

# Prison education

**A review of the evidence**



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## About the author



**Jon Collins** is chief executive of Prisoners' Education Trust (PET), the UK's leading prison education charity. PET offers distance learning courses and related advice and guidance to people in prison and works to improve prison education and show policymakers and the public the impact that education in prison has. Jon joined PET in April 2021, having previously been chief executive of the Magistrates Association, the membership body for magistrates in England and Wales. Prior to that, Jon was chief executive of the Restorative Justice Council and he has previously worked at the Police Foundation, the Criminal Justice Alliance, the Fawcett Society and Nacro. Jon has also been a member of the Victims' Commissioner Advisory Group, a member of the Commission on Crime and Problem Gambling, and a governor of a London primary school

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HMP Swaleside

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## Why read this evidence review?

No-one disputes the importance of prison education. But does it help people turn away from crime and live personally fulfilling lives? And what are the key elements which make for 'good' prison education.

This evidence review looks at:

- The educational needs of people in prison
- The current state of prison education
- The evidence base for the effectiveness of prison education
- Critical success factors for high quality prison education.



# Introduction

*“Successfully completing my course has got me one step closer to my goal of becoming a positive role model for my son. Thanks for all your help, it’s changed my life.”*

At Prisoners’ Education Trust (PET), where we enable people in prison to access distance learning courses, we receive feedback like this almost daily. There is no doubt that participating in education in prison can be transformational. In a system that too often does not provide people with hope or a chance to change, education can make it possible to read a letter from a family member, provide a route into employment, or give a much-needed boost to mental health and wellbeing.

The benefits of education in prison are widely recognised and the last few years has seen a welcome focus by the Ministry of Justice, HM Inspectorate of Prisons and Ofsted on how we can improve the provision of education in prisons, ensuring that learners can access high-quality education that will help them to turn their lives around.

The next step intended to help to achieve this will be the commissioning of new contracts for the provision of education in public sector prisons in England. Starting from April 2025, these new contracts will aim to fulfil the pledge in the Conservative Party’s 2019 manifesto to, ‘create a prisoner education service focused on work-based training and skills’.

Within this context, this paper sets the scene by describing the current provision of education in prison in England and Wales, summarises the available evidence on prison education and discusses where further research might be needed.

## Scope of this paper

While it draws on evidence from other jurisdictions, this paper is written primarily for people interested in the provision of prison education in England and Wales. Some of the data relates specifically to England, as comparable data is not routinely published on prison education provision in Wales. This paper also focuses on the provision of education to adults in prison. Education provision in the youth estate is an important, distinct issue that is not addressed here. Finally, it interprets ‘education’ broadly, including not just classroom-based or academic study but also broader vocational training.

