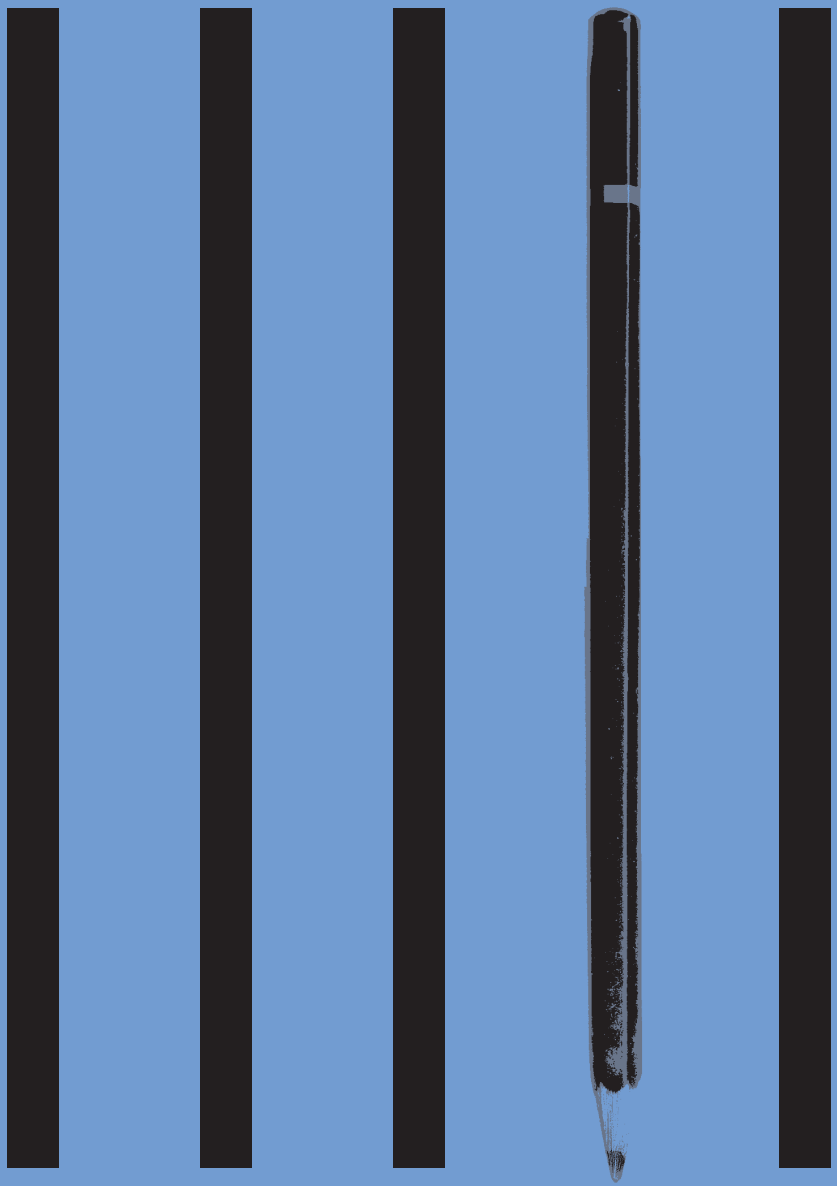
# **Wings of Learning:** the role of the prison officer in supporting prisoner education

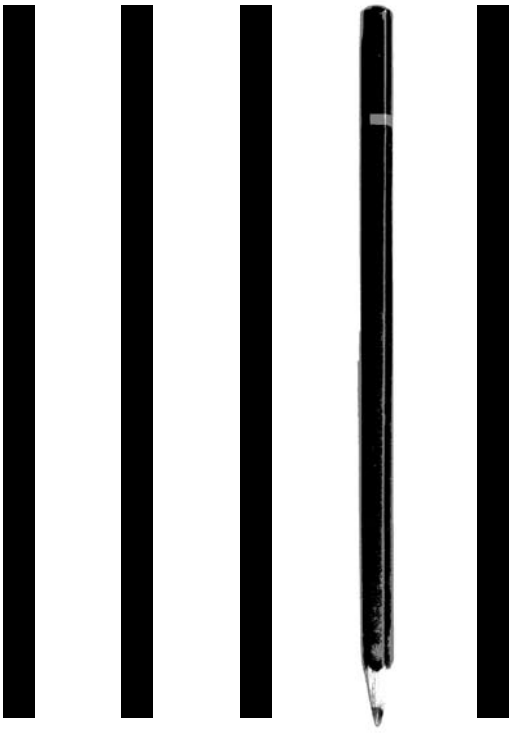


Esmée Fairbairn FOUNDATION

THE CENTRE FOR CRIME *and* JUSTICE STUDIES

# **Wings of Learning:** the role of the prison officer in supporting prisoner education

BY JULIA BRAGGINS AND JENNY TALBOT



With Forewords by Sir Richard Tilt, former Director General of the Prison Service and Chair of the Project Advisory Group, Phil Wheatley, Director General Her Majesty's Prison Service and Colin Moses, National Chairman, Prison Officers' Association

A research project of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

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THE CENTRE FOR CRIME *and* JUSTICE STUDIES

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## 1 Thanks and acknowledgements

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (CCJS) is most grateful to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for supporting this unique study into the role of the prison officer in supporting prisoner learning and skills development.

Wings of Learning has been guided by an expert advisory group chaired by Sir Richard Tilt. We would like to thank all its members for their help, especially for their comments on early drafts of the report: responsibility for the whole, and for any remaining errors, rests with the researchers and with CCJS. A list of members is shown at Appendix 1.

Two independent research associates, Julia Braggins and Jenny Talbot, undertook the study on behalf of CCJS. They were supported by Dr Roger Grimshaw, Research Director, CCJS. Chris Eades, Information Officer, CCJS, stepped in at short notice to take the notes at two prisons when one of the researchers broke her arm. We would like to thank both Roger and Chris very much for their help.

We are most grateful for the support of the prisons involved in this study. In particular we would like to thank all the prison officers who participated in the structured interview discussions and those who helped to organise the prison visits.

## 2 Foreword

**Sir Richard Tilt**
FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL, PRISON SERVICE. COMMISSIONER, THE SOCIAL FUND

I was delighted to be asked to chair the Advisory Group for this research, funded generously by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. It has throughout been fascinating, with the two researchers really getting to understand the views and ideas of prison officers in respect of prisoner education.

Not surprisingly, given their close contact with prisoners, the officers involved have put forward a wealth of ideas that could really contribute to making prison education more effective. As Phil Wheatley says this will require both funding and leadership. I hope these can be provided over coming years. We have come to understand that re-offending can be reduced but only by sustained and high quality programmes that address the individual reasons for offending.

This report contains many ideas that can and should be implemented. The resources directed to prison education have been increasing over the past few years – I hope the new National Offenders Management Service will be able to adopt them and exploit the potential for improvement they offer.

**Colin Moses**
NATIONAL CHAIRMAN, PRISON OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

I am extremely pleased that the work of Prison Officers has been recognised in this report, something which is long overdue.

Clearly, it is vital that front line staff form part of any multi-disciplinary team, to ensure the service continues to address offending behaviour and reduce re-offending.

On behalf of the POA, I personally place on record my sincere thanks to the Advisory Group, researchers and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation who funded this research.

The report identifies many key areas which must be implemented and fully resourced to ensure this work continues to develop.

Learning is not restricted to the classroom. Therefore, it is vital that prisoners understand that prison officers are there to assist. The need to have well balanced regimes which take account of security and activities are important. However, staff training needs to improve, the current prison population has to be reduced, and staff need time to interact with prisoners on a daily basis.

The POA will continue to work closely with the Government, our employer and other agencies to ensure effective education programmes are in place as part of an effective programme for the prisoners in our care.

**Phil Wheatley**
DIRECTOR GENERAL, PRISON SERVICE

The report makes an interesting contribution to the debate about the role of the prison officer in a Prison Service which is committed to reducing re-offending and where future funding will be provided as a result of the commissioning decisions of Regional Offender Managers.

The report is helpful in giving a voice in this debate to front line staff. It makes clear the very real concerns of those staff and the wish of the vast majority to be a full part of the multi-disciplinary team working to reduce the risk of reconviction.

From a personal viewpoint, I am sure that real progress can only be made if we do forge multi-disciplinary teams using all the mix of skills available (instructors, teachers, probation officers, psychologists, prison officers, drug workers, health staff and others from the voluntary sector, other agency and government departments) to deliver in an integrated way.

This will undoubtedly need an increased investment in the training and development of all our staff. It will also need a clear commitment and leadership to ensure genuine partnership working.

## 3 Executive summary: aims, methods, key messages and conclusions

### AIMS AND METHODS

Previous research has shown that prisoners involved in education value support and encouragement from officers on the wings. The study was aimed at discovering how officers viewed prison education, what support they could offer, and how it might best be given in the future. Twelve prisons in England and Wales were visited, between December 2004 and May 2005, and small group interviews were carried out with a total of 77 prison officers.

### KEY MESSAGES

The most powerful messages from this study were:

1. That officers operated with a broad understanding of what counted as 'educational', as far as prisoners were concerned. They tended to perceive as 'educational' anything that helped prisoners change their lives for the better. Their priorities were:

- Personal, social and health education, particularly education to enhance general 'coping' skills that would help on release
- Vocational skills training including help with finding a job
- Basic skills (literacy, numeracy and IT skills) for those who needed it.

Officers were not particularly interested in the formal curriculum as delivered by education departments, perhaps because they were not involved. They were interested in further opportunities for developing their own roles in respect of their perceived priority areas, provided they were given the time, support and training to do so.

2. That officers believed there were confused perceptions about their role, within the Prison Service, within individual establishments, and amongst officers themselves, despite a clear job description.

- The concluding discussion identifies three strands to the role: enforcer, carer and reformer. Where officers were in doubt or under pressure, it is argued, enforcement was the natural default position. The research suggests, however, that most officers were keen to get more involved with the caring and reformative aspects of their role.
- The concluding discussion argues that the three principles of dynamic security – good relationships, structured activity, and individualised programmes – might be a useful starting point for such involvement.

3. That officers thought that they needed more time to do their jobs adequately and in accordance with the job description, in the current situation of over-population and, as they perceived it, under-staffing.

4. That officers felt under-trained, under-supported and under-valued in the existing, let alone any enhanced, role. The perceived lack of appropriate training and support led directly to the feeling of being under-valued.

In summary, officers thought that prisoner education was important, although they had different priorities from learning and skills professionals. They felt they had a role to play (and would like opportunities to do more) but they did not think that they were given either enough time or enough training to fulfil their existing job description properly.

The report argues that no further progress will be possible in officer involvement with prisoner learning until these issues are addressed. As the National Offender Management Service gets under way, a review of the prison officer's role, training and support would be timely.

#### Conclusions: What needs to change?

1. Promoting prisoners' learning should be an integral part of the common purpose of the institution, communicated to all involved.

2. Like all staff, officers should have a basic responsibility to facilitate prisoner learning, as part of implementing a policy of dynamic security (preventing disorder by good communication and providing appropriate activity).

3. There needs to be a service-wide recognition of the 'learning mosaic' (the broad range of learning opportunities across the prison). This calls for a variety of skills amongst officers, to promote learning of all kinds, for both prisoners and staff.

4. Integrated management of learning is needed at governor level within each prison.

5. Promotion of learning should be comprehensively covered in: management plans and time budgets; activity options for prisoners; and initial training, professional development and appraisal for officers.

6. A fundamental clarification of the roles, management and support, training and staff development for officers is necessary.

7. The service should clarify what prison officers can and should offer to promote learning, and consider formalising a range of recognised opportunities to

do so, whether as guides, mentors, advisers, support assistants, or skill instructors.

8. Critical management problems of the Prison Service should be addressed, to ease pressure on all and improve outcomes.

These conclusions are fleshed out in the report's recommendations. Many of those mirror the recommendations of *Time to Learn*, based on prisoners' views about learning in prison, and also the recommendations of officers themselves.

# 4 Introduction

## 4.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This study builds on two recent reports on prisoner learning and skills, each of which took a different perspective. *Shared Responsibilities*[1], published in 2002 by NATFHE and the Association of Colleges, presents an overview of the perceptions of prison governors, education managers and contractors on the state of prison education in England and Wales. Many of the issues raised in *Shared Responsibilities* were further explored in *Time to Learn*[2], published in 2003 by the Prison Reform Trust, which focused on the views, hopes and aspirations of prisoner-learners. The researchers for the current proposal worked together on the latter, and one of them on both reports.

At the time of writing the prison population is rising once more[3], a controversial change is proposed in the way offenders are managed[4], and a critical assessment of the achievements of education for prisoners has been published by Parliament[5]. Prison officers are at the heart of any attempt to reform the way in which prisoner education is delivered[6], and yet their views have not surfaced. This study is particularly timely.

## 4.2 AIMS OF THIS STUDY

**The aims of the study were:**

- To elicit the perceptions of prison officers on the value and appropriateness of current educational opportunities for the prisoners in their care, and to better understand their views
- To highlight good practice and explore any options for change and development, in the interests of prisoners' learning and skills
- To develop fresh thinking in respect of the role of the prison officer in facilitating the educational progress and development of prisoners.

### Rationale: The importance of relationships to learning

The thinking behind this study is about the importance of human relationships in shaping a learning career. Prisoners spend the vast majority of their time with or around prison officers. The collective support, or not, of the officers has the potential to wield significant influence on the progress and development of prisoner education. One finding from *Shared Responsibilities* was that 34% of governors and education managers reported their perception that there was a lack of commitment to education among uniformed staff in their establishments[7].

At the very practical level, it is the officer who unlocks the prisoner-learner so that s/he may get to classes. The day-to-day running of a prison depends wholly on prison officers, and this in turn must impact directly on the effectiveness of any educational policy, whatever the aspirations of policy makers. Within such an environment, relationships become especially important. Difficult times can be transformed through positive relationships.

Relationships with education staff are perceived by prisoners as crucial to their learning, as the following quotations from *Time to Learn* demonstrate:

*'The courses I've enjoyed most, it's the tutor that's been the motivating factor.'*

*'I can think of three [education staff]. It's as though they're on a mission to get people to realise their potential and build their self esteem.'*

*'The first two years of my life sentence I wanted to die. The [education] staff here slowly, slowly brought me out of my shell. They did their best to encourage me.'*

*Time to Learn* also revealed much about relationships between prisoner-learners and prison officers. It became clear how much officer attitudes could influence prisoner learning, especially on the wings:

*'It depends on the officers – how they see you. Some don't care whether you do [education] or not. Others don't want to see you back in here – the ones that care.'*

*'You can get opportunities [e.g. oil paints and art materials to use in the cells]. But at the whim of an officer.'*

One, himself educated to post-graduate level, put it like this:

*'Until the officers value education for themselves they'll find it difficult to value it for others. Until that's sorted there won't be any change.'*

But what do the officers themselves think? We could not find evidence that they had been asked for their own views on this particular theme – hence this study. We wanted to explore the perceptions of prison officers about education and training in prison, as a crucial influence on the success of effective prisoner learning.

## 4.3 THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN PRISON

The notion that a prisoner should leave prison in a better state than he or she came in is enshrined in the Prison Service *Statement of Purpose*, which is posted on a board outside every prison's gate. This reads:

*'Her Majesty's Prison Service serves the public by keeping in custody those committed by the courts. Our duty is to look after them with humanity and help them lead law-abiding and useful lives in custody and after release'.* (emphasis added).

Significant funds have been invested in prisons in

recent years to introduce interventions that may broadly be described as 'reformative'. Investment in literacy and numeracy provision has been one. According to the Government, a 50% increase in spending on education and training is planned for the current financial year as against 2003-04: from £97 million in 2003-4, to £151 million for 2005-6[8].

Prison Service Order Number 4205 states:
*'The purpose of education within prison is to address the offending behaviour of inmates by improving employability and thus reduce the likelihood of re-offending upon release'.*

This stresses a strictly work-related criterion for prison education, linked to an assumption about crime-reduction. The Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU) broadens this definition a little. Its vision statement runs as follows:

*'Our vision is that offenders according to need should have access to education and training both in prisons and the community, which enables them to gain the skills and qualifications they need to hold down a job and have a positive role in society, and that the content and quality of learning programmes in prisons, and the qualifications to which these lead, are the same as comparable provision in the community.*[9]'

**The value of prisoner education**

The indirect impact of education on an individual is very hard to measure. However, prisoner education, in the formal sense, has for some time been recognised as one factor in changing lives.

*'At its best, prison education can open up opportunities, enlighten people, broaden their horizons and build their self-confidence. It can increase their awareness of options, giving them a real choice of a life away from crime. Education can open up the legitimate means of achieving success.*[10]'

The Select Committee's report discusses the purpose of prison education, in these terms:

*'Although contributing to the reduction of recidivism is of key importance, prison education is about more than just this. It is also important to deliver education in prison because it is the right thing to do.'*

This position is supported by international instruments[11]. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26 has this to say:
*'1. Everyone has the right to education*
*2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.'*

And further, under Basic Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners Principle 6.

*All prisoners shall have the right to take part in cultural activities and education aimed at the full development of the human personality*[12].'

This is echoed in the tone of the Chief Inspector's remarks in his introduction to OFSTED's 2003-4 annual report.

*'Education, as far as possible, needs to be broad and balanced, not just to serve some utilitarian end, but as an end in itself* [13].'

This valuing of education as a good in and of itself marks a significant difference of tone from the functional employment-led language of the Prison Service business plans.

## 4.4 WHAT COUNTS AS LEARNING? PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS

Prison Service planners, government and governmental agencies, prisoners and officers, as well as researchers and commentators, use the core terms 'education' and 'learning' to cover a wide range of different activities and ideas. The principle on which the researchers operated, whilst undertaking the fieldwork, was to accept as 'education' and 'educational' whatever the officers chose to designate as such.

The very many kinds of activity and interchange which officers mentioned, when asked a question about 'prisoner education', demonstrated the confusion and ambiguity that can exist. It is worth setting out some of these ambiguities at this early stage.

In the wider world of education, the words 'learning' and 'skills' have been substituted for 'education' and 'training', in recent years. The central drive has been to put the learner at the centre of the process, so that assessment of and response to learner need are paramount. This principle is the lynchpin of the Common Inspection Framework, adopted by The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and OFSTED for the inspection of prisons.

The title of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) itself, now responsible for all (non–university) education funding for 16-19 year olds in England (though not Wales), embodies this change. Such a change has been slow to translate to the prison setting, however. The recent House of Commons Select Committee Report[14] still cited 'Prison Education' as the topic for its inquiry.

As noted in *Time to Learn,* education is classified in prisons as a 'work party'. It is easy, therefore, to put it into a box: there's gym or education or the contract workshop. However this categorisation did not seem to make sense to the prisoners interviewed for that study.

We noted in the introduction that:

*'One prisoner-learner suggested that to focus on education experienced purely within the classroom, as if in a vacuum away from the rest of the prison, would be to miss much of the learning that takes place throughout the prison.*[15]'

The notion that a prisoner can be learning while doing something else (such as working in the kitchens, or gardens), and that moreover this learning can be accredited, has taken some time to become accepted in prisons.

The idea that 'education' is a place to take prisoners to, where they will spend their time in classrooms, is firmly rooted in the organisational structure and culture. An example from a piece written on behalf of the Shannon Trust[16] in the latest issue of Gatelodge[17], the POA members' magazine, demonstrates just one aspect of the definitional conundrum.

*'We are NOT education, although their departments lend support; we are scooping up those that have fallen below the net and would not touch education with the proverbial bargepole even if they could read the word.'* (original emphasis)

It is possible to identify a range – or a 'mosaic' as we may call it – of learning opportunities in prisons. Adopting the categories suggested to us by prisoner-learners in *Time to Learn*, relevant activities include:

- Class-room-based learning
- Distance learning
- Cell work, for example 'home work' or other self-motivated learning
- Vocational training, run by civilian prison staff and others
- Peer education and support (e.g. Toe by Toe, the Samaritans' Listeners training)
- Basic and key skills classes attached to workshops, and provided by the education department
- Gym-based learning and accredited courses run by Prison Service Instructional Officers
- NVQs achieved through work on the prison estate e.g. industrial cleaning, laundry and kitchen work
- Offending Behaviour Programmes (OBPs), usually run by the psychology department, sometimes by officers.

These options also figured in discussions with officers, who added:

- Induction, pre-release and resettlement courses, run and led by prison officers, and
- Quizzes and other activities on the wings run by officers, the chaplaincy and others
- Personal, social and health education, usually achieved informally, according to officers.

#### Informal learning

Over and above these specific activities, there is the 'informal learning' that goes on seven days a week, 24 hours a day, in every interaction between a prisoner and an officer, between one prisoner and another, and between every prisoner and the organisation itself.

As in *Time to Learn*, this report will present group members' perceptions of what is to count as prisoner education, in the findings that follow.

## 4.5 PRISONER EDUCATION: THE LAST DECADE[18]

There have been major changes in the way education and training services for prisoners have been delivered over the past decade. Contracting out such services has meant the entry of new providers, with much to offer in educational expertise, but often little or no experience of working in prisons. There has been a high staff turnover, and some difficulty in the recruitment and retention of, and support for, the predominantly part-time workforce on which education in prisons has traditionally depended[19]. During this period, overall responsibility for prisoner education has changed three times. At the time of writing, the Learning and Skills Council has just (August 2005) assumed responsibility for planning and funding offender learning in three development regions in England (the LSC does not serve Wales), with full responsibility to be assumed in August 2006.

These changes, and the consequent periods of uncertainty and confusion, have given rise to considerable anxiety amongst staff and managers alike. Nevertheless, the achievements of individual prisoners and education providers, supported by substantial funding increases, have been significant. In the Chief Inspector's words:

*'The number of basic skills achievements in our prisons make them the largest adult literacy and numeracy provider in the country. We are looking at around 50,000 awards a year from entry level to level 2. The contracting out of education provision to further education colleges, and their inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate or* OFSTED *exactly as if they were colleges or schools, has undoubtedly improved quality. Moreover, funding has significantly increased (from £48 million in 1999 to £122 Million in 2004) and, as importantly, is provided in a ring-fenced budget by the Department for*

*Education and Skills so that it cannot be raided by a governor looking for quick savings.*[20]'

However the focus, as far as prisoner learning is concerned, has been on process management, rather than on the more fundamental questions of purpose and value, or of integrating the different parts of the 'learning mosaic'. The Education and Skills Committee's report criticised the lack of an 'over-arching strategy about what prison education should be delivering'. There have been achievements, but there have also been costs and lost opportunities.

## 4.6 THE PRISON OFFICER

### a. Working in prisons

Prisons are unusual working environments. Described as 'total institutions' by Erving Goffman[21], they are normally closed to the general view, with the majority of the population never having been inside one and glad that this should remain so. Prisons are hard to get into, as well as out of. They are not open to public scrutiny, in the way that hospitals are, for example. Making sense of the work environment involves real effort.

As Liebling and Price point out, in *'The Prison Officer'* (2001)[22], far more has been written about the experiences of prisoners in the prison system than about the officers whose job it is to contain them.

