



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Prison learning and skills provision (better learning, better chances): impact assessment

An assessment on the impact of the prison learning and skills provision in Wales policy.

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Section 1: what action is the welsh government considering and why?

People in the justice system are often some of the most disadvantaged in society. Reoffending by those released from **custody costs society around £15 billion per year**. The **Wales Reducing Reoffending Plan 2022 to 2025** states prison leavers who get a job are up to nine percentage less likely to reoffend, helping them gain independence and contribute to the wider society.

By investing in learning and skills provision in prisons we can increase an individual's opportunities of finding sustainable employment on release, aiding safer communities, reducing the cost burden associated with reoffending and reducing the number of future victims of crime.

The "Better Learning, Better Chances: prison learning and skills provision in Wales" policy has a focus on delivery with a view to employability and, critically, works towards ensuring that the learning and skills achieved in prison successfully lead to employment on release. We will continue to work towards strengthening our employability offer to be more inclusive and responsive to people in prison and once they are released, preparing them for the continuously changing labour market.

Our **plan for employability and skills** sets out the Welsh Government's vision for employment in Wales. We, working closely with our partners, have a role in highlighting to employers the merits of this potential talent pool to address their workforce requirements and help mitigate some of the barriers people who have been in the justice system experience when seeking employment.

The Welsh Government has worked closely with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Wales, prison learners and prison leavers, education providers and third sector organisations to co-create this policy which sets out our expectations for the delivery of learning and skills support in the

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adult secure estate in Wales.

Our overall vision is to deliver a learning environment in prisons that engages and inspires individuals, helping them to become job ready and gain and retain sustainable employment.

Current position

The Welsh Government has funded the delivery of learning and skills provision and libraries in prisons in Wales since 2009, from monies provided to the Welsh Ministers specifically for this purpose by the UK government. This provision is delivered through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

Under this MoU, HMPPS and the Welsh Ministers set out how they will collaborate and work together in relation to the effective delivery and provision of learning and skills within prisons in Wales.

Policy Direction

The Better Learning Better Chances: learning and skills provision in Wales, will, for the first time, set out the Welsh Government's vision and policy direction for the delivery learning and skills support in prisons and "through the gate". This will contribute to our wider ambitions set out in the [programme for government \(PfG\)](#) and the [plan for employability and skills](#) to create a Wales where individuals of all ages can receive a high-quality education, with jobs for all, where businesses can thrive in a net zero economy that champions fairness and equality.

Learning and skills provision are powerful tools to tackle inequality. The policy aims to provide a provision that supports individuals to take up learning and

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meets employers' workforce needs, as well as a commitment to explore the development of intensive targeted support for those who are due to leave the prison estate:

- Helping young people realise their potential
- Tackling economic inequality
- Championing fair work for all
- Supporting people with a long-term health condition to work
- Nurturing a learning for life culture

Prevention

The Welsh Government believes in a rehabilitative criminal justice system and this approach is set out in the [Blueprints for Female Offending and Youth Justice](#), and the [reducing offending framework 2018 to 2023](#). The provision of high-quality learning and skills provision is a key pillar of effective rehabilitation. The purpose of learning and skills in prisons is to give individuals the skills and opportunities they need to unlock their potential, to gain sustainable employment and become assets to their communities. It should also build social and life skills and improve the well-being of individuals during their sentences and once released.

By investing in prison learning and skills, we can contribute to establishing safer communities and reduce the cost burden associated with reoffending as well as reducing the number of future victims of crime.

Section 8: conclusion

The Better Learning, Better Chances: prison education and skills in Wales policy outlines the vision for the delivery of learning and skills provision in Welsh

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prisons.

Achieving this vision relies on effective partnership working with all our delivery partners to ensure that our prison leavers have the holistic support required to address many of their complex needs as they transition from prison into the community.

Welsh Government has worked in close partnership with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, the third sector and delivery partners in the development of this policy. We have engaged with learners both in custody and in the community through several focus groups to ensure their views and experiences are at the heart of this policy. This collaborative working has been key to understanding the challenges and barriers faced by both learners and providers in the secure estate and to ensure the learning and skills achieved in prison successfully lead to further learning, training, or employability opportunities on release and contribute to reducing the risk of reoffending.

What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

Lack of learning and skills is a key factor associated with the risk of reoffending.

This policy works to explore the development of intensive targeted support for those who are due to leave the prison estate in Wales and are identified to have the most need, supporting commitments in the plan for employability and skills. It follows a person-centred approach, recognising the varying needs of individuals and working to maximise their opportunities for rehabilitation. The policy also seeks to build social and life skills and improve the well-being of prisoners during their sentences and once released. Through partnership working, the policy sets out to work with employers to eliminate barriers for employment of people leaving prison, as well as to address any negative stereotypes and perceptions.

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In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal:

- **maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals, and/or,**
- **avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?**

The well-being goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 underpin our approach to tackling inequality and ensuring a fairer Wales.

Being able to access learning and skills whilst in prison and appropriate support through the gate increases opportunities for employment and contributes to rehabilitation and a reduction in reoffending. In particular:

A prosperous Wales: the learning and skills provision will respond to labour market changes, meeting local and regional needs. It will work to address current and future skills gaps, for example, skills needed to meet the **Net Zero Wales** agenda. It will contribute to the development of a productive, skilled and a well-educated population and positively contribute to reducing unemployment.

A healthier Wales: by improving learning and skills we aim to help improve confidence and self-esteem and support prison leavers to become the best they can be.

A more equal Wales: by providing access to relevant learning and skills we will help individuals reach their potential, no matter who they are or what their background is. The policy will support learners with additional needs, providing relevant support and resources to enable them to effectively participate and engage in the classroom in prisons.

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A Wales of cohesive communities: through increasing the opportunities for learning and skills we help individuals to gain their independence and have a positive impact on their families and communities, reducing the risk of reoffending and making communities safer.

How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

Performance against our policy aims will be reviewed and monitored on a quarterly basis through meetings with HMPPS.

We will also engage with our offender learning and employability stakeholder group to continue to identify best practice and develop future interventions.

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