



# Learning and skills for offenders serving short custodial sentences

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The findings of this report derive from survey visits to 19 prisons and an analysis of the reports of 12 inspections. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the provision of learning and skills for offenders on short custodial sentences.

**Age group:** 18+

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**Published:** January 2009

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**Reference no:** 070233

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Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE  
T 08456 404040

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Reference no. 070233

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## Executive summary

The findings of this report derive from survey visits to a sample of 18 local prisons and one training prison and an analysis of inspection reports on the provision of learning and skills in prisons during the period July 2007 to April 2008. Each of the prisons visited in the survey sample had a high percentage of offenders on short custodial sentences. In this survey, short-term sentences are defined as custodial sentences requiring offenders to serve less than 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

Prison managers and learning and skills providers have responded well in developing strategies in individual institutions for short and relevant programmes that allow offenders to participate in learning and skills during their short stay in prison.

Effective strategies include approaches to learning that support the complex needs of short-term sentenced offenders. Prison learning and skills staff work well with offenders who often have a poor perception of education and training and a range of barriers to learning that includes inadequate literacy and numeracy skills. However, the wide range of prison health programmes available to offenders often compete with each other for the limited time offenders have available to participate in them. The construction of the prison day and the requirements of prison regimes often add to the pressure on the time available. In some cases this results in offenders' poor attendance and punctuality on learning and skills programmes.

Among the key factors that underpinned successful learning and skills provision for offenders on short custodial sentences in the prisons surveyed were the early and accurate identification of offenders' literacy and numeracy levels and related support needs; the ability of the prison and providers to work effectively together to meet the individual needs of offenders; and providers' knowledge of local employment opportunities and regional circumstances, particularly where prisons had a large local population. The introduction of literacy and numeracy sessions in workshops and the operational areas which support the daily functional working of every prison provided learners with opportunities to improve their skills in a real work environment.

The survey identified a number of areas for improvement. Initial assessment tools did not always provide accurate assessments of offenders' literacy and numeracy support needs. Too often offenders complete the assessments to satisfy prison targets rather than to take full account of their learning needs. Too many offenders continue to complete assessments several times, as they transfer between prisons.

Eleven of the 19 prisons visited in the survey had either a shortage of qualified information, advice and guidance staff or the delivery of this service to offenders was identified as an area for improvement. In the weaker prisons initial advice and guidance arrangements had yet to be fully developed and the service input remained insufficient to meet individual needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Ofsted has also published a companion to this survey entitled *Learning and skills for the longer serving offender* which evaluates provision for those serving four or more years.

In half the prisons visited individual learning plans were ineffective. In these prisons, short-term target-setting and the progress made by learners were not always shared with learners. There was no measurement of their progress or their personal and social skills development. Individual learning plans were more effective where learners were involved in setting their targets and measuring their progress and where the plans were standardised and used across all the learning and skills areas in the prison.

There is no single national system for recording offenders' progress and achievements in learning and skills. Contracting colleges and other providers did not systematically provide enough data to prison managers for analysis and target setting. Even though the timescales for collecting and interpreting data about learner progress are short for this category of offender, the recording of progress and achievement remain critical in monitoring learner success and evaluating the effectiveness of programmes.

In half the prisons visited during the survey there was a strong emphasis on improving offenders' employability skills. Prisons recognised the importance of establishing good communication with employers to gain their involvement and advice in agreeing opportunities for employment and training for offenders on their release. However, the planning and accountability for vocational provision within prisons remains unclear. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC)-contracted providers have a clear responsibility for education and an increasing amount of accredited vocational training. Vocational training opportunities offered by prisons arising from routine activities such as prison cleaning and kitchen work and for physical education are not always as well planned as they could be. The different definitions of 'vocational training' and what constitutes 'purposeful activity' in prisons are confusing to short-term serving offenders when making their choices about which activities to attend. Some personal and social development programmes are funded through Her Majesty's Prison Service and the National Offender Management Service. Prisons offered good provision through a range of agencies, including the voluntary sector, but many offenders serving short sentences were unable to complete these courses. There is a need for prisons to take a holistic view of all the educational, personal development and vocational provision available for offenders.