*'Little is recorded about who prison officers are . . . The academic literature . . . portray(s) them variously as insensitive figures lurking in the background (Cohen and Taylor 1972*[23]*), as brutes prone to use violence at a moment's notice, (Kaufmann 1988*[24]*) as the 'shadowy phantoms' (Shaw 1995*[25]*) of the Learmont report (Home Office 1995*[26]*), or as noble people struggling to get the job done as best they can, under-supported and under-resourced.' (Thomas 1972*[27]*; Home Office 1991*[28]*).*

It may be worth noting, also, that providing top quality management and leadership in prisons seems to be a particular challenge for the Prison Service. According to the latest figures from the Prison Reform Trust:

*'The average tenure for governing governors in an establishment is one year and nine months. In the five years to March 2003 just under a third of all prisons (44) had had four or more governors or acting governors in charge'.*

### b. Public and private prisons

In the early 1990s, the first privately managed prisons, Wolds and Blakenhurst, opened. There are now eleven privately run prisons in England and Wales. Private prisons now account for ten per cent of the prison population holding around 7,500 prisoners[30]. This split is relevant to the current study in a number of ways, and will be touched on again in the discussion. The implications of prison privatisation have been felt across the service, within the state sector in particular as a result of the 'market testing' that is likely to be the consequence for any prison perceived as under-performing.

### c. The staffing profile.

On 1 April 2005, there were 24,424 officers (all grades) employed in the Prison Service (public sector), of a total unified staff (officers and governors) count of 25,868[31]. There are currently 2.80 prisoners to every officer, although this average conceals some variations, around the country. At the end of January 2005, the public sector prison service was short of 269 full-time equivalent officers against an operational staffing requirement of 25,704[32].

The Prison Service has had higher staff sickness levels than 'other parts of government[33]' and efforts are being made to tackle this. A National Audit Commission (NAO) report in 2004 found that:

*The number of recorded working days lost has increased since 1997-98 and, on average, each member of staff took 14.7 days sickness absence in 2002-3.*

Rates for 2003-4 had declined to 13.3 days per person, however, and further steps to address the situation were in train. The NAO commented that the Prison Service target of an average of nine days' sickness absence per employee per year remained 'very challenging' however.

Many prison officers leave within two years of joining the service. Of the 2,245 officers recruited between 2000 and 2003, 1,390 left within two years of signing up, a drop-out rate of 60%[34].

The 'typical prison officer', according to Liebling and Price[35] in 2001:

*'is male; is white; is between 30 and 40; and has around ten years of experience . . . The Prison Service has changed considerably in the time that the typical prison officer has spent working within it.'*

#### ● GENDER BREAKDOWN

On 1 April 2005, again, 5179 unified[36] staff members were female (20% of the total). Of these, there were 4049 female prison officers (as against 15,174 men), 681 female Senior Officers (as against 3,220 men) and 170 Principal Officers (as against 1,146 men).

#### ● ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN

In December 2004, there were 1,062 black and minority ethnic (BME) unified staff in post (4.12% of the total)[37]. The quarterly review notes that:

*'since 2001,* BME *representation has been consistently lower amongst unified than non-unified staff . . .* BME *shortages are particularly evident in the North West and amongst male members of the Prison Service'.*

At 31 December 2004, there were 853 BME officers (just over 4% of the total number) 123 BME Senior Officers (just over 3%) and 44 BME Principal Officers (just over 3%).

**d. Officer background.**
The old-style prison officer tended to come from the services. The Morrises[38], in their 1959 study of Pentonville report that *'the majority of prison officers had spent their early years in the armed forces.'*

They continue:
*'the officers were virtually unanimous in regarding 'the extension of service experience and security' as the most important reason for their joining.'*

Elaine Crawley, writing in 2004, records that most of the officers who took part in her study:
*'. . . came from blue collar occupations. Male officers had previously been employed as factory workers, coal miners, engineers, car mechanics, long-distance lorry drivers, market traders, pig butchers, foundry workers, and swimming instructors. A large proportion had been in the armed forces, and one or two had university degrees. Female officers had previously worked as shop assistants, care assistants, bank clerks, typists, saleswomen, postal workers, and telephonists. Large numbers of ex-services personnel continue to work in the Prison Service but . . . decreasing numbers are now being recruited* [39].

The Prison Service has devoted some energy and attention to its recruitment processes, and is now aiming for a more diverse labour force.

**e. Prison officer job description**
The job description on the Prison Service website reads as follows:

*'In addition to custodial duties, Prison Officers are called upon to build up and maintain close relationships with those in their charge. This is a complex challenge, balancing authority with a large amount of understanding and compassion.*

*As a Prison Officer you will be expected to undertake varied duties and tasks, such as:*

- *Carrying out security checks and searching procedures*
- *Supervising prisoners, keeping account of prisoners in your charge and maintaining order*
- *Employing authorised physical control and restraint procedures where appropriate*
- *Taking care of prisoners and their property, taking account of their rights and dignity*
- *Providing appropriate care and support for prisoners at risk of self harm*
- *Promoting anti-bullying and suicide prevention policies*
- *Taking an active part in rehabilitation programmes for prisoners*
- *Assessing and advising prisoners, using your own experience and integrity*
- *Writing fair and perceptive reports on prisoners.'*

Kamaljit Sachdera, a prison officer at Pentonville, is quoted on the website page, under a heading reading 'what's the work like?' as follows:

*'I'm a people person and feel I'm helping people on the inside with their simple basic needs, like making sure they get their shower or a phone card to phone their families. It's different from every other job I've ever done because it's a challenge and I love challenges. It's my perfect, well paid job.'*

The personal officer scheme is intended to link one officer to a particular group of prisoners. Both the personal officer scheme, and the sentence-planning with prisoners that is intended, appear to have fallen into some disrepair in parts of the estate[40].

**f. A typical day**
What might an average day for a landing officer look like? Liebling and Price write an account of such a day, drawn from the range of prisons they visited as part of their research. Such a day involves officers primarily in counting and checking, superintending movements, maintaining security, locking and unlocking.

- Landing officers unlock a landing in the morning and generally remain on the wing or spur while breakfast is served.
- Officers check prisoners names off as they move to work or education.
- When most prisoners are off the spur, landing officers are normally placed on the required daily task of checking locks, bolts and bars (LBBs), or cell searching.
- Prisoners return from their activities, and lunch is served.
- Afternoon activity (work, training or education: same pattern), then dinner.
- Evening association, which tends to be seen as 'prisoner time'.

There are few opportunities in such a day for much extended conversation between officers – even personal officers – and prisoners, except perhaps in the evenings.

*'In one day, an officer can be a supervisor, custodian, disciplinarian, peacekeeper, administrator, observer, manager, facilitator, mentor, provider, classifier and diplomat'* [41].

Varying shift patterns, over 24 hours and including weekends, can mean that relationships are hard to develop and sustain. Officers are contracted to work an average 39-hour week, but with time off for training, holidays and sickness absence estimated at

approximately 20%, officers may be working an average of 31.2 'effective' hours each week.

**g. Officer recruitment and training**[42]

Officers are recruited locally. There are no formal educational criteria, and selection takes place at Job Simulation Assessment Centres (JSACs). Initial training takes place either at the Prison Service Training College at Newbold Revel, or at local centres. Initial training for prison officers lasts for just eight weeks. The officer remains on probation for the first year of service.

There are no formal entry criteria for comparable uniformed services such as the police and fire service either. However initial police probationary training lasts for a minimum of 37 weeks whilst fire service initial training lasts for three months. It might be argued that the Prison Service has more in common with the police service than the fire service, in that both police and prison officers are primarily involved in dealing with people[43].

The probation service by contrast is, and has been for a while, a graduate profession. Nursing is now fast becoming a graduate profession: all training for nurses is undertaken at Institutes for Higher Education, and although it is possible to aim for a diploma rather than a degree, both courses are three years long.

Skills for Justice is a recently formed organisation, one of the sector skills councils created from the national training organisations, which deals with training and standards for all of the different criminal justice organisations. Whilst there were fairly full entries on its website for police and probation national standards and training, there was not much information on it about custodial care. It appeared that there was a custodial care NVQ, but details about it were elusive. On enquiry, it seemed that national standards for custodial care were currently being revised. Within twelve months there was to be a foundation degree available.

While we were conducting our research, the Prison Service was undergoing a period of financial restraint, and the promised Custodial Care NVQ, towards which several of those officers we spoke to were working, was shelved. According to the Prison Service training headquarters at Newbold Revel, the plans to reactivate this NVQ were still under review at the time of writing. Officers were not required to work towards it, although proposals were being developed to make it an eligibility requirement for promotion.

**h. Local learning centres**

The Prison Service has established twelve local learning centres at prisons, as well as another in Croydon. These centres can be used to deliver a wide variety of training, whether 'central', area or local provision.

The POA has also set up eight learning centres, funded by the Union Learning Fund, established by the TUC in 1998. Union Learning Representatives have been established through this scheme, and numbers of officers have raised their own levels of basic, IT and work skills, in their own time, through these centres – which also cater for local residents. An article in the Guardian of March 2005[44] featured a prison cleaner who had failed the written component of her entry test for acceptance onto prison officer training, and who was studying at the local learning centre to brush up on her skills.

**i. In-service training**

The issue of in-service training for officers appears problematic, as the majority of Crawley's[45] interviewees maintained. She writes:

*'Although a number of mandatory training hours for uniformed staff (six days per annum per officer at the time of my research) are built in to the systems of attendance, staff sickness, leave and general staffing problems made even this difficult to achieve. According to one principal officer . . . in charge of training:*

*"It's easy enough to arrange training courses. The problem is getting management to release the staff to attend them . . ."'*

## 4.7 METHODOLOGY

**a. Setting up the study**

We conducted 14 semi-structured group discussions with a total of 77 prison officers in 12 establishments across the prison estate in England and Wales. In two of the prisons we ran two groups, as our contacts had told us it would be impossible, for operational reasons, to find enough officers for one viable group. (In the event our contacts' fears were unfounded and we saw approximately twice the number of officers in those prisons)[46].

Group sizes varied from four to eight. In all save one group there was at least one female member. Black and ethnic minority officers were present in three groups. In all save two groups there was at least one senior officer. Principal officers were present in three of the groups[47]. Lengths of service varied from three weeks to 27 years.

The prison officers involved in this study brought with them a wide range of different experiences and responsibilities from across the prison. In addition to working on the wings, officers were also involved in: induction and resettlement courses; managing the Offender Assessment System (OASys); offending behaviour programmes; specialist activities such as Safer Custody, suicide watch and race relations. A small number of officers were working full time in specialist areas, for example, as part of a multi-disciplinary drugs team or as an officer-instructor in the prison gym. Many of the officers also performed the role of 'personal officer' and were involved in sentence planning.

The prisons we visited (all for male prisoners, except where stated), their official categories[48] and the numbers of officers we interviewed at each are listed below at Table 4.1.

This was almost exactly the list we visited for *Time to Learn*, for which we selected carefully to ensure a representative spread in terms of geography, gender, age group, and security level. It had been our intention to revisit these same prisons. However at the suggestion of the Advisory Group for the project, we removed Wandsworth from the list, to avoid possible duplication from the inclusion of two big London local prisons, and added Huntercombe, to see whether new perspectives were added by staff working with juvenile offenders.

We wrote to the governor in each case. All the prisons we wrote to were happy to have us, and we were made welcome. Governors delegated the task of liaising with us through a variety of different routes. In six cases we were directed to the heads of learning and skills, and in one case each to: the training manager; the head of residential; the head of deployment; a senior administrator; a governor grade and a safer custody principal officer.

**b. Time scale and modifications**

The fieldwork took place between December 2004 and May 2005. The group discussions ran for around one and a half hours each.

Over the period very little in the way of modification of the interview schedule took place, except that we added one further question to elicit officer perceptions of good practice. Around half way through the survey, we began to feel we were getting too little data on this, the uncovering of which was one of our specific aims. In the spirit of appreciative enquiry [50] we added the question: Can you tell us about an occasion when you felt you performed at your best?

**c. Selection of groups**

For each discussion, our main contact at each prison was asked to identify a random selection of officers, to include:

- Uniformed staff only
- Minimum group size of three, up to a maximum of ten
- A mix of officer, senior officer and principal officer grades
- Male and female officers.

Additionally, we asked that:

- Black and minority ethnic (BME) officers should be involved wherever possible
- The majority of officers in any group should come from the wings
- Involvement should be voluntary.

We indicated that discussions would last about one and a half hours.

We had supplied an 'information sheet for officers' by email to each of our link people. This explained the aims and rationale for the study, and its confidential and voluntary nature. However it became apparent that few groups had received this information, and that officers had, more often than not, been 'detailed' to our groups, rather than volunteering. A number of prison contacts indicated, when we were booking dates for our visits, that they could only have us on a 'training day' when the prison was to be 'on shut down', with normal activities suspended. Perhaps our expectation that officers might have been in a position to choose whether they took part or not was naïve – unless they were to do this in their own time. We also reflected that it might well have been easier to recruit prisoner volunteers (for whom it might have counted as 'time out of cell' and thus scored a tick for the auditors) for the *'Time to Learn'* study.

**TABLE 4.1**

| Prison | Category | Operational capacity [49] | Numbers interviewed |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Aylesbury** | Closed YOI, Buckinghamshire | 355 | Five officers |
| **Askham Grange** | Female open training, N Yorks | 151 | Eight officers |
| **Downview** | Female closed training, Surrey | 251 | Six officers |
| **Guys Marsh** | Category C prison and closed YOI, Dorset | 570 | Five officers |
| **Huntercombe** | Juvenile prison, Oxon | 360 | Five officers |
| **Leicester** | Local prison, East Midlands | 385 | Five officers |
| **Long Lartin** | Category C training and high security prison, Worcs | 422 | Four officers |
| **Manchester** | Local and high security prison, North West | 1269 | Twelve officers in two groups, (five and seven) |
| **Parc** | Category B local adult and YOI (privately run), S Wales | 1028 | Five officers |
| **Pentonville** | Local prison, London | 1205 | Four officers |
| **Wakefield** | Lifer Main Centre and high security prison, W Yorks | 581 | Ten officers in two groups (both of five) |
| **Wellingborough** | Category C Training prison, E Midlands | 526 | Eight officers |

Be that as it may, all joined in (with a few exceptions) and appeared ready and happy to give their views.

**d. Handling the groups and collecting the data**

For each discussion, one researcher worked through the interview schedule and managed the group dynamic, taking care to involve all participants, and the other researcher acted as scribe. The scribe made every effort to record the voices of the officers in their own words, capturing verbatim the group's discussion. We chose this method, above tape recording, both to diminish inhibition amongst respondents and to allow a second observer to assist in the transcription, and in the analysis of the data. This method keeps the 'rawness'[50] of direct speech, whilst doing away with transcription costs and difficulties. It also provides an opportunity for debriefing and feedback immediately after the discussion, for both researchers. No doubt we might also have had difficulty in obtaining such ready access to prisons had we requested permission to tape record discussions.

The data consists of transcripts of discussions based on the interview schedule, a copy of which is at *Appendix 1.*

**e. Analysis and writing up.**

Qualitative research enables a better understanding of how people make sense of their circumstances and their relationships by focusing on their own language and descriptions instead of asking them to use an arbitrary language contained in a fixed-choice questionnaire. Useful findings are therefore to be found in any statements that shed light on their distinctive perceptions and help to connect what might otherwise be isolated remarks.

This search for understanding contributes to an ethnographic study that shows how members of a group perceive their own world. In building an ethnography of prison officers we look for common statements across more than one interview [52].

A group interview allows the group members to foreground their shared views and experiences – although the fact that members are with their peers will also impact on the views and experiences they are prepared to express. The analysis of these interviews was qualitative in purpose, searching for common ideas and themes that when put together made sense and gave an insight into the prison officers' views of their occupational world. We also wanted to know whether perceptions were similarly expressed across the groups in different prisons, although in the time available and given the small sample size we have done little to contrast the views of officers in different types of prison.

Analysing qualitative data needs to be rigorous but its challenges depend on the complexity of the problems to be investigated and the number of information items and sources to be scrutinised. Here the analytical procedure was simple. One of the researchers carefully and systematically went through the interview notes and identified a number of statements that were related to the questions posed. Given the relatively small number of interviews she found it possible to scan the notes without a need for computerised word searching. Comparisons of the statements revealed the extent of similarities and differences among the views of individuals and groups. The procedure gave rise to lists of statements that were in effect 'coded' in terms of their meaning and could then be used to develop general descriptions of the officers' responses. The report then aimed to include sufficient information to support a claim to be 'credible' (in representing its evidence), 'transferable' (in being likely to have produced similar findings in similar prisons) and 'dependable' ( in being likely to have produced similar results if repeated in the same prisons) (see discussion of analysis in Robson 1993[53]). In writing up the findings we have departed from the order of the questionnaire in order to capture more accurately the logical flow of discussions.

Direct quotations from officers involved are used in what follows to highlight and amplify points made. We have done our best not to use quotations that would be likely to identify individuals. The quotations are identified according to the category or type of prison in which they were made, in order to give a context to what is said, but the descriptors have been shortened to offer a greater degree of anonymity to the establishments concerned.

The focus for our discussions with prison officers concerned officer perceptions of, and involvement in, prisoner education. In response to our questions officers told us about a wide range of activities that they associated with prisoner education. Some of the examples given relate to the more formal or traditional understanding of officer involvement, for example escorting prisoners to classes. Others relate to much broader personal, and pastoral, aspects of the role as they perceived it, and examples given by officers involved interventions that were both formal, for example officer-led pre-release courses, and informal, for example talking to a prisoner about personal hygiene. Many of the examples offered concerned conversations between officers and prisoners, in which the intention was to impart knowledge or skills. This section of the report contains examples of each of the above.

Occasionally we discovered that information we were told by an individual officer or by a group of officers was not wholly accurate. However, there is no reason to doubt that the individual or group of officers believed it to be true at that point in time. We are dealing in this report with officer perceptions, rather than factual realities. We have not checked everything we were told

for accuracy with each establishment. That would have been beyond the scope and resources of this study.

In reporting our findings we have indicated where officers from two or more of the twelve prisons concur. Where officers from three or fewer prisons concur they are described as 'a small number' or 'a minority'. Where officers from more than two thirds of the prisons concur, they are described as 'most' or 'the majority'.

In the context of this report, 'a small number' is important in that it represents a significant proportion of those prisons visited. We have sought to represent the full range of officers' views properly and clearly, recognising the validity of both the minority and majority perspectives.

At the end of each of our discussions with groups of officers we asked what, given the opportunity, they would change about the way education and training is delivered in prison. Where officers made suggestions at a third of the prisons or more, they have been translated into recommendations and are included throughout this section of the report and again in Recommendations at page 54.

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[1] Braggins, J. Shared Responsibilities: Education for prisoners at a time of change. NATFHE and the Association of Colleges. 2001.
[2] Braggins, J. and Talbot, J. Time to Learn. Prisoners' Views on Prison Education. Prison Reform Trust 2003
[3] It is now (05.09.05) just short of 77,000, an all-time record.
[4] The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) brings together the work of the Prison and Probation Services and will institute end-to-end management of offenders, from conviction to release.
[5] House of Commons Education and Skills Committee; Prison Education; Seventh Report of session 2004-5; HC114-1
[6] As evidenced in Time to Learn, op cit.
[7] Braggins, J. Shared Responsibilities 2002 op cit.
[8] Government Response to the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee Report June 2005. Cm 6562
[9] Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU) Delivery plan 2004/5
[10] Professor Gus John, Chair of the Advisory Group, Time to Learn. Ibid.
[11] See Coyle A. A Human Rights Approach to Prison Management. ICPS Kings College London 2002, for a further discussion.
[12] See also the Council of Europe Recommendations on Education in Prisons. These are available at www.epea.org
[13] OFSTED Annual Report 2003-2004. Commentary by David Bell. HM Chief Inspector of Schools. 2005.
[14] House of Commons Education and Skills Committee; Prison Education; Seventh Report of session 2004-5; HC114-1
[15] Braggins J. and Talbot, J. Time to Learn. 2003. Prison Reform Trust. Op cit.
[16] The Shannon Trust is responsible for the Shannon Reading Plan (often known as the Toe by Toe scheme) for teaching prisoners to read.
[17] Gatelodge August 2005. p 35. Appreciation from the Shannon Trust to the POA.
[18] For a fuller account, see appendix 2. See also the website of the Forum on Prisoner Education at www.fpe.org.uk
[19] See Shared Responsibilities, NATFHE/AoC 2001, for further evidence. For example, one finding was that: 'although two thirds of governors thought arrangements for providing education had worked as they should, only one in three education managers and one in three contractors thought the same.'
[20] HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. Prisoners' Education Trust Lecture April 2005.
[21] Goffman, E. Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Inmates, First published Doubleday, 1961. Pelican Books 1968.
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[23] Cohen, S and Taylor, I. Psychological Survival: the experience of long-term imprisonment. London, Penguin 1972
[24] Kauffman, K. Prison Officers and their world. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1988
[25] Shaw, S. Gladstone at 100, in Shaw S (ed) Gladstone at 100. Essays on the past and future of the prison system. London Prison Reform Trust 1995
[26] Home Office. Review of Prison Service Security in England and Wales – The Learmont Report (Cmnd 3020) London HMSO 1995
[27] Thomas, J. E. The English Prison Officer since 1850. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1972
[28] The Home Office 1991. Prison Disturbances April 1990: Report of an Inquiry by the Rt Hon Lord Justice Woolf, and His Honour Judge Stephen Tumim ('The Woolf Report'). London HMSO.
[29] Hansard, House of Commons written answer 31st January 2003, quoted in Prison Factfile. Prison Reform Trust, May 2005.
[30] Prison Factfile. PRT May 2005. op cit
[31] All April 2005 figures from Staff Profiles and Projections Quarterly Review. Prison Service HR Planning. April 2005
[32] Hansard, House of Commons written answer 21 February 2005; col 461W. Quoted in Prison Reform Trust Factfile May 2005.
[33] National Audit Office. The Management of Sickness Absence in the Prison Service. 2004.
[34] Hansard, House of Commons written answer 1st September 2003. Quoted in Prison Reform Trust Prison Factfile, May 2005.
[35] Liebling and Price 2001 op cit
[36] 'Unified' grades include prison officers, senior and principal officers, and governors 1-5 – ie those who have direct contact with prisoners. Many of the Prison Service's figures show numbers for 'unified' staff, rather than prison officers as such.
[37] Prison Service HR planning Ethnicity Quarterly Review January 2005.
[38] Morris, T. and Morris, P. Pentonville: a sociological study of an English prison. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1963
[39] Crawley, E. Doing Prison Work: the public and private lives of prison officers. Willan Publishing 2004.
[40] Inside Track: Prisoner Education in 2004 and Beyond. The Report of an Inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Further Education and Lifelong Learning. September 2004. Evidence from a visit to HMP Wandsworth.
[41] Liebling and Price op cit.
[42] See appendix 3 for details
[43] See Coyle, A. (forthcoming). Understanding Prisons: Key Issues in Policy and Practice. Open University Press. McGraw Hill (November 2005), chapter 5.
[44] Workforce Training that Works. Peter Kingston. Guardian Educational Supplement, 22 March 2005; thanks to Steve Gillan of the POA
[45] Crawley, E. 2004 op cit
[46] In one, because of our own availability, we had to cancel a proposed third group. We invited interested officers who would have taken part in this third group to send their comments to us by post, on a shortened version of the interview schedule, and two of them subsequently took the trouble to do so.
[47] See below for information on representation of minority groups within the prison officer population
[48] according to the Prison Service website in June 2005
[49] from the Prison Service Website on 5.09.05. 'The operational capacity of a prison is the total number of prisoners that an establishment can hold taking into account control, security and the

proper operation of the planned regime. It is determined by area managers on the basis of operational judgement and experience'. PS Population Bulletin.

