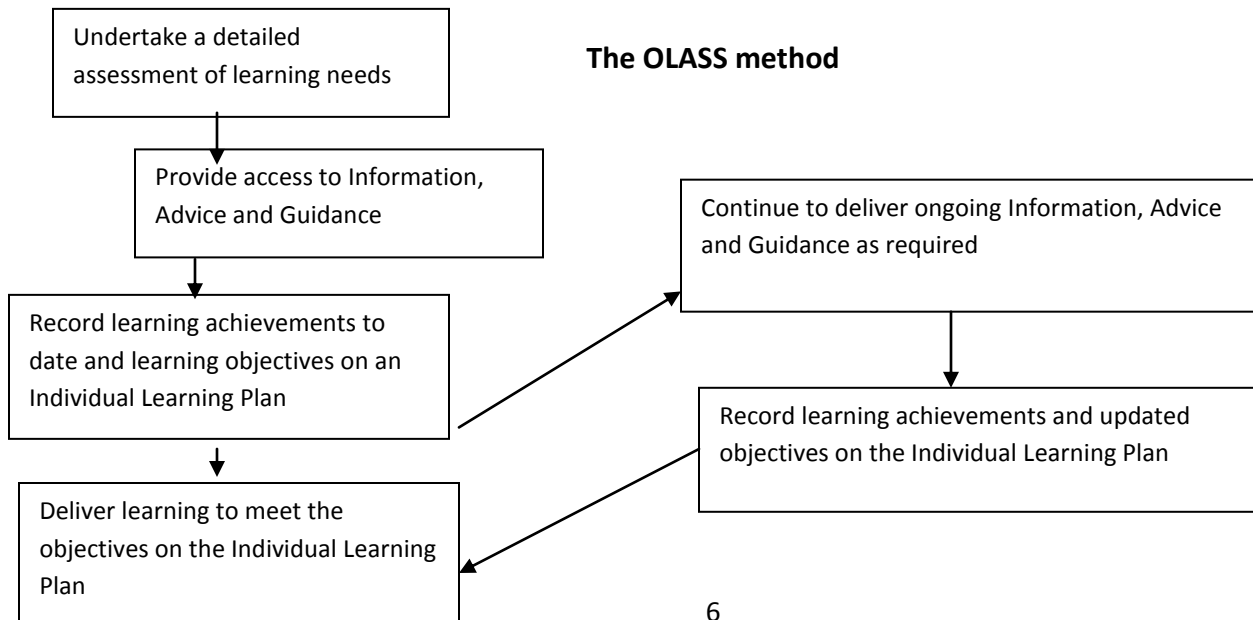
The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)

- Since 2001, OLASS co-ordinates the development and delivery of change in the learning and skills provision for offenders, both in custody and, from 2004, in the community. Provision is targeted towards getting prisoners to reach Level 2 in literacy, numeracy and other basic skills.
- set up in partnership with the Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Children, Schools and Families) and the Prison Service, now part of the Ministry of Justice's plan to reduce reoffending ^{xxi}

- Key partners include: the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), the Home Office, Prison and Probation Services, Youth Justice Board and the Learning and Skills Council.
- Delivery arrangements are overseen by Heads of Learning and Skills across the prison estate, then inspected by Ofsted, alongside the Prison and Probation Inspectorates, to exactly the same standards as all other post-16 learning.
- At a local level, Prison Service Governors ensure that current arrangements work effectively.
- Since 2005, a new national specification and delivery partnerships for the provision of an integrated learning and skills service for all offenders are being developed. The new service will be more flexible and individually-focused, meeting the needs of individual offenders in the context of the overall sentence plan and including the goal of rehabilitation.
- This will include a new focus on policy for the provision of services for offenders within the community, for which £17.9m was allocated in 2004/5.
- OLASS has over 250 employees and 20 regional offices.^{xxii}

The Policy Aim of OLASS

- The overall direction of offender learning policy was set out for consultation in the Green Paper *'Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment'* [December 2005] and reiterated as firm plans for the future in the follow-up document *'Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment: Next Steps'* published in December 2006.
- To ensure offenders have fundamental life skills (literacy, language, numeracy and basic IT skills), and have developed work skills, which enable them to meet the needs of employers in the area where they live or will settle after their sentence is complete.
- Offender learning is one of seven in the National Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan. Other pathways cover accommodation; drugs and alcohol; health; children and families; finance benefit and debt; and attitudes, thinking and behaviour.
- Partnership working on offender learning; addressing learning needs within an offender management process that coordinates and sequences activity across the pathways.^{xxiii}



