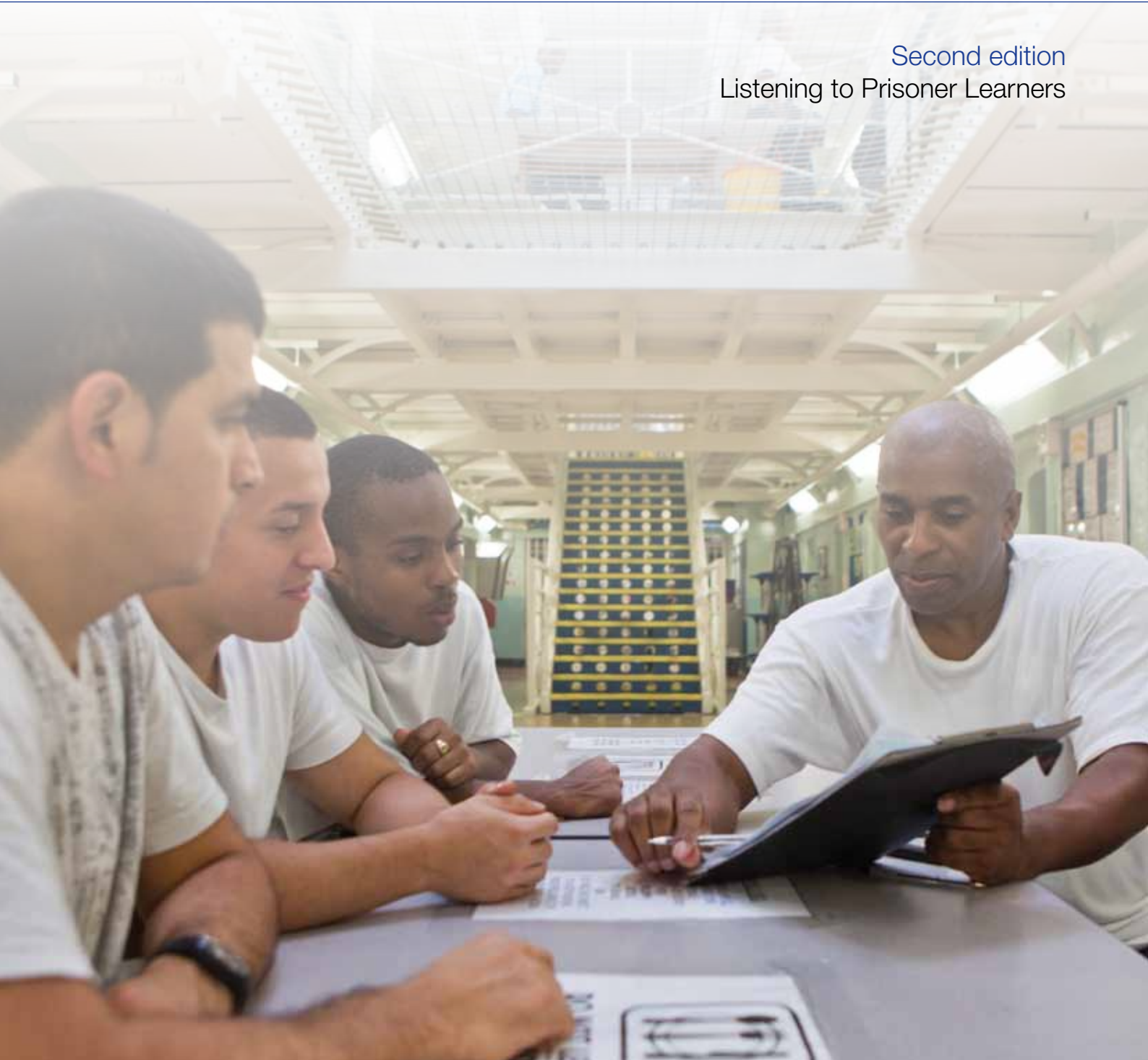




Prisoners  
Education  
Trust

# Brain Cells

Second edition  
Listening to Prisoner Learners



November 2012

Nina Champion, Prisoners Education Trust



# Prisoners Education TRUST

**Our vision is that every prisoner has the opportunity to benefit from education.**

## **Our beliefs**

- Education has the power to enrich, change and develop people throughout their lives.
- Offering prisoners access to education improves their self-esteem and enables them to choose a more constructive way of life – making it less likely that they will re-offend.

## **Our purpose**

- We support prisoners to engage in rehabilitation through learning. We do this by providing access to a broad range of distance learning opportunities and related services, to enable prisoners to lead more fulfilling lives and to contribute positively to society.
- We focus on those whose needs are not served by statutory prison education and who want to progress.
- We work to influence policy and practice so that education provision for prisoners becomes more effective; and we enable prisoner learner voice to be heard.

## CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	2
Foreword	3
Methodology	4
Profile of Respondents	5
Chapter One: Learner Voice	6
Chapter Two: Learning Needs	10
Chapter Three: Learning Support	17
Chapter Four: Why Learn?	26
Chapter Five: Who should pay?	30
Concluding Remarks	32
Appendix A: Copy of survey	33
References	35
Acknowledgements	37

“ Education changes the mindset, helps you to communicate and understand in detail. This gives clarity and makes you think about your future in an intellectual way. It stops you doing ridiculous things.

Prisoner survey respondent ”

# Executive Summary

## Chapter One: Learner Voice

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- Learner voice refers to ‘developing a culture and processes whereby learners are consulted and proactively engage with shaping their own educational experiences’<sup>1</sup>. This survey demonstrates that prisoners have something to say about their experiences of learning in prison and how it could be improved to better meet their needs. 40% of prisoners said they had not had an opportunity to feedback about their learning experience.
- Over a quarter of respondents want to be actively engaged through learner forums and to be trained in participation skills. Over half want to meet with policy makers directly.

## Chapter Two: Learning Needs

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- Nearly 80% of respondents had qualifications when they came into prison, including 45% with a GCSE. As a result, 41% felt the level of courses on offer in prison were poor.
- This report questions the official statistics about prisoners’ educational profiles. It makes the case for reviewing this data and providing more opportunities for higher level learning so prisoners, particularly those with longer sentences, can progress.
- 20% of respondents self reported difficulties with learning, however a third were unable to give their difficulties a specific label indicating a lack of screening and official diagnosis.
- This survey also reveals that BAME respondents achieved fewer qualifications in prison than white respondents across the full spectrum of qualifications.

## Chapter Three: Learning Support

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- Learning in the prison environment can be hard; success is more likely if prisoner learners have the support and facilities they need.
- Only 18% of respondents reported having contributed to their individual learning plan.
- 84% of respondents received support from prison education staff. 42% of respondents said they had received support from prison officers with their learning. Half had received learning support from other prisoners. 43% felt support for distance learning in their prison was poor.
- The survey responses indicate that increased access to computers and a wider range of books, materials and resources would help prisoners with their learning.

## Chapter Four: Why Learn?

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- Nearly 70% of prisoners indicate that improving their employability is a motivation and 73% of respondents think their learning has improved their chances of getting a job. However the survey indicates that the benefits of learning are much wider than this.
- 82% of respondents felt learning had increased their ‘ability and desire for learning’, therefore progression pathways are key to continue this momentum. This will also enable prisoners to reach levels of education that will improve their employment prospects.
- 65% of respondents said they wanted to continue learning after release. However the respondents saw funding, housing problems and lack of advice as barriers to continuing their education outside the gate. Over half of prisoners want to start their own business.

## Chapter Five: Who Should Pay?

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- The survey asked respondents for their thoughts about making contributions towards the cost of distance learning courses. 71% of respondents thought that prisoners should not have to pay anything as they do not earn enough, however 59% of respondents said they that they would take out a student loan for certain courses.

# Introduction

This report summarises the results of a survey prepared by Prisoners Education Trust and distributed in the November 2011 edition of the prison newspaper Inside Time. Given the self selecting nature of the survey, and that completing the survey required a reasonable level of literacy, we are aware that we have got the opinions of a selection of the prison population. Prisoners whose voices are less likely to be represented therefore include prisoners with poor literacy, who have learning difficulties or disabilities, those who see no relevance in education or expressing their views or who do not read Inside Time. Full details of the methodology and profile of respondents can be found on pages 4 and 5. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

The voices heard in this report are likely to be from prisoners committed to learning and to improving the conditions and facilities for learning. We thank them and hope their views are listened to by those with the power to influence change.

## Aims of the survey

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- **To better understand the experiences of prisoner learners by giving them a voice**

The survey aims to give prisoner learners a voice so readers can better understand their experiences of education and training in prison. The survey will help us to better understand respondents' learning achievements before entering custody and during their sentence. The survey also gives respondents a chance to tell us about barriers to learning, their motivations for learning, the support they have received and the benefits they have gained. It will help us to understand their aspirations for life after release and what they would like to see improved to help them to achieve those aspirations.

- **To track change over time and compare to other available data**

A similar survey was carried out by Prisoners Education Trust in the October 2008 edition of Inside Time. The first Brain Cells report was published in 2009<sup>1</sup> summarising the findings. One aim of the 2011 survey is to track differences in the responses since 2009. Although the 2011 survey was not an exact replica of the 2009 survey, where useful comparisons can be made, they have been highlighted. Where data collected can be usefully compared to data available from other sources this has also been referenced.

- **To affect change to better meet the needs of prisoner learners**

The nature of this survey is such that the results have helped prisoners to highlight areas where there are potential 'red flags' alerting us, and others involved in prisoner education, to issues which may need to be explored further. The open question, asking prisoners 'What would you most want to change and why?', was the only opportunity to ask them for their solutions. PET has therefore used its expertise and experience, as well as the responses to the open question, to make suggested recommendations. We have also set out specific actions we intend to take in the future to help address the concerns prisoners have raised in this survey. However we do not pretend to have all the answers. Therefore, you will notice that many of the recommendations involve PET inviting relevant stakeholders to meet to discuss the issue further to formulate possible solutions. We look forward to working in partnership with others, including prisoners themselves, to help find solutions to better meet the needs of learners in prison. One way we hope to do this is through the Prisoner Learning Alliance which PET have recently established. We will also continue to use our Learning Matters monthly enews to share good practice.

## Policy context

This report is being published at a time of significant change in prison education. OLASS (Offender Learning and Skills Service), the government funded service providing prisoners' education, is entering its fourth phase. The Review of Offender Learning Making Prisons Work: Skills for Rehabilitation<sup>2</sup> and its recommendations were published on 18 May 2011. The Review, along with Skills for Sustainable Growth<sup>3</sup> and Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing for Offenders<sup>4</sup>, will influence OLASS Phase 4 in a number of ways. This includes an emphasis on employability; making prisons places of 'hard work and industry'; meeting women prisoners specific needs; prisons working in clusters; increased payment by results models; the introduction of increased fees for FE and HE courses; student loans for prisoners and the increased use of technology such as the Virtual Campus.

This report therefore is a timely reminder of the importance of listening to prisoners' voices about their learning needs, aspirations and ideas to improve learning opportunities in prison, in order to improve rehabilitation and reduce reoffending.

**Nina Champion, Learning Matters Project Manager**  
**Prisoners Education Trust**

# Foreword

I applaud the Prisoners' Education Trust for this study, Brain Cells, which sheds new light on learning in prison from the prisoners' perspective. Understanding that perspective is a crucial part of changing the system.

This government is focussing on prison education more than ever before. Even with tight finances, we are committed to supporting education in prison as a vital part of breaking Britain's terrible record of reoffending. Ministerial attention, across government and at all levels from the Prime Minister downwards, is focussed on ensuring offenders emerge from prison better equipped to become part of law-abiding communities. We must work together effectively to ensure they are better able to reintegrate, and with the skills necessary to build useful and productive lives.



The offender learning strategy we launched last year gives prison Governors a new, decisive role in working with their learning provider, the Skills Funding Agency and others to determine the curriculum offer in their establishments. It is Governors who now take the lead in assessing the provider's performance. The analysis the Prisoners' Education Trust sets out in the following pages will certainly help Governors in delivering their new responsibilities.

Rehabilitation of offenders is a key mark of a civilised society, but rehabilitation must sit alongside punishment, upholding the values of law and order. If we can create a reformed prison education system that jettisons the errors of the past and stops offenders getting caught up in the revolving door of offending and imprisonment, society can only benefit.

Listening to the voice of the prisoner as learner can give a new, important insight on the effectiveness of our reform agenda. Brain Cells helps us do that.

**Matthew Hancock MP**  
**Minister for Skills**  
**Department for Business, Innovation and Skills**

# Methodology

This report summarises the results of a survey prepared by Prisoners Education Trust.

- The survey contained thirty questions and can be found in Appendix A of this report.
- Two copies of the survey were available in each copy of the November 2011 edition of Inside Time. 60,000 copies of Inside Time are distributed free of charge to all prisons and secure hospitals throughout the UK
- Prisoners could complete the survey and send it to Prisoners Education Trust free of charge using a freepost address.
- Completed surveys were then sent to research consultancy firm Billington Associates to collate the data. Prisoners Education Trust then used this data to write this report.

## Limitations:

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### 1. Self-selection

Completing the Inside Time survey was voluntary and prisoners self-selected. Those who do not read Inside Time are therefore less likely to have completed this survey unless brought to their attention by someone who had read it. Those who see no relevance in education or in expressing their views are least likely to have participated in this survey.

### 2. Availability of Inside Time in prisons

Although 60,000 copies of Inside Time are distributed free of charge to all prisons and secure hospitals throughout the UK, prisons may vary as to how they distribute copies around the prison establishment and therefore may impact the ease with which prisoners can access copies. For example if in some prisons copies are mainly to be found in the library or education departments, this would have an impact on the type of prisoner likely to access the survey and may therefore have been less accessible to prisoners not engaged in learning or who don't visit the library. Therefore those prisoners' experiences and opinions may be missing.

### 3. Survey completion

Completing the survey required a reasonable level of literacy so it is less likely that prisoners with poor literacy would have responded. Therefore these prisoners' views and opinions about prison education may therefore be missing.

Although most of the responses arrived individually, some did arrive in batches. In such cases, prisoners completing these surveys may have not been as open if they were aware a teacher was going to look at the responses before they were sent off. However this limitation is mitigated by the fact the surveys could be completed anonymously.

The introductory paragraph encouraged prisoners to assist others to help them complete the survey if they had difficulties. However the views of prisoners with learning difficulties or disabilities, who were unable to access support to complete this survey, may therefore be missing. If prisoners did help others to complete the survey this may have biased the answers towards the helper's views.

### 4. Incorrectly completed questions discarded

Some respondents had filled in their responses incorrectly, such as giving more than one answer, and therefore these responses had to be discarded. Therefore, as with most surveys, response rates to particular questions varied.