[50] For more on appreciative enquiry, a 'focus on best experiences', see Liebling A. and Price D. The Prison Officer, Leyhill: Prison Service and Waterside Press (2001); and Liebling, A; Prisons and their Moral Performance. Oxford University Press 2004.

[51] Liebling 2004, op cit. footnote p 136

[52] For a language-focused approach to prison research see Maeder, C. (2002)' Everyday Routine, Social Structure and Sociological Theory: Using Ethnographic Semantics for Research on Prisons' Forum: Qualitative Social Research Volume 3, No. 1

[53] Reference: Robson, C. (1993) Real World Research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner – researchers Oxford: Blackwell

# 5 The Current Study

This section of the report reflects the opinions and understanding of prison officers on a range of topics relevant to the study.

## 5.1 PRISON OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE

During the course of our discussions we heard much about the wide range of duties and responsibilities of prison officers. What follows offers an insight into how officers perceive their role overall. The different ways in which officers encourage and support prisoner education are touched on and further explored later in the report.

### a. Security, discipline and operational duties

Most officers talked about their role in terms of security, discipline and ensuring the smooth running of the prison. It was clear that operational considerations, in particular, security, came first:
*'Our first job here is security.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'. . . the first responsibility is to keep them in custody.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'You do the rounds – locks, bolts and bars . . . '* (JUVENILE)

*'At the end of the day our job is about security, running the core regime.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

According to one officer, the only thing that came above security was *'preservation of life.'*

We heard much about the role of prison officers in terms of discipline too:
*'We're basically discipline. Our main function is: to, from and numbers.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

At only one of the twelve prisons visited, which was one of the two women's prisons, did officers not make a specific reference to either security or discipline.

A small number of officers talked about their involvement in creating an environment of *'dynamic security'*, in particular in relation to encouraging prisoners to participate in *'purposeful activity'* and building positive relationships with prisoners:
*'That's all part of dynamic security, building up relationships. As a personal officer on the wing you may have ten prisoners you build a relationship with.'* (ADULT/YOI)

The building of positive relationships with prisoners was often given as an example of the changing role of prison officers. One officer spoke of it in terms of a 'role change' going on to say:
*'. . . It used to be: give an order; take an order and woe betide the prisoner who didn't comply. Now we are trying to change the prisoner to be a better person on the outside . . .'* (HIGH SECURITY)

Not all officers however were comfortable with this change and a minority of officers saw it as a potential *'conflict of interest'* with their disciplinary role:
*'There's a conflict of interest too. We're the thin blue line. They wouldn't want us to be in that [more supportive] role.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

We heard about the priority given to operational duties, the jobs that needed to be done, often at set times of the day, in order to keep the prison running smoothly:
*'We're time bound by a lot of things: unlock, breakfast, labour . . . The whole prison runs on time.'* (LOCAL)

*'Your primary responsibility here is operational duties.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

### b. Classes, programmes and other activities

In all of the prisons we heard about officer involvement in a wide range of classes, programmes and other activities. We not only heard about officers' own involvement but also that of fellow officers across the prison.

For most officers their involvement in classes and programmes was 'detailed' as part of their operational or residential duties. Their involvement ranged from leading and delivering classes and programmes, through to facilitation and support. The range we heard about included:

- Induction and pre-release courses
- Offending behaviour programmes
- Anger management programmes, for example, CALM
- Drugs programmes, for example, PASRO (Prisoners Addressing Substance Related Offences)
- Enhanced thinking skills
- Young persons development unit (anti-bullying).

Officers were also detailed to undertake duties such as:

- Safer custody
- Suicide awareness
- Race relations
- Voluntary drugs testing
- Sentence planning, and at one prison,
- OASys (Offender Assessment System) management.

In addition officers were also involved in encouraging or facilitating voluntary activity, for example in one prison we heard about tapestry, in another about 'quiz nights' and in over half of the prisons, officers were involved in 'Toe by Toe', a voluntary project to help prisoners learn to read.

**c. Informal interventions with prisoners**

The majority of officers spoke about their relationship with prisoners in terms of a series of informal interventions. Officers' day to day contact with prisoners and the opportunities afforded, as they saw it, to impart a wide range of social and life skills, including communication and inter-personal skills, was clearly seen as an important and integral part of their role – for example, telling prisoners how to ask for things appropriately, taking turns and not shouting or cutting across conversations:

*'They come up when I'm having a conversation and say: "Boss, boss." I say, "Go away until I've finished my conversation."'* (HIGH SECURITY)

*'They need the basics: reading and writing and social skills and hygiene. A lot of them when they come in here, they don't know how to live properly.'* (LOCAL)

Some officers spoke of the sense of satisfaction when they felt the message had got through:

*'Then one day it clicks into place and they come up and say "Thank you" and you think, "That's why I'm here."'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

Others were very clear about the place and importance of social and life skills:

*'They need life skills first; they need life skills first in order to be able to cope and then education.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

In a minority of prisons, officers talked about their role in providing moral education, pointing out to prisoners where they had gone wrong:

*'We have a high level of sex offenders here. They need to learn that what they are doing is wrong.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

A small number of officers also talked about the importance of acting as role models for the prisoners:

*'. . . officers acting as role models. The way officers carry themselves and associate with others. It's very important. It needs recognising.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

**d. Personal officer**

In a third of the prisons, visited officers talked about their role as a personal officer where they were encouraged to build up relationships with a small number of (for example 10-12) prisoners on a wing. However, unlike officer involvement in the various classes, programmes and activities described above, personal officer duties did not appear to be 'detailed'.

**e. Challenging and demanding roles**

*'It's not the easiest of jobs.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

*'You're going to get punched and spat on . . . We had 84 resignations last year.'* (ADULT/YOI)

However positive relationships between officers and prisoners might be, there will always be occasions when officers have to deal with disruptive, disturbed or dangerous behaviours. Officers at just under half of the prisons told us about some of the very difficult situations that they were dealing with on a regular basis – often, in their view, without adequate training or support:

*'What always gets missed is that we have to deal with a lot of severely mentally disturbed people and we have no training.'* (CAT C)

*'I was talking to a lad, while [a fellow officer] was holding his arm together and I was holding his throat together where he had cut himself.'* (LOCAL)

*'There's blood, death and trauma here, like in real life but more concentrated.'* (ADULT/YOI)

**f. All things to all people**

In a third of the prisons officers felt that they performed a variety of roles not related to their primary function and for which they received neither the recognition nor the training. As one officer put it:

*'I've said this before . . . Monday to Friday there's every specialist you can think of here available to the prisoners. Come Saturday morning and we're everything: social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, everything!'* (CAT C)

Officers from a small number of prisons described themselves as regularly performing the role of '. . . nurse, counsellor, mum.' (WOMEN'S PRISON) and at one of the local prisons we were told:

*'To some of them we're mother, father, brother, sister. We're all they've got.'*

**g. 'Just a turnkey'**

In just under a third of the prisons, officers expressed the view that, despite an increase in the number of different tasks that were expected of them, pressures of time were reducing their role to nothing more than a 'turnkey'.

*'I thought we would be doing more. We turn keys and we count them out and back.'* (LOCAL)

At one of the prisons, however, we heard the direct opposite. Officers there felt that the range of jobs they were now expected to accomplish made them anything but turnkeys. The common factor between both groups, however, was a lack of time, as officers saw it, to perform their duties effectively.

Some of the officers were disappointed that time constraints meant that they weren't being given the chance to do the job they thought they had applied for. At one of the local prisons we heard about a job advert for a prison officer that one of the officers had seen. His overwhelming impression was: *'That's not what I do!'* At another prison we were told:

*'People joined this establishment primarily because they thought they'd be working with young people. You come here and all you're doing is locking them up.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

**h. An under utilised resource**

Officers from over half of the prisons felt that they were an 'under utilised resource' (CAT C PRISON & CLOSED YOI). Officers wanted to do more but felt prevented from doing so by 'the system'. We heard from officers about the wide range of skills and talents they had that were not being used:
*'I have a [relevant] degree and nobody has ever said to me, "How can we use that?" There's no personal development.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

*'It's about choice; it's about options. There are lots of officers with lots of talent, degrees, so why don't we use and encourage specialisms?'* (CAT C)

Two officers who told us about their fulltime specialist roles within the prison did so with a degree of pleasure and satisfaction:
*'I'm privileged really because I work with the drugs team, I'm not like the residential staff . . .'* (CAT C)

We heard from one prison officer about how his views on officer involvement in education had changed as a direct result of being detailed to a fulltime position facilitating offending behaviour programmes:
*'If you had asked me before then I would have said "no". Like I said, prison officers are suspicious dinosaurs. But now I would like to see more involvement.'* (LOCAL)

**i. An under valued resource**

Officers from a small number of prisons felt keenly that despite being with the prisoners '24/7' their input into prisoner assessments wasn't either adequately sought or properly valued. As they saw it, the 'professionals', for example psychologists, would spend only one or two hours with the prisoner, who in any case, according to the officers, knew the form well enough to tell the 'professional' what they wanted to hear. It seemed to the officers that on the basis of only a couple of hours the 'professional' would form an opinion:
*'We don't get a chance to give our feedback, to say: "For that two hours you see him, he's different to that 24 hours a day we see him."'* (ADULT/YOI)

At one prison, where officers' views were sought we detected a sense of pride at their involvement. However, there was once again the problem of sufficient time in which to complete their reports:
*'Officers have a big impact on the assessment of prisoners. The Parole Board values officer observations.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

It seemed that officers didn't feel any due sense of recognition either by the prison service or the wider public. Unlike the police or the fire service, theirs was a 'forgotten' public service. That they were the ones who kept everything running smoothly was made clear to us on more than one occasion:
*'If all the governors were out on an away day, the gaol would run. If all the principal officers or the senior officers were out, the gaol would run. But if all the officers went, the gaol would come to a halt.'* (LOCAL)

**j. What sort of prison? What are we here for?**

It became clear in listening to most officers involved in the study that they perceived their duties and responsibilities to be many and varied, frequently challenging and often demanding. Many officers wanted to do more but felt constrained by the demands of the job and a lack of time. Others took a different view arguing that any blurring of the line between discipline and the 'softer' parts of the regime such as education could lead to a conflict of roles.

In half of the prisons visited morale often appeared to be low, with officers feeling that their efforts were left undervalued, unsupported and unrecognised:
*'Officers are at rock bottom at the moment and I don't think that management realise that.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

An officer at another prison added a further perspective:
*'There's light at the end of the tunnel, but it's foggy.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

It seemed to officers at a small number of prisons that there was a lack of clarity about the type of prison theirs was and perhaps more importantly where the focus of effort in terms of service provision should be:
*'We're a local prison. We're also a resettlement prison; a Cat B dispersal prison and we've got a lifer wing. We're all things to everyone. We want [need] to make our minds up what we want to be.'* (LOCAL)

*'But we need to know, under NOMS, what sort of prison we are. Are we going to be a resettlement?'* (ADULT/YOI)

Officers in just under a third of the prisons also wondered about their role, 'what are we here for?' Others felt that their role needed some re-thinking. As two officers put it:
*'If you've got a clear goal for what you want an officer to do, everything revolves around that. If you want to keep them [the prisoners] occupied – we're doing that. If you want them [the officers] to help prisoners become better members of society . . .'* (HIGH SECURITY)

*'It's in our statement of purpose. How can we help them to lead useful law abiding lives when we are not given the resources? We're just papering over the cracks.'* (LOCAL)

**k. Time and the core day**

As officers talked about their various duties and responsibilities the stringencies of time were never far away. The majority of officers told us about insufficient

time, as they saw it, to adequately fulfil their duties. For officers the 'core day' and detailed duties took priority. This was said as a simple statement of fact – we're there to count them, feed them, move them about the prison and make sure they don't escape. Many officers felt that the amount of work and wide range of duties expected of them left little or no time for anything else:
*'You are deployed on certain jobs, throughout the day, that have to be done. We haven't got time for anything else.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

*'The core day doesn't allow us time to do extra. There's 90 prisoners on a wing and all of them want things now… and you've still got security.'* (CAT C)

Security and other operational considerations came first; anything extra or which wasn't 'detailed' was seen as an add-on and the first to go if either time or staffing was short. 'Extras' seemed to include personal officer duties as well as any informal contact with the prisoners:
*'It's the time constraint. You've got 100-120 prisoners on a wing and maybe three staff. There's no time to talk [to prisoners] on association.'* (LOCAL)

At one of the prisons, however, it seemed that time could perhaps be found for non-detailed activity, for example during the evenings and at weekends:
*'A lot of the core day officers don't have a lot of time. But in the evenings and at the weekends . . .'* (HIGH SECURITY)

It seemed that changes to 'detailed' duties would often happen at short notice when, for example, officers were needed for security jobs such as escorting prisoners to court or to hospital. This in turn disrupted other activities, for example involvement in officer-led programmes for prisoners, making it difficult for officers to plan ahead. The following exchange between officers reflects similar discussions at other prisons too:
*'You look at what you're on next week and think: "Oh great!" Then you come in and you're not really. You're in hospital with a prisoner having his foot plastered or something.'*
*'And when we are short [of staff] officer-led classes are the first to go.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

It seemed to officers in one third of the prisons that there was a shortage of officers, whether due to absence or an unrealistic staff complement or both, and consequent high ratio of prisoners to officers:
*'We need more officers; I can't do half the things I want to do. We've got three officers to ninety prisoners, we get four officers if that goes up to one hundred, so they keep the levels at ninety-nine.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'When you've got 48 [prisoners] per landing and only one officer, it's a lot . . .'* (LOCAL)

*'We don't have the time. We're short staffed and the profile (work activities) keeps going up.'* (CAT C)

## 5.2 THE PURPOSE AND VALUE OF PRISONER EDUCATION

### a. The views of officers

How officers perceive the purpose and value of prisoner education is at the core of this study. In asking officers their views, we did not offer any definition of 'education'. Education, therefore, was defined by what the officers chose to tell us about[54].

Most officers talked about the purpose of education in terms of rehabilitation and preventing re-offending. Opportunities for prisoners to become more employable and better able to cope with life generally were common themes:
*'It makes them more employable.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

*'To equip them for when they go out'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

As was the desire not to see the same prisoners back again:
*'We want to give them a good education here because we don't want them back again.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

Officers from a small number of prisons cited very practical and compelling examples demonstrating the importance of basic skills:
*'If you go to a parents' evening and the teacher shows you your child's work and you haven't got a clue because you can't read . . .'* (LOCAL)

And at another prison one officer saw a clear link between not being able to read and reverting back to crime:
*'If they can't read how can they get a job? Some of them don't even claim benefits because they can't read . . . Because they can't read they turn back to crime to live, there's no choice.'* (ADULT/YOI)

Officers from a small number of prisons felt that developing a routine for prisoners was important:
*'Some people here have never worked in their lives, so simply getting them up and into the workshop on time is an achievement.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

Making prisoners feel good about themselves, building confidence and self-esteem, personal development and demonstrating to prisoners that they were capable of achieving were seen as important by officers in one third of the prisons visited.
*'Making them feel good about themselves. Taking pride in their work. To show them that they are capable.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

Officers from a small number of prisons talked about many prisoners having had disrupted lives with little in the way of education. The opportunities available to prisoners were, as they saw it, perhaps the first chance prisoners have had to 'better themselves' and should therefore be supported and encouraged.

Prison as a provider of moral education was a strong focus for officers from a small number of prisons – to know what's right from wrong. In one prison officers saw it as a question of 'moral guidance', which was perceived as being in short supply in some families. In another the example was much more specific:
*'For example, going to bed with your sister. If you've been told that's all right, and society tells you it's wrong, you need some education. You need to learn to think the right way.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

Officers from a small number of prisons talked about education in terms of providing a positive contribution towards creating an environment of dynamic security:
*'We had no workshops for 18 months. It was a dangerous place to work. No sense of purpose. Nothing to do.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

*'Here they have an actual structure. They come out of their cells, keep their minds occupied, get tired. They don't want to come out and have a fight.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

At just under a third of the prisons visited it seemed to officers that, while important, the formal curriculum was 'not the be all and end all'. There were times when other concerns should take priority:
*'Some of the lads have committed serious sexual offences. I think it's more important to tackle that before formal education.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'A lot have a lot going on in their heads. They are primary carers and often subject to abuse. They need to clear their heads before they can sit in a classroom.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

At one prison officers talked about prevention being better than cure. It seemed to them that a greater emphasis on education and more discipline both within the home and at school would serve to reduce the numbers of people coming into prison. Showing young people the inside of a prison and the project 'Prison Me No-way!!!!' were seen as two positive actions that could be taken.

Overall we heard positive things from officers about how they viewed the purpose and value of prisoner education. As one officer put it:
*'There's no reason to be against it.'* (ADULT/YOI)

However, although we didn't ask where prisoner education came on their list of priorities, one officer volunteered the following:
*'For the officers, I'd say education is one of the least of their concerns.'* (LOCAL)

**b. Prison officer perceptions of the importance of education to their individual establishments**

We asked officers about the level of importance placed on prisoner education in their establishment, as they saw it. Officers from the majority of prisons felt that education was seen as important:
*'Education is one of the largest workshops. It's one of the last to be closed. It's one of the most important things.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

This was qualified by officers from half of the prisons visited who felt that the high level of importance afforded to education was a direct result of targets, and the desire of the governor to realise their Key Performance Targets (KPTs):

*'The governor takes more of an interest than the officers because of his KPTs.'* (LOCAL)

This wasn't necessarily seen as a bad thing by officers, more a statement of fact:
*'This is a KPT, so it's pushed; it's the age group, 18-21, so it's pushed . . . When you take the whole pie – gym, gardening etc and they've all got an educational aspect, it's a big part.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

However it seemed to officers at one third of the prisons that the drive to meet targets also had a negative impact. It didn't seem to matter what prisoners were doing on education as long as they were there:
*'For the governors it's figures. It doesn't matter whether it's useful or not.'* (LOCAL)

*'I'm cynical. It's a way to get purposeful hours to meet the terms of the contract.'* (ADULT/YOI)

We heard from officers at one prison about more able prisoners being encouraged to attend education in order to increase the number of qualifications achieved and at another, of a prisoner who had been allowed to do the same certificate twice.

At another prison the drive to increase numbers was seen by officers as a potential threat to security:
*'And there's the risk to security in the desire to get the numbers. I was on duty in a workshop and there was a prisoner who'd been a hostage taker…so I dealt with it. But things like that get missed.'* (LOCAL)

And at the same prison we heard about the financial implications of 'missing' targets:
*'If we don't reach our targets we're going to get fired… If ETS doesn't reach 90% of their target, audit will pull the money . . . 30 officers' jobs would go.'* (LOCAL)

It seemed to officers at a minority of prisons that whilst education was important:
*'. . . The priority in the Prison Service isn't on education.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

**TABLE 5.1**

**OFFICERS' LIST OF OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN THE FORMAL CURRICULUM IN ELEVEN OF THE TWELVE PRISONS, EXCLUDING THE JUVENILE PRISON:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Basic and key skills** | English, maths and IT |
| **Social and life skills** | Home maintenance and DIY; health and hygiene; counselling; citizenship |
| **Academic courses** | Open University degree courses; a variety of GCSEs and A levels; languages, including Spanish; English for speakers of other languages |
| **Creative and recreational classes** | Arts and crafts; Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme; gym, including weight lifting; pottery; creative writing |
| **Business and IT training** | Business administration and management; ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence); computing; CLAIT; business studies |
| **Vocational skills training** | A variety of NVQs, including: hairdressing, food preparation, gardening, industrial cleaning; painting and decorating; 'Motormechs' motor mechanics course; gym leadership and teaching gym; first aid; health and safety; bricklaying; carpentry; food hygiene; generic preparation for work; sewing; manual handling; engineering; plastering; tailoring; motor cycle maintenance; laundry; blacksmiths; forklift truck driving; Braille workshop |

**TABLE 5.2**

**OFFICERS' LIST OF OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN THE FORMAL CURRICULUM AT THE JUVENILE PRISON:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Basic and key skills** | English, maths, IT |
| **Social and life skills** | Sex education; behaviour and bullying; culinary development; washing clothes; using a dishwasher; budget management; preparation for work; camp craft |
| **Academic courses** | A variety of GCSEs and A levels; degree courses |
| **Creative and recreational classes** | Centre for Dramatic Art, including music, drama, art; and creative writing; gym |
| **Business and IT training** | None reported |
| **Vocational skills training** | Construction; bricklaying; painting and decorating; woodwork; motor mechanics; engineering; NVQ in the kitchens; 'Fast-fit', exhausts, tyres and basic mechanics |

## 5.3 OFFICER AWARENESS OF THE FORMAL CURRICULUM FOR PRISONER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

We asked officers about the formal curriculum for education and training available to prisoners and, as in our previous study, *Time to Learn*, their responses indicated the wide variety of provision across the prison estate. The term 'formal curriculum' is used to differentiate between education and training provided through vocational workshops and the prison education department, and other prisoner learning opportunities across the prison.

Opportunities provided by the prison education department and through vocational skills and training workshops in eleven of the twelve establishments, excluding the Juvenile prison, are shown at TABLE 5.1. The juvenile prison, which has more generous funding arrangements for educational provision, is shown separately at TABLE 5.2. Officers were not asked for a comprehensive list; the courses shown below are the ones that officers were readily aware of.

### a. What did officers think about the formal curriculum?

Officers at over half of the prisons visited commented specifically on the range and quality of opportunities available to prisoners in their prisons. At just under a third of prisons officers told us about a wide range of good quality provision:

*'The things we actually have to provide we provide over and above. These inmates move down through the system better able to cope.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

*'The basic education here is very good and we have a lot of travellers who need that.'* (CAT C)

At one of the prisons we heard about a 'broad expanse' of opportunities but didn't get any sense as to whether officers viewed it as being a quality provision or not.

Officers from a third of the prisons visited were not impressed by provision. One officer simply told us that education is 'quite poor here.' At two of the local prisons officers were damning about both the range and quality of provision, although at one of the prisons this was later qualified:

*'The only class that benefits prisoners is the one for foreigners learning English.'*

And at another prison one officer noted:
*'What we have here isn't great, officers will agree. If we had to attend education we'd be bored.'*

We heard from officers at over half of the prisons visited about opportunities for prisoners to do NVQs covering a wide range of subject areas, (see TABLES 5.1 and 5.2). Current provision varied from prison to prison and there often seemed to be a plan to do more:
'NVQs *all over the prison . . . Just about every activity is geared to a training qualification.*' (LOCAL)

*'There will be more, we pay lip service at the moment . . . Every single department is supposed to be looking at what educational component there is in that area.'* (ADULT/YOI)

There was a strong sense from officers at half of the prisons visited that courses that had a resettlement value, which might help prisoners on release, were more useful than academic or recreational subjects:
*'It's all about the curriculum . . . It's got to be relevant . . . '* (LOCAL)

*'Proper training so that they can do things when they leave. I mean we do pottery, what good is that?'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

Linked to this, officers universally saw vocational training as a good thing. Where prisons provided opportunities, officers wanted more, both in terms of additional places on existing courses and a wider range of provision. Where there were no opportunities, officers felt that provision should be made. At one of the local prisons, officers told us that they would encourage prisoners to transfer to prisons where there were opportunities.

