

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM - A CONSULTATION

This consultation focuses on education for young people supervised by the youth justice system (age 10-17, across England only). It follows a commitment in the publication 'Reducing Re-Offending Through Skills and Employment: Next Steps' (December 2006), and seeks views on issues for young offenders' access to and participation in education, training and employment; the curriculum offer; workforce development; and the accountability framework for young offenders' education.

### **The Prince's Trust: a brief introduction**

The Prince's Trust is a charity that believes in young people who often don't believe in themselves. We seek out those young people that need our help the most and work with young people who struggle at school, are in or leaving care, are long-term unemployed or have been in trouble with the law. We work with young people aged 14-30 to help them get back into work, education and training.

The Prince's Trust is helping to break the cycle of crime by offering offenders training and support so they can turn their lives around and give back to society. In 2005/6 over 3,500 participants on Prince's Trust programmes were offenders or ex-offenders. Almost 65% of the (ex)offenders we assisted moved into employment, self employment, further education or training.

The Trust's age range starts at 14, and we recognise that many young people who come to us may already be offending or at risk of offending. We therefore work on reducing their offending behaviour and do this through a number of programmes, e.g.:

**xl clubs**, which are team-based programmes of personal development based in schools for pupils aged 14-16 'at risk' of truanting and under-achievement. Clubs aim to improve attendance, self-esteem, motivation and social skills and enable young people to take part in a community project. By engaging young people back into education, we are helping them to increase their basic skills and reduce their likelihood of getting into crime. In 2005/6 13,886 pupils took part in xl in more than 621 schools across the UK. The Prince's Trust has piloted the use of xl outside of mainstream education, for example in PRUs and at a YOI, and is looking to expand this provision.

**The Team Programme**, which is a 12 week personal development programme for 16-25 year olds (the majority who are unemployed) to develop their confidence, motivation and skills through teamwork in the community. In 2005/6, 8,802 took part in the programme in over 300 locations across the UK. 71% of unemployed participants find work or enter full time education or training after completing the programme. Through the Team programme, The Trust contributes more than £4.75m to local communities through community projects.

The Trust's success is dependent on the strength of its partnerships, and we work with a range of statutory and voluntary organisations to provide better outcomes for offenders, e.g.: Youth Justice Board, Probation Service, prisons, NACRO and Clinks. The Trust supports the Smart Justice campaign for alternatives to custody, and is part of the

Coalition on Social and Criminal Justice and the Standing Committee for Youth Justice. The Trust also works with the Police, the Ministry of Defence and Fire Service to build community confidence.

Many of the young people The Trust works with have complex needs that need an holistic multi-agency support system. One intervention on its own will not necessarily help break the cycle of offending. The Trust actively engages with the multi-agency approach and works with specialist partners such as Mind, Rethink, Addaction and Drugscope.

The Trust understands and acknowledges the strong link between mental health and offending. Our programmes help develop self-confidence and motivation, improving the health and wellbeing of young people. 76% of young people who participated in a Trust programme during 2005/6 report higher life satisfaction than one year ago. Comparable rates amongst unemployed 16-24 year olds in the general population are 34%<sup>1</sup>.

### **The Prince's Trust's response to the consultation**

The Prince's Trust welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this debate on issues for young people's participation in ETE within the criminal justice system, whilst making the point that much of our work in this context is with young people aged 16 and over.

The Prince's Trust held a seminar in December 2006 ("Breaking the Cycle of Offending"), where young people were able to give their first hand experience of the criminal justice system to key policy makers, and identified some key actions that would contribute to reducing re-offending. The Prince's Trust's response includes some of the findings from this event, and the Research Focus Group work which took place before the seminar. Our response, therefore, is informed by real consultation with the people who matter, as well as our experience of delivery.

We have focused on the following consultation questions:

Participation in education, training and employment – all questions

Delivering a relevant curriculum – 1, 2, 3

Accountability for young offenders' education – 2 and 4

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<sup>1</sup> British Household Panel Survey 2004

## PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

### CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

- 1) **Participation in custody:** What more needs to be done to ensure that young people undertake appropriate full-time education, training and employment programmes in custody?

“It’s like everyone is an individual, and one idea has worked from one person doesn’t mean it will work with another. Having an individual approach rather than a blanket approach to everyone.”<sup>2</sup>

**A.** Programmes have to be relevant to the individual, addressing their needs, rather than focusing on the needs of the custodial institution to reach certain targets. It is important to recognise as well that, for some young people, ETE will not be appropriate until their mental and physical health, substance misuse and attitudes, thinking and behaviour issues have been effectively addressed.

