The Prison's Strategy White Paper – Catch22 response
February 2022
www.catch-22.org.uk

Catch22 is a national charity and social business that designs and delivers public services that build resilience and aspiration. Our 1,500 staff and volunteers work at every stage of the social welfare cycle, supporting 128 communities across the UK. Our vision is a strong society where everyone has a good place to live, a purpose and good people around them. As an organisation our principal aim is to help reform public services so that everyone can achieve these things.

Catch22 delivers offender management, resettlement and gangs work in prisons and in the community. At the heart of our rehabilitative and restorative work is the belief that relationships are crucial to effective desistance from crime. Last year we supported 26,000 people within the custodial estate through OMU, TTG and Custodial Gang Services. We supported 2,600 people with our offender focused community services – combining our community gang, violence reduction, personal wellbeing and reparation services. We also supported 12,000 victims of crime.

Because Catch22 also provides children's social care, alternative provision education, apprenticeships and routes to employment, our work in prison and probation services is informed by our understanding of the whole system – we understand the barriers to rehabilitation and the opportunities to intervene early. We work hard to be innovative and our programmes win awards. We care about giving people with convictions a better future, but also supporting victims, with Police and Crime Commissioners across Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Hertfordshire commissioning our victim services.

We have specified which questions we are responding to:

Chapter One – A Roadmap to Building the Future Prison Estate

1. Do you agree that these are the right long-term ambitions for the prison estate?

Transforming the approach to rehabilitation is an important vision, and one we have advocated for, for many years. The strong emphasis on meaningful education within the prison setting – with clear routes to employment – is hugely welcome. We know that having a job upon release greatly reduces the likelihood of reoffending, yet fewer than 4% of women are employed 6 weeks after leaving prison, and 11% of men[1].

In-cell learning will play a major part in this, and we welcome the new Prison Education Service to train up offenders with vocational skills including construction and coding. Our own work at Code4000 (see case study at the end of this submission), which teaches computer programming to prisoners, is proving very successful. 40% of those graduating from the programme have secured work immediately upon release, and none of the participants have so far gone on to reoffend.

Properly preparing prisoners for release will be key to the success of a strategy that both protects the public and gives ex-offenders a renewed purpose.

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[1] http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Working%20it%20Out%20FINAL%20NEW.pdf

- **Greater Prison Governor Autonomy**

Holding prison Governors account for prison leaver outcomes through increased autonomy and a drive for greater innovation are both positive shifts. Although, given the focus of the strategy on employability, it's important to note that, in the case of employability, there are a lot of agencies involved in improving employment outcomes of prisoners of which a lot the governor has limited - to no - input into their management. The recent changes in TTG resettlement are a great example of this whereby there is a greater reliance on external agencies (i.e. community based probation teams, CRS providers, DWP etc). These services are increasingly operating in-reach delivery models. As a result, many struggle to embed their service offering into the prisons which could result in silo working, duplication of services or limit their ability to make meaningful impact. Our experience delivering TTG Resettlement contracts demonstrated the value of having embedded resettlement services into the prisons. Being integrated into the prison regime promoted multi-agency working and allowed the Governor to have greater insight & influence.

Recommendation: In order to ensure that Governor autonomy has the desired impact, we need to streamline the organisational involvement in an individual's employment journey on release. For example, one organisation should be used to build a strong, trusted, relationships and then sign-post based on individual need.

- **Digital Infrastructure Improvements**

The need for a '*digital revolution*' in prison is way overdue, as a result of Covid we have seen some positive progress in rolling tech out into certain prisons which were previously thought impossible to do so. For example, in some of the Victorian prisons we work in, they rolled out in-cell telephony, as well as some swift updates to prison IT infrastructure to allow certain roles to operate remotely.

However, in our prison settings, the difference between digital technology in private sector vs. public sector prisons has been stark and the disparity brought to light through Covid in a greater way than before. Only three out of the thirteen prisons we work in had in-cell telephony at the start of the pandemic. Firewalls have also meant that our staff aren't able to access simple digital platforms to enable them to do their jobs most effectively and therefore help our service users. When prisoners have been required to have even less contact with staff, this has had a huge impact on wellbeing and rehabilitation - many prisoners for example have been unable to access the offending behaviour interventions they need, let alone educational or employment focused initiatives.