It seemed to officers in half of the prisons visited that training workshops offered the best chance for prisoners to be able to find work on release:
*'We need more of the sort of things that they can use on the out.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

*'It's vocational training that's important, something that can get them a job.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'Vocational training is the key for a lot of these guys, we can offer a real life alternative.'* (CAT C)

There was, however, recognition by officers from a small number of prisons that achievement was valuable in its own right in enhancing prisoners' self-esteem and levels of confidence. Furthermore, it seemed to officers that however unrelated some qualifications might be to future job prospects, they would still indicate a level of ability to future employers. The following is an exchange we heard from officers at one of the women's prisons:
*'Not all qualifications are relevant. It's good for self-esteem and building confidence but it won't get them a job.'*

*'For a lot, they are going into unskilled work. We give them qualifications that won't get them anywhere but it does show employers what they can do.'*

Officers at just under half of the prisons were generally more supportive of opportunities for prisoners to learn to read and write, the basic skills, than they were for higher education, which was seen by some as 'nice to have' but not essential:

*'They need the basics: reading and writing and to a lesser extent, numbers.'* (LOCAL)

In contrast, officers at one of the women's prisons were particularly concerned about opportunities for prisoners being geared to the majority:
*'The difficulty is you do it [education] for the majority, but it's the exceptions you've got to cater for too. It's the very bright ones that get left out.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

In this particular instance their concern was about prisoners they considered as 'bright', but the same could also be said about prisoners at the other end of the spectrum. We only heard about specific opportunities for prisoners with learning difficulties at one prison.

It seemed to officers at one third of the prisons visited that the curriculum, as it stood, was not sufficiently flexible to cater for the individual needs of prisoners:
*'. . . They are not all starting at the same point, but we expect them to be all the same, that's what's happening. We don't tailor make for individual needs, that's why a lot don't go.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

We heard from the officers at the prisons dealing with juveniles and young offenders about their low attention spans and consequent difficulties in the classroom. What was needed, according to the officers, was a curriculum that was capable of managing young people with short attention spans as well as a general lack of interest in classroom based education:
*'A lot are identified with Attention Deficit Hyperactive disorder: they can sit still for 20 minutes max and then they start throwing pens at each other. So we've started to change the lads around, not the teacher. They [the education provider] have stipulated 45 minutes, but you can only teach them for 20.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'A lot of them [young offenders] are uneducable; I don't mean that in a rude way, they just are. They didn't go to school. Teach them how to play with an engine and they'll love that.'* (ADULT/YOI)

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
The formal curriculum for prisoner education should be made more flexible and adaptable, taking into account the wide range of prior learning experience and attainment, abilities, motivation and particular requirements of prisoners.

**b. What would officers like to see more of?**
In light of current provision, we asked officers whether they would like to see any changes.

- **SOCIAL AND LIFE SKILLS**

In half of the prisons visited officers wanted to see greater provision for helping prisoners to develop a range of interpersonal, social and life skills, self

management and coping skills, skills that would help prisoners to manage better both on the inside and out. There was often a strong resettlement theme when officers talked in these terms:
*'I've seen it a lot: they can't cope with responsibilities on the out and so they come back to us. It's life skills that they need, how to manage, how to cope with every day living.'* (ADULT/YOI)

One officer in particular felt that prison itself fostered a culture of dependency:
*'. . . for example, the request and complaint system, it's not reality: it's not how things work in the real world. When we [on the outside] have a problem we have to learn how to manage, develop coping strategies, but in here they [the prisoners] become dependent on our systems and when they go out they can't even pay a bill.'* (ADULT/YOI)

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
There should be more opportunities to help prisoners further develop a range of interpersonal, social and life skills, self management and coping skills that will help them to manage better both on the inside and out. Suggestions to impart such skills include:

- Activities that would expose prisoners to new and different situations, for example, opportunities afforded by the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, the Prince's Trust, Tall Ships or simply taking a group of prisoners for a walk or a bike ride
- Practical learning about 'real life skills', for example, filling in forms, doing a CV, finding out how best to go about getting accommodation or applying for a job or a mortgage
- Self-management and coping strategies.

### • COURSES THAT WILL HELP PRISONERS ON RELEASE

At a third of the prisons visited officers felt that more opportunities should be made available to help prisoners to prepare for release, in particular in relation to housing and finding work:
*'It's housing and a job that are important.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'We've got 45 cells on resettlement and 1,100 prisoners. It's not enough.'* (LOCAL)

Officers from a small number of prisons felt that there should be greater links between the prison and external organisations relevant to prisoners preparing for release. It seemed to officers that it would be useful for them to meet with and learn more about the types of organisations/services they were most frequently asked about by the prisoners, for example housing. Officers also felt that there should be more integration between education and work and suggested inviting local employers into the prison. We heard from officers at one of the prisons, (LOCAL/HIGH SECURITY), about an 'Employer Fair' during which seventeen employers came into the prison to talk to prisoners about local job opportunities.

Officers at one of the local prisons wanted opportunities for prisoners to continue with their education on release, especially given that the provider of education within the prison was the local college. One officer wondered whether attendance could perhaps be made part of the prisoners' licence conditions.

In a similar vein, officers at another prison wanted to see more support for prisoners once they had been released:
*'Those leaving Cat Cs you need to follow up outside. We get them going and* BANG. *They're on the streets and there's nothing. There's no fall-back, follow-through for what we've started here.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

There was recognition by officers from a small number of prisons that NOMS should help with follow through from prison into the community, but there was also some scepticism:
*'. . . the buzz is that's not going to happen, that's pie in the sky.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
There should be more practical help and opportunities for prisoners to prepare for release, in particular in relation to finding work and accommodation. Suggestions include:

- Fostering links between the prison and relevant local organisations, which could be officer led
- Greater levels of support for prisoners on release
- Seamless transfers between prison education and training and opportunities in the wider community for prisoners wishing to continue with their education and training on release.

Officers from a small number of prisons, including at the two women's prisons, wanted more opportunities for prisoners to develop practical domestic skills – once again, courses that would help prisoners on their release:
*'If you're a single person you want to be able to mend a washer, change a tap. If you've got skills like that it's a lot more useful than doing maths.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

*'A basic cookery course, how to use a washing machine . . .'* (ADULT/YOI)

We also heard about the need for basic sewing classes,

*'. . . a lot can't even sew a button on . . .'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

Officers at one of the women's prisons were fulsome in their praise of the commercial food preparation course, but felt that more was needed to be done to prepare the women for life on the out:
*'They need to learn what to do with a lump of minced beef, cooking for a family on a low budget.'*

*'They've no idea what a balanced diet for a child should be and that's part of our job.'*

**● COURSES OF INTEREST TO PRISONERS**
Officers at a third of the prisons visited wanted to see more opportunities directly linked to what prisoners themselves would be most interested in:
*'. . . Do a survey, what would they [the prisoners] like to do?'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

Officers working at prisons for juveniles and young offenders in particular thought that courses that appealed specifically to their areas of interest would be helpful, for example opportunities related to cars and car maintenance including mechanics, panel beating, 'Fast fit' workshops:
*'YOs would love car mechanics . . . you see these YOs, half the pictures on their walls are of cars. They love them.'* (ADULT/YOI)

There were two key reasons for this. Firstly, from a pragmatic view point, juveniles and young offenders were perceived by the officers as being some of the most difficult prisoners to tempt back into education. It seemed to officers that many juveniles and young offenders had been 'excluded from every school they've ever been to', had short attention spans and found conventional education boring:
*'All our troubles start in education because they're bored. They'll start punching, start a fight.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

Secondly and particularly, but not exclusively, expressed by officers at the juvenile prison, was the view that basic and key skills should be developed as an integral part of vocational training rather than delivered in isolation in the classroom:
*'Develop mentoring in the workshops to support basic skills rather than making it separate in education.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
The formal curriculum should take into account what prisoners are most interested in learning about and maximise prisoner enthusiasms and motivation.

**● OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR PROGRAMMES**
Officers from a small number of prisons felt that there should be more emphasis placed on offending behaviour programmes:
*'. . . where they can learn about the consequences of their actions and some sense of morality.'* (LOCAL)

**● INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**
Officers from a small number of prisons raised the issue of information technology. At the juvenile prison in particular officers wanted to see more use made of interactive websites both as a tool for assisting prisoner learning and in facilitating contact with organisations 'on the out' that would be able to assist them on their release.

**c. Capacity of provision**
At a third of the prisons officers talked about a lack of capacity in terms of places offered through the formal curriculum:
*'There's only 100 places for 1,200 inmates . . .'* (LOCAL)

*'More of it [education and training] so that every prisoner could be involved.'* (CAT C)

Officers particularly noted a lack of capacity in relation to vocational training and wanted to see more places made available. Where prisons did provide opportunities waiting times were invariably long:
*'Only eight spaces on bricks. We could get all 350 working on that.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'Trouble is, you have to do 15 months before you can do bricklaying and there's a six month waiting list.'* (ADULT/YOI)

At just under a third of the prisons visited officers appeared indignant at the development of workshops for prisoners to undertake commercial contract work for private employers, replacing training workshops in order, as they saw it, to make money for the prison. It seemed to the officers that there was no education or training value in prison industries:
*'What's the criteria? Is it to qualify prisoners or is it to make them [the workshops] self-financing? It's all unskilled work, it's doing nothing other than getting prisoners out of their cells . . .'* (LOCAL)

*'I'd rather see more bricklaying than pot-pourri [commercial contract with private employer].'*

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
Opportunities for education and training should be made available for all prisoners.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
There should be a wider range of opportunities for vocational training and provision should be increased.

**d. Assessment and progress of prisoner learning**
In a third of the prisons visited officers wanted to see a better method for assessing prisoners' educational needs and tailored programmes developed to meet those needs:
*'More needs based. It's difficult to get teachers here . . . so the courses are tailored to staff and their skills . . . in an ideal world it would be the other way round.'* (CAT C)

*'A lot of them [prisoners] have been outside of education for years. If you put us in an educational environment we wouldn't like it. You need to assess them differently.'* (LOCAL)

Measuring progress against the initial assessment was a particular concern for officers at one of the prisons: *'Wheel them in. Do the course. Chuck them out. Going through the motions, but how much a prisoner takes in is another thing.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
Methods for the initial assessment of prisoners' educational needs and how progression is encouraged, supported and realised should be reviewed.

#### e. Length of sentence

At half of the prisons visited we heard about the length of sentence and the impact that had on opportunities for prisoners to pursue education. It seemed to officers that long-term prisoners benefited most. For prisoners on short sentences there were issues of motivation as well as difficulties in being able to complete courses once started:
*'"I want an app [application form, for example to request a particular activity or to see a member of staff] boss, but I can't fill it in, will you fill it in?" Why not go to education? "But I'm only here six weeks."'* (LOCAL)

*'There's another issue, if they start an NVQ course they are often unable to complete it.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

At two of the locals, length of stay was a particular problem:
*'A local gaol like this is a transit camp, we've very little time.'*

*'The majority are here for 4-8 weeks from the day of sentence.'*

## 5.4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING ELSEWHERE IN THE PRISON

In addition to the formal curriculum we also asked officers about other learning opportunities available to prisoners elsewhere across the prison. The majority of officers told us about such opportunities and, for a small number of prisoners, there were also further opportunities in the wider community. At one of the prisons, however, officers could only tell us about a very limited range of activity. Whether this was because not much went on or that they simply weren't aware of what was going on was not clear. We heard from officers at half of the prisons about a variety of different schemes often run with the support of voluntary organisations or other groups external to the prison, for example, 'Toe by Toe' and 'Listeners', which is organised by the Samaritans.

At just under half of the prisons officers told us about opportunities for distance learning, mostly described as 'Open University', including one prisoner who had taken a course in coastal navigation.

At a small number of prisons we heard about a range of opportunities including:

- Evening classes
- Library visits. At one of the local prisons the library had a 'writer in residence' as part of a wider Prison Service initiative
- Hobby work. There was however a safety concern in relation to some hobbies undertaken in cells, for example knitting needles used as 'javelins' and at another prison:

*'…no longer match models in cells because of the blades and the amount of self-harm.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

In one of the local prisons we heard about art and yoga classes available for prisoners in the detox unit.

One prison seemed full of opportunities which were not always, according to the officers, especially useful or relevant. Where opportunities were relevant there didn't seem to the officers to be a co-ordinated approach. The following exchange illuminates the issue:
*'There's all sorts of courses springing up, there's a dog patting course, horse whispering!'*
*'How can talking to a horse get you a job?'*
*'We aren't directing the money at the most appropriate courses.'*
*'There are so many agencies wanting to work with prisoners: Connexions, Job Centre Plus, Clinks. There's loads and there's no connection. You're just going round and round in a tiny spiral.'*

We also heard about courses and support groups often run or facilitated by officers. Two such schemes, 'befrienders' and 'insiders' involved more experienced prisoners in helping new prisoners to settle in.

Officers at a small number of the prisons (Women's prison, Adult/YOI and Cat C) told us about opportunities for prisoners to go out on temporary licence, Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). Apart from the women's prison it seemed that numbers were small. At one of the prisons, prisoners went out to the local college, but as one of the officers observed:

*'Some go out to college, but it's so good in here . . .'* (CAT C)

At two prisons, opportunities included both attendance at college and work with local employers. The Adult/YOI prison also provided opportunities for prisoners to take part in a day release scheme run by Community Service Volunteers whereby prisoners volunteered their services to local charities and other voluntary groups.

## 5.5 PRISON OFFICER INVOLVEMENT IN PRISONER EDUCATION

During the course of our discussions with officers we heard a lot about their involvement in prisoner education, from encouraging and supporting attendance through to leading and delivering courses.

### a. Officer involvement in encouraging and supporting prisoner education

We asked officers to what extent they should be involved in encouraging and supporting prisoner education. Officers at more than two thirds of the prisons visited told us that they were, to a greater or lesser extent, involved:

*'We should be, we are! It's our job at a basic level and education do the rest.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

For officers at one of the prisons encouraging prisoner education:
*'Starts with the officer on the wing . . . "Boss, what's it going to be like?'* (HIGH SECURITY)

And at another we were told:
*'If a prisoner approaches me and asks to get into education, I'll be on the phone that same day and I'll do whatever I can to get them into education.'* (ADULT/YOI)

Officers felt that they encouraged and supported prisoner education by offering guidance and advice, 'We're like a guide, a reference point': contacting the education department for information; helping to fill in applications; telling prisoners "well done". For one officer it was about encouraging attendance on courses that he felt were worthwhile, for example, vocational training. A small number of officers talked specifically about encouraging prisoner education as part of their role as a personal officer.

It seemed to officers at a third of the prisons visited that simply knowing more about what opportunities were available would help them to better encourage and support prisoner education:
*'We could hear from education: they could come and talk to us about what they're doing.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'What would be really helpful is a meeting like this with education staff . . . We need more opportunity for interchange of ideas.'* (LOCAL)

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
There should be regular communication between the prison education department and officers in particular in relation to education and training opportunities available for prisoners.

At only one prison did officers tell us explicitly that they did enough already and couldn't do more on a regular basis, including encouraging prisoner education. However during the course of discussion it became clear that they were already very much involved:
*'We do a lot of counselling. Officers do a lot of listening and we give advice about where to go for help.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

We heard from officers at two thirds of the prisons visited about some of the difficulties they experienced in encouraging prisoners to attend education. From a very practical point of view officers at one of the prisons told us about the problems caused by televisions in cells, which were seen as a bad thing when it came to rousing prisoners for education after an all night session of 'telly':
*'You try to get them out of bed to go to education: they'd rather sleep all day because day time TV's crap.'* (LOCAL)

The officers' solution was simple; turn off the electricity at midnight!

In just under half of the prisons we heard the phrase 'you can take a horse to water . . .' There was a very strong view expressed by officers that although they could encourage and support prisoner involvement in education and training, it was only when prisoners themselves were ready to attend that they would go. As one officer put it:

*'We have education and we have vocational training and we'd all make a lot of money if we knew how to get them [the prisoners] to listen to people, to learn.'* (CAT C)

A small number of officers felt that opportunities for education and training should be restricted to those prisoners either in real need or who demonstrated a commitment to learning:
*'You've got a massive percentage who don't want to be there. That's going to put off the ones who do want to learn.'* (LOCAL)

'Need' was generally defined by officers in terms of the basic and key skills: prisoners unable to read and write. Officers from half the prisons visited were more supportive of prisoners who they felt genuinely wanted to improve their education or develop new skills:
*'. . . We should target the market; concentrate more on those who want to be educated. Don't put the ones who don't want an education in with those that do.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'Money is tight . . . channel it to the areas . . . where there are more numbers or more need for it.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

In over two thirds of the prisons visited, officers told us about prisoners wasting time on education, playing computer games, using it as an extension of association or an opportunity to pass on information and supply drugs. Officers at one prison felt that prisoners viewed education simply as a 'means to an end', a way of meeting their sentence planning targets to assist with parole. The following is perhaps the most cynical view we heard:

*'I think sometimes they [prisoners] just want to learn things that are going to get them into people's houses when they leave here, so they can steal.'* (LOCAL)

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
Opportunities for education and training should be targeted at those prisoners who either need help with basic skills or who demonstrate a commitment to learning.

We also heard from officers about the lengths to which prisoners would go to hide their inability to read and write. It seemed to officers at half of the prisons visited that some of the major difficulties in encouraging prisoners to attend education were to do with embarrassment and peer pressure:
*'A lot are embarrassed to try education because they can't read and write.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'There's a lot of peer pressure too. A lot of macho-ism. It's difficult to take the first step.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

*'The other prisoners start laughing at them because they are in a class, and that stops them from learning.'* (ADULT/YOI)

Officers at one of the prisons suggested the development of dedicated wings for prisoners identified as needing help with basic skills and who were willing to give education a try.

Officers at the juvenile prison saw their role very much as trying to get over the ambivalence that they were often faced with in relation to education or training:
*'It's about tapping into the lads' potential and finding a niche for them . . . Each individual's got a button to press. What works for you? I've got to find out.'*

We heard from only one officer who didn't feel that it was his role to encourage prisoner education and training. Nor did he feel that prisoners should be given any opportunity to participate:

*'They've already had a chance to get themselves an education. They had a chance in school, so why should they get another chance? They pissed about in school, so why should they get another chance?* (LOCAL)

**b. Officer involvement in prisoners' informal learning**
We went on to ask officers about their involvement in prisoners' informal learning. The majority of officers described their involvement in terms of their relationships with prisoners including a wide range of interventions that happened 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Once again we heard a good deal about officers imparting social and life skills communication and inter-personal skills and moral education:

*'It's the life skills you pass on . . . We're helping people to learn how to interact at a proper level.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

Officers also told us about how they intervened to challenge the behaviour and attitudes of some of the prisoners:
*'It's about not being worried about challenging their views in a constructive way. Their response is often instant foul-mouthed abuse and then we have to challenge that approach.'* (ADULT/YOI)

There was a strong pastoral feel to much of what the officers said. It seemed to officers at half of the prisons that their involvement was not so much about 'education' in the traditional sense of the word as about providing practical help (for example, how to keep a cell clean), or health education (for example, on personal hygiene), or providing information, advice and guidance when prisoners asked for it:
*'It's more personal, practical stuff, not about education.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

*'Just showing [prisoners] where they can get information from is a form of education.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'We can help a lot: we know the score because we've heard it before.'* (LOCAL)

*Listening and being there when they've got a problem: most officers will do that.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

A small number of officers also talked about helping prisoners to read and write letters, providing help with spellings or the best way to phrase things.

At one of the prisons we heard about a peer support group for prisoners, run by prisoners with help from the officers. One of the officers told us about his involvement in helping and encouraging prisoners with their reading skills:

*'In my peer group on a weekend we do Toe by Toe. I've got two lads teaching foreign nationals. It's managed by me, we [officers] oversee it.'* (LOCAL)

**c. Officer involvement in the formal curriculum**
We asked officers to tell us about their involvement in the formal curriculum. Responses ranged from:
*'. . . Every day we're involved, really'* (CAT C), to:

*'We don't get involved. We're the discipline side.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

In over two thirds of the prisons visited officers were quick to tell us that they were not involved in formal education in any real sense:

*'Some [officers] get involved . . . but the majority of us do what you'd do in the adult estate. Meals, locking up and that.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'It's just functional really . . . there's no real involvement.'* (LOCAL)

*'Officers do supervise in education, but that's all: discipline.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

But it became clear to us that what officers were actually talking about was their involvement in prisoner education as delivered by the education department, that is, education provided by external providers. While it seemed that most officers for most of the time were concerned solely with discipline, security, movement and the passing on of applications, in every prison officers told us about both their and their colleagues' involvement in a wide range of different classes, courses and programmes.

In half of the prisons visited officers told us about officer-instructors working, for example, in the gym or at two of the prisons, the Braille workshop. We heard from four officers employed full time in specific areas: for example on a drugs project working as part of a multi-disciplinary team, including involvement in drugs education; in health care with a responsibility for running health promotion classes; running the resettlement programme. Another was responsible for facilitating offending behaviour programmes on a wing newly dedicated for the purpose. All of these roles had some direct involvement in the delivery of formal education. At the juvenile prison we heard about two officer-instructors involved in running courses such as budget management, preparation for work and camp craft.

In the majority of prisons we heard about officer involvement in helping to deliver a range of offending behaviour programmes, often working in multi-disciplinary teams as well as induction, pre-release and resettlement courses.

In a small number of prisons there was a view, expressed by the officers, that they were often better equipped than civilians to deliver these courses:

*'There's a course called PASRO [prisoners addressing substance related offences]. When civilians run it, it's rubbish: the prisoners just see how far they can push things. You need officers involved too. When we run it, it works much better. It develops more rapport and respect for the officers too.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'Prisoners respect the fact that it is an officer doing it [running offending behaviour programmes] more than a teacher. We can relate a lot better, we've been here a while.'* (LOCAL)

**d. More or less involvement?**

We heard from officers at a small number of prisons who were quite clear about the limits of their role and who were simply not interested in any involvement in formal education for prisoners:
*'I joined this job to be a prison officer, not to teach'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'You can't expect officers to be teachers, you've got teachers to do that.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

Some officers expressed concerned about the possible mixed messages that might result from a greater involvement in the 'softer' elements of the regime:
*'One minute you would be discipline, bending them over and taking them down the seg, the next a teacher. It would send out mixed messages.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

For others it was different, with officers at half of the prisons visited expressing an interest in having a greater involvement in prisoner education, or at least the flexibility so that those who were interested could pursue the option:
*'Given the opportunity officers would get more involved but the opportunities are limited and far between.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'Officers could be trained, for example, basic skills teaching, ETS, life skills training – it's all so important.'* (LOCAL)

At a small number of prisons (local and one women's prison) we heard from officers about planned activity to train and involve officers in supporting basic and key skills in the workshops. And at another prison one of the officers spoke warmly about a similar scheme:

*'In my last establishment we trained ten staff in basic skills through Learn Direct and we helped prisoners a lot on that . . . Staff enjoyed it and they could use the qualification in prison and elsewhere.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

*'I'd like to be more involved. What x [fellow officer] said about [becoming a basic skills tutor], for example, great!'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

There were different drivers for this. Some officers felt that the 'wealth of talent' that officers had was under-utilised and that there should be:
*'Avenues for officers to get involved, as an officer tutor, for example.'* (CAT C)

Others felt that they would have more respect from prisoners if they were involved in education. They would be more than just a 'turnkey'.