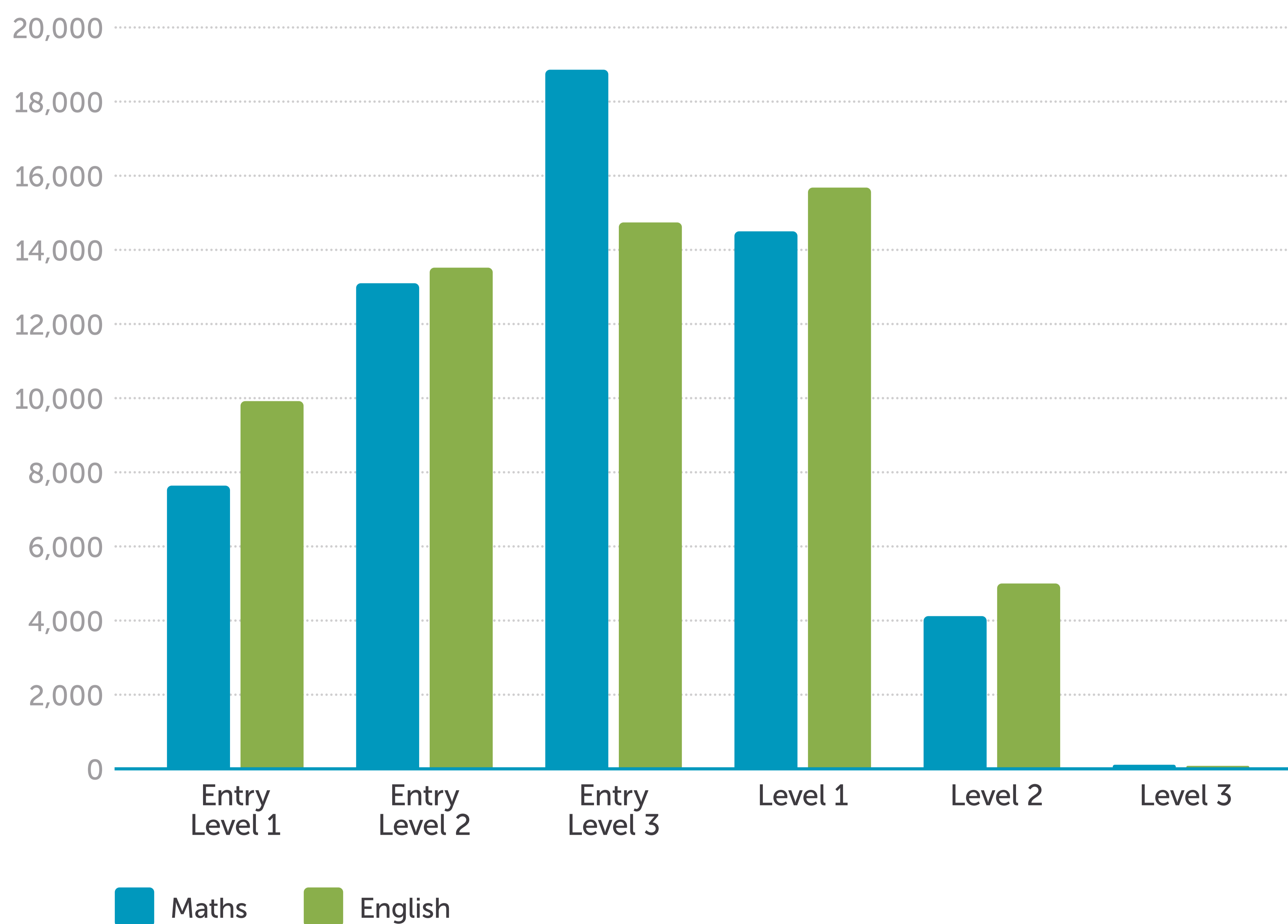


# The educational needs of people in prison

Every adult imprisoned in England and Wales is meant to complete an initial assessment to determine their levels of English and maths. While the validity of these assessments has been questioned,<sup>1</sup> the results provide the best available data on the educational levels of people entering prison.

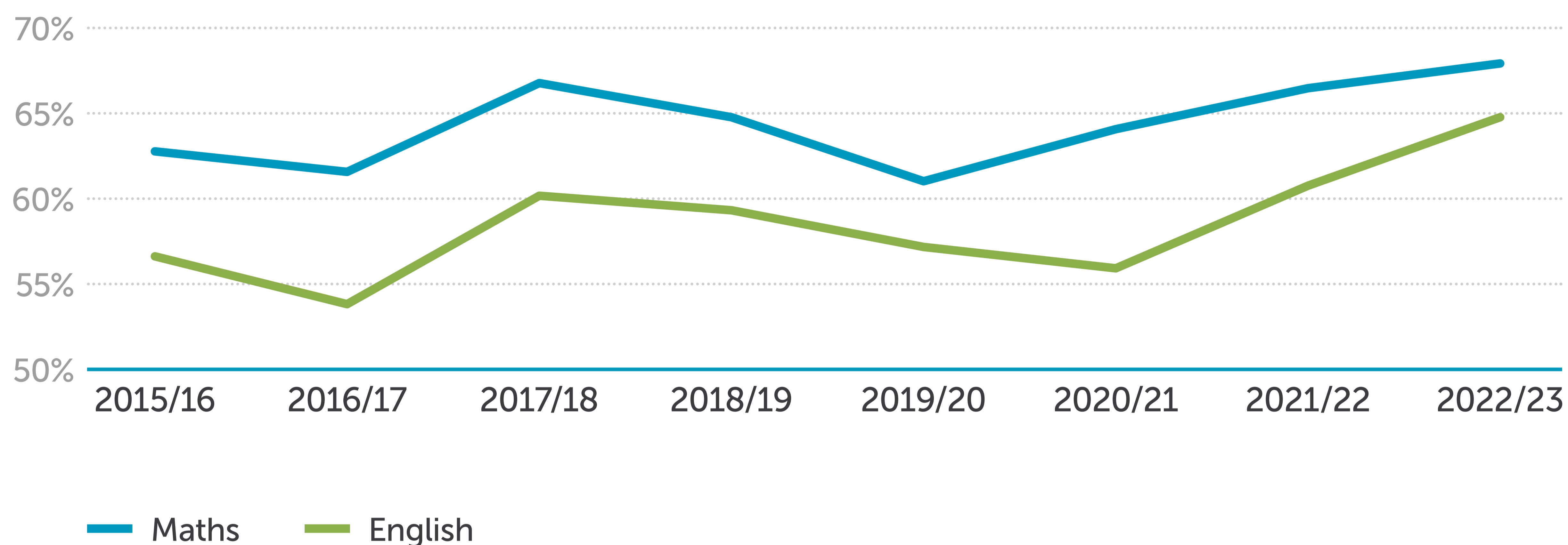
The latest data that is available – from assessments conducted during 2022-23<sup>2</sup> – covers public sector prisons in England and shows that 68% of maths and 65% of English initial assessment outcomes were at Entry Levels 1-3. Entry Level 1 is broadly equivalent to the expected levels at age 5-7, Entry Level 2 to levels at age 7-9 and Entry Level 3 to levels at age 9-11. One in seven (13% for maths and 17% for English) were at Entry Level 1, the lowest level. By contrast, less than 0.2% were at Level 3 (equivalent to A level).