Arrangements for transferring offenders' records within and between prisons were generally poor. There is no formal mechanism for sharing good practice in provision for those serving short custodial sentences.

## Key findings

In the prisons surveyed, the following contributed to meeting the needs of offenders on short custodial sentences:

- a strategy to ensure that provision and support arrangements meet the specific needs of offenders serving short sentences
- relevant and intensive literacy and numeracy skills provision

- appropriate arrangements to measure learners' progress in personal development and social integration skills.

The survey identified the following aspects which needed further development:

- a nationally recognised learning and skills programme for those serving short-term sentences, to ensure opportunities for continued progress and progression when transferred between prisons and to employment on release
- the standard of the information, advice and guidance service provided to learners
- the use and accuracy of initial and diagnostic assessment in assessing offenders' literacy and numeracy and language support needs
- timely access to learning and skills programmes for those serving short sentences
- the implementation of individual learning plans specifically designed for those offenders serving short-term sentences
- the quality of teaching and training for education and vocational training, and opportunities to share good practice
- the development of effective external links to provide employment and further training opportunities on release
- analysis of relevant learning and skills data to provide accurate information on individual progress and achievement that learners can understand and take with them on release, to support employment and/or further training opportunities.

## Recommendations

- The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and the LSC should develop a national strategy to include employers to support the planned 'core curriculum' for learning and skills provision.
- The LSC and providers should develop systems to measure learners' progress and support progression opportunities on release or transfer between prisons.
- The LSC should improve literacy and numeracy and language support programmes that take account of the time limitations and capabilities of short-term serving offenders.
- The LSC should implement an appropriate information, advice and guidance service for those serving short custodial sentences.
- The LSC and providers should improve the quality and use of appropriate individual learning plans.
- Providers should improve the quality of teaching and training to engage and sustain the interest of all learners.
- Providers should implement initial assessments and diagnostic assessments that recognise individual learning and development needs quickly and accurately.

- Providers and prisons should develop pre-release support for skills for life, employment and training opportunities from commencement of sentence to release.
- Prisons should improve punctuality and attendance at learning and skills sessions to maximise learning opportunities.
- The prisons and providers with the Learning and Skills Improvement Service should develop a national framework for sharing good practice.

## Background to the survey

1. This survey evaluates learning and skills provision for offenders serving short custodial sentences of less than 12 months. Ofsted has also published a companion survey entitled *Learning and skills for the longer serving offender*, which evaluates provision for those serving sentences of four or more years. These two periods of duration of custodial sentence were selected for further investigation as prison inspections had identified particular challenges in providing an appropriate programme of learning and skills for offenders in each category.
2. *The offender's learning journey*, published by the Social Inclusion and Offenders Unit in 2004, describes the components of high-quality learning and skills service at all stages of a learner's journey during their sentence. These should include effective advice and guidance, individual learning plans and learning and development activities that are of the same standard as those available to learners in other settings. The publication places an emphasis on continuity of learning, including during transition between establishments and from custody to community settings. It also emphasises continuity and coherence in sharing information and transferring records to enable the whole system to provide effective support for offenders at all stages of their sentence.
3. Following live-running trials in three regions, the new Offender Learning and Skills Service was rolled out across all nine English regions on 31 July 2006. This saw the introduction of new contracts between the LSC and lead providers for the provision of learning and skills in prisons and probation areas. Most lead providers are colleges, with a few private training providers. The LSC remit covers the design and delivery of learning and skills provision provided by its contracted providers for offenders in England who are held in public sector prisons or who are under supervision in the community. The LSC has clear accountability for the planning and funding of much offender learning and for the delivery of learning outcomes. It has overall responsibility for managing the learning and skills provider contracts. This responsibility is expected to transfer to the Skills Funding Agency in 2010.
4. The function of the prison service is the security and protection of the public and the reduction of re-offending. Ensuring that the learning and skills provision for prisoners serving short custodial sentences works effectively in prisons is challenging because it depends on good partnership working between different

organisations. Each organisation has different core responsibilities and the speed and effectiveness of their response to the individual needs of offenders serving short custodial sentences is important in working to a shared aspiration to reduce re-offending.