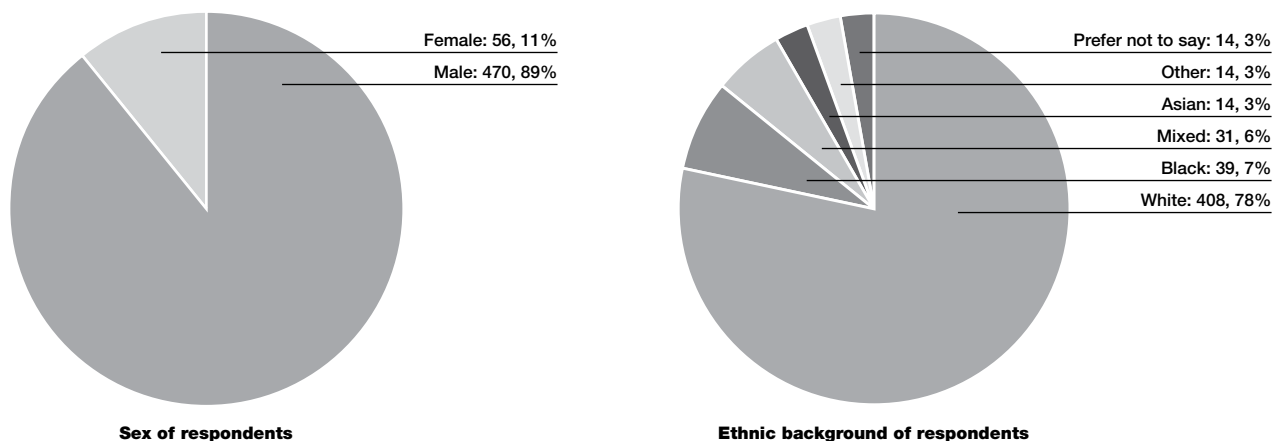
### 5. Misaligned question responses discarded

Unfortunately due to a printing error on Question 11 the response tick boxes did not line up accurately with the multiple choice answers. Therefore this question was discarded.

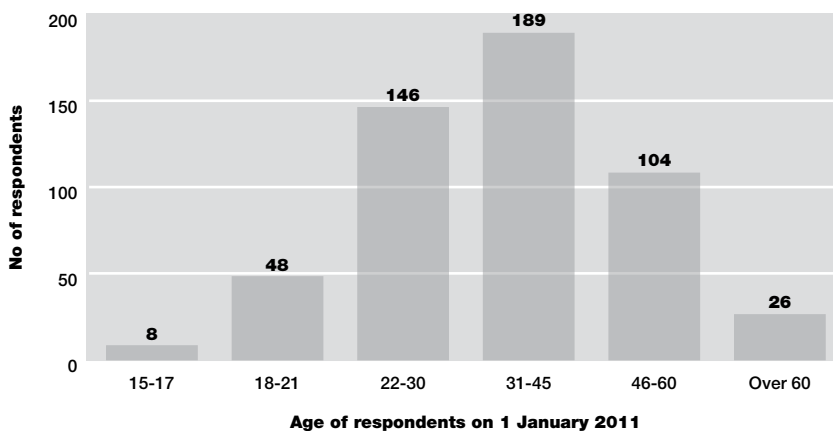
# Profile of Respondents

A record number of prisoners responded to the 2011 survey; 532 as compared to 468 in 2009, a rise of 12%. Responses also came from 81% of prisons in the UK, compared to 75% in 2009.

89% of respondents were male, 11% female. The proportion of females answering the survey is slightly higher than the proportion of women in the general prison population, which was 5% in 2011<sup>1</sup>. 19% of respondents to the survey identified themselves as being Black, Asian or from another minority ethnic background. This compares to approximately 25% of the whole prison population<sup>2</sup>.



10% of respondents were 21 years old or under. 28% were aged between 22-30, 36% were aged 31 to 45 years, 20% were aged between 46-60 years old and 5% were over 60. This is broadly comparable to the prison population in 2009<sup>3</sup>.



The majority of respondents (66%) had been in prison for two years or less. A significant number of longer term prisoners also responded as 18% had served between three to five years in prison and 15% had served over six years. Therefore a third of respondents had served over two years in prison. This compares to 45% of the general population<sup>4</sup> (based on data from June 2012) who are serving sentences of over four years, therefore serving two years or longer in prison.

## Open Question

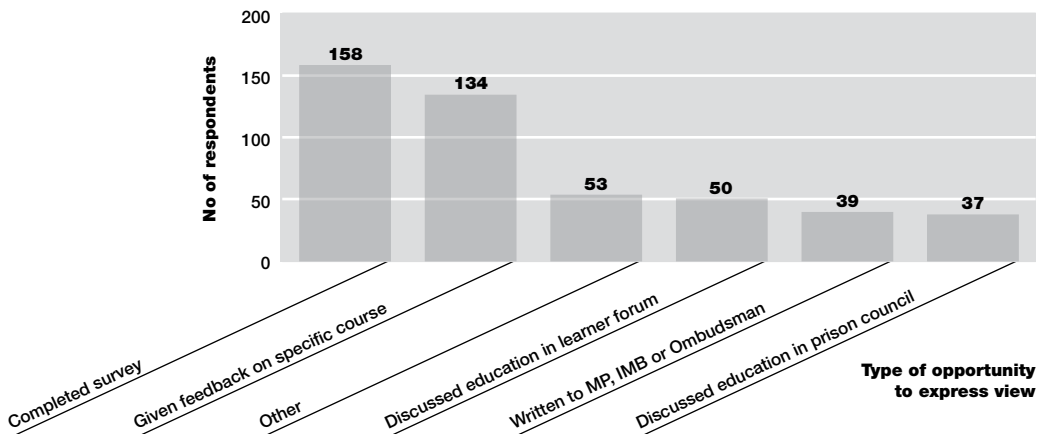
Throughout the report are quotes from respondents. These were in response to question 18 of the survey (See Appendix A). This was an open question which asked: 'If you could change one thing about education and learning in your prison, what would you most want to change and why?'

# Chapter 1: Learner Voice

## Prisoners experiences of 'Learner Voice'

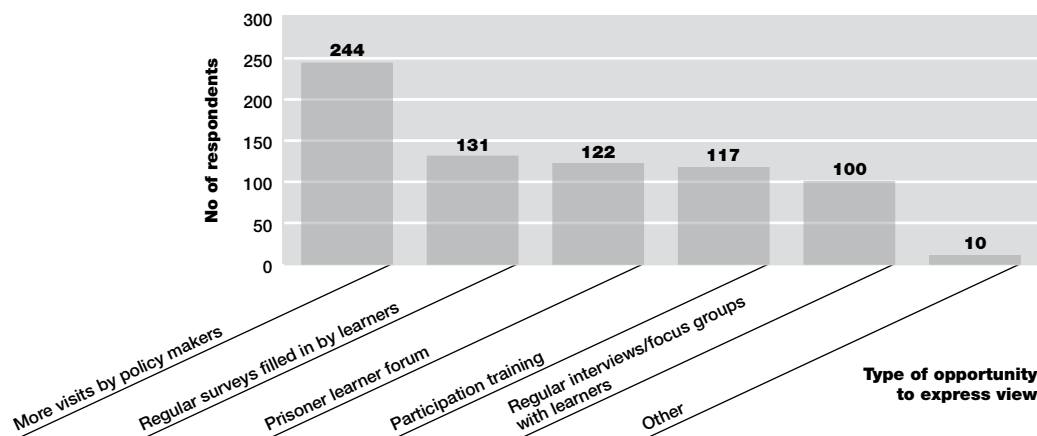
*Listen to the prisoners - we are pushed from pillar to post - not asked or listened to.*  
 Prisoner survey respondent

- Over half (60%) respondents had been given an opportunity to feedback about their learning experiences. However this means that a significant proportion (40%) had not been given this opportunity.



- Surveys were the most popular tool for collecting feedback from learners, with nearly a third of prisoners having completed a survey (29%). A quarter of respondents (25%) had given feedback at the end of a course. 9% had participated in a learner forum and 7% had discussed education in a prison council. 7% had written to their MP, IMB or Prison Ombudsman about education issues.

## How learners in prison would like their voices to be heard



- Over half of respondents (56%) wanted the chance to meet directly with policy makers.
- 28% wanted to take part in a learner forum.
- 27% wanted to receive training in participation skills to help them communicate their views better.

This shows that while respondents want the opportunity to engage in a more participatory way in shaping learning provision in prisons, they are also interested in the wider policy agenda and want to meet directly with policy makers. In addition over a quarter felt they would benefit from learning how to communicate their views better through participation skills training.

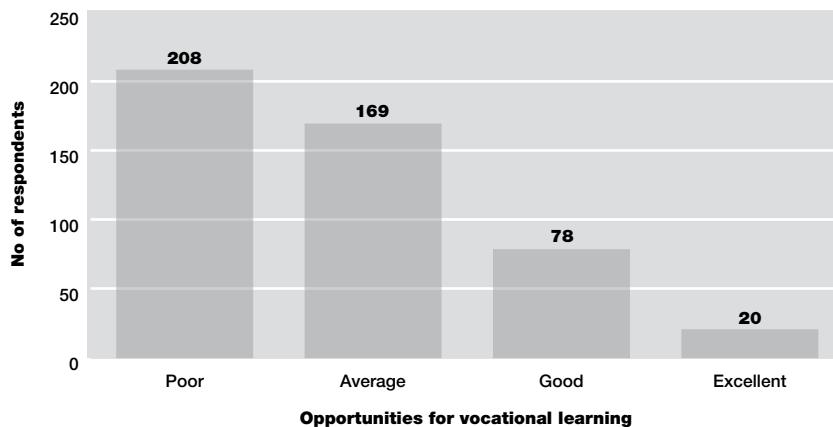
## Prisoner Inspection

Respondents were asked to rate six different aspects of education in their prison on a scale from poor to excellent. These included: opportunities for vocational learning, level of courses on offer, range of courses on offer, opportunities for informal learning, advice and guidance on course choice and opportunities / support for distance learning.



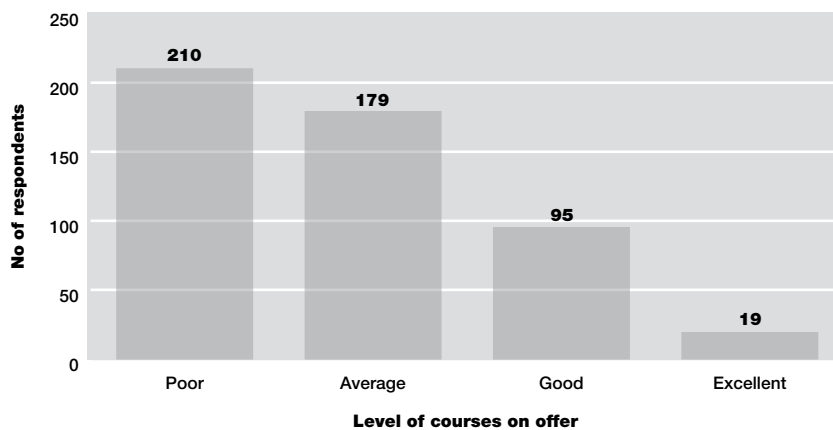
### Opportunities for vocational learning

43% of respondents felt opportunities for vocational learning were poor. 20% felt they were good or excellent.



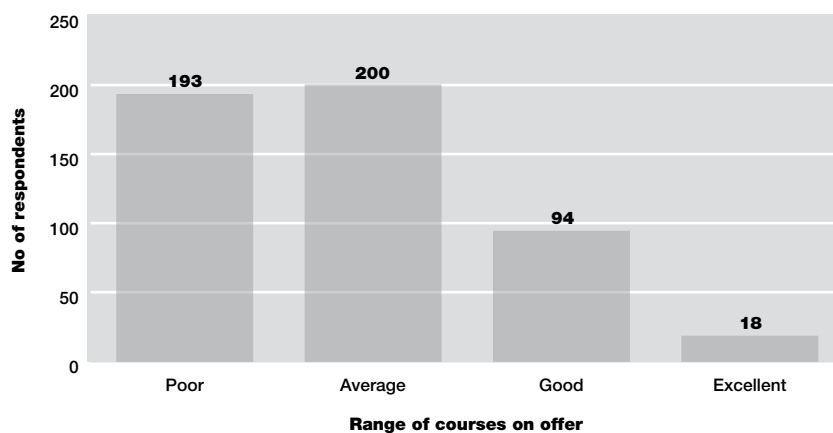
### Level of courses on offer

41% of respondents felt the level of courses on offer in prison were poor. 22% felt the range was good or excellent.



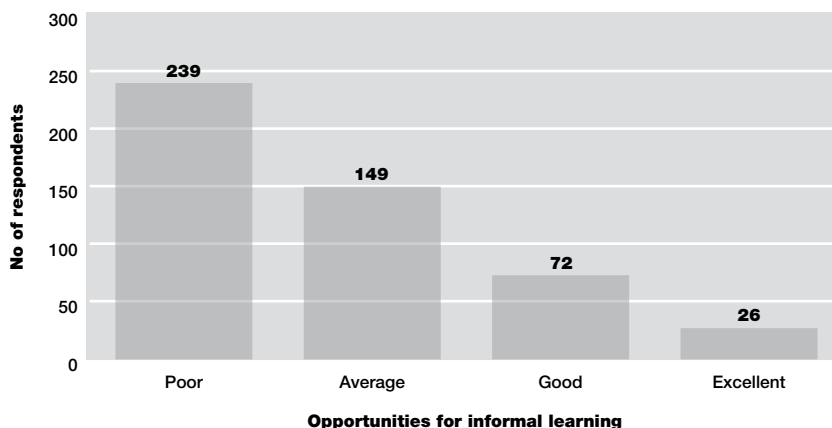
### Range of courses on offer

38% of respondents felt that the range of courses on offer in prison was poor. 22% felt they were good or excellent.



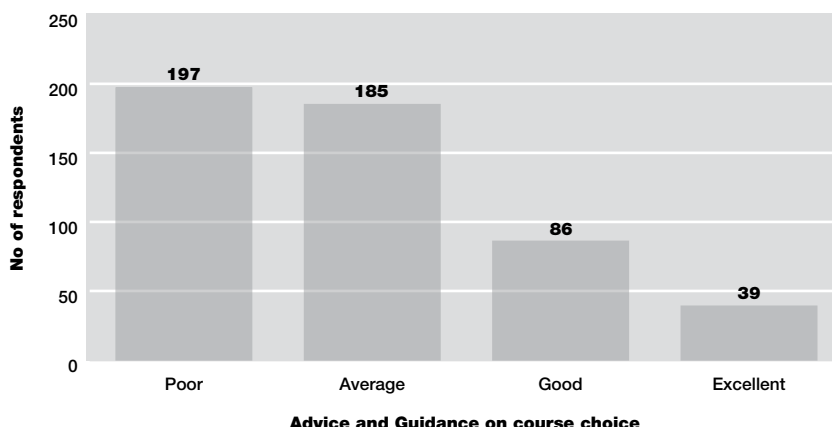
### Opportunities for informal learning

49% of respondents felt that opportunities for informal learning (e.g. reading groups, art, drama, family courses) in prison were poor. 20% felt they were good or excellent.



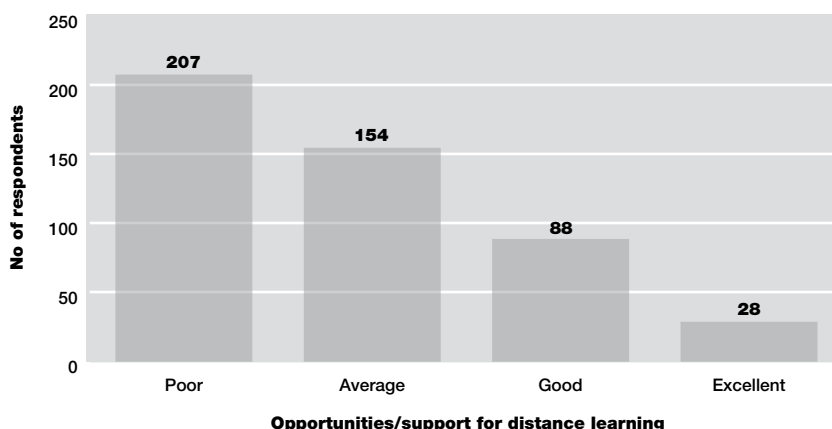
### Advice and Guidance on course choice

38% of respondents felt that advice and guidance on course choice was poor. 24% of respondents indicated that advice and guidance on which course to choose was good or excellent.