## Outcomes of English and maths initial assessments: 2022-23



These findings are broadly consistent with previous years, although the proportion of initial assessment outcomes at Entry Levels 1-3 has increased slightly in recent years.

### Outcomes of English and maths initial assessments: 2015/16 to 2022/23



The National Literacy Trust notes that adults below Entry Level 1, “may not be able to write short messages to family or read a road sign,”<sup>3</sup> while the charity National Numeracy says, as an example, that adults below Entry Level 1, “may not be able to select floor numbers in lifts.”<sup>4</sup> This shows how difficult it will be for people with the lowest levels of literacy and numeracy to engage successfully with prison regimes, let alone employment or other activities in the community. The contrast in literacy rates with the broader population is particularly stark – only 14.9% of the adult population has literacy levels at or below Entry Level 3. The equivalent figure for numeracy is 49.1%.<sup>5</sup>

Ministry of Justice data also shows that 28% of prisoners who took an initial assessment had a learning difficulty or disability (LDD) confirmed through a LDD assessment. However, this is not a comprehensive figure – the report notes that, “Learning difficulty/disability assessments are not required for all prisoners; we do not know how many of the prisoners that were not assessed have an LDD.”

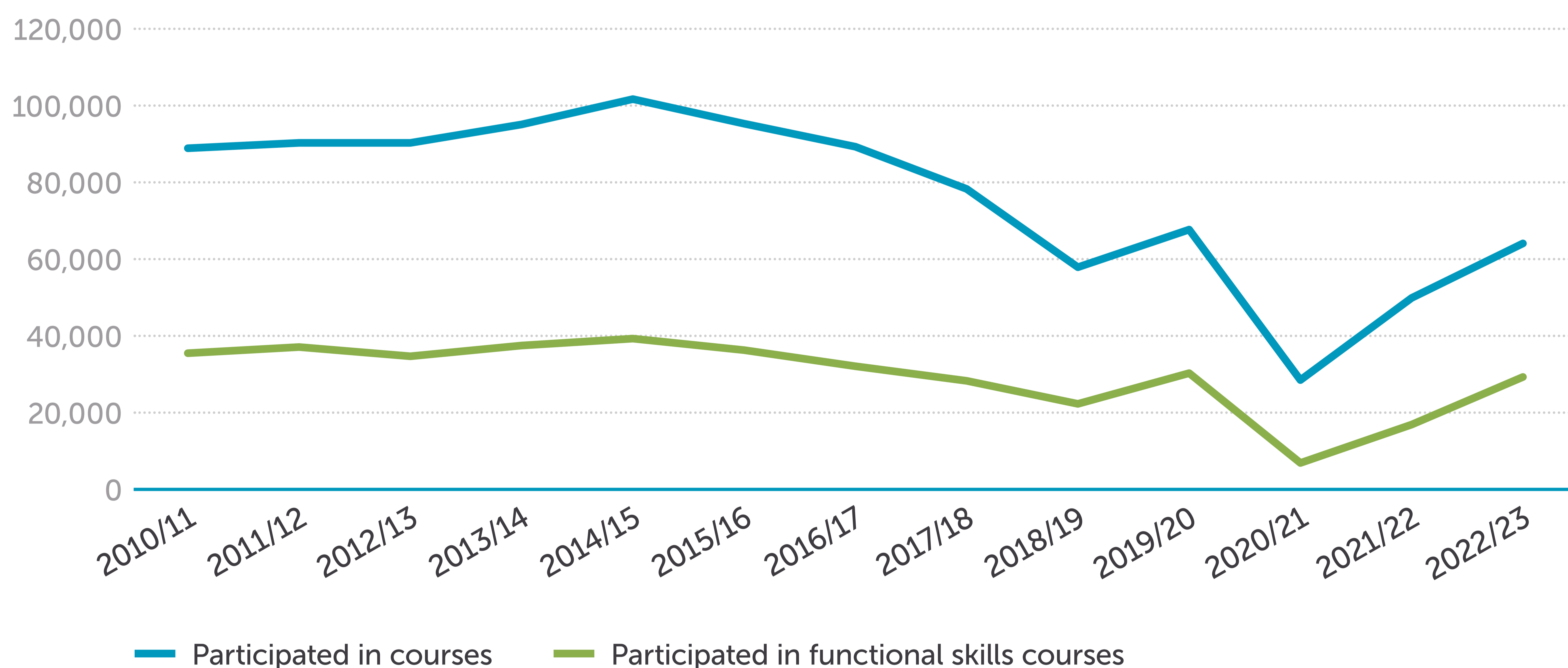
Previous research has found that just 53% of people in prison reported having at least one qualification (including GCSEs/O Levels or equivalent and higher qualifications, and trade apprenticeships) prior to entering prison. By comparison around 85% of the general population had at least one qualification. Forty-two per cent of people in prison reported that they had been expelled or permanently excluded from school.<sup>6</sup>