5. In September 2007, the LSC published *Developing the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service: the prospectus*.<sup>2</sup> This described its proposals to develop and reform offender learning. In its response to the consultation of the prospectus the LSC published the document *Offender learning and skills: taking the next step* which states:

'The Prospectus derives its vision of the contribution which learning and skills can play in reducing re-offending from the thinking laid out in Reducing reoffending through skills and employment: next steps' (DfES 2006).<sup>3, 4</sup> The 'next steps' document sets out how to realise the vision in the Green Paper Reducing re-offending through skills and employment (2005).<sup>5</sup> The issues on which the consultation is based are extremely complex. They involve the planning, funding and delivery of a very broad curriculum offer to arguably one of the 'hardest to reach' groups of potential learners. In addition this task is to be achieved within the parameters of the criminal justice system and the outcome of learning and skills is not only the learning itself but a contribution to reducing re-offending.'

6. According to the LSC, upwards of 36% of the current public sector prison population is engaged in LSC-funded learning provision at any one time. There remains a rich source of learning and skills provision that is not funded by the LSC. This comprises a range of different prison-funded programmes including offending behaviour programmes, work skills developed in many prison workshops, most catering programmes and physical education programmes. Many voluntary organisations also fund their own programmes supported through private funding. Some providers also contract individually with prisons.
7. Offenders serving short sentences, defined as less than 12 months, comprise a minority proportion of the prison population, approximately 10%. According to *Population in custody February 2008*, a Ministry of Justice publication, the total adult population in prison in England and Wales was 69,985.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Developing the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service: the prospectus*, LSC, 2007;

<http://olass.lsc.gov.uk/NR/exeres/BBCE18C8-4D2A-4340-AEE4-0A0E9E2FAFCA.htm>

<sup>3</sup> *Offender learning and skills: taking the next step*, LSC, 2007; <http://olass.lsc.gov.uk/prospectus/>

<sup>4</sup> *Reducing re-offending through skills and employment: next steps*, DIUS, 2006; <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/offenderlearning/index.cfm>.

<sup>5</sup> *Reducing re-offending through skills and employment*, Green paper, 2005; <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/offenderlearning/index.cfm>

<sup>6</sup> *Population in custody February 2008*, Ministry of Justice, 2008; <http://www.justice.gov.uk/docs/population-in-custody-feb08.pdf>



The provision of learning and skills for offenders on short custodial sentences

## **Strategic planning of learning and skills for those serving short custodial sentences**

8. Sixteen of the 19 prisons visited during the survey clearly recognised the need to continue improvements in the planning of learning and skills provision in order to cater for the needs of short-term offenders. No formal national guidelines meet the needs of those serving short sentences, although the LSC prospectus proposes new learning and skills funding guidelines in relation to the amount of time offenders spend in a prison.
9. In these 16 prisons the focus was on maximising the number of appropriate qualifications offenders can gain during their sentence period. The transition into learning and skills provision following initial advice and guidance was rapid and a range of opportunities was available to gain appropriate accreditation for units of study and short programmes that met learners' individual needs. However, inspectors found that the different service agencies operating in the prisons worked in silos with little or no communication between them to ensure a coherent framework for work, learning and skills and personal development. Conflicting demands and a lack of coherence often resulted in poor attendance and punctuality in learning and skills programmes.
10. In nine of the prisons visited where information, advice and guidance was at least satisfactory, early engagement with offenders, quick identification of learning needs and appropriate entry into learning and skills activities took place. In 11 of the 19 prisons taking part in the survey significant developments were taking place to ensure that recognition could be gained for small steps of achievement, through short-term target-setting and unit or module accreditation. Many programmes were designed as roll-on-roll-off, to cater for the year-round nature of learning in prisons, and the fluctuating population. For example, a wing in one prison which was designated for those serving less than nine months had a range of opportunities available including advice and guidance and training to prepare for release and a modular learning and skills programme.
11. In six of the 20 prisons surveyed there was no formal learning and skills strategy for those serving short custodial sentences, or indeed for those with longer sentences. There was confusion about how to accommodate the different sentence lengths and there were examples of inappropriate provision for the sentences served. For example, one prison was designing National Vocational Qualification programmes when over 85% of that prison's population had an average prisoner stay of six to eight weeks. Some programmes identified as a priority by the prisons were not included in the contracted provision and prisons had to approach other providers to negotiate funding outside of the contracted providers.