The Prince’s Trust offers programmes which support personal development, life skills, and education and employability, but we do not have specialist expertise, for example, in drug misuse, homelessness or mental health. We form partnerships with organisations offering specialist support which can complement our own programmes. In the context of custody, two significant factors can help participation:

1. **Consistency of delivery:** education and training programmes need to be available for long enough to make a difference, including across changes of custodial establishment, and being able to take credits between institutions ( as set out in the Raising Expectations consultation paper that, by 2013, all vocational qualifications will be unified and part of a credit and qualifications framework to make it much easier to recognise achievement when people move location – they will be able to carry the credit from completed units with them and continue to take further units elsewhere.)
2. **Positive role models:** The most effective role models are those who can present a realistic future i.e. have participated in education and training in custody themselves and can demonstrate the benefits through their own life opportunities. Following the “Breaking the Cycle of Offending” seminar in December 2006, where young people unanimously said they wanted tailored 1-2-1 support from people with similar backgrounds, The Prince’s Trust is developing a programme which recognises the complex needs of offenders and offers ongoing support using fully trained ‘Supporters’ who have broken the cycle of offending and now live successful lives.

In our experience, the most effective joined up work is via a “trusted adult” who can support young people between services and agencies. This worker might be employed by any agency or be a volunteer; the significant factor being that they have credibility with the young person and a trust which develops over time.

- 2) **Ensuring effective transitions:** How can we improve the transition from custody to

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<sup>2</sup> Prince’s Trust Offender Seminar - QA Research: Findings from Focus Groups November 2006

community, so that young people can continue in sustainable and effective programmes?

“The problem with prison is you try to fix things just as they are about to leave”<sup>3</sup>

**A.** Qualifications, and attendance on courses in prison, should be transferable to college and count towards further qualifications. Prison programmes should not exist in isolation from mainstream ETE.

It is vital that the resettlement process should begin as soon as young people enter custody. External agencies have to be part of that process, so that early identification of need within the community can be made, and programmes within custody are tailored to that need. This is particularly true where custodial sentences are of short duration.

Assessment of individual need is a pre-requisite for identifying the most effective programmes. The Prince’s Trust uses a range of internal tools to help this assessment process, but, wherever possible, we use assessments made previously by other professionals working with the young person. The “passporting” of assessment data can speed up the process of assessment, and reduce duplication and confusion for the young person. Ultimately, this will lead to the selection of the most appropriate education and training.

- 3) **Participation in the community:** How can we incentivise the ‘mainstream’ system to meet the needs (and deliver appropriate programmes) for young offenders and improve the range of provision? How can we strengthen relationships between youth offending teams, custodial institutions, local authorities and education providers to increase access to appropriate provision for young offenders?

“For me, The Prince’s Trust, or any of those things that have helped, they are signposts, they are programmes that give you programmes...(Male, Glasgow, Breaking the Cycle Project)”<sup>4</sup>

**A.** It is not always the case that the “mainstream” system can meet the needs of, and deliver appropriate programmes for, young offenders. The mainstream should recognise the value of the Third Sector in meeting those needs, and support them accordingly. Better links need to be made by the statutory agencies to alternative service providers, who support young people back into mainstream education, where appropriate. The Prince’s Trust’s Team Programme, (a 12 week personal development programme for 16-25 year olds (the majority who are unemployed) to develop their confidence, motivation and skills through teamwork in the community), contributes more than £4.75m to local communities through community projects.

- 4) **Equality of opportunity:** Are there any more measures we need to consider in order to ensure that all young offenders, regardless of race, age, disability and gender, are able

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<sup>3</sup> Ex-offender, Breaking the Cycle Project, 2007

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

to participate in education, training and employment?

“...they label you just because you haven’t done your GCSEs, they don’t think you are capable....Just because I haven’t, doesn’t mean I can’t do them”<sup>5</sup>

**A.** The Prince’s Trust has a clear diversity and equality policy. We believe that by improving the diversity of our workforce of staff and volunteers to reflect the diversity of the wider community we serve, we will encourage and increase the participation of young people in our programmes. The same will be true around participation in ETE. We are committed to increasing the mix of young people on our programmes, to introduce them to other cultures, ideas and beliefs, in order to support community cohesion.

In addition, assumptions should not be made about young people’s capacity for ETE, whether this is on the basis of their race, age, disability, gender or background. For example, young people have identified that statutory agencies have lower expectations of their intelligence because they have experienced disaffection.

- 5) **Incentives for participation:** What can we do to improve incentives for young offenders to encourage participation in education, training and employment?