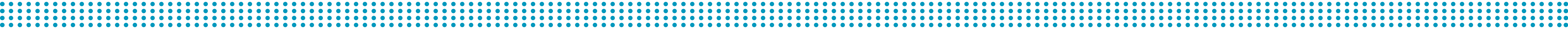
# What does prison education in England and Wales currently look like?

Responding to low levels of literacy and numeracy among people in prison, the core education provision in prisons in England and Wales focuses on literacy and numeracy up to Level 2, along with Information and Communications Technology (ICT), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and vocational training. In English public sector prisons this is delivered by independent providers under contracts, known as the Prison Education Framework (PEF) contracts. They run until March 2025 and the commissioning process for their replacements is taking place in the latter half of 2023. Arrangements in private prisons and prisons in Wales differ but the focus of the core provision is broadly similar.

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of people participating in education in England through the PEF contracts. Data for 2022-23 shows that 63,744 people in prison participated in courses and 54,401 (85%) made measurable progress by achieving at least a partial grade or level. Of these, 28,832 learners participated in functional skills courses (in English, maths, ICT or ESOL) and 19,329 (67%) achieved at least a partial grade or level. Only 1,582, however, achieved Level 2 in English and 962 achieved Level 2 in maths. While participation levels have recovered to close to what was being achieved prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, overall levels have been dropping since 2014-15, as this graph shows.

**Participation in education in prison: 2010/11 to 2022/23**





In addition to the core provision, access to distance learning courses on a wide variety of subjects – including Open University Access Courses, GCSEs and A Levels, and a range of vocational courses – is provided via PET, which purchases courses on behalf of learners from specialist course providers. This is funded through a combination of a grant from the Ministry of Justice, charitable funding raised independently by PET and a contribution from the prison. These courses are free to the learner.

People in prison can also participate in higher education. This is primarily through the Open University (OU), although other universities are exploring the potential of providing courses to people in prison, and funded by a student loan (although student loans are only available during the last six years of a prison sentence). Some prisons and universities have also set up Prison-University Partnerships, which bring universities into prisons to teach learners.<sup>7</sup> However these are mostly on hold awaiting new guidance from the Ministry of Justice, following the tragic terrorist attack at Fishmongers' Hall in 2019.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, some businesses work within prisons to provide vocational training to people in prison. The Ministry of Justice has set up the Future Skills Programme and the HMP Academies programme to take this work forward.<sup>9</sup> They are funded from the Employability Innovation Fund, which was announced in the Prisons Strategy White Paper, "to enable governors to work with more employers and training providers to repurpose workshops, deliver sector specific skills training to meet the changing needs of the economy and smooth the path from prison to employment."<sup>10</sup>

The Prisons Strategy White Paper also led to the establishment of the Literacy Innovation Fund, which has funded two pilot projects to test new reading and writing programmes. They are provided by two charities, will run for two years and are expected to work with around 750 people across 15 prisons.<sup>11</sup>

To complement core provision, prison governors can also buy in additional educational activities using a commissioning mechanism known as the Dynamic Purchasing System. This may include, for example, sport, art activities and peer reading schemes. Other organisations provide educational activities without being funded. All people in prison should have access to a library.