## **Gaining timely access to learning and skills programmes**

12. The medical requirements of offenders, particularly those on detoxification programmes, vary widely. Some offenders require treatment which can take up the majority of the sentence they are serving. Depending on their health and ability to cope with prison activities, offenders' access to learning and skills programmes can be considerably delayed, leaving little time for the completion of any structured programme.
13. In the provision surveyed, the time taken to complete prison induction and assessment and to provide initial information, advice and guidance varied widely depending on the circumstances of the offender. Much of this work was slow to be completed. There is no standard programme and timescale for offenders entering prison to receive these necessary interventions prior to taking up learning and skills activities. In one prison the induction period took three weeks to complete before offenders were able to start learning and skills programmes.
14. Offenders may require a number of different interventions that include support to deal with drug and alcohol misuse, cognitive programmes to change attitude and behaviour, literacy and numeracy development, language support, employability skills development and resettlement programmes. These interventions are all designed to meet the immediate and diverse needs of the prison population in the short time available, but there is a lack of a structured framework to ensure that these requirements are delivered in a coherent way. As a consequence, opportunities for short-term prisoners to access programmes in learning and skills are often limited.
15. It is difficult for many prisons to provide all these necessary interventions in the time available. There is a pressing need to improve external links to ensure the continuation of these support activities in the community for offenders on their release. With the high turnover of the prison population and the average length of stay in some of the surveyed prisons being as low as 23 days, evidence suggests that those serving very short sentences may not have any of their learning and skills needs addressed. Waiting lists for learning and skills can be long, meaning that some offenders leave the prison before being able to begin an appropriate learning programme.

## **The learning and skills programmes available for those on short custodial sentences**

16. In 16 of the 19 prisons taking part in the survey many of the learning and skills activities allowed those serving short custodial sentences to achieve appropriate accreditation quickly. However, the range of vocational programmes varied between prisons and often the timescale to complete them was longer than the offender's sentence. The better prisons had developed either short, multi-skill programmes, or modular programmes, or they provided offenders with the opportunity to work towards unit accreditation of a National Vocational

Qualification. However, in most prisons the learning and skills programmes remained basic and offered few new and relevant skills. In general, the range of learning and skills provision has remained much the same as it was before 2005, despite the change in learning and skills contractors.

17. One of the largest areas of learning, information and communication technology has seen LSC investment in improving information technology facilities. Equipment now meets industry standards in many establishments. Some providers have been successful in devising alternative learning methods to compensate for the lack of internet access in most prisons. For example, in one prison, secure arrangements have been made to enable selected offenders to have information and communication technology access that allows them to download up-to-date reference and news items. Opportunities to complete short information and communication technology courses or gain unit accreditation help many short-term serving offenders to achieve recognised accreditation. This is particularly useful for those offenders who are transferred to other prisons to help them continue their studies and progress to higher levels.

### **Information, advice and guidance and individual learning plans**

18. When conducted well, the provision of information, advice and guidance encourages participation, helps identify individual needs and the possibilities for further job and career exploration. However, in 11 of the prisons participating in the survey there was a shortage of qualified information, advice and guidance staff and the quality of the service delivery was poor. The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service has done much to promote the importance of good information, advice and guidance and it has strongly encouraged better delivery to ensure the early identification of the needs of offenders both during their programme and as they near the end of their sentence. However, in these prisons the information, advice and guidance arrangements were not fully developed and the quality and quantity of this service remained insufficient.
19. In half the prisons visited, individual learning plans were not used sufficiently used to identify meaningful, challenging, and achievable targets for those offenders serving short custodial sentences. The plans were used to maintain records rather than involving learners in monitoring their own progress. In learning sessions, the links between the content of individual learning plans and the objectives for the session were often unclear. Although planning and practice in learning and skills sessions catered for some individual differences, most activity was the same for all learners for most of the time. Goal-setting on individual learning plans was weak and not sufficiently specific.
20. Often staff did not understand the potential use of these documents for data collection and analysis and to inform developments. Learners were not offered the opportunity to take their individual learning plans with them when they were released or transferred to another prison.