Officers from a small number of prisons felt that greater involvement in prisoner education would serve to build bridges with education staff:

*'It's always been them and us. They see us as gaolers and we see them as do-gooders. And that's it.'* (LOCAL)

And at one of the prisons more officer involvement was also seen as a possible solution to the high turnover of education staff we heard about.

Officers at the juvenile establishment expressed both the strongest motivation for working in an educational context and the greatest frustration at how little in the event they were able to achieve:
*'People joined this establishment because they thought they would be working with young people.'*

*'I want to do so much more. But the regime won't allow it. "Can you go out on escort? Be shop patrol? Work on the units?" It's very frustrating.'*

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
Career development opportunities for officers interested in being involved in delivering prisoner education should be created.

**e. A question of time**
In every prison, lack of time was raised as an issue that militated against officer involvement in prisoner education at every level. There simply wasn't enough of it for officers to provide 'quality time' for those prisoners who wanted it. Unless officer duties and activities were 'detailed', it was left to the individual officer to find the time to provide the necessary intervention, encouragement or support. At the juvenile prison one officer told us:

*'When I started I used to spend quality time with them [the prisoners], one to one. I really felt I had some input into that young person's life. I got letters from them and their parents.'*

*'Time and manpower constraints mean it is not possible . . . We have a full complement of staff, allegedly, and we can't do it [spend time with prisoners]'* (LOCAL)

*'You're looking after 40-50 prisoners: all have individual problems. He [the officer] can't give each one half an hour of his time and that's what they need.'* (CAT C)

But it wasn't always a question of time. In a small number of prisons a further dimension was raised: money. Put crudely, it seemed to officers that civilians cost less. There was a perception held by officers at a small number of prisons that a wholly contracted out prison education service would be less expensive than one that might also involve prison officers:

*'It's down to money. You can get a civilian for £12,000.'* (LOCAL)

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
The role of officers in supporting and encouraging prisoner education and in providing informal education should be recognised and adequate time made available in the core day.

**f. Prison officer relationships with the education department**
Although we did not ask officers about their relationship with the education department or with education staff, it perhaps was not surprising that comments were made during the course of the discussions.

In half of the prisons, officers expressed concern about what they saw as inadequate levels of security and/or discipline exercised by education staff, which, if things went wrong, it would be left to the officers to deal with. Officers were highly critical of teachers who did not seem, in their view, to have their wits about them in terms of security:
*'We had a tutor who chose to ignore security and we had to change all the locks.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'A teacher comes round 'A' wing. Signs in and signs out at the same time to save himself the bother. Leaves us wide open. If there's a fire… He could be taken hostage, anything.'* (LOCAL)

It seemed to many officers that there was a distinct lack of adequate security training for teaching staff:
*'And the education staff. I don't think they're trained well enough. They should at least do a gaol craft course.'* (LOCAL)

At a small number of prisons officers felt that teachers were unclear where the line was between their role and that of the officers:
*'Another [teacher] thought he was an officer and started handing out warnings and he tried to nick somebody and the whole class was in a riot.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

Although officers were ready to voice their concerns, it seemed that they felt powerless to improve the situation. Their role appeared simply to move in quickly when things went wrong:
*'We think: "Here we go again." when the alarm bells go off.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

Another officer described what he saw as a conflict between the operational needs of the prison and education:
*'The teacher was getting very upset that we were too authoritarian. She almost ushered us out of the class, wanting the control back. There's a clash between the operational needs of the establishment and education'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

It seemed to officers at a small number of prisons that education staff didn't fully appreciate their operational role across the prison. According to the officers, teachers complained if prisoners were late getting to and from classes and on another occasion officers were

left to deal with a class of 20 prisoners on a wing with no teacher:
*'We can be depleted of staff and if we're late [getting prisoners to and from classes] we get an earful and that causes conflict . . . They don't understand we've still got a prison to run.'* (ADULT/YOI)

In one prison the perceived high turn-over of teachers gave cause for concern:
*'Recruitment and retention is a real issue. It's the retention that gives the stability you need.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

The extent to which officers were encouraged into the classroom varied. There may well have been reasons for education staff not wanting officers present but at one prison it seemed that they were excluded:
*'In education they're behind a classroom door. In the workshops you can wander round and talk to them.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

This contrasted strongly with the experience of another officer at a local prison:
*'I've sat in on some of the classes . . . I've been on a computer and I sat in on an art class – I enjoyed it!'*

Such enjoyment is likely to build positive relationships with education staff, which in turn, may also be of benefit to prisoners.

We heard from officers at a small number of prisons about the difficult circumstances in which education staff often work:
*'It's difficult for the teachers trying to deal with men with primary school abilities and with no facilities to split up the advanced from the others.'* (LOCAL)

At one of the prisons a teacher approved of by one of the officers got a mention, which provoked the following response:
*'But when you've got a good one [teacher] you'll target them. If you get someone who's particularly good [in education] they'll stand out.'* (LOCAL)

It was only at the juvenile prison that we heard fulsome praise of education staff:
*'We've a head of learning and skills here who's very driven. She drives her team to provide what I think is a very good facility. Teachers get spat at, chairs thrown at them. But they do a brilliant job.'*

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
A course on prison life and culture, in particular security, should be undertaken by all civilians prior to working with prisoners.

## 5.6 GOOD PRACTICE IN EDUCATION INVOLVING OFFICERS

During the discussions, we asked about examples of good practice in education, which involved officers. Invariably there was a lull in the discussion at this point, so we prompted: 'There must be something?' It was an interesting response. It was as if officers had never been encouraged to think about their role in terms of 'good practice'. They were after all only doing their job:
*'At the end of the day you are just doing your job.'* (LOCAL)

*'It's just something you are doing all the time.'* (LOCAL)

To try to encourage more of a response, at two thirds of the prisons visited we asked an additional question. We asked officers to tell us about a time when they felt they had performed at their best.

As a result we heard about a wide and interesting range of activities that officers considered best practice and/or the result of performing at their best. Once again, examples given by officers were ones that they associated with education.

### a. Good practice

Activities undertaken by officer-instructors were highlighted as examples of good practice at a third of the prisons visited:
*'Officer-instructors, obviously.'* (ADULT/YOI)

Three specific examples involved officer-instructors doing a 'good job':

- Organising the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme
- Running a gym based junior leadership skills course
- Encouraging a female prisoner to run a marathon who then went onto do a gym instructors' course at college

Another example involved an officer-instructor working in a Braille workshop:
*'They've got Koestler awards. It's run by us. The staff [officers] select the prisoners. They do training from start to finish. They produce a huge range of stuff from exam sheets to atlases.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

Officers at a small number of prisons told us about good practice involving officers in induction and resettlement. At the juvenile prison, officers had set up a simulation of a Job Club:
*'We're trying to take trainees from where they are to job readiness. We've created a bunch of fictitious jobs . . . You have to create your CV and practice the interview. It teaches them lessons around work.'*

And at another prison we heard about officers attending an external training course to help prisoners with special needs:
*'Three staff [officers] are doing signing at college. We've got three deaf prisoners.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

Officer involvement in multi-disciplinary teams was raised an as example of good practice at a small number of prisons. Two examples were in relation to offending behaviour programmes and the third in relation to drugs education. One officer involved in a newly established offending behaviour programme told us how he had been involved in changing how some of the group work sessions were run:
*'. . . because most of them are just too ashamed to get up there [to write on the flip chart]. Either they can't read and write or else it's so bad that they get embarrassed.'* (LOCAL)

Other examples ranged from activities that involved a degree of planning and organisation, for example involvement in 'Prison Me No-Way!!', through to small everyday activities, where officers were often reacting to a situation or specific request from a prisoner for help, for example, showing a prisoner how to keep his cell clean, reading prisoners' letters to them, generally helping to 'sort things out', or challenging attitudes:
*'You're in the association area; Coronation Street is on the telly. "She's pregnant" or "He's gay". You can have a conversation about that, challenge some of the attitudes.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

Another officer told us about her involvement in arranging for prisoners to undertake work in the community:
*'I used to send women there for community placements or for training on boat handling and that was really good . . . One woman is a manager there now.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

And at another women's prison one of the officers told us about when she:
*'. . . brought three [sewing] machines in and they loved it. Dressmaking for their kids, which they used to send out.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

**b. Prison officers performing at their best**
Asking officers to tell us about a time when they performed at their best prompted a slightly different type of response. This time it was much more about officers helping individual prisoners, although not always in ways that related to conventional education.

One had helped a prisoner with his studies:
*'I helped him to complete his degree. That felt good.'*

Another had:
*'. . . worked with a [prisoner who was also a]former soldier . . . He had serious mental health issues and being ex-army myself I could relate to him. I did a lot of work with him. He went out in the end back to his family.'* (ADULT/YOI)

At a different prison one of the officers told us about an alcohol awareness course he had set up and run at a former prison. Motivated by one of the prisoners who used:
*'. . . shampoo and . . . put Brasso in, leaving a film of neat alcohol on the top . . .'*, the aim wasn't to *'preach total abstinence – just watch what you drink.'* (LOCAL)

Another example involved an officer who spent a long time with a prisoner trying to find his mum:
*'It took me 12 months but I found her, rang her up and arranged a visit in the chapel. I don't know who was crying more, me or her.'* (LOCAL)

The following examples, both from the same prison, don't need any introduction:
*'. . . One lad said: " I can't do anything except burgle houses." He was doodling and it was good. I took him outside and showed him a blank wall and said, "Paint a mural." From that he got a job, painting and decorating . . . '*

*'We've got a lot of self-harmers. Their arms and legs are a horrendous mess. We use elastic bands to help. When they feel like cutting, we get them to "ping" the elastic band on their wrist. It hurts, stops them from cutting. Gets them to think, to take a step back.'* (LOCAL)

It was sometimes difficult for officers to have any real sense of the extent to which their involvement with prisoners had made any difference, especially when dealing with prisoners nearing their release date. As one officer put it:
*"[We get] letters from prisoners saying thank you, sometimes . . . We don't get any feedback from probation about how people are doing.'* (ADULT/YOI)

Once officers had warmed to the theme of 'good practice' and 'performing at their best' it seemed that they were able to cite more and more examples – the discussions could have gone on much longer. Despite some of the impressive examples given above, most officers would probably best relate their experiences to the following:
*'You don't get big golden moments. It's more like lots of little ones.'* (ADULT/YOI)

## 5.7 GOOD NEWS STORIES: OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON PRISONERS

We asked officers if they could think of any examples of the impact of education on prisoners. In the majority of prisons, officers were quick to tell us about the positive impact that education had had on individuals. Their only complaint was that once prisoners had left the prison, they rarely heard any more about them. It was only on the odd occasion that prisoners themselves got back in touch with officers, who reported such occurrences with pleasure. As one officer noted:
*'We facilitate but don't always see the end product.'* (CAT C)

The following 'good news' stories from officers don't need any further introduction:
*'X prisoner rang me to thank me and to say she was working in the medical profession; she was in charge of six people. I sent her on a Prince's Trust course; she was a self-harmer, really aggressive. Now she's married and going to have a baby.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

*'Qualifications make all the difference. X prisoner wanted to go into the marines and we made him get his qualifications and we got him to get his parents involved – and he joined the marines. What we taught him helped.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'A psychopath, with a violent temper, he committed a horrendous murder. He really got into art. He's done an art degree. There were issues he wanted to deal with, but he really wanted this degree. We tried to tailor the work necessary (you can do that in this establishment) to tally with his degree. It was something that he achieved. It really helped.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

*'X came in in a dreadful state. He was really thin, as quiet as a mouse, kept himself to himself. We said, "Why don't you give it [education] a go?" He got involved in everything he could: drug awareness, education, anything that was going. Since leaving he works in a voluntary and a paid capacity for the police and others. He's completely turned his life around. You'd never believe he was the same person. Last Christmas he was on the telly going round a supermarket car park with the police saying which car he would have burgled and what people could do to make things safer.'* (CAT C)

The satisfaction with which officers related these stories was apparent.

## 5.8 PRISON OFFICERS AND THEIR OWN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Having heard from prison officers about opportunities for education and training for prisoners we went on to ask them about their own education and training.

### a. Opportunities for prison officer education and training within the Prison Service

We asked officers about their own opportunities for education and training within the Prison Service:
*'Courses help, don't they? When we were accredited by Investors in People we did loads of courses. That was four years ago. I haven't done a course since. It's nice to take part in something and feel valued. It's not often we get a pat on the back.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

Whilst responses to our question varied both from prison to prison and within individual groups of officers, we were left with a sense of impoverishment, leading to cynicism, about training and development opportunities for officers. This impression was perhaps fuelled by a recently announced funding crisis, which meant that all non-critical funding, including training for officers, was frozen:
*'We've had a letter saying no training unless absolutely necessary.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

Officers in half of the prisons were pretty damning about training opportunities:
*'I've been here for five years and I've just got my first training course.'* (ADULT/YOI)

And in a small number of prisons our question about training opportunities for officers was met with derisory laughter.

At one prison in particular the situation appeared to be further compounded by a lack of courses suitable for the age group:
*'Very little. Not even worth mentioning. The training was geared to working in an adult establishment.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

It seemed to officers that a combination of time pressures and operational priorities were generally to blame. There was a strong chance that internal courses or individual attendance on courses would be cancelled at short notice for operational reasons:
*'Training and education [for officers] is the first thing to go out of the window. "I need six blokes to go to HMP xx, NOW!" And the course is off.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

*'The training courses are there – it's getting released to do them.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

Officers talked about having to undertake work related courses in their own time:
*'. . . And I have to do it in my own time when I work shifts, and I don't have enough time with my family as it is.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

At another prison, an officer working full time on a 'drugs team' told us about a drugs counselling course that he wanted to attend. After checking in advance that the prison would pay the £300 cost, things weren't as straightforward as he had anticipated:
*'. . . When I came to enrol and pay the drugs team said training should pay and training said it was nothing to do with them, the drugs team should pay.'* (CAT C)

The officer concerned decided in the end, out of sheer frustration, to both pay for the course himself and to attend it in his own time.

In contrast, officers from a third of the prisons visited, including two of the locals, spoke positively about training opportunities:
*'We have a full catalogue for external training and we have internal training on Wednesday afternoons.'* (LOCAL)

And at the same prison officers told us:
*'We even had an English teacher teaching us to do promotion exams, but that was in his lunch break. You know, teaching us how to do essays.'*

Where we did hear about training opportunities taken up, it was often reported to us with some pleasure:
*'I've done the 'Hostage negotiators' course: not many people pass that, but I did! I've also done 'Advanced inter-personal skills'; 'Control and restraint', like you usually do. I've done loads!'* (LOCAL)

In a third of the prisons visited officers felt that there was a lack of any encouragement to undertake training, the onus was on the officer both to identify suitable courses and to 'push himself forward'. Or to put it another way:
*'You have to do a certain amount [of training] but you have to want to better yourself, you have to do it in your own time.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

In this context we heard about the role of Staff Performance Development Reviews (SPDRs) from officers in just under half of the prisons visited. The SPDR is conducted annually and in theory reviewed after six months. Training needs are discussed as well as personal and career development opportunities. A common theme running through our discussions however was the ad hoc nature of the process. There seemed little if any actual follow through or encouragement:

*'There's not enough encouragement . . . The governor says to me "Think about your career path", but it's when it suits him. I want to learn and that sort of thing is de-motivating'.* (ADULT/YOI)

*'I've been here seven years and that means I've had seven yearly assessments. I've asked for ten training courses and got none of them.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'I'd be surprised if you've done the training identified in the annual review'.* (LOCAL)

One of the reasons for this may be a lack of training for those responsible for conducting the SPDR. As we heard from one officer:
*'I was acting up and had no training in how to write SPDRs for other staff.'* (LOCAL)

#### ● WHAT'S ON OFFER?

Internal courses of one day's duration, organised by the prison training department were much more likely to be made available to officers than external courses, which often involved a more extensive time commitment. In half of the prisons visited officers described how the prison 'shut down' once a month for training or other purposes, for example staff meetings or for officers to catch up on paperwork. Indeed our visits to prisons generally coincided with such a shut down. Internal courses covered a range of subjects some of which were described as 'statutory', for example, 'Control and Restraint' and 'Racial Diversity'. At a small number

**TABLE 5.3**

**TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES MENTIONED BY OFFICERS IN NINE PRISONS**

| Prison | Internal courses | External courses |
|---|---|---|
| Local | Fire<br>Suicide<br>Anti-bullying | Courses were referred to but not detailed |
| Local | First on the scene<br>Hostage negotiators<br>Advanced inter-personal skills<br>Control and restraint<br>Group counselling<br>Security systems<br>Various 'operational' courses<br>Resettlement | |
| Local/High security | Pro-social modelling<br>Acupuncture<br>Dealing with Stress | Mental Health |
| Female, Closed | | Addictive substance mis-use<br>Teaching certificate |
| Female, Open, Training | Reflexology<br>Management | |
| YOI | | Prison Health Course |
| Cat C Prison & Closed YOI | Information and guidance | |
| Cat C Training/ High Security | Computers<br>Management<br>Lifers<br>Legal services<br>Hostage taker<br>Presentation skills<br>Pro-social modelling | |
| Cat C, Training | Simulated hostage situation | Drugs counselling |

of the prisons we heard about targets for statutory training, including from one officer who had completed *'one course twice in a year . . . just to get the numbers up.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

Although we didn't ask officers to list what training was available, the following information was volunteered in nine prisons (see TABLE 5.3). It should be noted however that the list is not meant to be comprehensive neither does the absence of a prison mean that no training was available, simply that the information wasn't volunteered during the course of our discussion. Where it wasn't clear whether a course was offered internally or externally, it has been included under 'internal'.

At a small number of prisons visited officers wanted to see training that was more relevant to their day-to-day role, for example, 'wing work', gaol craft and dealing with difficult situations:
*'We need more relevant training on what we are doing here. You're going to get punched and spat on and you need to prepare for it.'* (ADULT/YOI)

For officers at the juvenile prison and one of the women's prisons it seemed there was little training for dealing with the different needs of different prisoner groups as officers moved around the prison estate, or when the status of the prison was changed:
*'I came from Dartmoor where I was working with men serving 12 plus years. I'd never met a group of adolescents in my life. And there I was managing a group of adolescents. And there I was in front of the governor: "You're not quite dealing with them right."'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'Most of us were here when the men were. It's a lot different now but we've had no training.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

Officers from a small number of prisons placed a greater emphasis on the need for training that would help to identify and deal with mental health issues and personality disorders in prisoners. Counselling skills were also seen as important and not adequately provided for:
*'We need counselling skills. I've pushed it for years, not only for prisoners but for your mate on the wing who might be having trouble with a prisoner. We all need it.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

#### ● JOB SPECIFIC TRAINING

In one third of the prisons visited we heard from residential officers detailed to specific roles but without, as they saw it, the necessary training:
*'I'm wing race relations liaison. I don't mind, but I've had no training and I don't know what I'm doing.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'…Then it was anti-bullying, now I think I'm suicide awareness and I haven't had any training on anything.'* (ADULT/YOI)

And at another prison the following was an exchange between officers, directed from one officer to another responsible for suicide prevention:
*'How many of your staff are trained in counselling?'*
*'None.'*
*'I rest my case. One chap opened up his arm. X and his team have to go in and talk to him. "Why did you do it?" No training.'*

At one prison, by way of explanation, we heard from a senior officer responsible for allocating such jobs who seemed somewhat resigned to the problem:
*I've got to allocate these jobs and I have to put people down even if they haven't been trained.'* (ADULT/YOI)

Talking about initial training, officers at one of the prisons felt that too great an emphasis was placed on areas that, as they saw it, were less relevant than those which were directly job related:
*'The training now is diabolical . . . Radio? Two sessions on radio, that's all they do and four on diversity . . . If they can't use one of these [radio] someone will get their head kicked in.'* (LOCAL)

#### ● ACCESS TO TRAINING

For officers at a small number of the prisons visited, there was a strongly held view that the vast majority, residential and security officers doing shift work (as one officer put it, 'the bread and butter of it'), had fewer training opportunities than colleagues working full time during the day in specialist areas:
*'The security department are either doing runs or covering the blocks, so when it comes to training you are already busy and no one will pull you out because you're security and can't be spared.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'But on the landings, as x says, it's really difficult – short of staff, no money and shift working.'* (CAT C)

*'The only time you get training is if you get involved in programmes.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

The following exchange between officers in one group further highlights the problem:
*'They lock down once a month for compulsory training unless you are on security.'*
*'So I never go.'* (ADULT/YOI)

We heard about an NVQ for prison officers at a third of the prisons visited. That it was described by officers at one of the prisons as 'directly job-related' seemed to be a good thing. However, we heard much more about the NVQ in terms of its recent demise, as officers saw it, as a result of recent funding cuts and how that made them feel. According to officers at one of the prisons it wasn't the first time this had happened:
*'The carpet's been ripped away for the third time'* (HIGH SECURITY)

The following exchange from the same prison reflects generally the views expressed by officers from other prisons:
*'Yesterday we heard from personnel that the whole* NVQ *process is to be cancelled because of funding.'*
*'So as a member of the organisation you wonder what emphasis they put on staff development and training if they cancel it.'*
*'They're not investing in the career of the prison officer taking that* NVQ *away'*
*'You don't feel worth very much, do you?'*

**● TRAINING TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT PRISONER EDUCATION**

We were particularly interested in any training available to officers in relation to encouraging and supporting prisoner education. The majority of officers said they had not received any training in this area. In only a minority of prisons did officers feel they had received any relevant training. Of these, one was an officer instructor, another had completed an 'information and guidance' course which he felt was helpful, and a third officer described a pro-social modelling course which he had undertaken as being relevant.

One officer, however, felt that the lack of training or support wasn't '. . . a major problem.' His colleague added:
*'What we do have is inter-personal skills and we talk to prisoners. It's a skill we have.'* (ADULT/YOI)

We also asked whether anything about prisoner education and training was included in initial training for prison officers. In just over half of the prisons visited, officers either didn't comment or couldn't remember. It was all too long ago. Officers in just under half of the prisons said nothing was included:
*'No, you're here to deal with prisoners not education.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'No. Just . . . how to open and close a door.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

**● MENTORING AND PERSONAL SUPPORT**

At a third of the prisons visited we heard about the importance of mentoring and personal support for officers. At one of the prisons there appeared to be a formal mentoring system in place while at others it appeared to be a much more informal arrangement:
*'When something's happened I'll phone x [fellow officer] up. It's mutual support.'* (LOCAL)

Officers at a third of the prisons visited felt that training, in particular but not exclusively for new recruits, didn't adequately prepare officers for life on the wings and could be enhanced through on-the-job learning and from more experienced fellow officers:
*'The prison I was sent to, ten years' training wouldn't have prepared me.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'We need more shadowing for new staff. The job affects you . . . We do need more shadowing; it's nice to have that moral support.'* (ADULT/YOI)

*'You learn as you go along. You go to college but you start learning when you get here. The level of support I've had here has been very good.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'Some one like x [fellow officer] – 24 years on the job. We learn from him.'* (LOCAL)

**● NON-WORK RELATED COURSES**

In addition to work related courses we also heard about a scheme whereby officers could apply to the Prison Service for funding to undertake courses *'in virtually any subject. All you do is fill in the paperwork.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

The Prison Service would pay for 80% of the course and the officer the other 20%. There seemed, however, to be some confusion as to the current status of the scheme, whether it was still available or not, and the extent to which officers now had to 'prove benefit to the Service.'