## The quality of prison education

HM Inspectorate of Prisons and Ofsted, who have responsibility for inspecting education provision within prisons in England, have expressed significant concerns about the quality of mainstream education in prisons. For example, Ofsted has said that, “Every year we report that it [prison education] is the worst performing sector we inspect. If anything, it has become worse still,”<sup>12</sup> while Charlie Taylor, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, has said that, “Education is a fundamental part of successful rehabilitation and yet it continues to be nowhere near good enough.”<sup>13</sup> This was echoed by the Ministry of Justice in their Prisons Strategy White Paper, which stated that, “The current quality of education provision is not good enough.”<sup>14</sup>

This is backed up by the outcomes of Ofsted inspections of prison education in recent years. As the table below shows, in 2021-22 only one of the 22 prisons inspected was judged to be good and none were outstanding. Half were found to be inadequate, the lowest ranking available.

### Ofsted prison education inspection outcomes: 2015/16 to 2021/22

	Total number of prisons inspected	Outstanding	Good	Required improvement	Inadequate
<b>2021/22</b>	22	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	10 (45%)	11 (50%)
<b>2019/20</b>	32	0 (0%)	9 (28%)	19 (59%)	4 (13%)
<b>2018/19</b>	45	1 (2%)	17 (38%)	20 (44%)	7 (16%)
<b>2017/18</b>	41	0 (0%)	16 (39%)	20 (49%)	5 (12%)
<b>2016/17</b>	41	1 (2%)	22 (54%)	12 (29%)	6 (15%)
<b>2015/16</b>	42	2 (5%)	14 (33%)	20 (48%)	6 (14%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>4 (2%)</b>	<b>79 (35%)</b>	<b>101 (45%)</b>	<b>39 (17%)</b>

Ofsted inspections only cover prisons in England. Prison education in Wales is inspected by Estyn, working with HM Inspectorate of Prisons. Estyn do not give an overall one-word judgement for each prison so it is not possible to compare the overall quality of provision.

## Does prison education work?

There is now a significant body of evidence focused on assessing the effectiveness of providing education to people in prison. The majority focuses on the impact on reconviction rates and on the chances of securing employment on release, and is broadly positive.

A rapid evidence assessment of the effectiveness of prison education in reducing recidivism and increasing employment conducted by academics at Manchester Metropolitan University and published in 2017 found that participating in education in prison has a positive impact on recidivism (reducing the likelihood of recidivism by approximately one-third) and on employment (increasing the likelihood of gaining employment by 24%).<sup>15</sup>

These positive findings are echoed in other research reviews. For example a review of the available evidence carried out by the Rand Corporation and published in 2013 concluded that people who participated in education in prison have a 43% lower chance of recidivism than those who do not, a reduction in the risk of recidivism of 13 percentage points. It also found that participants in prison education had a 13% higher chance of obtaining employment post-release. This study, as with others, found that the provision of prison education is cost-effective.<sup>16</sup>

A subsequent further meta-analysis of studies of prison education programmes in the US found, when focusing on the highest quality studies, that people participating in prison education were 28% less likely to reoffend compared with those who did not, although they did not find an impact on employment outcomes.<sup>17</sup> A more recent review of the evidence found that participating in education in prison leads to “significant decreases in recidivism, increases in employment, and modest increases in wages”. It notes, however, that “the impacts vary significantly across different types of education”.<sup>18</sup>

The majority of the studies that these reviews are based on are from the US. Evidence from England and Wales on the impact of participating in education in prison primarily comes from three sources.

The first is a joint report by the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Education, which looked at people who were released from prison in 2010 and linked information from the Police National Computer with learner records. Published in 2017, it found that people in prison who had taken part in education had a significantly lower reoffending rate on release from prison than their peers (34% compared to 43%). Interestingly, the report concluded that completing the course or learning activity appeared to make little difference to the reoffending rate, saying that “it is taking part in the learning activity which appears to have the most impact”.<sup>19</sup>

The second is a study of the impact of the provision of education in prisons under the ‘OLASS’ contracts (the predecessors of the current PEF contracts – see above – they similarly focused on literacy, numeracy and vocational qualifications up to Level 2). This study, conducted for and published by the Ministry of Justice, found that participating in education in prison has a positive impact on proven reoffending and employment one year

after release. Learners were approximately 7.5 percentage points less likely to reoffend within one year of release than people in prison who had not participated in education and were 1.8 percentage points more likely to be in employment one year after release. This report also shows that investment in prisoner education is cost-effective, noting that the benefits outweigh the costs by a ratio of approximately 5:1. It also notes that whether the learner achieve a learning aim or not does not seem to affect their outcomes in terms of reoffending or employment.<sup>20</sup>