## Vocational programmes

21. Vocational training is satisfactory or better across prison establishments. Important areas such as catering and physical education remain the responsibility of the prison service and LSC-contracted providers are generally not involved in this work. Vocational training is often linked to services internal to the prison, such as cleaning and kitchen work. Unit accreditation is increasingly offered across prison vocational work programmes, with examples of good opportunities to achieve certificates for industry-relevant short programmes such as food hygiene, manual handling and first aid. These are particularly important for offenders serving short sentences. In 16 of the 19 prisons surveyed there was a wide range of vocationally linked programmes for short-term sentenced offenders. However, in three of the prisons surveyed offenders had no access to programmes to develop employability skills or gain individual unit accreditation.
22. Gym staff have introduced accreditation as a method of enhancing offenders' personal development and employment-related skills. Physical education staff in one prison had developed particularly effective links with local gyms to provide routes into employment. However, accreditation in this area is a more lengthy process and better suited to longer term serving offenders. Ofsted prison inspection reports comment on the impact of these programmes on raised levels of self-esteem and confidence acquired by those attending recreational physical education programmes. As with the vocational areas, literacy and numeracy tuition is becoming increasingly available within physical education programmes.

## Literacy, numeracy and language programmes

23. The provision of literacy, numeracy, and language programmes is a priority for many offenders before they are able to undertake further vocationally relevant learning and skills programmes. However, the assessment tools used do not always provide accurate initial assessments. In six of the prisons surveyed, there was insufficient diagnostic assessment for offenders serving less than six months. Too often offenders complete the assessments to satisfy prison targets rather than to take full account of their learning needs. Too many offenders continue to complete assessments several times, as they transfer between prisons.
24. Prison education departments provide discrete literacy and numeracy programmes in classrooms and outreach provision for individuals in their cells, and increasingly tuition in literacy and numeracy forms part of vocational training. Reading schemes, available and funded through charitable organisations, are often available to offenders. These programmes focus on improving reading skills and require offenders to work together in pairs. This can appeal to offenders who have previously rejected traditional learning methods and it provides learning opportunities in a non-threatening environment.

25. Where prisoners are identified as requiring literacy and/or numeracy support there is a good range of programmes to meet their needs. Recent Ofsted prison inspection reports have identified that in some instances fewer numbers of offenders now require pre-entry level literacy programmes with a greater proportion of offenders now accessing levels 1 and 2. Inspection evidence suggests that successful development of these essential skills improves prisoner confidence, self-esteem and the means to pursue further learning and skills programmes. Some literacy and numeracy sessions are taught one-to-one on the wings and in cells. While some of this is necessary for a few learners, in some cases it is found to be detrimental to the overall learning objective of personal development and social integration with their peers.
26. In literacy and numeracy group learning sessions, the links between the content of the individual learning plan and the objectives for the session are often unclear. Although teaching and learning sessions cater for some individual differences, most activities are the same for all learners for most of the time. Some offenders who successfully complete literacy and numeracy programmes experience difficulty in retaining these skills and applying them to different aspects of their lives.

## **Personal development programmes**

27. The prison service and voluntary organisations provide a good range of personal development programmes including personal health, drama therapy, smoking cessation, victim awareness, anger management, fathers inside, family man, parent craft, art therapy and budgeting. One prison offered support through a voluntary community workshop whose volunteers visit the prison to discuss transfer from prison to community, provide mentored support on release and develop links with a number of external agencies in order to provide further support on release. Good use is made of the prison chaplaincy in providing a range of short programmes and individual personal support.
28. Many of the programmes support offenders to develop their motivation, self-esteem and behaviour management skills in order to help them access learning and skills activities on release from prison and to gain employment and training opportunities. Offenders often find themselves placed at a considerable distance from their homes and families. This situation is exacerbated in the women's prisons, which are geographically dispersed. As a result of this the learning and skills opportunities in women's prisons have a national rather than local focus. In addition, many women enter prison with family ties and responsibilities and many women offenders are single parents. Prisons are seeking further funding to help plan and meet the needs of this population.