In 2007 the **Learning and Skills' Service (LSC)** published *Developing the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service: the Prospectus*, setting out the LSC's proposals for developing and reforming the learning and skills service to offenders held in English public sector prisons and to those under supervision in the community in England. Key proposals included:

- reforming the way in which learning provision for offenders in custody is planned, organised, delivered and funded. Working with NOMS and other commissioners to move away from historical arrangements by prioritising the availability and range based on personalised learner and employer need. Principal focus of skills for employment and employability
- widening the scope, range and availability of learning provision for offenders in the community
- making the learning offer explicitly linked and aligned to other services and interventions, in particular by developing strong joint commissioning arrangements with NOMS commissioners, and
- supporting improvements in the quality of provision, ensuring that all offenders are able to benefit from existing provision and developments within the wider post-16 sector.^{xxiv}

(iii) Examples of good practice: education and training programmes

	Education/Training Programme	Objectives
National	<i>Toe to Toe</i>	Reading programme: a 'peer education' approach in which prisoners with good reading ability help those with less or none. Running in 130 adult prisons.
	<i>Virtual Campus</i>	A web based resettlement tool based on the 7 pathways to resettlement (9 for women) offering learners the chance to access learning and training tools. It flags up any job opportunities, courses and workshops that may be of interest to the learner. Prisoners to save their work in an 'e-portfolio' which can be accessed via any computer; again making it easier for prisoners to continue their study despite transfer between prisons. ^{xxv} There are over 1,000 learners, feedback has been supremely positive, but availability within prisons is still sometimes scarce.
	<i>Prisoners' Education Trust</i>	Primary focus is on providing funding for distance learning courses, over time the Trust has developed other projects which tackle key areas of interest – young offenders and offender learning policy and reform through peer mentoring programmes. With youth offenders, the PET's education officer is seen as an 'outsider', which proves advantageous as offenders feel they are getting information from the outside world. The <i>Learning Matters</i> project within the PET aims to

		raise awareness of the importance of education as an integral tool in the resettlement of prisoners. The Trust makes over 2000 grants to offenders every year.
	<i>The Apex Trust</i>	A charity promoting employment opportunities for ex-offenders such as 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. They also run a <i>JobCheck</i> helpline and pro bono job fairs.
	<i>Blue Sky Development and Regeneration</i> ^{xxvi}	A social enterprise whose sole aim is to get ex-offenders into permanent jobs. The only company in the country for whom a criminal record is a pre-requisite for a job. Has given jobs to over 200 people, with over 46% of recruits leaving with a permanent job. Re-offending rate among alumni lower than 14% (against a national average of 60%)
	<i>Open University</i>	All offenders are welcome to study and almost every prison in England and Wales has access to their courses. More than 1,000 prisoners across the UK are currently studying OU courses.
	<i>Life Change UK</i>	Staff training that empowers and enables positive work and change with marginalised groups of society. Extensive experience of training and rehabilitating young, male offenders.
	<i>SOVA (Supporting Others through Volunteer Action)</i> ^{xxvii}	Provides a range of innovative services within many communities working with the Criminal Justice sector and young people on youth offending orders. Volunteers and mentors help with basic skills training, one-to-one information, advice and guidance, accredited training and preparation for work.
Regional	<i>HMP Spring Hill (Buckinghamshire)</i> ^{xxviii}	Inmates at Britain's first open prison are able to do training courses alongside professional plumbers and tradesmen who have popped in to update their skills. The prison provides free premises for a training company on the understanding that prisoners can take advantage of its courses, which include training for jobs in the health and leisure industry. The reoffending rate for Spring Hill prisoners is just 5%, compared to the national average of 67%.
	<i>Black Box Project</i> ^{xxix}	Run by the National Literacy Trust in 2002-2003 in Sussex with aim of bringing together design-led and social rehabilitation initiatives, museums and galleries worked with male prison inmates close to release and ex prisoners, , with the aim of engaging 'hard to reach' audiences by creating 'personal museums of the imagination' inspired by artefacts brought in from