### Opportunities/support for distance learning

43% of respondents felt opportunities/support for distance learning was poor. 24% indicated opportunities and support were good or excellent.



These responses show that there are clearly pockets of good and excellent practice across the prison estate. For example when asked in the survey one thing they would change about education in their prison, some respondents did not want to change anything at all:

*Nothing, as this prison has 3 education areas and they are very good.*

*Happy with it how it is.*

*Nothing it is pretty good as it is.*

However given that 70% or more of respondents felt each of the 6 listed aspects of education and training were poor or average, this indicates that most respondents to this survey think that education and training provision and access to learning in prison could be improved. As one respondent desperately wrote:

*Some education, any education, please I so want to do education. Have put in so many apps I have lost count. Basically education in here is a joke.*

As mentioned in the methodology, it is likely that this survey was completed by prisoners who read Inside Time newspaper and have a good level of literacy. Therefore, although the findings do not reflect the whole prison population, it does indicate that there are some gaps in provision which need to be addressed if the learning needs of all prisoners are to be met.

## *Learner voice recommendations*

### **Recommendation 1: Learner Involvement Strategy**

Every prison should have a 'Learner Involvement Strategy' suitable to their population. Prisoners should be involved in the development of this strategy. It should include a range of learner voice activities, at different levels of the 'learner voice participation ladder'<sup>1</sup>, to ensure prisoners are consulted, involved and empowered to help shape their learning experiences. It should listen to the voices of prisoners not currently engaged in learning to establish the barriers to learning. It should also include a feedback mechanism so prisoners know the outcomes of their suggestions. There should also be provision for prisoners to be supported to articulate their opinions through participation skills training. Progress against this strategy should be inspected by Ofsted.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do;

- 1.1 Complete a report on learner voice activities in prisons which will include sharing good practice and evaluating different models of learner involvement in different types of establishments.
- 1.2 Invite key stakeholders to meet with us to discuss how we can work together to implement 'Learner Involvement Strategies' in prisons.
- 1.3 Build on and develop our own organisations strategy for incorporating learner voice into our service delivery and policy work.

### **Recommendation 2: Policy maker prison visits**

Policy makers should listen directly to prisoner learners by visiting prisons more frequently.

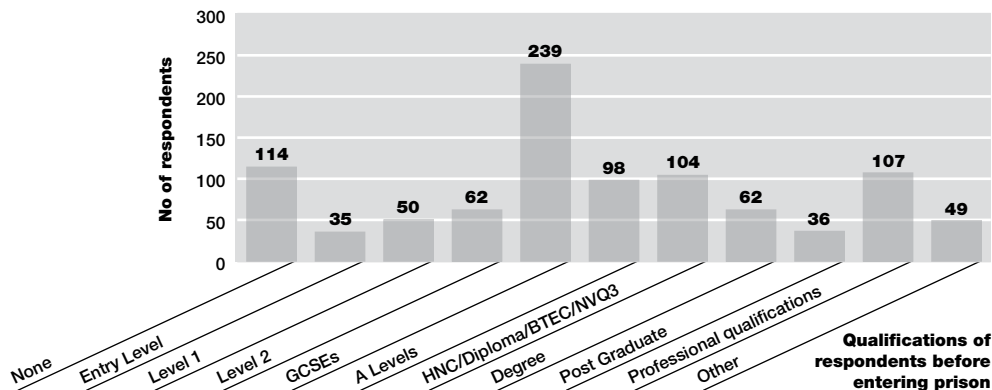
What Prisoners Education Trust will do;

- 2.1 Write to key policy makers to invite them on a prison visit so they can meet prisoner learners and hear their experiences first hand.

# Chapter 2: Learning Needs

## Educational profile of respondents

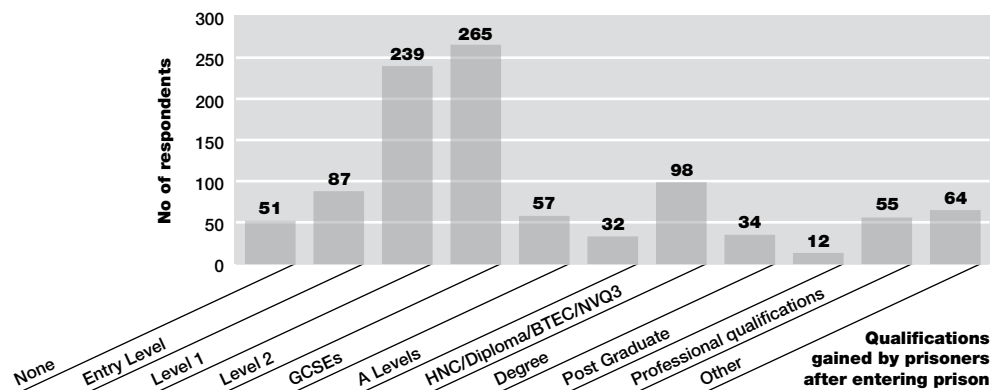
Nearly 80% of respondents had a qualification before entering prison. 45% had a GCSE (level 2) qualification, 18% had a A-level (level 3) qualification, 19% had an NVQ (level 3) and 11% had a degree (level 4) qualification.



21% of respondents said they had no qualifications before entering prison. This figure is lower than the 2009 Inside Time/ Brain Cells survey (36%)<sup>1</sup>. Of the 21% of respondents without qualifications before prison, 70% gained a qualification while in prison, which is excellent. However of the 18% of respondents who already had level three qualifications before going into prison, a third gained a level one qualification and 36% gained a level two, meaning they had gained qualifications at the same or lower level than they had previously attained. It must be noted that, for some prisoners, there may have been a valid reason for this as qualifications may have been gained many years before and so the prisoner may require a refresher or they may decide to pursue a different career path and so need to start from a lower level in a subject that is new to them. However, some respondents' comments in response to the open question suggest that some prisoners are being placed on lower level courses to help meet prison or education providers' operational targets, rather than being part of the prisoner's individual learning plan. As one prisoner commented:

*For prison education departments to listen to what prisoner wants to learn rather than force them into subjects which they have no interest. Prisons are too target driven, leading to alienation of prisoners.*

Of those with level three or above qualifications before coming into prison, 13% had progressed to degree level qualifications which indicates the high learning potential of some prisoners when given the opportunity, despite the practical difficulties studying at this level in prison, such as restricted access to resources such as journals, books, specialist tutor support, information technology and lack of internet-based online resources<sup>2</sup>.



### Prisoners' qualifications

Nearly 80% of the respondents to our survey had gained at least one qualification before coming to prison. Of those, nearly half had GCSEs, nearly one in five had A-levels, 19% had an NVQ level 3 and one in ten had a degree. Some of this difference may be due to the limitations of this self-reporting survey discussed in the methodology. However the educational profiles of the respondents were higher than the similar survey we carried out in 2009<sup>3</sup>, which had the same limitations. In the 2009 survey 64% had qualifications and 38% had GCSEs.

The Ministry of Justice Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) study 2012<sup>4</sup> suggests that 'nearly half those in prison (47%) have no qualifications at all'. However the same SPCR study also found that 'the proportion of the entire sample who reported having GCSE's A-C or equivalent was the same as the UK working age population – 22% in 2003<sup>5</sup>'. The data from the SPCR study is based on a sample which only includes prisoners sentenced to four years or less. 45% of the static prison population in June 2012 were serving sentences of four years or more<sup>6</sup>, so therefore their experiences were not reflected in this study. 33% of the respondents to the Prisoners Education Trust survey were serving sentences of four years or more. Therefore despite the methodological limitations, this survey provides a useful addition to our overall understanding of the educational abilities of the whole prison population, including longer sentenced prisoners, and highlights the need for more accurate and up-to-date official data on prisoners' qualification levels.

### Prisoners' literacy and numeracy levels

Official data from the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) Report in 2002 states that '48% of prisoners are at, or below, the level expected of an 11 year old in reading, 65% in numeracy and 82% in writing'<sup>7</sup>. We have a number of concerns about this statistic, detailed below, and therefore we question whether it should be relied on:

- The data about literacy and numeracy levels of prisoners is based on data over a decade old.
- The method was a one off capture of the number of all the Basic Skills Agency assessments done in prisons in the year 2001-02. As the assessments are carried out on reception, 97,000 tests were done, although the average static prison population that year was 64,000. Therefore we can conclude that number of prison receptions is biased towards short term, 'revolving door' prisoners. Therefore, this statistic does not seem to give an accurate overall picture of the educational profiles of the whole static prison population. Prisoners are only tested on entry to prison and therefore they did not test those already in prison on longer sentences who may be at higher levels.
- It is also possible that some assessments could have been repeats from prisoners entering the prison system several times in one year on short sentences or being recalled to prison.
- The SEU report equates a level one to the literacy level of an 11 year old. We are concerned that this may be a misinterpretation of educational equivalence levels, resulting in an underestimate of prisoners' basic skills. A recent report by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011)<sup>8</sup> on Skills for Life states level one is equivalent to GCSE grades D-G. This report also found that amongst the general population there has been improvements in literacy levels since 2003. Therefore this may have had a knock-on impact on literacy levels of those in prison.
- Assessments done on reception may also not be an accurate reflection of a prisoners ability, which is why some prisons now test a second time once a prisoner has 'settled in' to prison life. The 2002 Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) report itself admits the Basic Skills Assessment data is not completely accurate. They say:

*A number of those consulted have said that the assessment process fails to provide a rounded picture of a prisoner's skills and their learning needs. Others have said that the effect of arrival in prison, and the influence of drugs or alcohol withdrawal, often adversely affects results.*

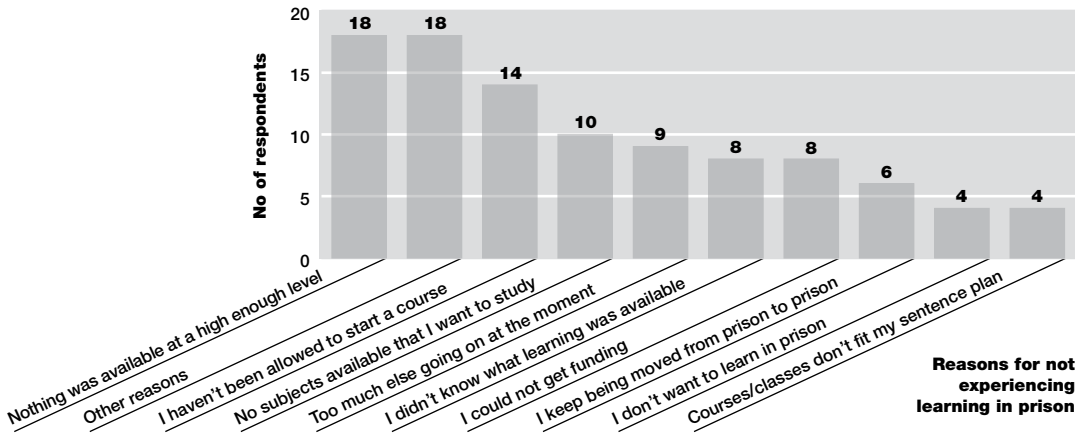
- In the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2004-05 report on prison education, MPs urged the government to undertake more research as they expressed concern that:

*The heavy concentration on basic skills qualifications is based on little more than a hunch.*

This more up to date research on literacy levels of prisoners has not yet been carried out. It is vital to understand the educational profile of prisoners if an appropriate education system is to be in place. In order to match provision to need, it is crucial that up to date and accurate data is collated and analysed to establish the educational profiles of the whole static prison population, in particular those already with basic skills and those on longer sentences.

**Needs of higher level learners and those serving longer sentences**

A lack of higher level courses was the top reason for respondents not engaging in learning in prison.



The survey also found that most qualifications gained by respondents in prison were at level one or level two and 41% of respondents felt the level of courses on offer were poor.

In response to the open question some prisoners explained why they wanted more access to higher level courses, for example one prisoner requested:

*A wider range of more advanced classes for long termers/lifers and those of higher than level 2 ability. This lack causes some prisoners to become bored easily and work through the Ed Department quickly leaving them with no focus.*

Other recent reports also raise concerns about the need for higher level provision in prisons.

- The House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2004-05 report on prison education commented that;<sup>10</sup>

*An over-emphasis on basic skills driven by key performance targets has narrowed the curriculum too far. Whilst aiming to meet the basic skills needs of prisoners, the Government must endeavour to broaden out the prisons education curriculum and increase flexibility of provision to meet the much wider range of educational needs that exists within the prison system.*

- The most recent Ofsted report in 2010/11<sup>11</sup> had

*Serious concerns' that 9 out of 24 (nearly 40%) of prisons failed to meet the needs and interests of learners. One 'key weakness' identified was the 'lack of provision at and above level two.*

- The most recent Annual HM Inspector of Prisons Report (2011/12)<sup>12</sup> also states that although some prisons offered qualifications up to level 3 and above:

*However, all too often, the range of courses met the needs of low entry learners and not enough was done for the more able.*

- A recent report by the Centre for Education in the Criminal Justice System (2012)<sup>13</sup> into prison education provision for under 25's in the London area found that:

***Most qualifications offered were from entry level to level 2, although most were at entry level or level 1, which impacted the progression that the learners could make' and 'examples of where there were good opportunities for longer-term prisoners to achieve qualifications up to level 3 and beyond were rare. Indeed there was evidence that some young people repeated courses because there were no higher level courses in particular areas.***

- Prisoners Education Trust have received email correspondence from the Skills Funding Agency (2012) to confirm that only 1% of education provision under OLASS 3 was at level 3.

Given that 45% of prisoners are serving a sentence of longer than four years they therefore have time to progress to higher levels with their learning throughout their sentence.

OLASS 4 has a focus on employability and sequencing of qualifications. The specification sets out plans to ensure basic skills will be the focus of the start of a prisoner's sentence, if this is an issue, however employability skills will be left until the 12 months prior to release<sup>14</sup>. For prisoners serving longer sentences, this could leave a hiatus in the middle where it could be interpreted that learning will not be a priority. This will not meet the needs of higher level learners or those with longer sentences who want to progress throughout their sentence.

Sequencing is vital, however a gap in learning would be detrimental to momentum and 12 months may not be sufficient time to gain all the skills and qualifications required for employment. For example, if a prisoner wanted to set up a business as a personal trainer they would need sufficient time to complete qualifications up to level three as well as the time needed to gain qualifications in business skills to enable them to effectively become self employed after release<sup>15</sup>. As well as sufficient time, prisoners also require stability of location to enable them to complete courses without being moved to another prison mid-way through which can disrupt their learning, particularly if the same course is not available in the prison they have been transferred to. If a prisoner must be moved then completing higher level qualifications by distance learning, divided into modules or through the Virtual Campus can help prisoners maintain continuity. They may also wish to take part in informal learning such as arts or mentoring to improve their soft skills. This should be progressed throughout the sentence rather than left to the final 12 months to put into action.