At a small number of the prisons officers seemed to be either unaware of the scheme or believed it to be no longer running. They wanted similar opportunities as prisoners to be able to pursue non-work related education and training courses, paid for by the prison service:
*'More education courses available to staff at Prison Service cost, Open University and management courses.'* (LOCAL)

It was in this context that we heard one of the very few negative comments in relation to opportunities for education and training for prisoners. At just under half of the prisons visited it seemed unfair to officers that prisoners should be offered opportunities that the officers themselves were denied:
*'If there is any resentment here, a prisoner can do an OU degree here in two years, all funded, but if we ask to do anything it's: "What do you want to do that for?"'* (CAT C)

**● A STRATEGY FOR TRAINING**

It seemed to officers at a small number of the prisons that there was 'no follow through' in relation to training for officers. Courses were 'flavour of the month' one minute and dropped the next. There didn't appear to be any strategy in relation to officer training or clear link between training and the requirements of the prison. One officer spoke with great enthusiasm about an external course on mental health, which she had undertaken at a local university in her own time together with staff from other prisons in the area. Perhaps unsurprisingly she felt annoyed and demotivated when nothing came of her efforts once she had completed the course:

*'Mental health – Martin Narey [former Director General] was interested, but it's died the death.'* (LOCAL)

We heard about another example from the same prison:
*'I did Pro-social modelling. XX, the Governor was keen on it. Then he moved on. The next Governor was not so interested in it. So forget that.'*

And in relation to the prison officer NVQ described earlier, officers made the following observations:
*'There's no follow through. I've done D32, D33 – NVQ stuff, but I can't finish, they've knocked funding on the head.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

*'They were keen on* NVQ *but then the funding ran out. I've got an* NVQ *but the emphasis is gone. It was flavour of the month . . .'* (ADULT/YOI)

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
Opportunities for officer education and training should be:

- Linked in practice as well as in theory to the individual officer's annual SPDR
- Available to all officers
- Ring fenced against last minute cancellation of whole courses or individual attendance.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:**
Formal opportunities for peer mentoring and shadowing of more experienced officers, especially for new recruits should be made available.

**b. Prison officers' education, training and qualifications prior to joining the Prison Service**

We asked officers about their own education, training and qualifications achieved prior to joining the Prison Service. There was a wide range of experience across all groups, with some officers having no formal qualifications at all through to others with relevant degrees and masters degrees. At the juvenile prison four out of the five officers had degrees and two officers had masters degrees. We wondered whether this was typical of officers in the rest of the establishment. The officers in our group thought probably not. To their knowledge, most other officers had GCSEs but not many had qualifications above that. In every prison, officers told us about their qualifications, or lack of them. Many of the officers who had served in the armed forces told us about the second opportunity this had afforded them for education and training. Some officers however remained silent and we didn't feel it appropriate to push individuals for responses. The range of qualifications officers told us about at each of the establishments we visited is shown in TABLE 5.4.

**● EXPERIENCES AT SCHOOL**

We were interested in officers' experiences at school and how that compared with education and training opportunities for prisoners.

In two thirds of the prisons visited, officers felt that the facilities and opportunities available for prisoners were better than those they had experienced:
*'The facilities here are fantastic.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

*'The computer shop here is exceptional'* (LOCAL)

And referring in particular to the vocational training workshops:
*'I'd have loved it!'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

The ratio of prisoner-learners to teachers was compared favourably in two prisons:
*'There were 50 in my class – it was horrendous. Here there's a maximum of twelve.'* (LOCAL)

Officers also made comparisons with opportunities currently available in schools. One officer felt that there were more opportunities generally for young people now, both inside the prison and 'on the out'. Officers in just under half of the prisons visited felt that prisoners had better opportunities compared with the rest of society and in three cases, themselves in particular. We asked how this made them feel.

Officers in a minority of prisons felt that prisoners 'had it on a plate':
*'They not only have their education paid for, but they have everything done for them too.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

*'. . . And they've got time for homework. I do 33 hours at work and then I have to go off and see to three children. I've got no time to study.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

One officer told us that he would feel frustrated knowing 'what's poured into prisons' if his own children didn't get equitable opportunities when they started school. Another mentioned the reaction of friends when he told them what went on inside prison:
*'. . . TVs, play-stations and menus. "You're joking!" They don't believe it.'* (LOCAL)

Despite some of the above comments, we got little sense of strong feelings of injustice or resentment. Where officers did draw comparisons, their response was more likely to be along the lines of this comment from the YOI group:
*'I won't knock it. If it gives them [the prisoners] a boost then that's good.'*

**● PARENTAL GUIDANCE AND UPBRINGING**

As officers talked about their experiences of school, in just over half of the prisons we heard about the importance of parental guidance and upbringing. Officers readily drew on their own experiences, comparing them with their perceptions of the experiences of prisoners. Overwhelmingly officers felt that they were significantly more fortunate than most prisoners in that they had received good parental

guidance, family discipline and support:
*'There's a lot of difference between what I had and what we have here. I got a strict disciplinary upbringing, I was taught morals and the difference between right and wrong.'* (LOCAL)

*'A lot of this is about parenting again. Kids are [seen as] a commodity: they aren't supported. I was fortunate.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

In a small number of prisons, officers talked particularly about the negative life experiences that many prisoners have had to cope with:
*'A lot of people here have had very disrupted lives…Drugs, prostitution, abuse . . .'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

*'Most of the lads here have been excluded from every school they've ever been to.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

*'A lot of them come from dysfunctional families.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

Officers in a small number of the prisons, including two of the three locals, felt that the increase in drugs culture caused additional problems and pressures:
*'In this day and age there's a lot of other cultures – for instance there's a huge drugs culture that causes them to re-offend.'* (HIGH SECURITY)

*'The biggest problem now is how much drugs are glamorised . . .'* (LOCAL)

**● DIFFERENT CHOICES**

In a third of the prisons visited, however, officers were quick to tell us that such experiences should not be seen in any way as an excuse. Life had been tough for them too, but they had overcome their difficulties. It was a matter of personal choice:
*'At the end of the day everything's an excuse. Young lads from single parent families will commit crime – what a load of crap. It's personal choice. If you want to commit a crime you will do, if you don't you won't.'* (WOMEN'S PRISON)

We heard from officers at a small number of prisons who had hated school or who had played truant. Two officers told us about siblings who either were or had been in prison; one officer told us he had spent time 'travelling around' and as a result had had a disrupted education and no qualifications. Another officer told us how, at 15, her father wanted '. . . a return on his investment, like, for the first 15 years . . .' and she was sent to work in a factory.

We heard from one officer who, with the help of the Prison Service, had recently been diagnosed as dyslexic:
*'That's why I come across as aggressive, because I've had to put on a front.'* (JUVENILE/YOI)

In other words, it hadn't been easy for them either, but they had chosen a different route:
*'. . . But [I tell them] if I can do it anyone can! We both turned to a life of crime, but I'm on one side of the fence and he's on the other.'* (LOCAL)

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[54] (See section 4.4: Principles and definitions, page 12).

**TABLE 5.4**

**EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS/LEVELS ACHIEVED BY OFFICERS, MENTIONED BY THEM IN DISCUSSION**

| Establishment type and number of officers interviewed | None | CSE | GCSE/O' level | A' level | Further education | Higher education | Armed services | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Local, 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 | | Apprentice blacksmith | | x 2, Army | |
| Local, 4 | | | 4 | 1 | Btec, Business and Finance; HND in IT; Diploma in Youth and Community Studies; Book-keeping; Shorthand; NVQ | Final year in Social Policy and Public Admin degree course | | First aid; x2 CLAIT; 13 week OU course in Social Sciences |
| Local/High Security, 12 | | 1 | 2 | 2 | Diploma, Business management; Catering College; HND; C & G Plastering | | x 5, including x 1 RAF | |
| Female, Open Training, 8 | 1 | | 1 | 3 | RSAs; Btec | Health Science degree | RAF; Army, PTI | |
| Female, Closed, 6 | 1 | | 3 | 2 | Btec, building; Diploma in Community Care; Diploma in English | | x 2 Army; RAF | |
| YOI, 5 | | | 2 | 1 | Apprentice engineer; C & G | | Army | |
| Cat C Prison & Closed YOI, 5 | 1 | | 1 | 2 | Btec, Business & Finance | History degree | Forces, HGV1 | PE teaching |
| Cat C Training/High Security, 4 | | 1 | | | HND Engineering | | | |
| Cat B Local Adult & YOI, 5 | 2 | | 1 | 1 | Plumbing | | | Ex-Police Service |
| Lifer Main Centre, 10 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | | | Forces | Evening classes |
| Cat C Training, 8 | | | 2 | 2 | Btec | Law degree | Army | |
| Juvenile, 5 | | | 3 | 1 | ONC | x 2 Masters; degrees in Psychology; Informal Community Education and Computing & one other | | Software engineer |
| Total number of officers | 9 | 6 | 23 | 16 | 23 | 8 | 16 | 8 |

# 6 Concluding Discussion

## 6.1 AIMS REVIEWED AND KEY MESSAGES

It is worth recapping at this point on the aims of the study. These were:

- to elicit the perceptions of prison officers on the value and appropriateness of current educational opportunities for the prisoners in their care, and to better understand their views
- to highlight good practice and explore any options for change and development, in the interests of prisoners' learning and skills, and
- to develop fresh thinking in respect of the role of the prison officer in facilitating the educational progress and development of prisoners.

### • KEY MESSAGES

It is perhaps a common experience for qualitative researchers to discover that the key messages from their data are somewhat to one side of the main field of study. The most powerful messages from this study were:

1. That officers operated with a very broad understanding of what should count as 'educational', as far as prisoners were concerned. They tended to perceive as 'educational' anything that helped prisoners change their lives for the better. The formal curriculum was sometimes discounted, or found wanting.

2. That officers believed there were confused perceptions about the officer's role within the Prison Service, within individual establishments, and amongst officers themselves, despite a clear job description. Were they simply 'discipline staff' or were there greater expectations? If so, what were these and how should they fulfil them?

3. That in the current climate of over-population, the majority of officers felt that too much was being asked of them anyway. No more was possible, until current pressures were addressed.

4. That officers felt under-trained, under-supported and undervalued in the existing, let alone any enhanced, role.

In summary, officers thought that prisoner education was important, although they had different priorities from learning and skills professionals. They felt they had a role to play (and would like opportunities to do more) but they did not think that they were given either enough time or enough training to fulfil their existing job description properly. Until that changed, further progress was unlikely.

## 6.2 OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF THE PURPOSE AND VALUE OF PRISONER EDUCATION

Given that officers were operating with a very broad understanding of what should count as 'educational' as far as prisoners were concerned, there seemed to be a rough hierarchy of importance for the majority. This ran as follows:

1. Personal, social and health education (including communication skills, and 'moral education' – learning the difference between right and wrong). Officers considered that these were the most important things for prisoners to learn, and that, moreover, they could and did have a part to play, '24/7', in teaching them. The majority seemed to want to engage with the reformative aspects of prison work. In the apparent absence of clear training or policy around how this life-changing work was to be achieved, however, officers were working with little more than instinct and assumption about their task and the best means of achieving success.

2. Vocational training: learning skills that would help prisoners get jobs on release. Officers had no quarrel with this aspect of the Prison Service's commitment. Their views tallied particularly clearly with those of the prisoners interviewed in *Time to Learn*. They wanted more places to be made available on more courses – particularly courses that would result in real jobs in prisoners' home communities.

3. Basic skills: reading and writing, and, less importantly, numeracy. Officers were generally well disposed towards the Prison Service's commitment to raising skills in this area. The main difficulty, as they saw it, was getting prisoners to face up to their skills deficits and doing something about remedying them. 'You can take a horse to water . . .' was an oft-repeated phrase across all the prisons visited.

There was little indication that officers disputed the official, instrumental, work-focused rationale for education for prisoners as a key to reducing re-offending. The majority view seemed to be that prisoners needed: *'Proper training, so that they can do things when they leave'*.

Academic, creative, sport and general interest courses, classes and activities were mentioned less often, as was the idea that prisoners might have a valid view, or a right to choose their own 'learning journey'[55]. For the most part, officers appeared confident that they knew what prisoners needed.

### • A SENSE OF RESENTMENT

The Select Committee took evidence from the Prison Officers' Association, amongst others. Brian Caton, the union's general secretary, is quoted in the report thus: *'Prison officers in the main come to work to look after prisoners, to make sure prisoners are looked after, to make sure the security of the establishment happens, and it is very difficult for a prison officer whose feet are firmly planted on the ground to deal with this floating academia that drifts in and drifts out.*[56]'

This attitude of dismissive exasperation towards the 'floating academia' was confirmed by several group members in this study. This was frequently because the teachers could make the officers' lives more difficult by ignoring proper safety procedures or displaying ignorance of the operational constraints for example. The officers, with their 'feet on the ground', perceived themselves as having to look after prisoners and to keep everybody safe despite these careless high-minded drifters.

Officers expressed some envy, on occasion, in relation to their perception of the sorts of learning resources now enjoyed by prisoners compared to their own or their children's experience. Computer equipment for prisoners and small class sizes prompted a few mentions. Some saw other aspects of prisoners' study opportunities as much better than their own: prisoners' education was free, and they did not have to battle with the demands of earning a living and running a home at the same time.

## 6.3 OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE: ENFORCERS, CARERS OR REFORMERS?

As Coyle mentioned in the Select Committee Report: *'Prison officers see themselves as having to do the hard, difficult part, and other people come in and do the nice part . . .'*

It may be that one of the difficulties in involving officers more fully in developing prisoners' learning and skills is that there is a central fault-line in the role as it is currently conceived. Is their role about security only, or security plus? The evidence from this study suggests that officers are frequently in some doubt as to where the caring and reformative aspects of their role (the 'plus' aspects), both of which are mentioned in the job description, fit with the central enforcement role. Because this is not clear, because it does not figure in the initial training, and because of the history and culture of the service and the staff who work in it, the officer in doubt is likely to retreat to the enforcement side of this rift whenever under challenge.

### a. Enforcers

We heard much over the course of the study about the importance of security, about the officers' role as enforcer of the rules and as keeper of order. Indeed they used the term 'discipline staff' to distinguish themselves and their own role from the other staff who work in prisons: administrative staff, managers, psychologists, probation, medical, and educational personnel.

Officers in their discipline role were clear that they enabled the civilian professionals – teachers, psychologists, probation officers and others – to come in and take up the more interesting, life-changing, roles with prisoners. Whilst this 'us and them' distinction irked many, the enforcer side of the role was embraced just as strongly by the majority of officers. This seemed to them the Prison Service's top priority. The uniform was welcomed, where discussion touched on this theme. Group members seemed relatively happy to recognise themselves as the 'thin blue line'. In the one group where the issue of calling prisoners 'Mr', or by their first names, was mentioned, officers were unanimously against it. Anything which blurred the boundaries between 'them and us' would be just as unpopular with prisoners too, they argued.

The thinking behind the suggestion that prisoners be addressed differently is presumably about encouraging a growing climate of mutual respect in prisons. However one message from officers in this study is that this is a two-way street. Officers appeared to feel under-respected themselves in a variety of ways, and this suggests that other more fundamental changes in how staff at all levels in the service are trained and supported may need to be undertaken first.

### • THE IDEA OF 'DISCIPLINE'

As the Strangeways riots made clear, prisons can only function with the consent of the imprisoned. When that consent is, for whatever reason, withdrawn, sheer numerical force can prevail and overwhelm. One of the first requirements of a safe prison is that there should be 'good order and discipline'.

It may be worth looking a little more closely at the notion of 'discipline' in this context. In one familiar sense, it has a punitive connotation. Every employer must by law have a 'disciplinary procedure', to be distinguished from any capability procedure, for instance, when questions of staff under-performance are under consideration. The notion of discipline carries within it the notion of punishment for a witting and willed offence against the rules. However, prisoners are sent to prison in the twenty-first century as a punishment, not for punishment[57]. The punishment is the deprivation of liberty.

The other sense of 'discipline' relates to order, instruction, a system of rules and procedures. Within academic life, the term may mean a branch of learning. The shared notion is the presence of, and need to maintain, a body of rules. However, the notions of 'discipline as punishment' and 'discipline as order' can

sometimes become entangled, in organisations like schools for instance, as well as in prisons.

Although the word 'discipline' does not occur in the Prison Service's own recruitment literature, the requirement to maintain 'good order and discipline' is a touchstone for prison officers. They are there to see that the rules are obeyed, that people are doing what they should, and not doing what they shouldn't. Brian Caton, again:[58]
*'What we have got to have in the Prison Service is order and discipline because if you lose order and discipline you can have as many good educational courses as you like you are not going to get them to do it.'*

Perhaps the tension for officers, between being expected to be the enforcer one minute and reformer the next, partly explains the alleged reluctance of some to undertake any further engagement with the developmental aspects of the role: it can just get too complicated.

**b. Carers**

As we have seen, the officer quoted on the Prison Service website thought of herself as a 'people person' and gave this as one reason why this was her 'perfect job'. There was plenty of evidence from this study too of officers' job satisfaction in respect of some of the pastoral aspects of the role. The satisfaction in having played some part in helping to change a life for the better was apparent, as was an almost parental pride, on occasion, in the achievements of prisoners in their charge.

Yet it was apparent that others were dissatisfied when they found the job did not live up to the expectations the recruitment process had led them to hold. This was particularly apparent in the juvenile prison, where most of the officers said they had joined specifically to work with young people, but there were far fewer opportunities to do this in any meaningful way than they had hoped. In many of the prisons, officers related difficulties in carrying out the personal officer role effectively, and in finding the time to listen to prisoners one to one, to write up their reports properly or to 'do groupwork.' They found themselves defeated by the sheer grind of the 'daily detail', the numbers they had to deal with, and the sudden changes of plan as officer duties were altered at the last minute to meet changing operational needs.

**● DYNAMIC SECURITY AND DECENCY**

'Dynamic security' was mentioned a number of times by officers. The phrase 'dynamic security'[59] was coined by Ian Dunbar in a Home Office paper which has been very influential but which is now hard to trace. He stressed the importance of three key principles in running safe and secure prisons that fulfil their purpose: individualised programmes, structured activity and good relationships.

The Dunbar paper was acknowledged as a factor in planning the education of political prisoners in Ireland, as one of the speakers to the European Prison Education Association (EPEA) reported to their conference in 1999. Here he offers a paraphrase of Dunbar's views as follows:
*'In any organisation it is the people who count. Successful prison regimes concentrate on the individual staff member and the individual prisoner. Of crucial importance are the relationships not only between prison officers and prisoners but also between the prison and the outside community. Activity is fundamental in achieving and maintaining control and security. A prisoner idle in his cell is a dangerous person.*[60]'

After the Woolf Report, Joe Pilling, then Prison Service Director General, gave a lecture entitled 'Back to Basics[61]' in which he stressed the vital importance of staff-prisoner relationships. The Prison Service's current 'decency agenda' incorporates the idea that civilised conditions, human rights, fairness, and good staff-prisoner relations – the whole moral climate of a prison – are vital.

Prison officers operate under pressure, in prisons that are often over-populated and which they perceive to be under-staffed, often with little continuity in their senior management as governors come and go with increasing frequency. They have to be 'all things to all people' on a '24/7' footing.

From the evidence of this study, it appeared that most officers accepted the importance of Dunbar's three principles of dynamic security: developing good relationships; keeping people purposefully occupied; and tailoring individualised programmes for them. However they felt that a good deal more time and attention was spent on delivering this for prisoners than for themselves. The majority were unhappy about what they perceived to be a lack of support and training. The sense that they felt themselves to be inadequately cared for was strong.

**c. Reformers**

*'In quite small matters increased information would make for greater efficiency. On one occasion an officer was unlocking prisoners for a lecture. The senior officer did not know what the lecture was about, so that he could not tell the junior officers, and they in turn were unable to tell the prisoners. Delay and indecision resulted whilst men made up their minds whether to attend and hope they would not be bored, or risk missing something really interesting. More importantly, such deprivation of elementary information tends to reduce the status of the officer to an automatic turnkey-cum-sheepdog'* [62].

This comes from the Morrises' sociological study of Pentonville in the 1950s. However not much has changed. Officers in the discussion groups for this study complained of too few opportunities for the exchange of ideas with colleagues from the education

department, and of a lack of basic information about learning opportunities in the prison that would help them to do their job properly. Above all, they expressed disappointment with the limitations of the 'turnkey' role.

Officers in this study evidenced an interest in taking on a greater 'reformative' role with prisoners. 'It's in our statement of purpose'. Nevertheless they were clear that they could not do this whilst working under the current pressure and with the current resources. They felt themselves to be 'just papering over the cracks.'

One suggestion made was that officers should receive training in how to become teachers or trainers themselves. There was a strongly expressed view that a great deal of experience and expertise amongst the officer workforce was left untapped. The idea that more thought might be given to alternative specialisms or progression routes for officers was voiced more than once.

Crawley noted that:
*'Many officers get a good deal of satisfaction from human services work, such as running inmate development courses . . .'*
Additionally, she noted, *'the belief that prison officers are just as capable as many specialist staff is commonplace in prisons'.*

However, not all the officers she spoke to wanted to be "teachers" [63].

One Senior Officer Crawley interviewed had this to say about staff members' alleged lack of interest in development work with prisoners:
*'They refuse (to run courses) more out of trepidation than anything else. Basically, they don't think they will be <u>able</u> to do it and so they say they're not interested to save face. Once they've had some training though, and got a bit of confidence, and they've sat in with the others that are doing it, they love it. You can't keep them <u>out</u>, then.'* (original emphases)

This attitude was replicated in the current study, with some officers claiming additionally that prisoners would prefer to have courses delivered by officers rather than civilians. But is this true? Even if it were agreed to be valuable to add to officers' job satisfaction by giving them the training to contribute more fully to the reformative task, perhaps along the lines of classroom assistants in schools, there may be a concern that the 'enforcer' role would sabotage their contribution in the eyes of the prisoners. Prisoners need to have a voice in who assists them, how, and to what extent.

Be that as it may, the suggestion still underscores the conflict at the heart of the prison officer's role, as laid down in the job description, and the difficulties this causes. If 'dynamic security' is to be a meaningful and useful concept in prisons, more thought and training based on it might point the way to reconciling the three roles. However, officers felt that they needed more resources, training and support to enable them to do the job as described in the present circumstances, let alone anything more.