		museum collections. It was considered to be reasonably successful.
	<i>Project Hero</i> ^{xxx}	Creative reader and writer development courses around graphic novels and artefacts for young offenders who were disaffected with education'. The Museum of Reading and Reading's Prison Library worked with young men in the Separated Prisoners Unit at HM Young Offenders Institute, Reading. External evaluation suggests that the pilot project 'raised the young men's self esteem and enhanced their key skills in literacy, creativity, communication and social interaction'.
	<i>Virtual Egypt</i> ^{xxxj}	The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge works with a number of prisons throughout England, collaborating with prisoners and prison education departments to develop educational resources. Resulting material will be a public resource, also used for project work in prisons. The project combines 'specialist knowledge with specific cultural experiences to provide learning opportunities/methodologies adapted to those unable to visit museums but of value for much wider application'
Programmes being piloted		
	<i>MIAP (Managing Information Across Partners)</i>	System currently being piloted to improve transfer of data between prison institutions and learning providers and prison and probation agencies.
	<i>Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA)</i>	Will examine the way in which public bodies such as HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted are working together to meet the needs of the people they serve.

4) ANALYSIS

Existing problems and operational difficulties^{xxxii}

- 250 prison teaching jobs recently were cut in the light of further out-contracting of prisons.
- Manchester College is currently the biggest provider of prison education after winning the contracts to teach at 96 jails, young offender institutions and secure training centres around the UK. However, teaching staff at Oakhill STC in Bedfordshire held a one-day strike last year over their "terrible" working conditions. A year after Manchester had taken over the contract in 2008, only 13 of the original 34 staff were still in post. The Manchester Principal says that "offender learning contracts have proved to be financially challenging, due to unforeseen hidden costs".

- Additional savings of £3million would apparently be needed. Teacher unions and prison campaigners say the cuts will have a devastating impact on the education available to prisoners, which is vital if prisoners are to acquire skills that lead to jobs after release and so prevent their re-offending.
- Institutional limitations- an Ofsted report concluded that the strict operational priorities of the prison regime can place practical limitations on learning because 'prison activities are often arranged at times which clash with offenders' learning schedules so that they miss sessions without prior notice to tutors'.^{xxxiii}
- 'Churn Factor'- the regular transfers of prisoners between prisons means that learning is frequently disrupted given the lack of standardized provision of learning programmes. Moreover, offender learning records are often lost in the process of transfers: as Ofsted point out 'the lack of a national, coherent management information system for reporting offenders' progress' is problematic.^{xxxiv}
- Prisoners serving short sentences are often not eligible for vocational courses within prison workshops as they will not have time to complete the qualifications offered.
- Open University degrees above level 2 are not usually publicly funded: offenders need to pay themselves or find the fees from charity.
- Lack of IT equipment- an acknowledged problem, but difficult to reconcile with the huge cuts that the Ministry of Justice faces in this difficult economic climate.
- The offender population contains both BME and disabled people, who may require highly specialised learning programmes with individual support.
- General lack of incentives to encourage offenders to participate in learning.

Suggestions as to what improvements could be made

- Difficulties with the implementation of programmes, even very successful ones such as *Toe to Toe*, arise in Youth Offending Institutions due to short sentences and a youthful lack of motivation
- With youth justice in particular, a key concern is the difficulty in securing education and training post-custody.^{xxxv}
- An ongoing challenge prisons face is getting inmates to overcome the 'shame' factor, the stigmatisation of illiteracy.
- Systems for diagnosing offenders' individual learning needs more quickly and accurately should be developed.
- For pure literacy training, programmes need to be effective in a short period of time, so as to ensure a) prisoners maintain interest in the end goal and b) as many prisoners as possible
- It is important to meet the needs of offenders with short training courses for offenders serving short sentences with a focus on employability skills, such as CV writing and the job application process, as well as information on how to *access* training and employment services upon release.

An article in *Inside Time* magazine (a publication for prisoners) argues that prisoners should be encouraged to compile Curriculum Vitae of their prison careers so as to keep track of their

positive achievements, the jobs/tasks they carry out while in custody and promote a desire to build on educational/vocational qualifications.^{xxxvi}

As a recent Government Strategy paper notes, skills deficits are not the only barriers to employment and the social inclusion of offenders, and cannot be addressed in isolation from other difficulties which these learners face, such as substance abuse, homelessness and broken relationships.^{xxxvii}

As organisations such as CRISIS and Switchback comment: ‘Many ex-offenders need to be supported holistically to stabilise all the areas of their lives, in order to bring about the necessary lasting change that results in sustained employment.’^{xxxviii}

A Policy Exchange report said that helping ex-prisoners into work may save the taxpayer more than £300m annually^{xxxix}