The third main source of evidence on the impact of prison education in England and Wales is reports published by the Justice Data Lab (JDL). The JDL assesses the impact of organisations or programmes working in the criminal justice system by comparing outcomes for participants with otherwise similar non-participants.<sup>21</sup> The organisations that deliver education in prison and have tested their impact via the JDL are PET, the OU and City & Guilds.<sup>22</sup>

The latest analysis of the impact of participating in a distance learning course funded by PET, published in 2021, found that 18% of the people who received grants for distance learning through PET reoffended during the one-year period after release. This was significantly less than the comparison group (23%). They also committed fewer further offences, and those who did reoffend committed their first further offence later than the comparison group. It also found that 40% of the people who received grants for distance learning through PET were employed during the one-year period after release. This is significantly more than the comparison group (33%).<sup>23</sup> These findings echoed the findings of earlier JDL analyses published in 2014,<sup>24</sup> 2015<sup>25</sup> and 2018.<sup>26</sup>

The 2021 analysis also found that people who received grants for distance learning through PET and did not get a job after release were less likely to reoffend than members of the comparison group who were also not in employment. The same is true for those in employment, with those in employment who received grants for distance learning through PET less likely to reoffend than those in employment who did not. This suggests an impact on reoffending distinct from the increased likelihood of employment. Analysis carried out by Pro Bono Economics of the outcomes of the JDL's analysis of PET's work, and published in 2015<sup>27</sup> and 2020,<sup>28</sup> confirmed that it is cost effective.

Analysis by the JDL on the impact of the OU's programme of higher education in prisons found that 14% of the people who participated in higher education with the OU reoffended during the one-year period after release. This was significantly less than the comparison group (18%). It also found that participating in higher education with the OU decreased the number of proven reoffences during a one-year period.<sup>29</sup> Analysis of the reoffending of people who had registered for a City & Guilds course while in prison found that participants were less likely to re-offend, had a lower frequency of reoffences and took longer to reoffend than the comparison group.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, there is some limited research capturing learners' views of prison education, in particular PET's *Brain Cells* report<sup>31</sup> and the Prison Reform Trust's *Time to Learn* report.<sup>32</sup> This research highlights the benefits that learners themselves identified from participating in education. These benefits included keeping their minds occupied while in prison, using their time in prison productively, and helping to secure employment and more generally

improve their prospects on release. Participants in the research also noted that they thought that participating in education in prison had improved their self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline and communication skills. Given the importance of these outcomes, more research capturing learners' views would be beneficial.

## What works?

As discussed above, much of the existing evidence focuses on the impact of prison education. There is less evidence that looks at what makes for an effective prison education programme and therefore could inform future implementation.

This gap in the evidence base led the authors of the meta-analysis published by the Rand Corporation mentioned above to conclude that the current literature does not tell us what it is that makes specific programmes effective, going on to say that "there is a need to undertake studies that 'drill down' to get inside the black box and identify the characteristics of effective programs in terms of such variables as curriculum, dosage, and quality."<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the study conducted by academics at Manchester Metropolitan University concluded that there is a need for more research to "consider how and why education 'works'."<sup>34</sup>

However, the research carried out on behalf of the Ministry of Justice on prison education provision identified some key enablers to good quality delivery. They included good partnership working between the provider and the prison and the flexibility of the provider and the prison, particularly their willingness to adapt processes to support more effective delivery of learning. Barriers to effective delivery that were identified in the research included constrained resources and funding rules and processes that were viewed as inflexible or insufficiently tailored to a prison setting.

In relation to literacy and numeracy provision, other factors identified included having processes in place to support attendance, having an encouraging learning environment, the importance of engendering learner motivation, and addressing challenges created by the prison regime (for example three-hour sessions, structured around regime timings, were too long for many learners). Barriers to the delivery of vocational courses were more structural, with short average lengths of stay in some prisons and insufficient prison infrastructure (for example facilities and space for workshops) both identified. The research also noted the importance of having sufficient specialised staff to work with people with LDDs.<sup>35</sup>

In order to carry out their inspections, Ofsted and Estyn also identify the elements that they see as comprising good quality delivery. Ofsted inspections are conducted using the *Handbook for the inspection of education, skills and work activities in prisons and young offender institutions*.<sup>36</sup> It sets out the criteria that inspectors use to judge the quality of prison education and the main types of evidence used, and is aligned with the Ofsted education inspection framework.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Estyn has a *Guidance handbook for the inspection of learning in the justice sector (adult prisons)*, which sets out their inspection approach and underpins the judgements that they make on the quality of provision.<sup>38</sup>

When judging the overall effectiveness of education provision Ofsted looks at four measures, the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, and leadership and management. Within the quality of education measure, inspectors look at intent, implementation and impact. In evaluating intent, inspectors primarily consider the curriculum leadership provided by senior and subject leaders, focusing on factors that contribute to learners receiving education and training that enable them to achieve well. In evaluating impact, inspectors focus on what prisoners have learned, and the skills they have gained and can apply.