## 6.4 THE PRESSURES OF WORKING LIFE IN PRISONS

As has been suggested above, working life in prisons is particularly stressful at the present for a number of reasons. In this study, it will be appropriate to touch on just a few of these: population, privatisation, working practices and organisational culture. Some aspects of their impact on the delivery of educational opportunities for prisoners will then be briefly considered.

### Prison population

The prison population has expanded dramatically over the last decade, from approximately 49,000 in 1994 to approximately 75,000 in 2004/5. At the beginning of September 2005 the population stands just short of 77,000 [64]. This expansion in population has not been matched by a parallel expansion in capacity, staffing and facilities. Prisons have been operating at the limits of their capability for some time now. At the end of July 2004, 83 of the 138 prisons in England and Wales were officially designated as 'overcrowded' [65]. All aspects of life in prison have been affected, not least education and training.

Prison numbers remained relatively stable, at or around 75,000, in 2004-5. However, the population stabilised at a level of 24% overcrowding. The first NOMS Business Plan for 2005-6 [66], assumes that public sector prisons will be 24% overcrowded and private sector prisons nearly 35% overcrowded. As the Chief Inspector of Prisons said of these figures, this:
*'. . . may be both realistic and understandable but it cannot be right.'* [67]

### Prison privatisation

The threat of competition has, allegedly, forced up standards in the public sector. However, in order to compete with the private sector in open competition for contracts, the Prison Service has had to engage in cuts to staffing levels, as well as a general tightening up on several aspects of performance management. For example, the Prison Service now has, as one of its KPIs, a target for the reduction of staff sickness absence, which has traditionally run at well above the national average. The contract to manage Manchester Prison, rebuilt after the Strangeways riots, was won by the Prison Service in open competition, and resulted in a service level agreement. The consequences of the 'SLA' were very much alive in discussions with officers in this prison.

Pay and conditions for staff in private prisons are inferior to those in the public sector. On one estimate, staff in private prisons are up to 70% worse off than their public sector counterparts [68]. This may link to

the high turnover of staff amongst private prisons[69], and a concern about the lack of experienced staff noted by the National Audit Office (NAO) in 2003. According to the NAO report, prisoners in five privately managed prisons which reported high levels of assaults expressed concerns about their safety due to the relative inexperience of staff [70]. The NAO report (2003) estimated that, overall, private prisons had 17 per cent fewer staff than prisons in the public sector.

**Time pressures and the core day**

We heard a great deal in the discussions about time. There was simply not enough time, in the officers' view, for them to do their existing jobs properly, let alone to take on anything new. Significantly, the invitation to consider additional involvement in prisoner education was seen as an invitation to take on yet another set of duties and commitments (e.g. running courses), rather than to adopt a different stance and attitude (an encourager/enabler stance) to duties officers were undertaking anyway. This was a minority view, but strongly expressed.

We heard about the frequency of sudden changes to the daily and weekly detail, which made it very difficult for officers to plan ahead. This seemed sometimes to be brought about by short staffing, sometimes by sudden prison emergencies – a disturbance of some sort or a staff shortage at another gaol – or by the unexpected need to accompany prisoners to hospital for example.

**A lack of autonomy**

An 'ours not to reason why' attitude was discernible in some groups: a rather gloomy sense that officers were cogs in a much larger machine, and were shunted about mechanistically as need required, without consultation or consideration. It sounded as though officers felt very similar sorts of things to the prisoners in *Time to Learn*, caught up in the ever-present 'churn effect' created by the population pressures, and sent from prison to prison whatever stage they may have reached in their learning, as this quotation reveals:
*'I moved prison when I was only one month away from doing exams, A levels, and I couldn't do the exams.'*

It sounded as though many officers felt captive too, powerless to resist organisational demands and shuttled about much as prisoners were. This did little to enhance their self-esteem or job satisfaction.

**Officer culture**

Compared to the wealth of research interest that there has been in police culture [71], relatively little has been written on prison officer culture. It would be beyond the scope of this study to attempt much here. However, from our observations of the emotional tone of the majority of interviews, one working hypothesis might be that officer culture is primarily defensive. A good day is a day when nothing goes wrong.

This culture seems to be endemic to the organisation, and not just to the uniformed staff. As a member of the advisory group pointed out, the majority of the Prison Service KPIs are conceived defensively: bad things (self-inflicted deaths, escapes, staff sickness, drug-taking) are to be reduced. Interestingly, the KPI for prisoner education is an exception to this rule: prisons are aiming at more good outcomes (basic skills qualifications) rather than fewer bad ones.

Andrew Coyle's evidence to the Select Committee stressed the pressure the whole system is under, and the impact that has on staff culture:
*'You translate that (pressure) further down, I think, to the staff who are in the prison, the officers who are there on a daily basis making sure that it works.'*

He continues as follows:
*'Success in the prison setting by and large is measured by absence of failure, 'let's not get it wrong', and you have got to make sure people do not escape, you have got to make sure that there is not disorder, you have got to make sure that there is not a ministerial question, or whatever, and that is what really drives people.'* [72]

The prevailing staff culture could be understood, from these accounts, as a negative rather than a positive one; 'away from' rather than 'towards'. If success is characterised as an 'absence of failure' then you are not likely to be expecting great things. One other way in which this was apparent in the current study, for instance, was in the difficulty officers found in talking about good practice on their own part. Celebrating success felt like an alien activity [73]. Officers did not seem used to having their achievements with prisoners mentioned, and yet there were a number of moving examples shared, detailing where officers felt that they had contributed to making a difference to individual prisoners' lives. There seemed little formal mechanism for feedback on prisoner success after leaving their care. The more typical (informal) experience was of disheartenment in seeing or hearing that a prisoner was back inside.

The idea of education as an enabler tends to come from a 'towards' culture: when asked what education might achieve for an individual, someone with this mindset would most readily answer in terms of doors opening, possibilities unfolding, or horizons expanding. This speaks more of hope, and of self-fulfilment, than, simply, of an 'absence of failure.' Changing officer culture may be a long process, and may require some radical changes to Prison Service policy and organisational culture too.

**Pressures on the delivery of education**

Educational provision will vary according to the prison type. Local prisons, for instance, can usually offer a more limited curriculum than other prisons. They

are more subject to the 'churn' factor, with prisoners coming and going both rapidly and regularly. In the words of the Chief Inspector of Prisons [74], again: *'Local prisons, in a pressurised system, effectively become transit camps . . . Many governors make valiant efforts to hold on to prisoners who are in mid-course or mid-programme, but at the height of overcrowding it may not even be possible to receive back returned prisoners from court.'* [75]

Given the population expansion, and the consequent need to move prisoners frequently around the estate, the traditional roles and category distinctions between prisons have become increasingly blurred, however, leading to additional difficulties for managers, staff and contractors alike. It also means that prisoners are often spending a large part of their sentences many miles from their home communities, thus making resettlement links even harder to forge. Many of the training prisons have also significantly increased in size, with the money for additional regime activities, let alone the staff, always arriving after the prisoners do[76]. The capital funding for additional workshops and classrooms is also by no means guaranteed.

All these factors have added to the difficulties for prisoners, the Prison Service and officers alike. The population pressures, and the anxieties generated in staff by change in the service as a whole, seriously affect what is possible, not only in terms of care and rehabilitation for prisoners, but also in terms of the quality of working life in prison, and the management of the Prison Service.

## 6.5 OFFICER INVOLVEMENT IN PRISONER EDUCATION

As has been seen, officers in this study were not particularly interested in the formal curriculum as delivered by education departments, perhaps because they were rarely involved. They were more interested in anything involving personal, social and health education, and vocational training, and in further opportunities for developing their own roles in respect of their perceived priority areas, provided they were given the time, support and training to do so.

When pressed, however, they were ready to share examples of the impact that learning of all kinds, the acquisition of new skills and new self-confidence, had had on individual prisoners they had known. Often they displayed considerable satisfaction in telling the 'good news stories' and regretted that they received little feedback on what happened to the majority of those who had passed through their prisons.

If officers are to become further involved in the development of prisoner learning, a number of changes appear to be needed – at least for the officers who spoke in the discussion groups. More time, better training and support, and better internal communication with education and training staff have all been mentioned. Above all, perhaps, the role of the institution in promoting learning for all, and an organisation-wide recognition of the 'learning mosaic', needs attention. If officers 'run the gaol' it is vital that they understand what its priorities are, and what they can do on a daily basis to further them.

## 6.6 TRAINING, SUPPORTING AND VALUING PRISON OFFICERS

### Prison officer learning and training

As one prisoner from *Time to Learn* put it:
*'Until the officers value education for themselves they'll find it difficult to value it for others. Until that's sorted there won't be any change.'*

It became increasingly clear as the study progressed that officers felt that their own learning and training needs had not been, and were not being met, and that they had not, in most cases, had enough 'education' for themselves. Training is only one part of the learning mosaic: many officers felt uncertain, too, about their own levels of general education. As the self-disclosing officer with dyslexia mentioned, an insecurity about officers own literacy levels could lead to 'putting up a front' with prisoners. Any sense of having been under-nourished, where further and higher educational opportunities were concerned, could lead to a feeling of resentment if it appeared that prisoners' needs were more readily met, and a defensiveness about any suggestion of learning alongside prisoners for example.

We heard in almost every prison of the difficulties of gaining access to in-service training. The commitment to regular continuing staff development appeared slight to officers: no matter what had been booked, permission to attend would be withdrawn on the day if there was a staffing crisis. The apparent withdrawal of the custodial care NVQ was just one case in point. However this rankled particularly:
*'It doesn't make you feel worth very much, does it?'*

It is noticeable that there is no reference in the information on POELT to education and training in prison, as well as to many other things. In its summary on barriers to effective education and training delivery in prisons, the House of Commons Select Committee report had this to say:
*'We must keep in mind the fact that a prison is a prison and not a secure training centre. Nevertheless the government should be aiming to develop a culture in prisons in which education is a much greater priority. This cannot be achieved without a significant shift in the investment in training given to prison officers. At just 8 weeks, the initial training period for Prison Officers is too short, and we invite the Home Office to review this. A much greater level of investment in staff education and development is required in order to encourage a more positive attitude amongst Prison Officers towards the role that education has to play in prisons.'*

In his detailed evidence to the Committee, Coyle, himself a former prison governor, noted:
*'. . . we have one of the shortest and most basic forms of training for prison staff of any country, certainly in Western Europe . . . We take someone in off the street, we give them eight or nine weeks' basic training and then we ask them to go and deal with young offenders, to deal with women, or to deal with long-term prisoners. Now that passes a message about what our priorities are and what we expect of our staff. The staff, I think, in reality deliver much more than we are entitled to expect and one could contrast that with a number of other countries in Western Europe where the training of prison officers equates to the training of a nurse or teacher, a two or three year course . . .'* [77]

The professionalisation of the officer role, along these lines, must surely be overdue. Perhaps it is worth leaving the last word to Paul Goggins, former Prisons Minister, also quoted in the Select Committee's report:

*'I think that staff do have an entitlement to expect to receive appropriate training. In the end, what are they being trained for? They are being trained to work with and motivate the prisoners who are in their custody and care. What we are trying to do in prisons is to try and change lives and that requires tremendous skill on the part of an officer who has to be responsible for security and safety but also has to be able to motivate and help people change their behaviour and attitude. That is a highly skilled job.'* [78] (emphasis added)

**Professional support for officers**
Although we did not ask about this directly, officers did not speak highly of management structures and support in their establishments, nor yet of the Staff Performance and Development Reviews (SPDRs) which seemed to be the principal mechanism by which performance management happened. This came out most strongly in respect of access to training opportunities.

However, officers also mentioned that there was little support for them on a day-to-day basis in dealing with the toughest parts of the job: prisoner suicide and self-harm were mentioned several times, as were incidents of verbal and physical abuse, prisoner on officer. The implication was that there were weak formal support mechanisms for the undoubted stress that handling such episodes regularly would induce. We heard about informal support mechanisms – 'My mate on the wing' – who would listen if there had been a particularly tough shift. But this sort of support was not factored into the performance management system, it appeared. It is hard to resist the speculation that the high sickness and low retention rates already touched upon may have had something to do with this reported lack of professional support.

**The 'hidden profession'**
There was a strong sense amongst the officers in this study that the Prison Service had a lower status as a career than other comparable professions, most obviously the police and the fire service. It was felt that the public did not have an idea of the valuable work that went on in prisons, or the pressure that staff were under (for example, in dealing with the significant numbers of mentally ill prisoners). Some said that they did not mention where they worked, amongst their wider networks.

This came across in many ways during discussions: one of the most obvious was in relation to officers' perceptions of their own roles vis a vis the teachers and other 'professionals'. In officers' eyes, the teachers were 'do-gooders' whilst they were perceived merely as 'gaolers who bang doors' – not as fellow professionals. Perhaps the sense of being under-valued, which came though strongly in many of the group discussions, was one effect of this. If the profession is lowly regarded, and I am a member of it, then maintaining my own self-regard will be hard too.

Coyle[79] notes the ambivalence felt by many about prisons, and, by extension, about the staff who work in them. ('What kind of person would choose to spend their life doing such a job?') He also notes that, in some jurisdictions, custodial staff are 'described as guards, wardens or correctional officers.' Indeed such staff were described in England and Wales as 'warders' (from the old French word meaning 'to guard') until 1921.
As he notes, however, at least for the warder the role was clear:
*'The title 'prison officer' carries no comparable clarity'.*

The status of a profession may be enhanced through its training. Training of professional length and quality makes staff members feel respected and valued, and aids the recruitment of high calibre staff. Good quality management and development support has an equally important effect. As Paul Goggins noted, the prison officer's is, or should be, 'a highly skilled job'. If the career is to be professionalised, a substantial uplift in initial training, management support and career development opportunities must be considered.

## 6.6 WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

What are the implications of this? What, in terms of principle, needs to change?

- Promoting prisoners' learning should be an integral part of the common purpose of the institution, communicated to all involved – including external providers and practitioners, as well as officers themselves.
- Like all staff, officers should have a basic responsibility to facilitate prisoner learning, as part of implementing a policy of dynamic security.
- There needs to be a service-wide recognition of the 'learning mosaic' which calls for a variety of skills to promote learning of all kinds.
- Integrated management of learning is needed at governor level within each prison.
- Promotion of learning should be comprehensively covered in management plan, time budgets, activity options for prisoners, staff initial training, development and appraisal.
- A fundamental clarification of the roles, management and support, training and staff development for prison officers is necessary.
- The service should clarify what prison officers can and should offer to promote learning, and consider formalising a range of recognised opportunities to do so, whether as guides, mentors, advisers, support assistants, or skill instructors.
- Some of the critical management problems of the PS should be addressed, to ease pressure on all and improve outcomes.

No further progress will be possible in officer involvement with prisoner learning until these issues are addressed. As the National Offender Management Service gets under way, a review of the prison officer's role, training and support would be timely.

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[55] The Offender's Learning Journey is the title of OLASS's policy document on educational provision for prisoners, published in 2005.
[56] Education and Skills Committee report, para 319
[57] Ruck. S. K. ed, 1951. Paterson on Prisons: The collected papers of Sir Alexander Patterson. London: Frederick Miller
[58] Select Committee report op cit. evidence from the general secretary of the POA
[59] Dunbar, I. A Sense of Direction. Home Office 1985. See also for example the Prison Ombudsman's inquiry into the fire at Yarl's Wood, where Dunbar's paper is praised. www.ppo.gov.uk/download/reports/yarlswoodinquiryreport.pdf
[60] Wynne, Sean: Education and Security – A Dangerous Liaison? EPEA 1999. www.epea.org/7thconf/ws4-sean.htm
[61] Back to Basics: Relationships in the Prison Service (1992). Eve Saville Memorial Lecture, Institute for the Study and Treatment of Delinquency.
[62] Back to Basics: Relationships in the Prison Service (1992). Eve Saville Memorial Lecture, Institute for the Study and Treatment of Delinquency.
[63] In her footnote she explains that 'The work that prison officers describe as 'teaching' encompasses all those classes, sessions and courses designed to improve prisoners' thinking, communication, interaction, educational and practical skills.' This is similar to the views expressed by the officers in the current study.
[64] Prison population and accommodation briefing for 02 September 2005, accessed via the PS website
[65] A Measure of Success. PRT August 2004
[66] NOMS Business Plan 2005-06 accessed via Home Office website www.homeoffice.gov.uk
[67] HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. Prisoners' Education Trust Lecture. Op cit
[68] Sachdev, S. Paying the Cost? Public Private Partnerships and the Public Service Workforce. London, Catalyst. 2004. Quoted in Prison Factfile. PRT May 2005. op cit.
[69] for example Dovegate Prison recorded staff turnover of nearly 30% in 2001-2 whilst public prisons lost on average just 6% of staff in the same year.
[70] National Audit Office. The Operational Performance of PFI Prisons. London 2003. Quoted in Prison Factfile May 2005. op cit.
[71] See for example, Janet Foster's chapter on police culture in Newburn, T. (ed) The Handbook of Policing. Cullompton. Willan Publishing 2003.
[72] Select Committee Report op cit, para 318
[73] The Butler Trust Awards celebrates staff achievement in prisons
[74] HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. Prisoners' Education Trust Lecture. 2005
[75] HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 2005. op cit.
[76] HM Chief Inspector of Prison 2005. op cit
[77] Select Committee report para 324
[78] Select Committee report para 328
[79] Understanding Prisons (2005 forthcoming). op cit

# 7 Recommendations

The recommendations contained in this report are straightforward. They are neither surprising nor alarming. Many have been made before. What happens to them depends on how they are received and acted upon by others. Different levels of authority and decision-making are required in order to make progress. For example, some of the recommendations will require a Prison Service-led multi-agency approach, while others simply require the commitment locally of individual governors, heads of learning and skills or area managers. Rather than direct specific recommendations to different government departments, agencies or individuals, it was felt best to leave those responsible for prisoner learning, and for the employment, professional development and welfare of prison officers, to decide themselves how best to proceed.

The recommendations are made in two parts. The first part includes recommendations made by the researchers on the basis of the report. The second part includes recommendations made by officers involved in the study. Recommendations made by officers from one third or more of the prisons visited have been included.

On occasion, a similar recommendation was also made in the researchers' previous study, *Time to Learn*. Where this is the case, the recommendation from *Time to Learn* has also been included. Where the researchers and prison officers have made similar recommendations, this has been highlighted.

## PART ONE

### A whole prison approach to learning

1. A whole prison approach should be adopted towards encouraging and supporting education and training for both prisoners and staff. Learning should not be compartmentalised, beginning and ending with teachers in the classroom. Learning should be part of a continuum in which prisoners, education staff, officers and relevant others are involved in working towards a common goal.

2. The broad range of learning opportunities available to prisoners both through the formal curriculum and informally through a variety of different activities and officer interventions, should be clarified and properly identified within a single prison learning mosaic.

### The role of the prison officer

3. The role and purpose of the prison officer should be reviewed, in particular in relation to:

a. The part officers play in the rehabilitation of prisoners;

b. Exploring the potential for officers to further support the rehabilitation of prisoners;

c. Providing greater clarity on the relative importance of officers' custodial duties, beyond security, and other responsibilities contained in the prison officer's job description;

d. Addressing potential role conflicts by highlighting the contribution of 'dynamic security'.

The following reflects officer recommendation 11 at page 57:

e. Ensuring adequate time is 'detailed' for officers to undertake all of their responsibilities and not just those relating to operational duties.

The following reflects officer recommendation 10 at page 57 and is also a recommendation in *Time to Learn*:

4. Different career pathways should be made available for officer progression. Career development opportunities should be created both for officers wishing to specialise, for example in offending behaviour programmes and for those who wish to continue on residential duties.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM *TIME TO LEARN:***
'Detailed recommendation 25: The potential contribution of prison officers to education and training and to the effective rehabilitation and resettlement of offenders should be highlighted in recruitment information and further reinforced during prison officer training. Further opportunities for job-related training, career and personal development should be made available for prison officers. Ways in which prison officers can contribute towards encouraging and supporting learning opportunities for prisoners should be the subject of further research.'

### Initial training

5. The length of time for initial training for prison officers should be increased to:

a. Include a greater emphasis on the knowledge, people skills and the understanding necessary for officers to manage with confidence the 'complex challenge' as described in the job description for prison officers;

b. Reinforce the key role of the prison officer in the rehabilitation of prisoners.

6. A module on prisoner learning and education should be introduced including an on-the-job element where the new recruit spends time working with prison education staff.

**In-service training**
The following reflects officer recommendations 8 and 9 at page 57:

7. The Prison Service should ensure that appropriate training opportunities are made available for officers in order that they are able to fulfil their job description. In particular:

a. Provision for in-service training should be reviewed. Courses should be further developed to provide officers with greater opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) that will build on and enhance officers' knowledge, people skills and understanding of dealing with prisoners. In particular courses should be developed to assist officers in encouraging and supporting prisoner learning and education in the widest sense;

b. Officers should be encouraged to undertake CPD, which should be identified as part of their Staff Performance Development Review (SPDR);

c. The Prison Service should ensure that officers are able to attend CPD identified as part of their SPDR within an appropriate timeframe;

d. CPD should be undertaken in 'work-time';

e. The Prison Service should decide whether to support or withdraw the officer NVQ and follow through accordingly. If kept, a strand relating to the rehabilitation of prisoners, in particular in relation to prisoner learning and education, should be included;

8. Appropriate qualifications for different officer career pathways should be identified and flexible learning opportunities made available and encouraged.

9. Opportunities for officers to pursue courses for personal development should be funded by the Prison Service where relevance to the Service or the individual prison can be shown.

10. The work of the POA's local learning centres should be developed and supported.

**Management, supervision and support**
11. Greater investment should be made in the overall supervision and support of officers.

12. The annual performance and development review for officers (SPDR) should be given priority, in particular:

a. Appraisers should undertake training prior to conducting appraisal interviews;

b. Training for appraisees should be made available to all officers;

c. Officer development plans and performance should be effectively reviewed on a regular basis (at least quarterly) by the officer's line manager. Any additional support, supervision or training identified as being necessary should be provided within an agreed timeframe.

13. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should focus wherever possible on the creation of positive outcomes for prisoners rather than the avoidance of negative ones for the prison and the Prison Service.

**Links with the prison education department**
The following reflects officer recommendation 12 at page 57:

14. Heads of Learning and Skills should ensure that officers are kept up to date with education and training opportunities for prisoners.

15. Opportunities should be created for officers and education staff to learn from each other, for example joint staff meetings.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM *TIME TO LEARN:***
'Detailed recommendation 31: The OLSU should develop more practical ways for education staff, prison staff and providers of education to learn from each other . . .'

16. The shared use of education facilities for officers undertaking CPD or pursuing qualifications, supported by education staff, should be encouraged

## PART TWO
### OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS
*Recommendations relating to prisoner education and training:*

1. Opportunities for education and training should be made available for all prisoners.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM *TIME TO LEARN:***
'Principal recommendation 2: Opportunities for education and training should be made available for all prisoners.'

2. There should be a wider range of opportunities for vocational training and provision should be increased.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM *TIME TO LEARN:***
'Detailed recommendation 15: To reduce waiting times for prisoners wishing to access education and training generally and the more popular classes in particular, e.g. IT, vocational training and cookery, learning provision should be increased . . .'