The Prison Reform Trust think Government should heed the powerful statistics of how far recidivism is reduced and give immediate priority to reforming the “arcane, complex” Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974), which “places unnecessary obstacles in the way of many ex-offenders who seek work”^{xl}

Table: More policy analyses and recommendations

<i>Regulatory body or independent organisation</i>	<i>Selected Policy Recommendations</i>
<i>OFSTED^{xli}</i>	<p>Learning and skills strategies need to recognise the need and benefit of improving core skills to a level where other programmes, such as offending behaviour programmes, become more accessible and beneficial (Ofsted).</p> <p>Prison education too often fails to build on offenders’ existing skills and what they have picked up previously during their sentences.</p> <p>Focus on advice/planning needs to shift away from what is available in prison, which in turn is designed around the average length of a prison sentence, to the long-term needs of the offender.</p> <p>Inspectors often found little opportunity for prisoners possessing level 2 qualifications (five good GCSEs or the equivalent) to go further. However, some prisons do present opportunities for these inmates to work as peer mentors, or train as guidance workers- these schemes could become more widespread.</p>
<i>OLASS^{xlii}</i>	<p>With some 10% of prisoners held in private prisons, and with regular movement of offenders between public and private prisons, ensuring the smooth transfer of information between establishments and the delivery of a learning service that looks and feels the same in different places is an important requirement.</p> <p>Early, intense focus on assessing and recording an offender’s learning needs should happen as soon as possible following contact with the criminal justice system. This means understanding individual learning needs, how best to</p>

	<p>meet them and where long-term employment aspirations lie.</p> <p>Not all offenders will have the motivation or confidence to pass through all the points of custody-non custody transition and continue their learning unaided.</p> <p>The needs of adult offenders and those aged under 18 are different, and this is particularly true for those below school leaving age. Mainstream educational policies setting out different entitlements for those aged 14-19 add a further layer of complexity, as does the expectation that higher education will be available to those who have the ability to study at that level.</p> <p>In the past, offender learning delivery activity was very separate and different to an 'outside' Further Education College. This meant teaching staff felt disengaged from professional interaction and tended to miss out on continuing professional development.</p> <p>Regional interaction is the critical point in the system vis-à-vis managing and controlling OLASS.</p>
<i>National Skills Forum</i> ^{xliii}	<p>Improving the skill levels of offenders could significantly increase their chances of finding a job, prevent re-offending, and ensure their successful integration back into their local community.</p> <p>Education and training should be an integral part of the daily prison regime and that prison staff should be enabled to encourage offenders to participate in learning through the use of incentives such as wing privileges.</p> <p>Careers Information and Advice Services (CIAS) within prison should be made aware of learning/training opportunities available that fall outside of the OLASS remit, so that such initiatives can be promoted to offenders.</p> <p>More investment is needed in <i>Virtual Campus</i> so that it is uniformly accessible across the prison system.</p> <p>Greater continuity in skills provision for offenders.</p> <p>Lack of variety of vocational training in prisons</p> <p>In the current economic climate, it is unrealistic to expect the Government and the Ministry of Justice alone to be responsible for financing a greater range of educational and vocational opportunities for prisoners. Private businesses, mainstream colleges and charities will all have to play their role in expanding the range of courses prisoners are able to study, particularly through the development of long distance learning courses such as those currently provided by the Open University.</p> <p>Another of the report's key recommendations is that offenders on short term sentences, including those on remand or licence recall, should have more education and training opportunities made available to them, particularly advice on job applications and how to look for work on release. As these prisoners are soon to be released, they are the most likely to benefit from training.</p> <p>More controversially, the report also suggests that such courses be included as part of a prisoner's sentence to ensure the brief prison stay is not a wasted opportunity.</p>

Endnotes

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- ^{xxiii} DCSF Offender Learning and Skills
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- ^{xl} Ibid. <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/standard.asp?id=1509>
- ^{xli} Ofsted, The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2008/9, p 54 (2009); Guardian 'Lack of education for prisoners serving longer sentences' Jan 2009 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/jan/19/prison-education-longer-sentences>
- ^{xlii} OLASS: Brief Guide <http://olass.lsc.gov.uk/NR/exeres/BBCE18C8-4D2A-4340-AEE4-0A0E9E2FAFCA.htm>
- ^{xliii} National Skills Forum Factsheet <http://www.skillsandinclusion.org.uk/downloads/Offenders%20&%20Ex-Offenders.pdf>;
- National Skills Forum report: Doing Things Differently <http://www.skillsandinclusion.org.uk/?detectflash=false>