As the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee commented in their 2005 report on prison education<sup>16</sup>:

***The Committee has received a great deal of evidence to demonstrate basic skills are not enough to improve the employability of prisoners on their own.***

***By concentrating on basic skills the government is failing to recognise the significance of the low skill-low pay equilibrium that will not help many prisoners find a real alternative to crime on release.***

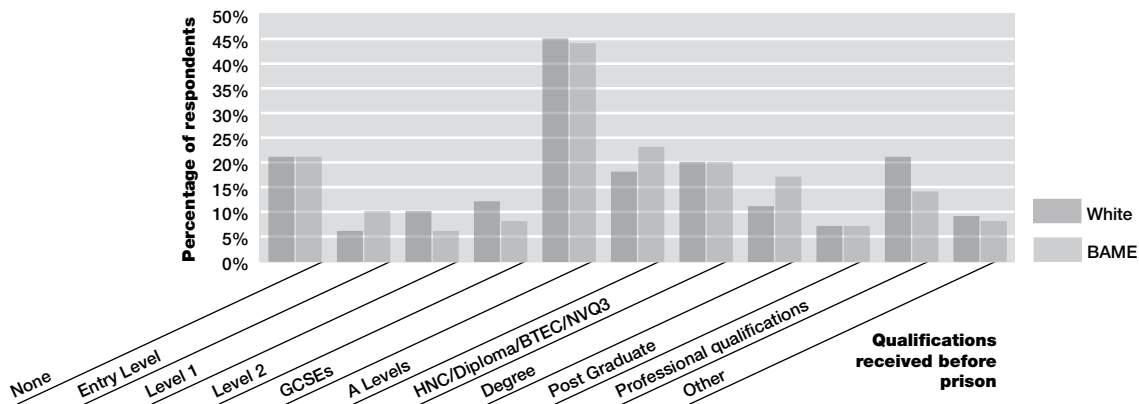
Higher level courses will require more guided learning hours. For example a level two accredited certificate in hospitality and catering can involve 108-180 guided learning hours, whereas a level three professional certificate in hospitality and catering can require up to 1200 guided learning hours. The OLASS 4 education contracts seem to focus on the number of accredited qualifications, rather than the level. We are concerned that this could result in more short courses at lower levels being offered. A recent report by the Centre for Education in the Criminal Justice System (2012)<sup>17</sup> found that:

***In some instances there appeared to be a change of emphasis in vocational training to providing qualifications that could be achieved quickly rather than offering learners a wider range and depth of qualifications.***

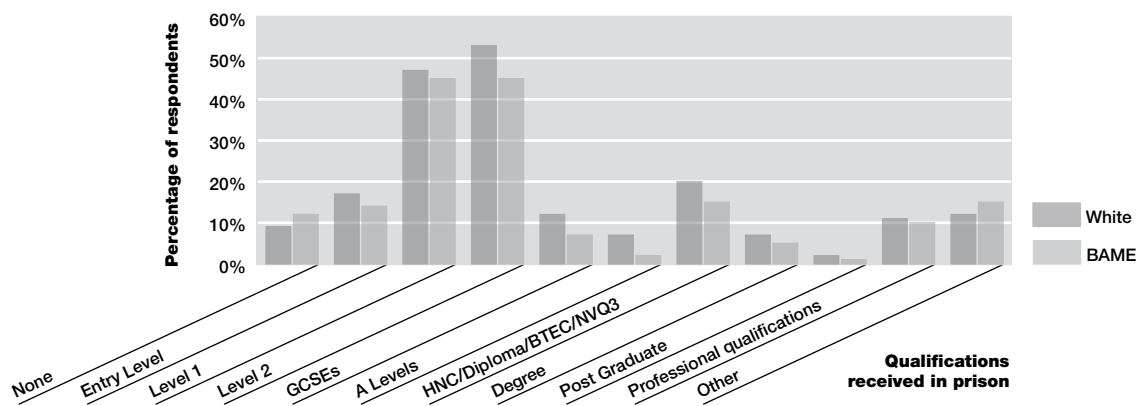
Although this would meet the needs of some prisoners, particularly those on short sentences or without basic skills, it may not meet the needs of those on longer sentences or who already have basic skills. Dividing higher level qualifications into shorter modules, supporting distance learning or making use of the Virtual Campus could be a solution. In order to meet the needs of higher level learners and longer sentenced prisoners, appropriate establishments should be able to offer higher level courses and not be penalised under the contracts.

### Needs of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) prisoners

BAME respondents to the survey were more likely to have A-levels, degrees or post-graduate qualifications than white respondents. This supports the Ministry of Justice SPCR research (2012)<sup>18</sup> which found that prisoners from BAME backgrounds were more likely to have a qualification than prisoners from non-BAME backgrounds (64% compared with 51%).



However once in prison, our survey reveals that BAME respondents were less likely than white prisoners to achieve qualifications during their sentence, across the whole spectrum of qualifications:



#### Response to data from Anthony Salla, Senior Policy Officer, Race on the Agenda

“We know that BAME groups are disproportionately represented throughout the criminal justice system and welcome the Prisoners Education Trust’s Report that adds to our understanding. The delivery of public services can be problematic for all ethnic groups. However, ROTA research has shown that for BAME communities this can be specific and/or compounded by other issues. Hence, the specific and dissimilar experiences which occur within, and are also connected to, the criminal justice system, can be attributed to the culture in the structure of services. A consequence of this is widening racial inequalities. From the data presented by the Prisoners Education Trust, it is clear that BAME groups, whilst more likely to have higher qualifications upon entering prison, are proportionally less likely to gain qualifications when in prison than their white counterparts across the spectrum of qualifications. It is not clear whether this is attributed to the experience in the delivery of services, or a failure of the services to actually engage the individual in the first instance. However, the overall regression in the advances of some BAME groups in educational attainment whilst in prison is a concerning and important finding.

Prison remains a life changing opportunity, albeit the last in the line, and perhaps the most costly of state interventions. It is all the more important therefore that people who require support to make changes in their life are not disadvantaged or discriminated against. The apparent inequality in outcomes, highlighted in the data, indicates there has been a failure to advance equality of opportunity, and thus a potential contravention of a public institution to comply with Equality Act. It is accepted that in order to add more interpretation, greater sophistication is required in the collection of data of those carrying out courses and the outcomes achieved. However, the finding from Prisoners Education Trust Report throws light on the distinct challenges faced by BAME prisoners. It is such unique challenges which have yet to be adequately



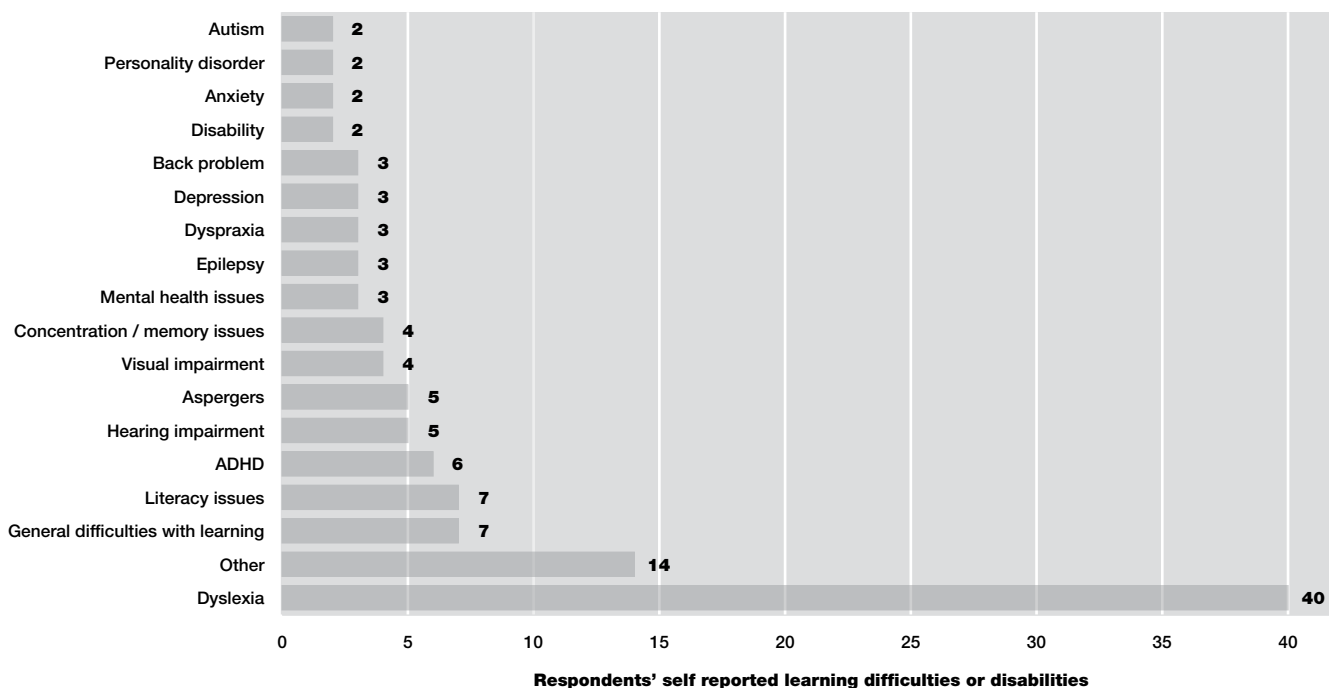
*acknowledged by statutory agencies, let alone solved by them. For this reason, this report is welcomed alongside its wider aims to redress some of this imbalance. We hope this report will mark a step forward by placing this problem on the policy table, for the benefit of BAME groups and wider society”.*

### Needs of prisoners with learning difficulties or disabilities

Respondents were asked whether they considered themselves to have a learning difficulty or disability. 20% of respondents self identified having a learning difficulty or disability, compared to an estimated 20-30% of prisoners in the general prison population<sup>19</sup>. Of these 20% who self identified, 87% gave further details about their learning difficulty. Therefore 13% did not or could not put a label to the difficulty they had. Furthermore 6% of those respondents with a learning difficulty described themselves as having ‘general learning difficulties’, 13% said ‘other’ and 4% said they had ‘concentration/memory issues’. Therefore over a third (36%) of those who self reported a learning disability or difficulty did not have a specific diagnosis.

10% of respondents reported that they had a ‘Specific Learning Difficulty’ (Dyslexia, Aspergers, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia or ADHD). The most common learning difficulty mentioned was dyslexia (41%), however this is the most commonly screened for learning difficulty in prison and in the community.

All those reporting ADHD were under 30 and more than half reporting dyslexia were under 30. This may be due to increased levels of screening in schools in recent years, in particular dyslexia.



As this was an open question, the 20% of respondents who self identified as having a learning difficulty or disability made reference to a wide range of difficulties they had with learning. Of particular interest were those who mentioned hearing problems, visual impairment, epilepsy and back problems or other physical disability. This raises the issue about whether sufficient measures are being taken to enable these prisoners to take part in learning activities. For example, those with back problems may find it uncomfortable to sit for long periods and may require equipment such as back rests. Given that people over 60 are the fastest growing age group in the prison estate<sup>20</sup>, this barrier to learning may well be an area that needs some attention, especially as it has been found that some older prisoners will have a physical health status of ten years older than their contemporaries in the community. This is also important given the finding of the Prison Reform Trust<sup>21</sup> that only one in five prisons reported that an occupational therapist came into the prison to provide daily living aids.

There are some examples of good practice in this area in certain prisons, such as HMP Shrewsbury who provide British Sign Language training. There are also good examples of prisoners helping find solutions. For example in one YOI prisoners successfully requested menus and information to be printed on different colour paper to help dyslexic prisoners.

### Women Prisoners

- Women respondents to the survey were less likely to have received encouragement from someone to learn than male respondents.

- Women respondents were more motivated than male respondents to learn in order to improve their employment prospects and gain qualifications.
- Women respondents were particularly motivated by the challenge of learning and to make their families proud.

### **Prisoners under 30**

- Respondents under 30 were more motivated to learn in order to improve employability than older prisoners.

Given that people over 60 are the fastest growing age group in the prison estate, the difference in employment motivation could partly be due to prisoners who will be of retirement age when released.

## *Learning needs recommendations*

### **Recommendation 3: Accurate and current data on prisoner educational profiles and capabilities**

The government should use the start of OLASS 4 as a timely opportunity to collect, collate and analyse up-to-date data on the educational profile of prisoners including their qualifications and basic skill levels, including assessing basic skills over level 2 where appropriate to get a more accurate picture. This data should reflect the whole prison population, not just short sentenced prisoners.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 3.1 Invite key stakeholders to discuss the need for better data on education profiles and how processes can be improved to co-ordinate collection, collation and analysis for more accurate and up-to-date education profile data.

### **Recommendation 4: Wider range of provision and more opportunities for progression**

The data collated and analysed on educational profiles (see recommendation 3) should then be used to establish the appropriate spectrum of further education qualifications available in the prison learning offer, including more qualifications at higher levels. This will enable prisoners to progress and gain qualifications appropriate to their ability and employment aspirations. The plans in OLASS 4 to prevent prisoners from taking qualifications at or below levels they have already achieved should be carefully monitored and other options appropriate to their needs should be offered as an alternative. The use of distance learning, modules and e-learning should be explored to enable prisons to offer wider provision and enable progression. Learning opportunities should be available to prisoners throughout their sentence, not just at the beginning and end of a sentence. Time in prison should be used to effectively progress to the highest level prisoners are capable of achieving and to build a full complement of hard and soft skills through a range of formal and informal learning opportunities. The learning needs of longer sentenced prisoners and those on indeterminate sentences should be explored further.

- 4.1 Invite key stakeholders to discuss how the prison learning offer will reflect the educational profiles and capabilities established from the updated statistics.
- 4.2 Work with key stakeholders to find ways to increase number of level two and above qualifications available in prisons, including through distance learning, modules and e-learning.
- 4.3 Discuss with key stakeholders how to provide more opportunities for higher level learning in prison to better meet the needs of longer sentenced prisoners and those who have basic skills.

### **Recommendation 5: BAME prisoner achievements**

Research should be commissioned to explore this issue further and make recommendations for actions that can be taken to remove barriers to BAME prisoners from achieving educationally. Within prisons diversity governors and prisoner diversity reps should also be encouraged to think of solutions for their own prisons.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do;

- 5.1 We will undertake to apply for funding to carry out further research into this area.
- 5.2 We will communicate with staff and prisoners responsible for diversity through Inside Time and other means to raise awareness of these findings and encourage them to take action within their own prison.
- 5.3 We will review our own procedures for collecting and analysing ethnic monitoring data from applicants for the Trust's services and explore other measures to ensure the Trust promotes diversity.

**Recommendation 6: Screening and support for learning difficulties**

There should be increased screening for all Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia, Aspergers, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia and ADHD) and especially for prisoners over 30 who may have missed screening opportunities at school. Use of technology to support screening should be explored. Non-specific difficulties with learning, including mental and physical issues, should also be discussed at induction, included on individual learning plans and reasonable adjustments should be made to limit the impact of these on accessing learning.