## **Management of learning**

29. The coordination of curriculum planning for short-stay offenders between prisons at local and national level is poor. There is no local or national planning of learning and skills programmes, and no account is taken of the needs of

those returning to the prison for alleged re-offending. There is no system for maintaining and transferring learners' records between prisons. This makes it difficult for learners to maintain continuity of learning, particularly when occupancy turnover and transfers in the prison estate are high and offenders are moving between establishments after short periods and part way through their learning programmes.

30. The use of data for planning and improving the provision was an area for improvement in half of the prisons surveyed. There is no national system to collect data about learning and skills provision for offenders and some contracted colleges and providers do not share sufficient data with learning and skills managers for analysis and target-setting. In many instances there has been an expectation of better information systems becoming available, and prisons and learning and skills contractors have waited too long before rectifying the problems that have developed. Heads of learning and skills are sourcing other systems to help with the problem, while others are developing their own systems, but there is a lack of consistency across the prison estate. The impact is felt across all the provision but is particularly pertinent to those serving short sentences where information is frequently required to be transferred within a short timescale, either elsewhere in the prison estate or on release.
31. Punctuality and attendance at learning and skills sessions are often poor. In the worst case learners were arriving up to 40 minutes late and leaving 10 minutes early from sessions. Learners who have only a short period of access to training because of their sentence length make limited progress when their learning time is curtailed in this way. They experience further disruption through visits they may receive during the day, regime working and the impact of latecomers arriving in the classes.
32. The provision of additional learning support is too variable. In prisons, learning support assistants are not always available and there is no automatic offer of support for those identified as having dyslexia or severe learning difficulties. In one prison in the survey, little assessment of the needs of those with learning difficulties took place, particularly those with dyslexia. The prison had no measures to assess the impact on offenders of additional support or the progress learners made. By contrast, the education contractor in another prison had secured additional funding through the European Social Fund to provide additional learning support in the classroom with a dedicated team of six tutors providing classroom assistance. In a third prison there was particular emphasis on additional learning support in the workshops through the delivery of literacy and numeracy provision by a large learning support team.
33. Communication and the exchange of information between learning and skills providers for offenders serving shorter sentences are poor. In almost every establishment surveyed aspects of good practice were identified. Some of the good practice, for example in approaches to effective compilation and use of individual learning plans, addresses an area for improvement identified in other

establishments. However, there is no formal method of sharing good practice across the prison estate.

## **Links with employers**

34. Links with employers in 13 of the prisons in the survey were satisfactory or better while the remainder were weak. In the better prisons links with local and national employers helped to establish employment and training opportunities on release. In the weaker prisons there was very little activity and contact with external organisations and little knowledge of how employers in the geographical area could help the prison.
35. Most senior prison managers recognise that links with employers need further development. Links established by individuals within prisons and particular companies are often good but more broadly established communications with local and national employers to develop an understanding of the benefits of employing and training ex-offenders are often limited. Some good progress has been made in attracting local and national industries to work with prisons. These are beginning to develop employment and related opportunities for offenders, mainly through voluntary organisations, local and national companies and private agencies. For example, one prison was working towards courses to meet local needs such as lift truck driving and courses related to the building industry.
36. One prison in the survey had developed good links with employers, supported by strong relationships between the prison, the information, advice and guidance provider and Jobcentre Plus. In another prison an employer engagement worker was proving successful at linking those offenders being released, into training rather than employment. However, in general, the learning and skills and employment support arrangements for short-term serving offenders released into the community are very limited.

## **Education providers' views**

37. Two regional college contracted providers noted an increase in turnover in those local prisons where they had responsibility for learning and skills delivery. In 2007, for example, in one establishment, 40 new prisoners arrived each month; in 2008 this had increased to 139 each month. Many of these offenders were serving shorter sentences. In examples where information, advice and guidance hours are taken from the core learning contract hours to support this increase in prisoner intake numbers, the number of contact learning hours is reduced. There is also little or no time to provide a review of progress for offenders on short sentences. A comprehensive information, advice and guidance process and the demands of the curriculum do not work well together in these circumstances.
38. In one local prison the annual turnover of enrolments was 3,000 with 90 offenders in learning and skills at any one time. The education contractor had introduced roll-on-roll-off courses to meet the needs of those offenders whose

average stay at the prison was four weeks. Learning and skills had undergone a major restructure to meet the needs of the population, operate within the limits of LSC priority areas and cope with the ageing and cramped accommodation.