Even in prisons where tech is available there is still a risk adverse attitude towards embracing its full capabilities. We have also seen, through the delivery of our Code4000 programme, that there remain many layers of bureaucracy to navigate. This means that there is a dependency on purchasing through a limited number of hardware providers which is expensive, and not always as dynamic as we would want. Please see Code4000 case study at the end of this submission for more detail.

Recommendation: We need third sector organisations such as Catch22 to provide evidence and recommendations to the Ministry of Justice on how IT security can be adequately addressed and how we can circumnavigate risk-averse approaches to technology.

Chapter Three- The Role of Prisons and Probation in Cutting Crime and Protecting the Public

6. Where can we go further to give prisoners the skills to secure stable employment on release?

Investment in prison education should have a transformational effect on the ability of an individual to succeed in employment and therefore many other aspects of their life on release. Re-offending rates would be reduced and communities strengthened.

Given that almost half of prisoners have been excluded from mainstream education coupled with the referenced high population of those with a learning difficulty or disability, there needs to be a greater focus of delivering pertinent and engaging educational services. Our current experience of Prison education is that it can feel stagnant, and prisoners not always want to engage with. Needs be greater focus on alignment with future employment aspirations furthermore, embedded learning practices

Currently prison education varies hugely in both quality and type of opportunity across the estate. This is impacted by a multitude of factors –the disconnect between a sentencing plan and education plan, the varying quality of the buildings, and the impact this has on opportunities available, alongside a dangerous lack of access to digital technology and a lack of prison specific training to equip prison educators with the tools they need to effectively work within prison settings.

Recommendation: A prisoner's education plan should be a key part of their sentencing plan which itself should be linked into an overarching employability plan – tailored to individual need and the length of the sentence. Education programmes must also contribute towards addressing criminogenic needs as opposed to solely focusing on educational attainment to accelerate the removal of barriers to learning and support re-engagement with education. Furthermore, Education contracts must be jointly accountable with other involved prison agencies for employment outcomes. This will assist in promoting collaborative working.

We provide more in-depth evidence on this as part of our submission to the Education Committee inquiry into prison education in January 2021 here.

- **Short-term sentencing**

The educational opportunities available, and success, is also hugely impacted by short-term sentencing. As you have stated, we know that prisoners serving short sentences generally have worse outcomes than those serving longer sentences; the reconviction rate (58.9%) is 17.3 percentage points greater than the general reconviction rate for all individuals released from custody (41.6%). Any Short Service Function should also have a focus on education and employment support, alongside the mental and physical health support. Furthermore, we need a greater focus on community sentencing.

We have noticed a lack of confidence from judges and magistrates which is seeing the reduction in number of community sentences being issued. This is often rooted in a lack of understanding on what is available, how these options will be managed and their effectiveness. We are concerned that this lack of understanding around effectiveness is being caused by poor consideration of the role of rehabilitation in community sentencing, as opposed to solely focusing on punishment i.e. unpaid work such as litter picking which lacks a meaningful rehabilitative focus and a small % of ETE hours being utilised.

Recommendation: There needs to be a focus on what can be achieved through community sentencing in terms of addressing criminogenic needs and reducing re-offending. We believe that the new model needs to evolve community sentencing options and reignite the 'community' aspect by unlocking the potential, accountability and capacity that already exists within communities. This would provide a wide spectrum of innovative, meaningful and effective community sentencing options – with a focus on supporting sustainable employment.

- **Work experience**

We support the presumption in favour of ROTL, as previous risk adverse attitudes have overruled the rehabilitative opportunities ROTL could provide. Furthermore, we have seen positive progress made through the availability of real-life corporate work experience to prisoners. Timpson's is a great example of what can be achieved through ROTL placements which then progress onto paid employment post release. However, we need to ensure that this experience aligns with the labour market needs of the resettlement regions, as well as the right kind of support to transition this experience into sustainable jobs upon release. We have seen examples in prison where prison industries are supporting corporate need with manufacturing, training individuals to a high skill level but then the corporates not committing to offering jobs upon release.

Recommendation: HMPPS needs to shift the narrative for businesses to engaging with prisoners away from doing it for good social value to an opportunity to tap into a valuable recruitment pool. Social value should be intrinsic. With the high vacancy rates faced by many businesses, recruiting a highly skilled, already trained workforce should be an obvious business choice. An internal review of labour market need in the resettlement areas of each prison must be undertaken, so that education provision can properly reflect the market demands for employment. This, in turn, must be married with prisoner aspiration, so that prisoner education can be tailored for the right employment prospects for the individual. We also need to find a way to incentivise local employers who are willing to offer employment to prisoners and willing to be matched to a specific prisoner cohort by guaranteeing supported training, apprenticeship or job offer.