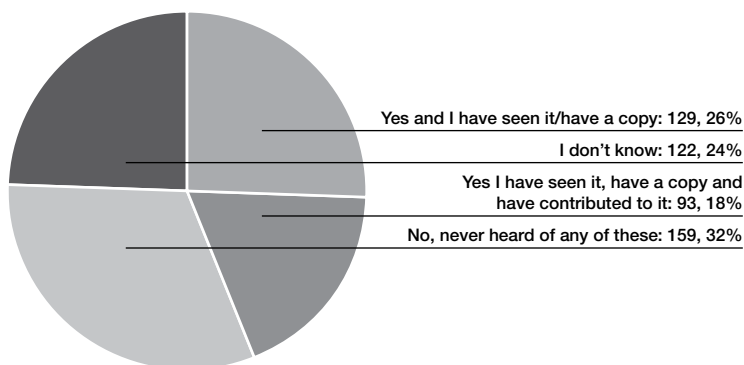
What Prisoners Education Trust will do;

- 6.1 We will meet key stakeholders to discuss this recommendation and how it could be implemented in practice.
- 6.2 We will complete partnership work with the Prison Reform Trust on digital inclusion of prisoners, in particular exploring how technology in prisons can be used to increase screening and better support prisoners with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- 6.3 We will review the Trust’s training needs in relation to learning difficulties and disabilities to inform our service provision.

## Chapter 3: Learning Support

### Individual Learning Plans

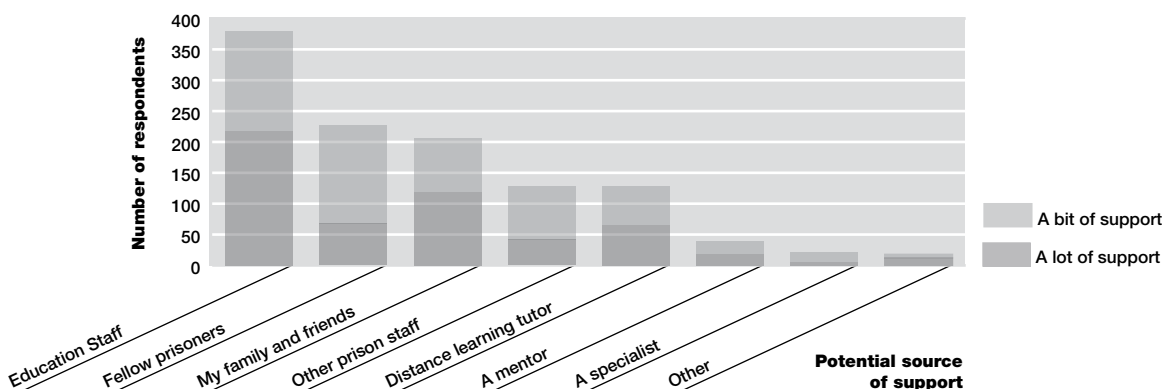
56% of respondents did not have or did not know if they had an Individual Learning Plan, compared to 58% in the 2009 Brain Cells report<sup>1</sup>. Only 18% of respondents reported having contributed to a learning plan. This indicates only a slight improvement since 2009.



**Respondents' Contribution to Individual Learning Plans**

Contributing to Individual Learning Plans help develop prisoners' responsibility for their learning journey, enables them to have a focus for progression and to establish what support they need to achieve their goals. However, as prison learning can happen in a variety of areas within the prison and with a variety of agencies, it can be a challenge to enable all parties, including the prisoner, to contribute to a single learning plan. Technology such as the Virtual Campus, should be utilised where possible to make contributing to such documents easier.

### Sources of support



### Education Staff

Most support came from education staff (84%). However for 37% of respondents this was ‘a bit of support’ rather than ‘a lot of support’.

We know many teaching staff and librarians go ‘above and beyond’ to assist prisoner learners<sup>2</sup>, however in response to the open question some of the respondents commented that they felt support from tutors could be improved. Some comments from respondents included:

*More support from teachers & not just them dumping a book on your lap & expecting you to understand it.*

*Making learning more fun.*

*More consistency with teachers being here and back up ones when they are on leave.*

*Tutors paying more attention and not just looking to get as many people passed through their courses to make them look better.*

### Prison Staff

42% of respondents said that they had received some learning support from prison staff e.g. prison officers. This appears to be an improvement from the 2009 survey<sup>3</sup> where only 18% of respondents described prison officers as ‘supportive’. However there is more room for improvement as only 13% of respondents reported getting ‘a lot of support’ from prison officers with their learning. This is highlighted by responses to the open question which included:

*More support from officers, with less emphasis on security and bang-up and more emphasis on rehabilitation.*

*More cooperation between wing officers (who have a negative view of education) and education staff.*

*More encouragement from prison staff.*

### Peer Support

Prisoners want to help others. Half of all respondents had received learning support from other prisoners. This has more than doubled since 2009<sup>4</sup>. This may be due to the expansion of peer mentoring schemes such as Toe by Toe literacy mentoring run by The Shannon Trust which now operates in 154 prisons across the UK.

Only 21% of respondents had received ‘a lot of support’ from fellow prisoners. This indicates that although prisoners are willing to help, more training and support for prisoners to help others with their learning could improve the impact. Helping others also develops valuable soft skills such as communication, patience, empathy and can boost confidence and self esteem. This survey reveals the second most popular benefit of learning was an increased ability to help others and 44% of respondents want to help others through voluntary work after release. In her recent book, Hughes discusses how this can contribute to desistance through finding a ‘social purpose’ and ‘belief in self-efficacy’<sup>5</sup>. OLASS 4 also promotes the use of peer mentoring.

### Support from family and friends

45% of prisoners who responded to the survey said they had been supported by their family and friends.

### Support with distance learning

43% of respondents felt that opportunities and support for distance learning in their prison were poor or average. When asked what they would change about education in their prison, some prisoners highlighted support with distance learning support as their top priority:

*To have more information about courses (Distance Learning) and what courses I am likely to be accepted for before I apply.*

*A dedicated, competent, full-time distance learning person to be employed by the prison.*

*There are no Distance Learner Coordinators and I cannot therefore study anything other than Basic Skills.*



Other prisoners felt that their prison actively discouraged distance learning:



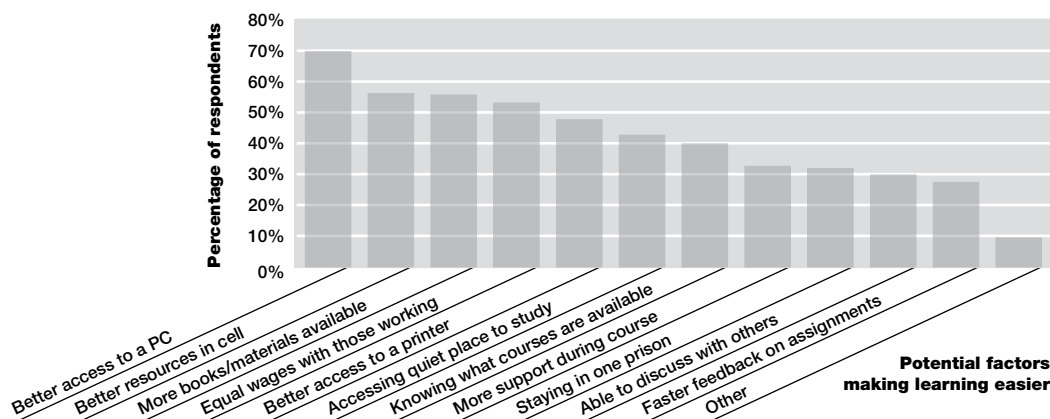
*In my experience the prison does not like you to attempt to get onto any distance learning courses or in-cell education. Anything that is not offered as standard in the education dept is a real fight. My last OU course I had to write to an MP to get it. Now I'm struggling to get another.*

*All new O.U. course applications were rejected due to refusal of Governor to endorse them, regardless of Learning Centre Managers recommendations.*



**What would make learning easier?**

Respondents were asked to indicate which potential factors would have made their learning easier. Respondents could tick multiple answers.



**Computer access**

70% of respondents said better access to a PC would help them learn. Some prisoners indicated that they would find it useful to have access to a PC in their cell given their frustrations with getting access to a PC during the core day:



*I'd like a basic laptop in my cell so I can type up my OU assignment. We can have playstations, why not something for people on courses requiring computers.*

*Laptop loan to do work evenings and weekends if I feel like it and in the long term I would pass exams quicker, thus freeing place for someone else.*



**Books and materials**

Over half of respondents (56%) said more books/materials available would help them learn.



*Better access to much needed resources relevant to the particular course!*

*Availability of / access to education and materials outside of office hours e.g. evenings and weekends.*



### In cell resources

Over half of respondents (56%) would like better resources in cell. As two respondents commented:

*Having the choice of learning in cell instead of having to go to education where people just go to mess around instead of learn.*

*It's really difficult to get study time in a quiet place and time at a PC.*

This request would be interesting to research further as it opens up several questions:

- Could spending more time in cell rather than in classrooms lead to increased isolation?
- If the library PCs were available more frequently would prisoners prefer to study in the library or in cell?
- How will 'working prisons' impact the core day and ability to access PCs?
- Will this make in cell study more in demand so studying can be done in the evening and weekends?
- Do prisoners really want to study alone or are the classrooms too disruptive?
- If so, is the solution to deal with these root causes instead of isolating people in cells?
- Could classrooms and libraries be used outside of core hours to provide quiet time out of call for prisoners to study with access to computers?

Hughes discusses learning environments further in her recent book.<sup>6</sup>

### Education v. Work

Some prisons pay lower wages for education compared to work which is often low skilled and this can be a disincentive to prisoners to access learning. Over half of respondents (53%) said that equalling wages would help. This was 10% increase compared to the 2009 survey<sup>8</sup> (43%) indicating that it has become a more pressing concern. As the 'working prison' concept is developed and rolled out, this will become a more important issue to address, particularly if it results in an expansion of low skilled prison industries where prisoners can earn commission for 'piece work'. This may result in more prisoners being incentivised to choose the short term financial gain rather than potential long term economic gain. As one prisoner commented:

*I worked in prison industries where we made lights. It was the best paid job in the jail which is great for today and tomorrow, but what about the future? Vocational courses which lead to employment upon release are much more important for any prisoner's future.*

This was also a concern for the Education and Skills Select Committee in 2005<sup>7</sup>:

*We recommend that pay must be equalised across all activities undertaken in prison with immediate effect. There must be equal pay for education as for all other activities. Workshops that offer tedious, unskilled work should be phased out as they contribute nothing to the employability of the prisoner on release.*

### Information and advice

40% of respondents reported that more information about available courses would be beneficial. This has become a more important issue since the 2009<sup>9</sup> survey (31%).

Information about courses is the first step in the learning journey in prison. Without this basic knowledge, how are prisoners expected to engage in educational activities? This information should be provided both at induction and once again once prisoner has settled in, as already happens in some prisons. Up to date information should be made available to prisoners' families in the visitors centre and to prison officers on the wings, if not already. As some respondents commented in response to the open question:

*I would have liked more information on what was available on my coming here. Not have to wait weeks to see what's there then wait again till a place is available.*

*Better advice about courses which would aid in employment post imprisonment.*

*To have more information about courses (Distance Learning) and what courses I am likely to be accepted for before I apply.*

*I'd want courses on offer to be in a book so we all know what's available and what courses I can do in cell in my spare time.*

### Waiting lists

Although not included in the list of what would make studying easier, waiting times was an issue raised by respondents to the open question, for example some respondents commented:

*When applying for a course in the Education Dept. you are out on a waiting list. But you are not told you are on the waiting list or how long the waiting list or where you are on the list. I have been on a waiting list 2 1/2 years to do a Health & Safety course. I recently started a bookkeeping course one year after applying for it.*

*Faster access. Waiting months/years to get accepted sucks.*

*I'd change the intake on courses. So when you apply you can get a start the next week instead of being placed on waiting list.*

*In the prison I'm in now we been waiting to start my IT course + Maths + English for 6 weeks now. And I'm still waiting.*

The reasons for some prisoners having to wait to access learning are unclear as it was not in the remit of this survey, however as respondents raised this issue without being prompted, it should be explored further.

### Staying in one prison

Over 30% of respondents said that staying in one prison would help make learning easier. Frustrations about churn and being transferred during a course were clear in response to the open question:

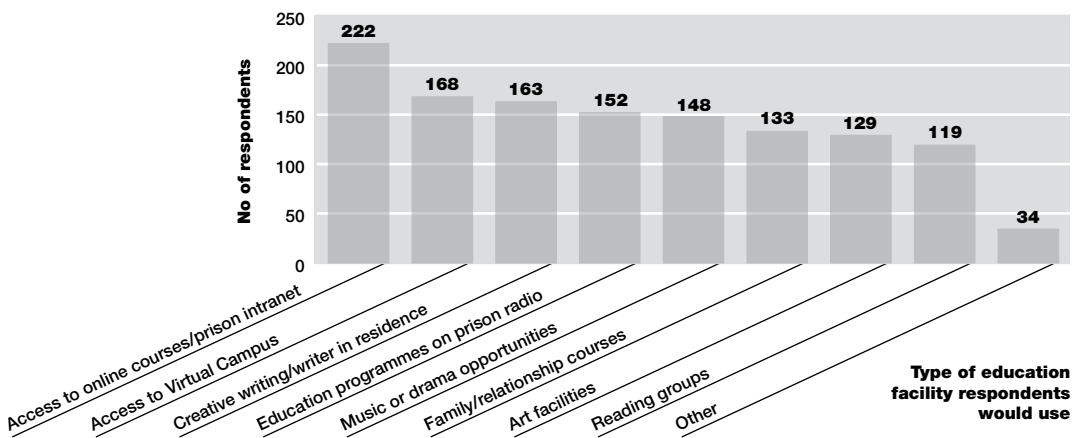
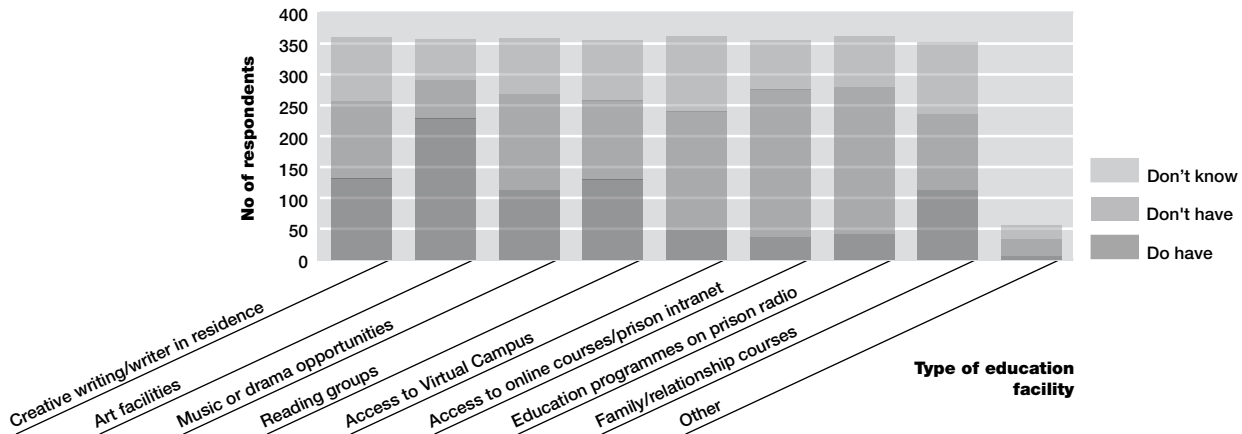
*For the prison service to take the fact I'm studying more seriously and not move me when I had all the support needed to a place where I lost all support and now am struggling to maintain the standard I had.*

*Letting prisoners finish their courses before being transferred to other jails. It's not fair starting a course only to be shipped out after 2 weeks. Not fair on the teachers and the prisoners too.*

*When you're on a course and have stuck to it the prison shouldn't move you until you've finished it. Like what happened to me.*

### Access to and need for different learning facilities

Respondents were asked if they knew whether they had access to various learning facilities in their prison and if they would use them.