“Being able to participate in decision making....so they can feel that they have had an input in to a decision that affects them”. Ex-offender, Breaking the Cycle Project, 2007<sup>6</sup>

**A.** The Prince’s Trust research for the offender seminar found that a key element for some young people was involvement in the decision-making process. They felt it would be valuable because, as well as being able to make decisions about what affects them, it could have a knock-on effect upon their self-esteem.<sup>7</sup>

When The Prince’s Trust consulted pupils in Year 10 & 11 who were taking part in The Prince’s Trust’s xl programme for the Raising Expectations consultation, we asked them what would encourage them to stay in education or training after 16. The main reasons given were:

- money or EMAs
- more choice/activities/better courses
- felt that the incentive of staying in school to better their education/career prospects was incentive enough

Other suggestions included making driving lessons compulsory, more in-touch teachers, doing part-time work/school, more school trips, better quality food, being a role model, support from teachers & parents, not wanting to disappoint family, making it more fun, guaranteed job and no school uniform.

Many of these issues will be relevant to young people in custodial institutions.

- 6) **Data accuracy and monitoring:** How can we improve data monitoring on education,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

training and employment participation to ensure accurate understanding of performance and what works?

**A.** More work needs to be done on data sharing between agencies, supporting the Third Sector in understanding the data needs of statutory agencies, and identifying benefits other than exam pass rates. The development of so-called “softer” skills, including basic skills, are important steps in a young person’s development , are pre-requisites for the harder outcomes associated with education and employment, and need to be recognised as such, although we recognise that they are harder to measure.

## DELIVERING A RELEVANT CURRICULUM

### CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

- 1) **Assessment and information transfer:** How can we improve education assessment and information transfer to support professionals in meeting young offenders' personal learning needs and progress towards meeting them?

"[Worker] doesn't give up on you. You can just sit down and have a chat with her like you would a family member. I call her my auntie because you can sit down and talk to her like a normal person and she doesn't judge you and she doesn't have any pre-conceived ideas about you....she never gives up on you. She keeps giving me ideas and options for things you might want to do."<sup>8</sup>

**A.** Young people can be assessed many times by different agencies asking the same questions, and recording the same data. Not only does this waste time, it gives the impression that agencies are not joined up, and can be very frustrating for the young people, who will lose confidence in agencies' abilities to deal effectively with them and their particular needs. As a result, they can fall through gaps in the system, leaving them unsupported and at risk of re-offending. There needs to be a seamless transition of the young person between the different agencies, not only in transferring data, but also in ensuring from the outset that the original assessment has identified clear pathways, highlighting points along the way where different agencies will either take over responsibility, or work alongside other agencies to provide the necessary programmes and services. Such an assessment should be agreed and shared with the young person and their parents or carers, where appropriate. The Prince's Trust's research has found that young people valued their key worker at specific projects, whose role should and could include supporting that seamless transition.

In addition, young people identified the need for 121 support for offenders by ex-offenders.<sup>9</sup> The Prince's Trust is piloting this work in the South West with support from the Prison Service, the Probation Service and Drug Treatment Centres (see attached a briefing note which provides more detail of this pilot project).

- 2) **Curriculum in custody:** What reforms are needed to deliver a curriculum in custody which meets personal needs, is part of a consistent learning pathway that spans custody and community, is in line with the 14-19 curriculum reforms, and prepares young people for life, further learning and work?

"Don't move people so much between prisons – so we can complete courses. We need consistency of courses across different prisons".  
Ex-offender, Breaking the Cycle Project, 2007<sup>10</sup>

**A.** We are concerned that Statements of Special Educational Need do not apply in custody. We acknowledge that there is an expectation that SENs will be dealt with according to the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs, but consider this is

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Breaking the Cycle of Offending Report. 2007

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

not sufficiently robust to guarantee that the individual needs of young offenders will be met.

A consistent learning pathway can only be delivered where there is continuity of support by the same worker or agency, where credits can be transferred between institutions, and beyond when the young person leaves custody, and where the young person's emotional, physical and mental health issues have been effectively addressed

It is important that young people re-engage with education, training and employment through activities that will build their confidence and improve their social skills. This can be done through football or music, for example, The Prince's Trust has piloted a football based scheme with YOIs in the North West which engages young offenders. Get Off the Bench uses a 6 day programme of football and coaching activity which creates an "excitement" factor that can be used to involve the young people back into education and training. Get Off the Bench works with 15 to 19 year olds and its success is dependent on good partnership arrangements with Connexions, football clubs and other local organisations. It has been successfully operated with Lancaster Farms and Hindley YOIs.

- 3) **Curriculum in Community:** What needs to change to ensure that mainstream schools and colleges, pupil referral units, alternative education providers, and work-based learning providers can effectively offer learning programmes which meet the needs of, engage with and motivate young people in the youth justice system?