In evaluating implementation, inspectors focus on how the curriculum is taught at subject, classroom or workshop level. In doing this they consider the following factors, reproduced in full from the handbook:

- Whether teachers, trainers and instructors have expert knowledge of the subjects that they teach, including reading, as appropriate. If they do not, are they supported to address gaps so that prisoners are not disadvantaged by ineffective teaching, training and instruction.
- Whether teachers enable prisoners to understand key concepts, presenting information clearly and promoting discussion.
- Whether teachers check prisoners' understanding effectively, and identify and correct misunderstandings.
- Whether trained peers are deployed as mentors to work closely with staff to provide focused individual guidance and help for prisoners.
- Whether leaders and teachers have designed and are delivering the subject curriculum in a way that allows prisoners to transfer key knowledge to their long-term memory. The curriculum should be sequenced so that new knowledge and skills build on what prisoners know and can do, and prisoners can work towards defined end points.
- Whether teachers ensure that prisoners embed key concepts in their long-term memory, and apply them fluently and consistently.
- Whether teachers use assessment to:
  - » check prisoners' understanding in order to inform further teaching, training and instruction
  - » help prisoners to embed and use knowledge fluently
  - » develop prisoners' understanding
  - » help prisoners to gain, extend and improve their skills and not simply to memorise disconnected facts.
- Whether prisoners' employment-related skills are recognised and recorded.
- Whether Release on Temporary Licence is used to enhance prisoners' employment or training skills and prepare them for release.

Taken together, these factors are used by Ofsted to decide whether the quality of education in a prison is good.

Estyn uses five inspection areas to assess the quality of education provision in prisons in Wales, which are:

- Standards, where the expectation is that learners achieve and attain the best possible outcomes and standards in their education, work and activities
- Wellbeing and attitudes to learning, where the expectation is that learners feel safe in education, work and activities and develop behaviours that help them to minimise reoffending
- Teaching and learning experiences, where the expectation is that learners benefit from good quality teaching and a relevant range of learning experiences that equip them for their release from prison
- Care, support and guidance, where the expectation is that the provision of care, support and guidance helps learners to overcome barriers and to plan their progress successfully
- Leadership and management, where the expectation is that leadership and management of education, skills and activities improve the outcomes that prisoners achieve.

The expectations set by Ofsted and Estyn are based on their experience and expertise on what makes good quality education. On that basis, they provide insight into what can make for effective education provision.

Finally, in the research for the Prison Reform Trust's Time to Learn report learners were asked what would improve prison education. Among the things that were identified were the narrowness of the curriculum and the problems caused by differences in curriculums between prisons, the need for more personal choice, the importance of pay for education being the same as for work, problems caused by inflexible prison timetables and the potential for evening classes, the importance of prison officers' attitudes to education (whether positive or negative), and the need for alternative means of delivery outside classrooms, including peer learning schemes. The ethos of education departments was also seen as important, with learners valuing the studious atmosphere and being treated as 'a student, not a criminal'. Time and space for breaks was valued.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, in PET's Brain Cells report learners were asked what they liked about prison education and what would improve it. Issues raised included equal wages as for work, opportunities to learn during evenings and weekends, better access to information and communication technology, the availability of better resources in cells and more books, and making more higher-level courses and a broader range of courses available. The importance of learning mentors and of supportive, encouraging and motivational tutors and learning support staff was also highlighted.<sup>40</sup>

## What do we not know?

While there is significant evidence, summarised above, that prison education reduces reoffending and increases employment rates after release, evidence in other areas is more limited.

Firstly, we know very little about whether prison education is experienced differently by different groups of learners. In particular, there is very little research on whether education in prison, as it is currently delivered, is as accessible and effective for women as it is for men. Moreover, some research suggests that Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are less likely to access education than the overall population.<sup>41</sup> More research on the experiences of minority groups is required.

Secondly, most of the current research focuses on short-term outcomes post-release. It would be useful to explore longer-term outcomes. We also know about employment outcomes but there is only limited evidence<sup>42</sup> on whether people who participate in education in prison are more likely to participate in education in the community after they are released, potentially with long term benefits for employment and pay. More research on this issue would be beneficial.

Thirdly, as noted above we know relatively little about which different elements of participation in education have the greatest impact. Is it just participating at all that makes the difference (as some evidence suggests)? What about the quality of provision? Does education at different levels have different outcomes? Does the mode of delivery make a difference, for example whether it is in a classroom, one-on-one or online? What makes the bigger difference, academic study, vocational training or both together? Some of the meta-analyses mentioned above do begin to address these issues, but largely in a US context.