3. The formal curriculum for prisoner education should be made more accessible, flexible and adaptable, taking into account the wide range of prior learning experience and attainment, abilities, motivation and particular requirements of prisoners. The enthusiasms of prisoners, in particular young prisoners, should be taken into consideration in determining the formal curriculum.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM *TIME TO LEARN:***
'Principal recommendation 5: The curriculum should be of equal relevance to the needs of all prisoners . . . [including] prisoners who have rejected the more traditional forms of education.'

4. There should be more opportunities to help prisoners further develop a range of interpersonal, social and life skills, self management and coping skills that will help them to manage better both on the inside and out. Suggestions to impart such skills include:

- Activities that would expose prisoners to new and different situations, for example, opportunities afforded by the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, the Prince's Trust, Tall Ships, or simply taking a group of prisoners for a walk or a bike ride
- Practical learning about 'real life skills', for example, filling in forms, doing a CV, finding out how best to go about getting accommodation or applying for a job or a mortgage
- Self-management and coping strategies.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM *TIME TO LEARN:***
'Detailed recommendation 20: Ways in which charities and voluntary organisations can encourage and enhance learning . . . should be disseminated by the OLSU and their involvement encouraged.'

5. Methods for the initial assessment of prisoners education needs and how progression is encouraged, supported and realised should be reviewed.

6. There should be more practical help and opportunities for prisoners to prepare for release, in particular in relation to finding work and accommodation. Suggestions include:

- Fostering links between the prison and relevant local organisations, which could be officer-led
- Greater levels of support for prisoners on release
- Seamless transfers between prison education and training and opportunities in the wider community for prisoners wishing to continue with their education and training on release.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM *TIME TO LEARN:***
'Detailed recommendation 29: Support for prisoner-learners wishing to continue with education and training on release should be made available before and after release, so providing a 'bridge' between learning in prison and the wider community . . .'

7. Opportunities for education and training should be targeted at those prisoners who either need help with basic skills or who demonstrate a commitment to learning.

*Relating to officer's own education and training:*

8. Opportunities for officer education and training should be:

- Linked in practice as well as in theory to the individual officers annual SPDR
- Available to all officers
- Ring fenced against last minute cancellation of whole courses or individual attendance.

9. Formal opportunities for peer mentoring and shadowing of more experienced officers, especially for new recruits should be made available.

*Relating to officer's professional development:*

10. Career development opportunities for officers interested in being involved in delivering prisoner education should be created.

11. The role of officers in supporting and encouraging prisoner education and in providing informal education should be recognised and adequate time made available in the core day.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM *TIME TO LEARN:*** – see 'Detailed recommendation 25'.

*Relating to officer relationships with education staff:*

12. There should be regular communication between the prison education department and officers in particular in relation to education and training opportunities available for prisoners.

*Relating to training for education and other civilian staff:*

13. A course in prison life and culture, in particular security, should be undertaken by all civilians prior to working with prisoners.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM *TIME TO LEARN:***
'Detailed recommendation 23: . . Initial training, for those new to the prison environment, should be developed and implemented for newly appointed prison education staff who have not previously taught in prison.'


# 8 Appendices

## Appendix 1 - Advisory Group Membership:

Catherine Atthill, TRUSTEE *Prisoners' Education Trust*
Chris Barnham, HEAD OF UNIT *Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit*
Charles Bushell, GENERAL SECRETARY *Prison Governors Association*
Kimmett Edgar, RESEARCH MANAGER *Prison Reform Trust*
Steve Gillan, VICE-CHAIR *Prison Officers' Association*
Dr Roger Grimshaw, RESEARCH DIRECTOR *Centre for Crime and Justice Studies*
Katharine Hamilton, HEAD OF LEARNING AND SKILLS *HMP Brixton*
Erwin James, JOURNALIST *The Guardian*
Merron Mitchell, HEAD OF OFFENDER LEARNING DIRECTORATE, CITY COLLEGE MANCHESTER *Representing the Association of Colleges*
Robert Newman, HEAD OF POLICY: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT *Youth Justice Board*
Christiane Ohsan, NATIONAL OFFICIAL *NATFHE*
Steve Taylor, DIRECTOR *Forum on Prisoner Education*
Sir Richard Tilt, SOCIAL FUND COMMISSIONER AND CHAIR OF THE ADVISORY GROUP *Independent Review Service for the Social Fund*
Steve Wagstaffe, AREA MANAGER YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE *Prison Service*

## Appendix 2 - Learning in prison, the last decade

### Contracting out education

In 1993 prison education services were contracted out. Contracts were issued for 5 years and went to a variety of providers, largely colleges of further education. Some colleges had multiple contracts, which were spread across the country. Mostly there was a reasonably close proximity to the prison, but some contractors were based up to 150 miles away from the prisons they served and the staff they managed.

### Basic Skills, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets

According to Home Office figures[80], more than half of all prisoners are at or below the level expected of an 11 year old in reading, two-thirds in numeracy and four-fifths in writing. In the mid to late 1990s, the Prison Service agreed a revised curriculum for prison education, dedicated to raising the standards of functional literacy and numeracy. In 1999, KPIs for prisoner education and training were introduced for the first time. The KPIs focused exclusively on basic skills, and the related targets varied, establishment by establishment.

For the first time, delivering on educational targets contributed to the governor's success, and therefore education achieved a higher profile within the establishment. However, the impact on the curriculum, and the almost exclusive focus on basic literacy and numeracy, was regretted by some. In *Shared Responsibilities* (op. cit.), it was reported that 'less than half of all respondents thought that the core curriculum addressed the learning needs of adult prisoners satisfactorily' [81]. Although these KPIs and targets have been developed and refined over subsequent years, they, and their focus, remain.

### From PLSU to OLASS

In 2001, responsibility for education and training in prisons transferred from the Prison Service to the Department for Education and Skills (DFES). A new unit was created, titled the Prisoners' Learning and Skills Unit (PLSU), to oversee the work. In April 2004 the Unit was given additional responsibility for community-based offender education and training policy, and was retitled the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU). The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) took responsibility for planning and funding offender learning in three 'development' regions in August 2005. It will take full responsibility by August 2006. The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) is the name given to the new delivery plans for offender

learning, detailed in the document *'The Offenders' Learning Journey'*. OLSU 'will continue to exist in the role of "policy guardian".'[82]

The LSC, however, operates only in England, not in Wales. The position regarding responsibility for learning and skills provision in Wales is unclear at the time of writing. Another area where there is a lack of clarity concerns provision for higher education within prisons, since this is beyond the LSC's remit.

Responsibility for prison education has therefore changed three times over the past four years, and there is still some lack of clarity surrounding arrangements for the future.

**Project Rex**

In 2002/3, PricewaterhouseCooper were commissioned to review the funding of prison education and training. The review recommended that the service should be retendered, to combine education, vocational training and libraries. Traditionally, skills training workshops had been (and at the time of writing most still are) staffed by prison service employees, civilian instructors and instructional officers, whilst the non-vocational education had been contracted out. The Project Rex proposals caused considerable concern amongst, and the consequent loss of, many experienced staff[83]. Notice to contractors of the retendering process was given in April 2003 with the intention of bringing new contracts into force a year later. However, in early 2004, Project Rex was abandoned and the tendering process was halted.

After a period of some confusion, with contracts due to end shortly and no new process in place, the LSC announced that it would trial a re-tendering exercise in three development regions. That process is now complete, and new contractors have been announced in these pilot areas. Contracts have been awarded on a regional basis, this time, rather than prison by prison, and there has been a greater emphasis on bridging the gap between the prison and the community. Numbers of experienced providers lost their contracts. Other than in those three regions, existing providers are unsure what the future holds. This uncertainty is likely to have proved costly in terms of staff and organisational morale, and thus on the provision of the service.

**Heads of Learning and Skills**

Another recent initiative has been the appointment of Heads of Learning and Skills in each prison funded by OLSU. These staff members have a responsibility for all prisoner learning in the prison[84]. They are directly employed by the Prison Service and are part of prison senior management teams. The concept was borrowed from the Youth Justice Board's successful introduction of these roles into juvenile establishments, and these appointments have been welcomed. There are still, though, some confusions about accountability for the work, as between the contractor, the education manager (appointed and managed by the contractor), the HOLS and the governor. A further recent initiative, however, has been the proposal to phase out the role of education manager[85] – although we understand that this is now to happen only in one of the three development regions.

**Achievements over the past decade**

These changes, and the consequent periods of uncertainty and confusion, have given rise to considerable anxiety amongst staff and managers alike. Nevertheless, the achievements of individual prisoners and education providers over the past decade have been significant. In the Chief Inspector's words:

*'The number of basic skills achievements in our prisons make them the largest adult literacy and numeracy provider in the country. We are looking at around 50,000 awards a year from entry level to level 2. The contracting out of education provision to further education colleges, and their inspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate or* OFSTED *exactly as if they were colleges or schools, has undoubtedly improved quality. Moreover, funding has significantly increased (from £48 million in 1999 to £122 Million in 2004) and, as importantly, is provided in a ring-fenced budget by the Department for Education and Skills so that it cannot be raided by a governor looking for quick savings.'*[86]

The Chief Inspector goes on to stress the value in prisons being seen, and having to act, *'. . . as part of society and community. Education and training, like the provision of healthcare and work on resettlement, has benefited hugely from the direct involvement of national and local agencies whose jobs and professional expertise are in education, health, or work and pensions, rather than in criminal justice. Prisoners are people, and citizens, not just collections of offences.'*

**The reduction in vocational training opportunities in prisons**

There is some evidence that vocational skills training workshops in prisons have declined over the past few decades. However the importance of such training is well recognised and there is evidence that this is changing.

The construction trades (brick-laying, painting and decorating, carpentry, plumbing, plastering and electrical engineering) have always been highly popular with prisoners, giving the expectation of immediate employability, on a building site somewhere, after release. In its response [87] to the Select Committee report already extensively quoted, the government reported that:
*'*HMP *Dartmoor has recently been awarded (by the Adult Learning Inspectorate) a grade 1 for construction training (April 2005). This was the first grade 1 ever awarded to a prison for any area of learning. In 2003-4 only one provider in the entire post-16 sector achieved a grade 1 for construction.'*

However, whether because of the expansion in the population, the shortage of skilled craftspeople willing to teach in prisons or for some other reason, availability of places has been in decline. In *Time to Learn*, for example, a prisoner told us:
*'They do have bricklaying and a carpentry course here but there's a six month waiting list. You have to be doing four years to get on.'*

It is also the case that some vocational training available in prisons has been geared more to 'the historical availability of provision in a given prison'[88] rather than skills actively required by the job market in prisoners' home areas.

**The contribution of the commercial sector**

A number of commercial companies and concerns have been working in prisons in the past decade, and these partnerships have been widely welcomed. Toyota sponsors a very popular motor mechanics workshop in Aylesbury YOI, for example. The Select Committee noted 'the excellent work of the Young Offender Programme led by National Grid Transco' which leads to both training and jobs in the gas industry. The Government is committed to developing further such initiatives through NOMS.

**The contribution of the voluntary sector**

Many voluntary organisations have been working inside prisons, sometimes on an ad hoc and piecemeal basis, and in some cases more consistently across the whole estate. The Shannon Trust, for example, has already been mentioned. The Prisoners' Education Trust, to take just one further example, has been funding distance learning for prisoners over the past two decades, and has now taken on the administration of Open University degree courses on behalf of OLSU. Many other organisations and initiatives have involved, and enriched the lives of, considerable numbers of prisoners.

Again, NOMS is committed to nurturing and building on its voluntary sector partnerships, although such partnerships, often involving relatively small organisations (as against large organisations like the Prison Service), are sometimes difficult to get right. The Chief Inspector of Prisons noted, in her evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Group's inquiry,[89] that:

*'The Prison Service has not always been very good at partnership. Their characteristic approach has been: "We'll tell you what we want you to do, when we want you to do it, and with whom. Then we'll decide whether we'll allow you access."'*

The NOMS 'contestability' principle, requiring that all contracts for service provision be put out to tender, may pose problems for the smaller organisations with shorter timescales, and little time, money or infrastructure in reserve[90].

#### Parliamentary interest

The All Party Parliamentary group on Further and Life-long Learning published its inquiry findings in 2004[91]. Subsequently, the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee on Prison Education has reported (Session 2004-5)[92]. Both reports were critical of current standards and levels of achievement. More importantly, the Education and Skills Committee's report criticised the lack of an 'over-arching strategy about what prison education should be delivering'.

In its summary, this report described current provision as 'unacceptable.' In 2004, less than a third of prisoners had access to prison education at any one time, and this despite the government's manifesto commitment to 'dramatically increase the quality and quantity of education provision' in prisons.

A new All Party Group for Offender Learning and Skills is to be launched during the autumn of 2005.

## Appendix 3 - Officer Recruitment and Training

#### Eligibility requirements

The recruitment literature specifies that applicants:

- must be between 18 and 57 at the time of appointment, and
- a British or Commonwealth citizen, a British Protected Person, and EU national or a national of Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein or Switzerland, free from immigration control and with indefinite leave to remain in the UK.
- must not be an undischarged bankrupt.
- should be physically fit, and 'if your vision requires correction it must meet Snellen 6/12 or better in each eye.' (There is a medical examination and a fitness test).
- must not be a member of any group or organisation that the Prison Service considers racist.
- are subject to a criminal record check.

There are no formal entry requirements other than these. The recruitment literature stresses that applicants are required to possess good communication and interpersonal skills.

#### Educational criteria

For a short period in the mid-nineties, an educational entry threshold for new officers of five, then two (maths and English level 2), passes at GCSE or equivalent was instituted. However, this was dropped a few years later in the face of staff shortages. There are now no formal educational entry criteria. Potential recruits have to take a short written test and are then assessed for their suitability by means of a job simulation assessment centre, where their personal communication skills are tested in a range of simulated situations.

#### Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT)

Initial training lasts for eight weeks. Its aim is to provide new officers with the *'core skills and knowledge they need to begin their Prison Service Careers.'* [93]

The formal training may be delivered at The Prison Service's training college at Newbold Revel, or around the country in local centres. It has also been delivered on site by the prisons themselves, where staff shortages have required swift action. The weekly delivery pattern is 1-3-1-3, with week one and five in the prison. A total of six

weeks is spent at the college or local centre.

**WEEK 1: ESTABLISHMENT INDUCTION WEEK** The compulsory sections of the POELT pre-course training – Key Security and Chaplaincy – plus the local orientation and/or induction programme.

**WEEKS 2, 3 AND 4: PSC NEWBOLD REVEL OR LOCAL TRAINING CENTRE**
Classroom-based learning, practical training and team building exercises. Formative assessment helps students to identify their progress and development needs. A written exam confirms learning at the end of this phase.

**WEEK 5: ESTABLISHMENT BASED WEEK**
Establishment based learning objectives, to include:

- Meeting their line manager and mentor.
- Visiting their work area, which should ideally be residential-based for their first year. Include participation in wing-based activities with the guidance of their mentor or experienced colleagues.
- Meeting healthcare staff to discuss local healthcare issues.
- Under supervision, taking part in rub down and strip searching.
- Using the radio under supervision.
- Meeting the Diversity Officer to discuss local roles and procedures.
- Under supervision, taking part in cell searching and accommodation fabric checks.
- Observing prisoner application procedures and general wing routines and procedures.
- Observing an adjudication.
- Observing outgoing and oncoming staff handover procedures.
- Locking and unlocking cell doors under supervision.
- Observing an external escort.

**WEEKS 6, 7 AND 8 – PSC NEWBOLD REVEL (OR LOCAL TRAINING CENTRE)**
Consolidate earlier learning and provide new skills and knowledge through realistic prison-based scenarios. Classroom work continues, with more practical assessment – including C & R. There is a second exam to pass prior to successful completion of the course. The graduation ceremony is held on Friday morning.

**Assessment during POELT**
'The exams are in Week 4 and Week 8. They cover the subject material from the preceding weeks. There are three sections of about 20 questions each in each exam.

- In Section One you must chose the correct answer from those given.
- In Section Two you must decide whether a statement is true or false.
- In Section Three you will be asked for short, factual answers recalled from your memory.

The information needed to answer the exam questions is in the student's reference material given out during the course.

Remember, we use an ongoing assessment process. So we will not fail a student who has difficulty in only one area, be it an exam, an assessed observation or difficulty in understanding a particular issue or subject.

However, if a student continually fails to meet the requirements of the course be it in terms of performance, conduct, attendance or commitment, then we will contact their home establishment with a recommendation as to their suitability to become a prison officer'.

### Working in Juvenile Prisons

There are more opportunities in general for staff working in juvenile prisons to undertake professional development and staff training.[94] There is now also a specific induction training course, known as the Juvenile Awareness Staff Programme (JASP).

## Appendix 4 - Interview Schedule

| Wings of Learning | Interview schedule |
|---|---|
| PRISON | |
| DATE | |
| INTERVIEWER | |
| NUMBER OF OFFICERS | |

- This schedule is for use by the two researchers, it is not intended for completion by individual prison officers. 'Probe' questions, for example, "If yes . . ." will be explored as appropriate.
- A preamble will be added which will introduce prison officers to the research project. The preamble will include such issues as confidentiality and the scope of what is meant by 'education' in the context of this research.
- We will explain that we are independent and we are there to listen to all views. We do not have preconceived ideas about the role of prison officers: it is for the group members to discuss their perceptions. Each view is important, not just one person's view or the view of a majority.

1. WARM UP: THE AIM OF THIS SESSION IS TO ENGAGE RESPONDENTS GENERALLY IN SOME OF THE ISSUES RELATING TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR PRISONERS BEFORE MOVING ONTO THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES AND INVOLVEMENT

a. Relevant quotes will be read out and prison officers will be asked for their comments both generally and in relation to their own prison/experience.

b. What education or training is available for prisoners at this prison?

c. Are you involved, either formally or informally at the moment?

*i. If yes, in what ways are you involved?*
- *To what extent do you enjoy this aspect of your work?*

*ii. If no, have you been involved in the past either at this or any other prison?*
- *Would you like to be involved in any way?*

*iii. Are other prison officers involved in any way?*

*iv. Can you think of an example of good practice involving prison officers?*

2. ORGANISATION OF FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR PRISONERS

a. In what ways are prison officers involved in the organisation of formal education and training for prisoners? For example:

*i. In processing applications?*

*ii. Liasing or working with the education department?*

*iii. Movement of prisoners to and from classes?*

*iv. Running courses?*

*v. Anything else?*

b. In relation to each of the above, would you like to see any changes?

*i. If yes, what and why?*

*ii. If no, is that because the current arrangements work well?*

3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM

a. Does any education or training take place in this prison outside of the classroom, for example cell work, peer education, distance learning, Open University, NVQ work around the estate?

*i. If yes, in what ways are prison officers involved?*
*ii. If not, do you have any suggestions about how this might be encouraged or organised, including how prison officers might be involved?*

b. Thinking about prisoners wishing to do cell work, how much and what in the way of books and equipment are they able to keep and use in their cells?

*i. In what ways does this impact on the prison regime?*
*ii. What do you think of the idea that prisoners should be allowed to keep more in their cell if it is important for their education or training?*

4. PURPOSE AND VALUE OF PRISONER EDUCATION

a. What in your view is the purpose of prisoner education?

b. Can you think of any examples of the impact it has had on individual prisoners known to you?

c. How important would you say prisoner education and training is perceived to be in this prison compared to other activities?

d. How fairly are the educational needs of all the prisoners treated?

e. What value do you think prison officers in this prison place on prisoner education and training?

*i. Can you think of any examples?*

f. What value do you place on prisoner education and training?

g. What do you think of the range of opportunities on offer at this prison?

*i. Would you like to see any changes?*
- *If yes, in what way and why?*
- *If not, is that because you think what's on offer is about right?*

5. PRISON OFFICERS AND EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR PRISONERS

a. To what extent do you think prison officers should be involved in encouraging and supporting prisoner education?

b. Do prison officers receive any training or support in relation to encouraging and supporting prisoner education?

*i. If yes, explore. Is it local to this prison or available across the whole estate?*
*ii. If not, do you have any suggestions as to what might be helpful, either locally or as part of a national training programme?*
*iii. Do you have any ideas that you would like to see developed?*

6. PRISON OFFICERS AND THEIR OWN EDUCATION AND TRAINING: CAN I ASK YOU ABOUT YOUR OWN EDUCATION AND TRAINING?

a. Since joining the Prison Service what opportunities for training or education have you had?

*i. Was anything about prisoner education and training included in your initial training?*

*ii. Would you like to see any changes?*

- *If yes, what and why?*
- *If no, is that because what's available is about right?*

b. Have you undertaken any other formal education or training for example in Further or Higher education?

i. If yes, what? Any professional qualifications?

c. What opportunities were offered when you were at school?

*i. Did you achieve O' levels/GCSEs?*

*ii. Did you achieve A' levels?*

d. If you think about your own educational experience now, what thoughts then come into your mind about prisoner education? (Prompt: was it different or the same? What implications can you draw from the comparison?)

7. IN CONCLUSION

a. If there were one thing you could change about the way education and training are delivered in prison, what would it be?

b. Is there anything else you would like to add?

c. Is there anything you wish to ask me?

Thank you for your time.

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## Appendix 6 - Research Team

Two research associates, Julia Braggins and Jenny Talbot, undertook the study on behalf of CCJS. They are co-authors of *Time to Learn,* published by the Prison Reform Trust in 2003, from which this study evolved. Both work as freelance researchers and consultants.

Julia is also a management trainer and consultant for the Centre for Strategy and Communication, and a trustee for Rainer and the Inside Out Trust. She was director of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, where she also edited *Criminal Justice Matters,* until 1998. Her previous experience includes work as a prison tutor, Open University tutor and counsellor, and coordinator of an adult and community education project for ex-offenders. As well as Time to Learn, with Jenny, she was also author of *Shared Responsibilities: Education for Prisoners at a Time of Change,* (NATFHE and the Associations of Colleges, 2001), and Inside Track (2004), the report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Further Education and Lifelong Learning's Inquiry into Prison Education.

Jenny's background is largely in the voluntary sector. Since going freelance in 2002 she has worked as interim Chief Executive for the Child Poverty Action Group, as a research associate for the Prison Reform Trust where she is currently undertaking action research on a prisoner volunteering pilot project, and as a researcher on behalf of the British Institute of Human Rights. She is currently vice chair of the Kent and Medway Strategic Health Authority and chairs the Equality and Diversity Monitoring Group. Until 2002 she was Chief Executive of the Institute for Citizenship and before that Regional Director and founder member of Common Purpose.

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[81] Braggins, J. Shared Responsibilities: education for prisoners at a time of change. NATFHE and the Association of Colleges. November 2001.

[82] Forum on Prisoner Education Briefing Paper no 16 2005, quoting Chris Barnham of OLSU.

[83] For more background information about the recent history, and a wealth of links and resources, see the Forum on Prisoner Education website at www.fpe.org.uk

[84] For the most part, they do not have responsibility for staff training. However we understand that some governing governors are giving HOLS this responsibility.

[85] One advisory group member comments that this is not happening across the board, although in the South West region, Education Managers have been replaced by Learning and Skills Coordinators.

[86] HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. Prisoners' Education Trust Lecture April 2005.

[87] Government Response to the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee Report – Prison Education, June 2005. Cm 6561

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