39. Some education contractors have developed a learning and skills programme that provides useful and achievable qualifications for those staying for only a few days. However, evidence suggests that those serving short sentences are not as keen to engage with learning and skills and have little regard for the long-term benefit of gaining experience and qualifications.

### **A summary of key features to inform the future development of effective programmes for offenders serving short custodial sentences**

- a clear prison strategy for offenders on short-term sentences
- a suite of short qualifications appropriate to the length of sentence
- a short, focused induction and access to learning and skills where appropriate (health and medical needs may take precedence)
- knowledge of the history of prior learning and qualifications of offenders, and taking account of this when planning a programme of learning
- the provision of good information, advice and guidance at both ends of the sentence
- recognition of achievement on short one-day courses and opportunities to gain accreditation for individual units of qualifications
- a clear view of the offender's destination, either in movement to another prison or preparation for release
- regular monitoring of progress with learner involvement
- agreement between the offenders and staff on the programmes followed
- good links with the community and local employers
- good links between learning and skills programmes and the pre-release programmes.

### **Notes**

Between July and December 2007, Her Majesty's Inspectors visited 18 local prisons and one training prison to evaluate the range of provision offered to those offenders serving custodial sentences of less than 12 months. Each of the prisons visited in the survey sample had a high percentage of offenders on short custodial sentences. Inspectors interviewed a range of prison learning and skills staff including contracted and independent training providers responsible for aspects of the delivery of learning and skills provision in the prisons. In addition, inspection reports on the provision of learning and skills in prisons during the period July 2007–April 2008 were analysed. The prison learning and skills reports and prisons selected for the survey were



representative of the geographical distribution of prisons in England and included a private prison managed by external agencies.

## Further information

The companion to this survey, *Learning and skills for the longer serving offender*, 2009, is on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070249](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070249).

Inspection reports on the learning and skills provided in English prisons can be found in the inspection reports section of our website under adult learning: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare\\_providers/list](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/list).

Information about the Offender Learning and Skills Service can be found at: <http://olass.lsc.gov.uk/>.

*The offender's learning journey*, the Green Paper *Reducing re-offending through skills and employment*, 2005, and other strategic documents are available from: [www.dcsf.gov.uk/offenderlearning/index.cfm?flash=1](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/offenderlearning/index.cfm?flash=1).

The LSC's proposals to develop and reform offender learning, *Developing the offenders' learning and skill service: the prospectus*, 2007, are available from: <http://olass.lsc.gov.uk/prospectus/>.

In response to the consultation of the LSC's proposal to develop and reform offender learning, *Developing the offender's learning and skills service: the prospectus*, 2007, the LSC published *Offenders learning and skills: taking the next step* available at: <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-olasstakingfirststep-sept08.pdf>.

Inspection reports on all prisons in England are available from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons at: <http://inspectrates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprisons/>.

Inspection reports on probation services in England are available from her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation at: <http://inspectrates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation/>.

Information about the work of the Prisoners' Education Trust and the provision of distance learning programmes in prisons is available at: [www.offenderseducation.org.uk/](http://www.offenderseducation.org.uk/).

This site provides monthly statistical releases presenting tables on the population in custody. It also contains more detailed information on the make-up of the prison population by custody type, offence group, sentence length, age group and establishment; [www.justice.gov.uk/publications/populationincustody.htm](http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/populationincustody.htm)

## **Annex. Prisons participating in the survey**

HMP Altcourse  
HMP Belmarsh  
HMP Birmingham  
HMP Blakenhurst  
HMP Bristol  
HMP Brixton  
HMP Dorchester  
HMP Exeter  
HMP Feltham\*  
HMP Hull  
HMP Low Newton  
HMP Moorland (closed)  
HMP New Hall  
HMP Norwich  
HMP Nottingham  
HMP Preston  
HMP Shrewsbury  
HMP Styal\*  
HMP Wormwood Scrubs

\* Visit incorporated into planned inspection activity.