Finally, there is no robust research on the impact of participating in education on measures other than reoffending and employment (and, to a degree, wages). PET's learners, for example, routinely tell us that participating in distance learning improves their mental health and wellbeing. This is a potentially important benefit that is currently largely unevidenced. Similarly, participating education may improve self-confidence and people skills, but again there is nothing to evidence this at the moment.

These are all gaps in the evidence base that could usefully be filled.



## Conclusion

We know that prison education works. There is evidence from England and Wales and from elsewhere that participating in education while in prison reduces the likelihood of reoffending and increases the likelihood of prison leavers securing employment. PET's experience, and that of other organisations working in this area, is that it also has broader benefits in terms of the wellbeing of learners.

Given this, the priority for policy-makers should be to ensure that as many people in prison as possible are able to access education that meets their needs and will help them to turn their lives around and thrive. This should be complemented by the development of a research programme that helps us to better understand how to provide broad, good quality prison education that works for all learners.

## Further reading

In addition to the articles referenced above, the following might be of interest:

Education Select Committee (2022). *Not just another brick in the wall: why prisoners need an education to climb the ladder of opportunity*. Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/817/prison-education/news/170850/chaotic-adult-prison-education-system-crying-out-for-overhaul/>

Dame Sally Coates (2016). *Unlocking Potential A review of education in prison*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unlocking-potential-a-review-of-education-in-prison>

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2021). *Education in prison: a literature review*. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378059>

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- 6 Ministry of Justice (2010). *Compendium of reoffending statistics and analysis*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/199224/compendium-of-reoffending-statistics-and-analysis.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/199224/compendium-of-reoffending-statistics-and-analysis.pdf)
- 7 One evaluation (Denney, M. and Tynes, R. (2021). 'The Effects of College in Prison and Policy Implications', *Justice Quarterly*, 38:7, 1542-1566. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07418825.2021.2005122> has found that US 'College in Prison' models are effective in reducing reoffending, but they are different in scope and design from UK-based Prison-University Partnerships.
- 8 <https://www.judiciary.uk/prevention-of-future-death-reports/fishmongers-hall-inquests-prevention-of-future-deaths-report/>
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## Our vision

Our vision is of a vibrant, independent and resilient voluntary sector that enables people to transform their lives.

## Our mission

To support, represent and advocate for the voluntary sector in criminal justice, enabling it to provide the best possible opportunities for individuals and their families.

## Join Clinks: be heard, informed, and supported

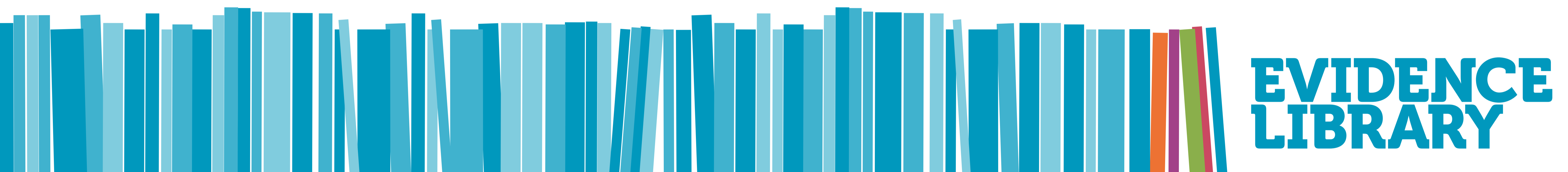
### Are you a voluntary organisation supporting people in the criminal justice system?

Join our network of over 500 members. Clinks membership offers you:

- A voice to influence change
- Practical assistance to be effective and resilient
- Support from a community of like-minded professionals.

Membership starts at just £80 per year and is free for organisations with little income.

[www.clinks.org/membership](http://www.clinks.org/membership)



### An online evidence base for the voluntary sector working in the criminal justice system

This article forms part of a series from Clinks, created to develop a far-reaching and accessible evidence base covering the most common types of activity undertaken within the criminal justice system. There are two main aims of this online series:

- 1 To increase the extent to which the voluntary sector bases its services on the available evidence base
- 2 To encourage commissioners to award contracts to organisations delivering an evidence-based approach.

Each article has been written by a leading academic with particular expertise on the topic in question. The topics are selected by Clinks' members as areas of priority interest. With the support of Russell Webster, Clinks is working towards building a comprehensive directory of the best evidence available across a wide range of criminal justice topics.

### Clinks

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