**E-learning and internet access**

The disparity between access and availability for Information Technology facilities is the widest. Nearly half of respondents (47%) would like online courses, but only 8% have access to them. 40% of respondents would like access to the Virtual Campus, but only 10% say they have access to it in their prison. We know that the Virtual Campus is being rolled out across the prison estate and, as this survey was carried out in November 2011, hopefully more prisoners should have access by now. However this should be monitored. The recent evaluation of the Virtual Campus<sup>10</sup> highlights four factors that are key to successful implementation of the Virtual Campus; resources, partnerships, security and commissioning valid and appropriate content.

**Arts and informal learning**

44% of respondents said they had art facilities in their prison. A quarter had access to music or drama activities. A third had a writer in residence or access to creative writing. 30% had access to reading groups. 49% of prisoners felt opportunities for informal learning were poor.

**Education via prison radio**

Over a third of prisoners (34%) would like to access educational programmes on prison radio.

**Response from National Prison Radio (NPR)**

*“NPR is encouraged by the fact that around one in three prisoners would access education programmes on prison radio if they were available in their prison. As of April 2012 NPR can be heard in around 80 prisons throughout England and Wales. The roll out of the service, which is managed by NOMS, is expected to reach the majority of all prisons across the estate by spring 2013. NPR does not rely on the literacy of prisoners in order to disseminate information. Every day NPR broadcasts adverts promoting educational courses and opportunities. The NPR Book Club is a daily audio-book broadcast to support listeners’ reading of a different book title each month, and discussion of the book at the end of the month. Word Up is monthly programme focusing on literature, words and prisoners’ creative writing and encouraging listeners to engage with their prison library and Writer in Residence”.*



## Family and Relationship courses

30% of prisoners would like access to family/relationships courses

### Response from Safe Ground

*"Each year, 450 men take part in Family Man and Fathers Inside; Safe Ground/Ministry of Justice prison-based family relationships and parenting skills programmes. The innovation of using drama as a teaching tool engages men who are unlikely to have ever achieved educationally (60% of Family Man graduates had been excluded from school) or to have participated in purposeful activity in a process of reflection and change that has long lasting impact. Since 2007, 92.4% of FM/FI graduates have progressed to further education, training and employment<sup>11</sup>. For example one student aged 46 said "Family Man helped me to rebuild my confidence, learn to work with other people, learn to trust... I started writing to my partner and phoning home more...and now I've got a qualification as a Learning Support Worker, and I'm really proud that now I can...help others improve their education".*

## Learning support recommendations

### Recommendation 7: Individual Learning Plans

Learning providers should ensure all prisoners have an individual learning plan developed from induction that is reviewed on a regular basis with input from the learner so they have a stake in their own learning journey. Learners should be able to keep an updated copy to refer to as well as a copy being held centrally by the prison. Learning plans should receive contributions from all relevant departments including careers advice service, workshops, resettlement, as well as education, as learning does not only happen in the classroom. Voluntary sector organisations working with the prisoner should also contribute. Learning plans should be a record of qualifications and skills gained before custody as well as during custody. Soft skills and qualifications achieved through distance learning and through attendance on programmes run by external agencies should also be recorded. Learning plans should enable progression and encourage prisoners to have a long term focus as well as short term goals. Learning plans should be closely linked to sentence planning and resettlement planning. The learning plan should be transferred with the prisoner if they are moved and should be available to their probation officer after release where it should continue to be reviewed while on licence. Technology should be used where possible to make keeping learning plans as time efficient and easy to use as possible and avoid replication of work if a prisoner is transferred and to enable better sharing for information<sup>12</sup>.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 7.1 Meet with relevant stakeholders to discuss the current use and monitoring of learning plans to establish any barriers to their use and to prisoners contributing to them. Explore how these barriers could be removed.
- 7.2 As part of the partnership work with Prison Reform Trust on the digital inclusion of prisoners, we will explore how technology could assist with management of individual learning plans.

### Recommendation 8: Support from Prison Teachers

Where possible, tutors should be encouraged and supported to use engaging teaching methods and explore how learning can be embedded into other activities and in different locations throughout the prison.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 8.1 Invite relevant stakeholders to meet with us to discuss increasing examples of embedded and engaging learning in prisons.
- 8.2 Share best practice examples of embedded and engaging learning with practitioners through the Learning Matters e-news and other methods.

### Recommendation 9: Support from Prison Officers

Where possible, prison officers should be supported and encouraged to understand the benefits of prisoner learning and the ways in which they can assist in promoting and supporting prisoner learners. Prison officers should be supported to become learning champions. Each prison should have at least one prison officer as a 'Learning Champion'. They should work closely with the prisoner Learning Champions (see recommendation 10). They should have the opportunity

to receive an accredited qualification such as a PTLLS (Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector) and the role could be linked to their appraisal system for added recognition. The recommendations in the report 'Wings of Learning'<sup>13</sup> by Julia Braggins and Jenny Talbot should be re-visited and considered to enable further progress in this area.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 9.1 Invite relevant stakeholders to meet with us to discuss a strategy for how prison officers can become 'Learning Champions'.

### **Recommendation 10: Support from fellow prisoners and family members**

Prisons should provide more opportunities for prisoners to learn how to help other prisoner learners more effectively through accredited peer mentor training courses or PTLLS (Preparing to Teach in the Life Long Learning Sector) qualifications. Prisoners should be supported to become peer mentors, classroom assistants, learner reps and/or Learning Champions. Prisoners' contributions to peer learning support should be recognised, positively reinforced and encouraged. Family members should be provided with information about education and training opportunities for their loved ones in prison so they can support and encourage them to learn. Family members should be able to take part in learning planning meetings, if appropriate, so they can more effectively support the prisoner to develop and achieve their goals for the benefit of the whole family.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 10.1 Invite relevant stakeholders to meet with us to discuss a strategy for how prisoners can become 'Learning Champions'.
- 10.2 Consider expanding delivery of our accredited peer mentor training in prisons.
- 10.3 Invite relevant stakeholders to meet with us to explore how prisoners' families could have access to more information about learning opportunities available in prison and, if appropriate, could be more involved in learning planning meetings.

### **Recommendation 11: Advice and support for distance learning**

Prisoners should have access to better quality advice and support for distance learning including course choice. Each prison should have a member of staff that is responsible for advising learners about appropriate distance learning courses and how to apply for funding. A member of staff should also have responsibility to support learners during their courses to check they are in contact with their tutors, have access to the books and materials necessary and to provide encouragement and support to successfully complete the course. Peer mentors should also be trained to provide encouragement and support to distance learners. Prisoners should be informed of the option of distance learning at the start of their sentence to enable them to progress with their studies throughout their sentence. This would enable them to achieve the qualifications they need in time for their release. Advice and guidance on careers and course choice in prison should be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness. This evaluation should include feedback from the prisoner learners.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 11.1 Explore ways we can improve and expand prisoners' access to advice about choices of distance learning course for different employment or self-employment paths.
- 11.2 Continue to review and develop information resources about distance learning for prisoners, prison staff, tutors and the National Careers Service.
- 11.3 Meet with relevant stakeholders to discuss how distance learning course advice and guidance to prisoners is or could be monitored and evaluated.
- 11.4 Meet with relevant stakeholders to explore how distance learning can continue to be supported under the new OLASS contracts.

### **Recommendation 12: Learning facilities and materials**

Prisoner learners should be able to access the materials and equipment required to enable them to study effectively. Prisoner learners should have more access to computers, books and materials for studying, including at evenings and weekends. Quiet study rooms and the prison library should be accessible by prisoner learners, including at evenings and weekends.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 12.1 Meet with stakeholders to understand the barriers to prisoners accessing these learning facilities and materials, especially outside of the core day and explore solutions.
- 12.2 Explore ways of improving prisoner learners' access to relevant books and materials.

### **Recommendation 13: Wages**

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Some prisoners tell us that they are incentivised to choose unskilled work over education as in some prisons there is a variance in pay between work and education. Wages for education should be the same as for work.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 13.1 Promote prisons who ensure prisoners doing education and work have equal wages through the Learning Matters e-news.
- 13.2 Meet with stakeholders to discuss how education wages across the prison estate can be brought into line with work wages.

### **Recommendation 14: Where there are delays for prisoners to access some courses**

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Some prisoners tell us they have to wait to get onto prison courses. A review of waiting lists should be carried out to find where there are delays for prisoners to access courses. Where there are unacceptable waiting lists the prison should explore ways to reduce these. Where lack of space in education is the issue, options such as wing classes, outreach and workshops should be utilised more effectively. A review of transfers of prisoners during courses should also be carried out to establish the impact and level of disruption caused.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 14.1 Meet with stakeholders to discuss what action can be taken to conduct a review of waiting lists and mid-course prison transfers.

### **Recommendation 15: E-learning access**

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E-learning should be more widely available in prisons to enable access to subjects and level as not otherwise available. E-learning can also provide an engaging method of learning when used as a blended model combining e-learning with face to face support. Prisoners studying higher level courses would benefit from increased access to some educational web based resources via the Virtual Campus. E-learning should be made available as a supplement to 'teacher-led' learning in order to enable prisoners to study for a wider variety of subjects and levels, allowing an open learning environment where prisoners can learn at their own pace and level.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do;

- 15.1 Explore how ICT can improve the education, training and employment opportunities of prisoners as part of our Inquiry into the Digital Inclusion of Prisoners.
- 15.2 Discuss with stakeholders how to get more engaging and educational content on the Virtual Campus and how to monitor prisoners access to the Virtual Campus for learning purposes.
- 15.3 Explore how we can develop our resources so they are available on the Virtual Campus.

### **Recommendation 16: Access to creative and informal learning opportunities.**

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Access to a broad curriculum including creative and informal learning opportunities should be available in all prisons and not just limited to art classes. Voluntary sector organisations working in prisons should be supported both practically and financially to continue to provide this work. Working prisons should also include opportunities for prisoners to gain skills and qualifications necessary to work in creative industries.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 16.1 Discuss with stakeholders how informal and arts based learning can be supported under the OLASS contracts.
- 16.2 Continue working with partners in the community and voluntary sector to promote creative and informal learning, for example through our role on the steering group of the Arts Alliance and giving grants to prisoners for arts materials.

# Chapter 4: Why Learn?

## Motivations for learning

The survey asked respondents to indicate what had motivated them to get involved in learning. 89% (471/532) of respondents answered this question. Respondents could tick as many options as applied to them.

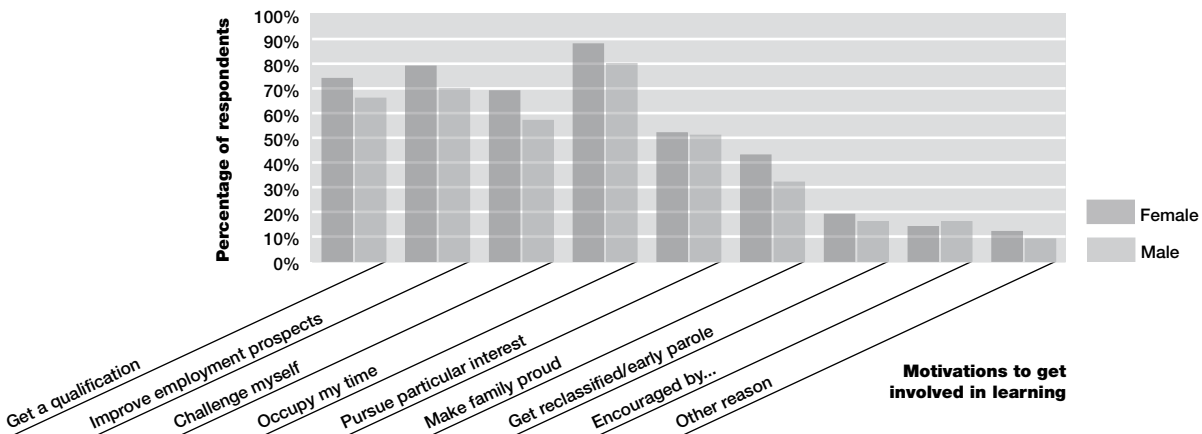
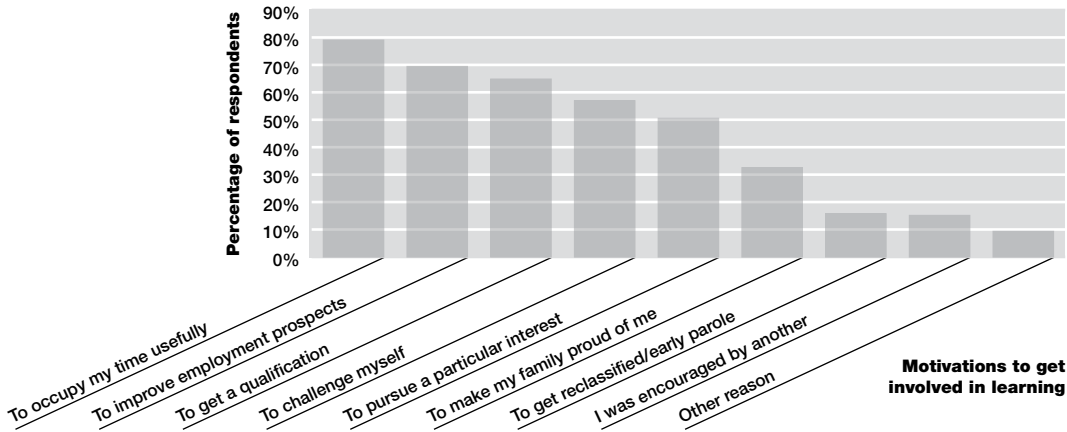
## Occupy time usefully

79% of respondents indicated that one motivation was to 'occupy their time usefully'. This does not seem to be a particularly focused motivation for learning, Pike (2009)<sup>1</sup> and Hughes (2012)<sup>2</sup> found that many prisoners start education or learning activities for this reason, however often the benefits of learning go much further than this.

## Employability

Nearly 70% of respondents cite this as a motivation for learning in prison, especially for under 30s. This has become a more important motivation for prisoners since 2009<sup>3</sup> survey by an increase of 10%. 65% wanted to study to get a qualification.

Women respondents were more motivated than male prisoners to learn in order to improve their employment prospects and to gain qualifications.



## Challenge

Over half (56%) of respondents were motivated by the challenge of learning and women in particular were motivated by this.

## Family

A third of respondents were motivated to learn to make their families proud, particularly women.

## Encouragement

Only 1 in 6 respondents got involved in learning because they were encouraged by someone else. Women were less likely to have been encouraged by someone else to take up learning than male prisoners.

This shows that many of the respondents were self motivated learners, however many prisoners have negative experiences of school. More should be done to encourage prisoners to step into a classroom or other learning environment in the prison.