"When you leave prison there is a real lack of support. When you have an identity crisis it is harder to go the right path. You get rail roaded back into old ways". Ex-offender, Breaking the Cycle Project, 2007.<sup>11</sup>

**A.** Improvements to the transfer of information between agencies (as proposed in Raising Expectations by building on CCIS, although care needs to be taken on accessibility, and whether systems reinforce the criminalization of the young people it tracks) should enable mainstream education providers to understand at which stage in ETE the young person has reached

It is important that mainstream providers work closely with alternative providers who are able to bring different experiences to bear in working with young people, and who offer programmes that address the needs of the young person, which are not being met through formal education. The outcomes of many of these programmes do not fit neatly into curriculum targets: they need to be assessed and incorporated because, for many young people, they can make all the difference in whether they return to mainstream education or not.

Although the previous quote is from an older young person it illustrates a view widely expressed by young people leaving custody. In our experience, one of the biggest challenges is ensuring there is a programme to engage with immediately on release from custody. The Third Sector offers numerous very good programme opportunities

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid

with educational elements but these are often restricted by transient funding or restricted geographical availability. The government might be able to facilitate more co-ordination of these various programmes to ensure scale and accessibility.

The Prince's Trust, working with the Barking and Dagenham YOT has developed 'The Vibe' youth centre, which uses The Trust xl programme outside of its normal school environment to help 14-to 16-year-olds not in education because of crime.

The pilot, which began in December 2005, has been so successful that it is hoped it will become embedded in the Youth Offending Service's provision for 14-to 16-year-old offenders.

"Like school but you're doing activities instead of just sitting about in a classroom listening to someone rabbit on to themselves" Ex-offender, Breaking the Cycle Project, 2007<sup>12</sup>

One of the most consistent messages that has come from our own consultation with ex-offenders is the desire for workers or mentors who have, themselves been offenders and have experienced custody. Ex-offenders who have moved on in life have an ability to connect with young offenders which puts them at an advantage over someone without this experience. This "credibility" can be very helpful in influencing young people and motivating them in education and progression. Identifying, training and supporting ex-offenders into mentor or worker roles is time consuming and expensive but they provide a valuable "role model" capable of enhancing what statutory services are offering.

"For me, there could be a lot more mentoring from people who've been in your situation but have come out the other end. They can give guidance and support. For me, only an offender can understand another offender because it's about empathy" Ex-offender, Breaking the Cycle Project, 2007<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

## ACCOUNTABILITY FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS' EDUCATION

### CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

- 2) **Targets and funding:** What should be considered in ensuring that targets, performance indicators and funding across multi-agencies drive behaviours to best secure positive education, training and employment outcomes for young offenders? Which targets and funding streams cause the most difficulties?

**A.** Given the move to local delivery and accountability, it is important that national targets/performance indicators etc make sense at local level. There are some dislocations between the role of the YJB to set requirements and performance indicators for YOTs, and YOTs' accountability to local authorities. For the Third Sector, it means either that organisations that have national coverage need to negotiate on a local authority by local authority basis, or that small organisations delivering excellent services in one local authority area might not be able to develop and expand their services. This can lead to time-wasting and inefficiencies.

The Prince's Trust works closely with the LSC in the delivery of its programmes, particularly Team. However, Team can deliver other agencies' targets. The promotion of multi-agency partnerships with single funding streams would have the virtue of having a clearer remit and simpler processes around commissioning, and would reduce the potential for conflicting targets and KPIs. The current plethora of commissioning frameworks makes it difficult for the Third Sector to compete effectively. We would also look for improvements in cross-government co-operation, particularly around health and well-being, and educational attainment.

We are concerned that limiting access to programmes and support by age has adverse consequences for young people who cross age lines and who may then be left without the continuous support they need in order to continue to make significant and positive steps to turn their lives around.

- 4) **Incentives:** Are there any targets, inspections, funding streams, or wider disincentives that you think need to be addressed in order to provide incentives for key agencies to foster improved education and training outcomes for young offenders?

**A.** There needs to be greater flexibilities around funding streams, as many are age-bound, rather than stage-bound. It is important to recognise that many organisations do not view themselves as delivering the Government agenda on reducing re-offending, for example. Rather they focus on the individual. There is a need for greater sensitivities around what these organisations deliver, and a recognition that they can be innovators. They invest considerable time and expertise in work that is eventually mainstreamed; this could be recognised within funding arrangements.

More streamlining of targets, inspections and funding streams would assist the Third Sector, particularly the smaller organisations which struggle to meet the governance and reporting requirements.