- **Resettlement passports**

There have been really positive developments, and the right level of aspiration, through the roll out of employment boards, alongside the introduction of video technology for interviews and greater involvement with DWP, as well as support with ID's, Bank Accounts and CVs. A Resettlement Passport which takes all of this into consideration will be really powerful, however we need to think about how this will all be sequenced and supported into outcomes. This idea has been on the table for years with little to no visible progress. The current challenge is there are various agencies involved in a Person in Prison (PIP) resettlement journey, which requires expert, joined-up working to avoid duplication. We know that the most impactful public services, are the ones built on the principle of developing single-point, trusted relationships, with professionals who can navigate wider systems and sign-post. Therefore having this centralised platform may support joined-up working and ensuring progress is being shared. It would also provide greater transparency as to who is responsible for different aspects. However, this will require all the different agencies to provide timely and accurate updates on this. Our current experience with the usage of the likes of P-Nomis is often poor with key agencies solely using their own systems (healthcare good example of this) which creates silo working. The passports may also support appropriate and streamlined referrals into the new CRS services and the new HMPPS Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS); in our experience the custodial referral pathway into these services is currently underutilised and this may support and address.

Recommendation: The Resettlement Passports must be considered alongside an approach to streamline the agency engagement an individual has. They should be delivered through one organisation, who can support an individual in custody, through the gate, and into the community.

Code4000 Case Study in response to 'Where can we go further to give prisoners the skills to secure stable employment on release?'

Code4000

Newly merged with Catch22, Code4000 delivers computer programming training, or coding, in UK prisons and is the first organisation of its kind in Europe. Our curriculum guides a novice programmer through their very first steps in coding to becoming a full-stack (fully trained) software developer.

Many Code4000 graduates have gone on to set up their own web-development agencies, and we have pioneered employment into the Financial Technology sector with graduates now working as software developers in high-street banks. With more prison leaders looking to secure a Code4000 academy in their establishment, we hope to reach more people with our innovative curriculum and change yet more lives through teaching tech. We also enable regular workshop visits from volunteers in the tech sector who deliver training in addition to our curriculum, including from a large international data company.

Code4000's experience, demonstrates how important it is that the link between skills and employment should be considered at all times. Each education or skills and training activity should have a clearly defined employment route, that adds purpose to the activity. At Code4000, we offer a huge package of self-led learning that is proven to inspire, however, with the current availability of in-cell tech, there is little that can be done in class (albeit with some compromise in quality) that can't be done in-cell. We think there's some value from the basic digital literacy perspective too, learning digital skills "on the side" that fundamentally support other training and skills and, therefore, job prospects. By way of example, Catch22 and Nominet's recently published report looking at the barriers disadvantaged young people face to digital skill demonstrates that digital disadvantage reinforces and exacerbates the barriers for disadvantaged people trying to move into work.

At Code4000, we also work to address a skills and therefore recruitment shortage. We can provide employers with skilled employees immediately, either remotely in-custody, or on release. It also means that we are giving prisoners tangible skills for their lives on release turn to us for staff even while they are still resident, a lot of coders work remote anyway.

One challenge that we face as a digital skills provider in prison, is variability in the quality and availability of in-cell technology. We currently have a working proposal for the first women's prison on how we would manage coding training for students using in-cell laptops or outside of classroom equipment . The problem is that we don't know what in-cell technology will be available, what the laptops would look like, how much of our content would work and how much we would have to redevelop. A key part of this proposal is ensuring that there is a single co-ordinator appointed who would go from site to site to support individuals with accessing their training and build a bespoke support package for each learner.

Recommendation: There needs to be some clarity on what in-cell technology will look like and how consistent that is across the entire estate (public and private), as well as a more innovative approach to digital solutions, such as security-controlled tablets. In order to deliver the most impactful digital training programmes, we would need to know high levels of detail such as the interface for getting content on laptops, what document formats are supported, how heavily locked down the laptops

are etc. We see a lot of providers falling foul of existing in-cell technology and developing content with turns out to be incompatible. This means that many successful programmes could fail entirely due to a lack of investment in digital infrastructure. A department or key team within Ministry of Justice could be developed to manage this area of work, forming strong bonds with organisations like Catch22 and those working to deliver successful digital employability programmes.