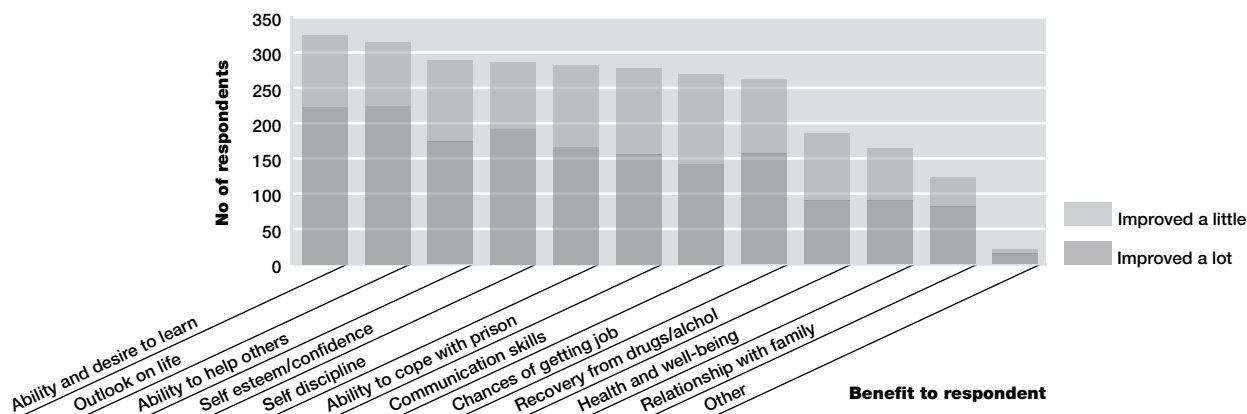
This shows the range of motivations prisoners have for learning in prison. This was also found in the Ministry of Justice SPCR study<sup>4</sup>:

*Prisoners' attitudes towards learning and education showed that they clearly understood the value of education and were willing to learn. Only 1 in 10 prisoners thought learning was not for people like me.*

**Benefits of learning**

There are wide ranging benefits to learning in prison:

Over half of respondents (55%) indicated there had been improvement in 8 out of the 11 benefits which cross cut the reducing re-offending pathways including benefits to health, well being, ability to cope with prison, employability, family relationships and substance misuse.



82% of respondents said learning increased their ability and desire to learn. This finding adds weight to the recommendation for more access to higher level courses to be available to enable prisoners to be able to progress to higher levels. This will enable them to keep up the momentum of learning throughout the prison sentence and beyond. This finding also indicates why many prisoners voiced their frustrations at waiting lists for courses in response to the open question, as well requesting more time to study, including requests for evening classes like are on offer at some prisons.

*I would like more hours learning. I think the time we have is not enough.*

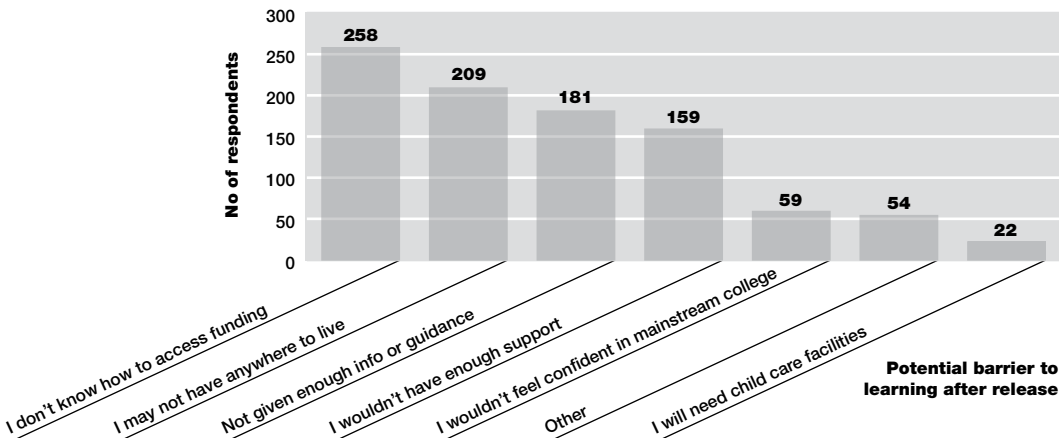
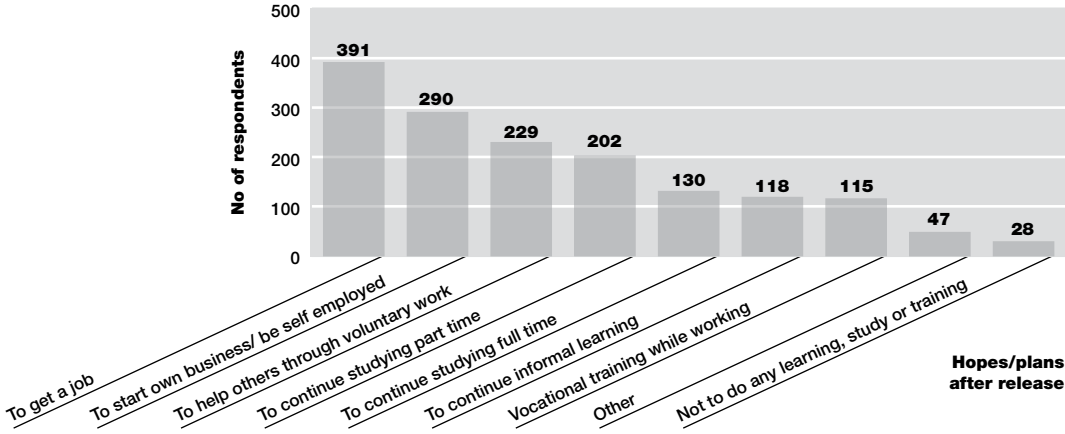
*The chance for evening classes using the time for good instead of sitting around watching TV or playing pool.*

73% of respondents think their learning has improved their chances of getting a job however only 40% think has improved their chances 'a lot'.

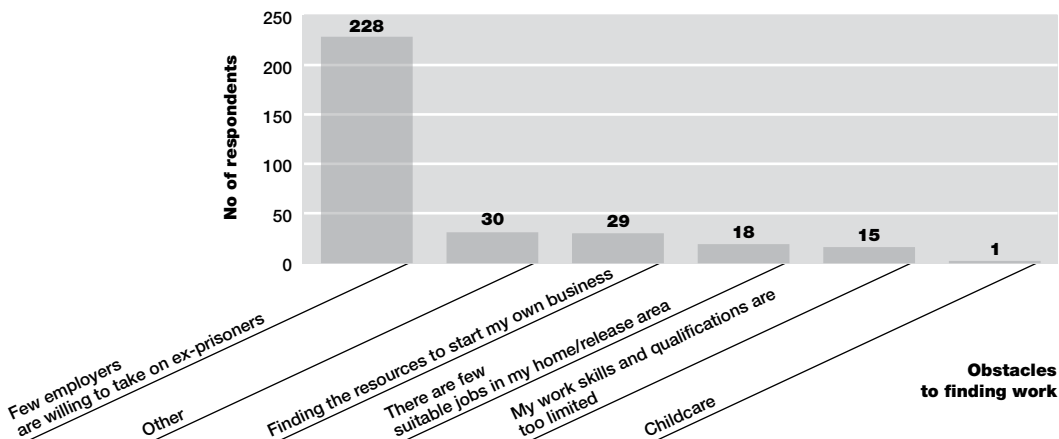
Over 80% of respondents felt that learning had improved their 'outlook on life' and three quarters noted improved self-discipline and communication skills. Importantly these are exactly the personal skills which employers are looking for when considering hiring ex-offenders, according to a report by CfBT<sup>5</sup> who commissioned a You Gov survey on employers' perceptions of prison education (2011). The You Gov survey of employers found that 'a positive attitude' (44%), communication skills (37%), and reliability (34%) are the most important skills or attributes. Indeed, a positive attitude was deemed as important as having the technical skills to do the job.

### Hopes and plans after release

Respondents were asked to name their hopes and plans are after release. The question gave respondents four options for indicating whether they intended to do learning or training after release including; studying full-time, studying part-time, continue informal learning or do vocational training while working. 65% of respondents indicated they wanted to do some form of learning or training after release, however they foresee funding (63%), accommodation issues (50%) and lack of advice and guidance (43%) as potential barriers.



Three-quarters of respondents (76%) said they hoped to get a job after release, however respondents foresee the biggest obstacle to them getting work being employers unwilling to take on ex-prisoners. This could explain the fact that over half of respondents (56%) want to start their own business after release. 44% wanted to help others through voluntary work (44%).



## Why Learn recommendations

### **Recommendation 17: Celebrating the learning achievements of prisoners.**

To more fully develop the motivation, encouragement and support of families, fellow prisoners and staff, prisons should celebrate the learning achievements of prisoners more frequently and invite family members, staff and fellow prisoners to participate. Every prison should celebrate Adult Learners Week with their own award ceremony and have more frequent smaller celebrations of achievement throughout the year. This should be co-ordinated by the prisoner and staff 'Learning Champions'.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 17.1 Meet with relevant stakeholders to discuss how prisons could implement this recommendation and promote good practice in celebrating achievement through Learning Matters e-news.
- 17.2 Nominate prisoners to the national Adult Learners Week Awards and facilitate winners and their families to attend the award ceremony where possible, as done in 2012.
- 17.3 Explore how the Trust can better celebrate the achievements of prisoners studying via distance learning and the people who support them to do so.

### **Recommendation 18: Self-employment support**

With over half of prisoners wanting to start their own business, prisons should respond to this feedback by ensuring that suitable skills development and support is available to prisoners both in prison and through the gate. All vocational workshops in prisons should provide prisoners with the option of completing qualifications in business skills so they can become self employed. Every prison should work closely with an organisation providing through the gate support for business start ups. Careers advisors should provide advice on business skills and self employment. The Virtual Campus should include business plan development templates.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 18.1 Discuss with stakeholders how business development and self-employment support could be improved across the prison estate including using the Virtual Campus.
- 18.2 Review our 'Starting your own business' course information resource.
- 18.3 Seek out and promote good practice in this area through Learning Matters e-news.

### **Recommendation 19: Continuing to learn after release**

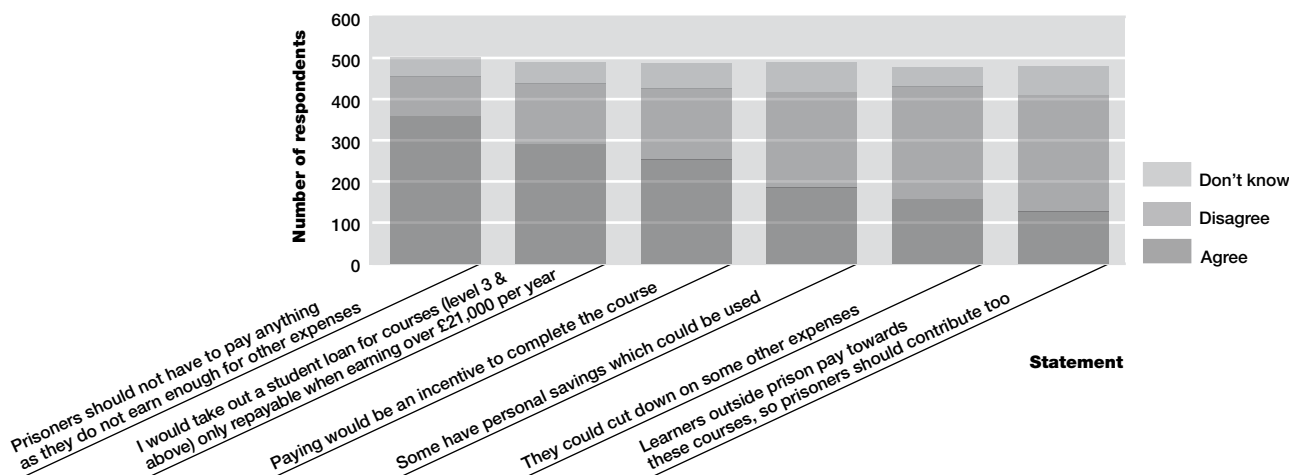
Going into education, training or voluntary work after release should be a valid outcome for any prison 'payment by results' model. Careers and resettlement advisors in prison should have sufficient information on accessing learning opportunities after release. Prisons should work together more with Probation, Work Programme providers and others to ensure that if prisoners require further training or a higher level course in order to obtain particular employment, that they are supported with this through the gate. Where prisoners study the theory element of a course in prison, for example by distance learning, they should be supported to access the practical element and final examination after release so they can complete the qualification. Prisoners should be informed how to access the Prisoner Funder Directory in custody and after release.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

- 19.1 Meet with relevant stakeholders to discuss how prisoners can better be supported and advised about how to continue their learning journeys after release and explore how this could be incorporated into the payment by results model.
- 19.2 Explore how to develop our resettlement support for prisoners who have done distance learning in prison.

## Chapter 5: Who should pay?

The survey asked respondents for their thoughts about making contributions towards the cost of distance learning courses. They were presented with 6 different statements and asked to say whether they agreed with it, disagreed with it or didn't know.



In relation to the questions about contributing to distance learning courses up front, the responses paint a complex picture.

- 71% of respondents thought that prisoners should not have to pay anything.
- 59% disagree that prisoners should contribute towards courses because learners outside prison do.
- However, 52% agreed that paying would be an incentive to complete the course,
- 37% agreed that prisoners should contribute as they might have personal savings
- 32% agreed that prisoners could cut down on other expenses to contribute towards their education.
- 59% of respondents agreed that they would take out a student loan for certain courses (level 3 and above, only repayable when earning over £21,000 per year).

This data indicates that some prisoners see education as an investment, however the circumstances of prison do not equate with learners in the community and each prisoner may also have different financial circumstances. Some may be paid more than others, some may have savings, some may have families to send money in, but others may not. Some may spend what they do earn on items which could be cut down on, however others may spend most of their wages on phone cards to speak to their families and children and postage stamps to send letters home. Average prison wages are between £7 and £12 a week (around 30p per hour), with a minimum rate of £4 per week (around £200 per year)<sup>1</sup>.

The Legal Services Research Centre in 2007 found that prisoners are also often financially excluded as 40% of people in prison did not have a bank account or other financial products compared to 5% of the general population. In their report 'Time is Money' The Prison Reform Trust and UNLOCK<sup>2</sup> found that just over half of the people they interviewed in prison had debts. Of those, 40% felt that their debts had worsened during their sentence. Therefore the ability to contribute anything significant towards courses is often difficult, despite learners experiencing a wide range of benefits from the learning experience. Figures from UCAS show that mature students are more likely to be put off the increased fees than younger students<sup>3</sup>, however this survey data seems to indicate that some prisoners are willing to take out a loan. The eligibility criteria to take out a loan may be a barrier to some prisoners for example if they have over six years left to serve, if they are not an EU national, if they have not been resident in the UK for the last three years, if they do not have a bank account or if they have previously taken out a student loan. There are some indications, through anecdotal feedback from prison staff to Prisoners Education Trust, that some staff feel uncomfortable advising prisoners about financial matters such as taking out student loans, which could also be a barrier to prisoners accessing further and higher education.



## who should pay recommendations

### **Recommendation 20: Monitoring and reviewing participation levels**

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Careful longitudinal monitoring of the impact of the changes in funding on access to further and higher education amongst prisoners is required.

What Prisoners Education Trust will do:

20.1 Discuss with relevant stakeholders how participation rates in FE and HE learning in prison and after release could be monitored and reviewed.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

### **Alexandra Marks, Chair of Prisoners Education Trust**

As recently appointed Chair of Prisoners Education Trust, I welcome this important piece of research, based on the views of over 500 serving prisoners. It is being launched at a time of significant change within the prison estate as new education contracts are rolled out. This timely report addresses not only the motivations and benefits of learning, but also the provision and support prisoners say would help them turn their lives around. I was particularly heartened to see that ‘an increased ability to help others’ was identified by prisoners to be an important benefit of learning. This is often overlooked, as is the impact of learning on improving family relationships, confidence, health, ability to cope with prison life and developing a positive outlook on life. With the current strong focus on employability outcomes, this report reminds us of these wider benefits of learning beyond reducing reoffending. The report also shows that once prisoners engage in learning, they become thirsty for more. We must harness this motivation and enthusiasm by providing the range and levels of courses and training available to engage them both within the prison and then in wider society.

In the ever-more complex world of prison education - with contractors, sub-contractors, clusters, hubs and the huge variety of providers including public, private and voluntary sector - it is vital that the views and experiences of prisoner learners are both heard, and responded to. I therefore welcome the Minister of Skills’ comment in the Foreword to this report that “Listening to the voice of the prisoner as learner can give a new, important insight on the effectiveness of our reform agenda”.

Many of the recommendations of this report involve PET discussing the issues further with relevant stakeholders. We do not have all the answers ourselves, so working in partnership with others is crucial to formulate possible solutions for better meeting prisoners’ needs as well as sharing good practice and innovation. It is for this reason that Prisoners Education Trust has set up the Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA). The PLA will bring together diverse non-statutory stakeholders to provide expertise and strategic vision to inform future priorities, policies and practices relating to prison education, learning and skills. Through attendance of PLA meetings by senior cross-departmental Government officials, the PLA will provide one mechanism by which some of the issues raised by prisoner learners can be heard by policy makers. As the Skills Minister said in the Foreword “We must work together effectively to ensure [prisoners] are better able to reintegrate, and with the skills necessary to build useful and productive lives”.

### **Lord Ramsbotham, Former Chief Inspector of Prisons**

I shall always remember two conversations that I had about education, soon after being appointed HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. The first was with the sadly deceased Chief Inspector of Probation, Sir Graham Smith, who told me that education was by far the most important contributor to successful resettlement, and therefore the prevention of re-offending. The second was with the Head of Learning and Skills at HMYOI Northallerton, who told me that her biggest problem was motivating young offenders to want to learn. The truth of both of these underlies my reaction to reading this very important piece of research, important because, as I found when inspecting, being based on the views and experiences of prisoners themselves, it is ‘fact’ and not the ‘fudge’ that, all too often, I found being fed by officials to Ministers, because it was what they wanted them to believe.

Initial assessment of prisoners, on first reception into prison, will disclose the full facts of the lack of reading, writing and numerical skills, that it has always seemed to me to be the duty of the authorities to try to rectify. Armed with the details, provision of necessary rectification programmes can be costed, and shortfalls, both in funding and content, identified. At the same time assessment can be made of the cost of provision of such important additions as arts programmes, which, mainly because of the self-esteem factor, often provide the vital, motivational trigger for further involvement with education, and distance learning, which is such a vital factor for those aiming for more than basic skills. But, until the publication of this research, too little was known of the details of the requirements, beyond individual prison walls, which, largely because of frequent moves, was always out of date. I hope therefore that those responsible for both planning and funding what so clearly plays a vital part in the prevention of re-offending, thereby protecting the public which is the aim of the Criminal Justice System, will take note of the findings and adjust both planning and funding to meet the identified needs. Armed with clearly focussed provision, it will then be much easier for Heads of Learning and Skills to motivate people to want to learn.

# Appendix A

## Prison Education Survey 2011

This is a confidential survey aimed at finding out how prisoners experience education and training inside prison. We also want to hear the views of prisoners who might have difficulty reading and completing this survey for any reason. We would therefore be grateful if you could offer to help other prisoners to complete the survey if possible. The Learning Matters Project will use the survey results to argue the case for better learning and training provision in prisons. Your views, together with those of others, will help us understand what priorities to set and improvements to push for. Please answer as many questions as possible.

**insidetime**  
the national newspaper for prisoners

in association with  
**Prisoners Education Trust**  
Unlocking potential for crime-free lives

Please note; we are not covering offending behaviour programmes within this survey.

**Q 1** Are you? Male  Female

**Q 2** What age were you when you left full-time education? (Tick only one box)  
Under 16  16 - 17  18  Over 18

**Q 3** How old were you on 1st January 2011? (Tick only one box)  
15-17  18-21  22-30  31-45  45-60  Over 60

**Q 4** Tell us about the qualifications you have received, both before and inside prison. (Tick all that are appropriate)

	Before prison	In prison
None.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Entry Level (inc. ESOL).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Level 1.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Level 2.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GCSEs.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Levels.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HNC/Diploma/BTEC/NVQ3.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Degree.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post Graduate.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional qualifications.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q 5** Do you consider yourself to have a learning difficulty or disability?  
Yes  (please give details)..... No

**Q 6** How would you describe your racial/cultural origin? (Tick only one box)

Prefer not to say <input type="checkbox"/>	Asian / Pakistani <input type="checkbox"/>
Black / African <input type="checkbox"/>	Asian / Bangladeshi <input type="checkbox"/>
Black / Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/>	Asian / Other <input type="checkbox"/>
Black / Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed <input type="checkbox"/>
Asian / Indian <input type="checkbox"/>	White <input type="checkbox"/>
Other <input type="checkbox"/> (Please state).....	

**Q 7** How long have you been in prison on your current sentence? (Tick only one box)

Less than 3 months <input type="checkbox"/>	3-5 years <input type="checkbox"/>
3-6 months <input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 years <input type="checkbox"/>
7-12 months <input type="checkbox"/>	Over 10 years <input type="checkbox"/>
1-2 years <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>

**Q 8** How much longer do you expect to be in prison in your current sentence? (Tick only one box)

Less than 3 months <input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 years <input type="checkbox"/>
3-6 months <input type="checkbox"/>	Over 10 years <input type="checkbox"/>
7-12 months <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
1-2 years <input type="checkbox"/>	I am on remand <input type="checkbox"/>
3-5 years <input type="checkbox"/>	

**Q 9** Which prison are you in? Please write the name of your current prison  
.....

**Q 10** What category of prison or the part of the prison are you in?  
Cat A  Cat B  Cat C  Cat D (Open)  YOI   
Special Hospital  Other  (Please state).....

**Q 11** Have you started or completed ANY learning or training activities while you have been in prison? (Tick all that apply to you)

Formal courses in education with a teacher.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peer to peer learning e.g. Toe by toe.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informal learning e.g. Reading groups, art, drama, reading groups family courses.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distance learning course(s), such as Open University.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning using the Virtual Campus.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online learning (such as ECDL or CISCO).....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocational Training in a prison job or workshop e.g. kitchens, industries... Other? (Please state).....	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, I have not attempted any learning during this sentence.....	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q 12** If you haven't experienced learning in prison, why was this? Please tick one only and go straight to Question 17

I didn't know what learning was available.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nothing was available at a high enough level.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
No subjects available that I want to study.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Too much else going on at the moment.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
I could not get funding.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't want to learn in prison.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
I haven't been allowed to start a course.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Courses/classes don't fit my sentence plan.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
I keep being moved from prison to prison.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other reasons? (Please state).....	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q 13** What motivated you to get involved in learning? (Tick all that apply to you)

To get a qualification.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
To improve my employment prospects on release.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
To challenge myself/see if I could do it.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
To occupy my time usefully.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
To pursue a particular interest.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
To make my family proud of me.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
To get reclassified/early parole.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was encouraged by teacher, another prisoner, officer etc..... (Please specify).....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Reason (Please state).....	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q 14** Who gave you support while you were learning? (Tick all that apply to you)

	No support	A bit of support	A lot of support
Education staff.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other prison staff e.g. prison officers.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fellow prisoners.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My family and friends outside.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A distance learning tutor.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A specialist for dyslexia or other needs.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A mentor.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q 15** What have been the benefits of your learning experience? (Tick all that apply to you)

	No change	Improved a little	Improved a lot
My ability and desire to learn.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My self discipline.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My ability to help others.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My outlook on life and my future.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My communication skills.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My self esteem / confidence.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My chances of getting a job.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My relationship with my family.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My health and well being.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My ability to cope with prison.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My recovery from drugs/alcohol (if relevant) Other (Please state).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q 16** What would have made learning easier? (Tick all that apply to you)

Being able to discuss with others.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
More books/materials available.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faster feedback on my assignments.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staying in one prison.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessing a quiet place to stud.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Better resources in cell (eg a desk/good light).....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having better access to a computer.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having better access to a printer.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowing what courses are available.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having more support during the course.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equal wages with those working.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other? (Please state).....	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q 17** Do you have an Individual Learning Plan or Learning Record?  
Note: This may be held in the Prison Education Department. (Tick only one box)

Yes and I have seen it/have a copy.  No, never heard of any of these...   
Yes I have seen it, have a copy and have contributed to it.....  I don't know.....

Survey Continued.....

Q 18 If you could change one thing about education and learning in your prison, what would you most want to change and why?

If you need more space please use a separate sheet, but don't forget to include your details

Q 19 What do you think about these aspects of education in your prison?

	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
Advice and guidance on which course to choose.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Range of courses on offer in education dept.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Level of courses on offer.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities and support for distance learning.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for vocational learning in work.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for informal learning e.g. art, drama, reading groups, family courses.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q 20 Do you have/would you like access to any of the following?

	Do have	Don't have	Don't know	Would use
Creative writing/writer in residence.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Art facilities.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music or drama opportunities.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading groups.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access to the Virtual Campus.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access to online courses or prison intranet.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education programmes on prison radio ...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family / relationships related courses.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q 21 Have you had any of the following opportunities to express your views about education and learning in prison? (Tick all that apply to you)

- I have completed a survey given to me by the prison .....
- I have discussed education/learning in a prison council .....
- I have discussed education/learning in a learner forum.....
- I have given feedback on a specific course or activity.....
- I have written to my MP, the IMB or Prison Ombudsman .....
- Other (Please state).....

Q 22 Learning Matters wants to ensure policy makers listen to what prisoners think about learning in prisons. How could prisoner learner opinions, ideas, suggestions and complaints be best heard? (Please tick two only from the following list)

- A 'Prisoner Learner Forum' .....
- Regular surveys / questionnaires filled in by learners .....
- Regular interviews or focus groups with learners.....
- More visits by policy makers to prisons to meet learners.....
- Participation training e.g. how to get your voice heard .....
- Other (Please state) .....

Q 23 What are your thoughts on prisoners making contributions towards the cost of distance learning courses?

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Prisoners should pay a contribution because...	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Some have personal savings which could be used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
They could cut down on some other expenses (e.g. tobacco or snacks, to invest in their education)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paying a contribution would be an incentive to complete the course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learners outside prison have to pay towards these courses, so prisoners should contribute too	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would take out a student loan for courses (level 3 and above) only repayable when earning over £21,000 per year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prisoners should not have to pay anything as they do not earn enough for other expenses e.g. phone calls	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q 24 Which aspects of prison life have helped your rehabilitation?

	Doesn't apply to me	Hasn't Helped	Helped a little	Helped a lot
Prison education classes e.g. literacy / numeracy.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workshops, work experience & vocational training.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distance learning such as OU .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informal learning e.g. reading groups, music, Toe by Toe.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resettlement courses or activities.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offending behaviour courses.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities to help others e.g. mentor, listener .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: (Please explain).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q 25 What are your hopes and plans after release? (Please Tick all that apply to you)

- To get a job.....
- To help others through voluntary work.....
- To start my own business / be self employed.....
- Vocational training while working e.g. apprenticeship.....
- To continue studying, part-time.....
- To continue studying full-time at College or University.....
- To continue informal learning e.g. reading, art, music, drama .....
- Not to do any learning, study or training on release.....
- Other? (Please state).....

Q 26 If you hope to continue learning after release, what barriers might prevent you from doing so? (Please Tick all that apply to you)

- I haven't been given enough information or guidance .....
- I will need child care facilities .....
- I don't know how to access funding .....
- I may not have anywhere to live .....
- I wouldn't feel confident in mainstream college.....
- I wouldn't have enough support .....
- Other (Please state).....

Q 27 If you aim to find work on release, which of the following sources of help will you use? (Please Tick all that apply to you)

- a) Job Centre  b) Family or friends  c) Previous employer
- d) Recruitment agency  e) Government back to work scheme
- f) Voluntary/charitable Organisation e.g. St. Giles, Working Links, Princes Trust
- g) Prison resettlement help or advice  h) Virtual Campus

Q 28 Which of the above (Q.27) do you expect to be of most help?.....

Q 29 Which of the above (Q.27) do you expect to be of least help? .....

Q 30 What do you see as the biggest obstacle to finding work? (Please tick one only)

- Few employers are willing to take on ex-prisoners.....
- My work skills and qualifications are too limited.....
- There are few suitable jobs in my home/release area.....
- Finding the resources to start my own business .....
- Childcare .....
- Other (Please explain).....

Q 31 If you would like to be contacted about other opportunities to express your views, please provide your name and prison number here (and ensure you have told us which prison you are in). The answers to this survey will remain confidential. ....

Q 32 Finally, *Inside Time* would like to know which of the main sections of the newspaper you enjoy most. Please number your top five sections 1,2,3,4 and 5. (Number 1 being your personal favourite)

Mailbag.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newsround.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family Welfare.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
News from the House.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal Comment.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal Q & A/Banks on Sentence.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health & Wellbeing.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Book/DVD Reviews.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poetry.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jailbreak .....	<input type="checkbox"/>

This information will be automatically be passed to Inside Time and help the editorial team continue to develop and improve the newspaper. Your input will be very much appreciated

Thank you for taking part in this survey. Completed forms should be put into an envelope and posted to :

The must arrive by 10th December at the latest

Freepost: RSSZ-UZZA-XAEZ,  
Prisoners Education Trust,  
Wandle House, Riverside Drive,  
Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 4BU  
(No stamp needed)

Inside Time will publish extracts from the results in February 2012, and a full report will be published soon afterwards. The Learning Matters Project will use the survey results to argue the case for better learning and training provision in prisons. Your views, together with those of others, will help us understand what priorities to set and improvements to push for.

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# Acknowledgements

**We would like to thank the following people for their contributions to this report:**

Andrew Billington	Inside Time newspaper
Lynn Bindman	National Prison Radio
Susie Dye	Prison Reading Groups
Cassie Edmiston	Race on the Agenda
Matthew Hancock MP	Safe Ground
Emma Hughes	Monument Trust
Jane Hurry	Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Melanie Jameson	Bromley Trust
Pat Jones	Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Seb Klier	The prisoners who completed the surveys Prison and education staff
John Lister	
Alexandra Marks	
Anne Pike	
Chris Queree	
Lord Ramsbotham	
Kelly Rust	
Tom Schuller	
Jen Walters	
John Weightman	
Geoffrey Wolfson	
Rachel Youngman	

“Education within these walls will surely lead to a more permanent liberty than the one we find on release. Freedom doesn't have to begin when those gates are flung open in the distant future. It can begin now and be found within the pages of a book.

A prisoner learner reflection on his experience”

Data analysis undertaken by:

**billington**  
associates

Survey distributed in November  
2011 edition of:

**insidetime**  
The National Newspaper for Prisoners



Prisoners  
Education  
Trust

Wandle House · Riverside Drive  
Mitcham · Surrey · CR4 4BU

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Tel 020 8648 7760 · Fax 020 8648 7762  
lm@prisonerseducation.org.uk  
www.prisonerseducation.org.uk  
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