

Mapping of Employability Service to Offenders in Glasgow

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Glasgow City Offenders and Employability Strategic Group commissioned a mapping study of employability support for offenders in the city. The overall aim was to provide an evidence base to inform its decision making. The core outputs in addition to this summary are the full report and a database of survey responses provided by 21 service providers in the city.

For the purposes of this report we have used the Workforce Plus definition of employability which describes it as:

“...the combination of factors and processes which enable people to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and to move into the workplace.”

Background and context

The scale of Glasgow’s challenge relating to offending behaviour is well established. The city’s crime levels and custody rates exceed the national figures by 42% and 84% respectively. Short term sentences account for a high proportion of custodial episodes. Of the 4,080 prisoners released back to Glasgow in 2009/10 79% had been in prison for less than one year and 65% for less than six months. The rates for young men are even higher.

Reconviction rates for Glasgow are also above the national average. Of the young male prisoners liberated into Glasgow, 57% have been reconvicted within 2 years.

Women account for a small proportion of overall prisoners, totalling 3.5% of those from Glasgow in June 2009. The incarceration rate for women with a charge proven against them is half that of men (7% against 14%) and reconviction rates for women are also lower.

Although a wide range of interventions have been developed to support offender employability, evidence provided in the Scottish Government Workstream Reports indicated that employment impacts are low, particularly for those leaving prison. Jobcentre Plus data indicates that at the point when the economy was buoyant only 2.4% of prisoners using their services proceeded into jobs. In an economic downturn with fewer opportunities, accessing employment will be even tougher – particularly where the media encourages perceptions of ‘more’ and ‘less’ deserving poor.

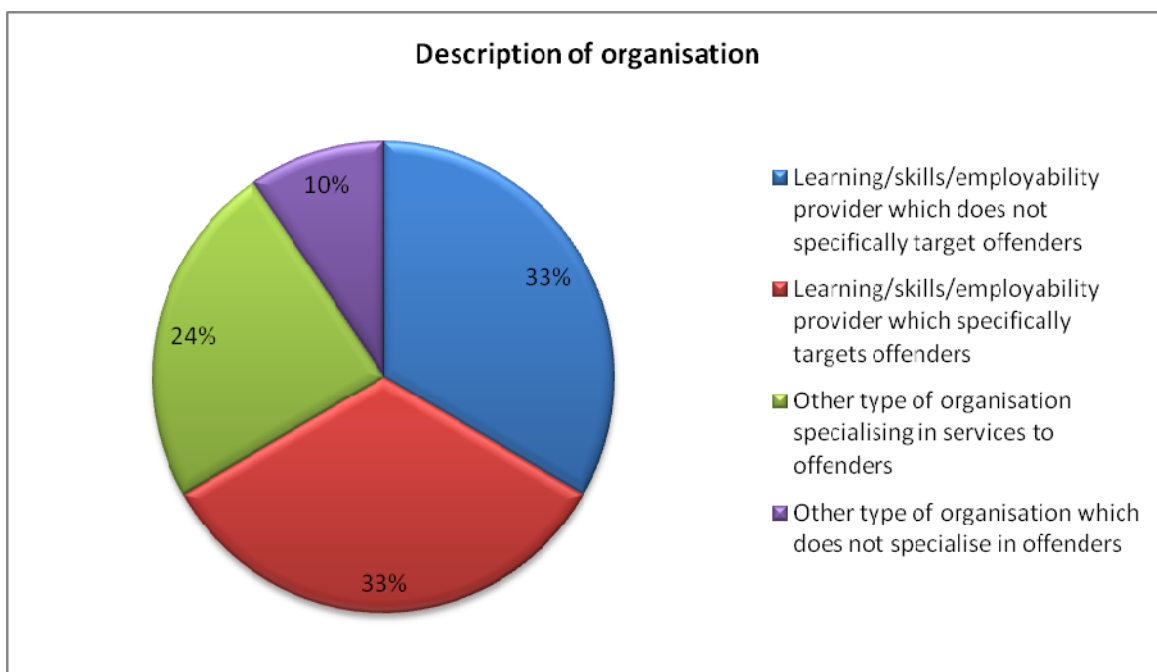
As well as a turbulent economic context, this work has been conducted against a background of frenetic policy development which applies equally to the Justice and Welfare to Work domains. In Scotland the Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act (2010) has introduced radical changes, with an emphasis on fewer short custodial sentences. The bill also allows for the introduction of the integrated Community Payback Orders (CPOs) which offer potential to strengthen the employability support offer. South of the border the Coalition Government has published an ambitious Green Paper which promises innovation and change. Although not pertinent to Scotland, some of its pilot activity – such as the launch of Social Impact Bonds – may offer models that can be implemented here.

The Coalition Government’s Welfare agenda is no less radical. It proposes significant changes to the benefits system, which may particularly affect offenders (most notably, proposed changes to the Employment and Support Allowance). In addition, the introduction of the Work Programme (anticipated in the summer of 2011) will place additional pressure on offenders to actively engage in return to work activity. Strongly built around an output-related-funding model, it remains to be seen whether this client group will be an attractive prospect for Prime Contractors.

Combined with a programme of public funding cuts, this scenario presents significant challenges – as well as opportunities – for those working to support offenders into sustained employment.

The Glasgow Service Map

Of the 21 organisations which responded to the survey, 47% were voluntary sector, 28% public sector and 24% ‘other’. The chart below illustrates the profile of respondent organisations.



62% provide city-wide services. The remainder, which focus on parts of the city, include LRAs and community-based organisations. 11 of the 21 organisations provide services to offenders in prison and of these, 9 also support offenders in the community. Of the 19 organisations delivering services in the community, 8 defined themselves as a criminal justice service.

The key messages from the prison-based services were that:

- The number of prisoners supported per annum ranges from 10 to 800
- The greatest number supported was in Barlinnie – 1,462 of which 76% were Glasgow residents
- 9 of the 11 have staff which continue to support prisoners post-liberation
- The 3 main targeting criteria are residential area, release date and sentence length
- 10 support short-term prisoners, 6 support long-term prisoners and 5 support remand prisoners

- The most common types of support are around debt/money advice, job-search support, confidence-building, vocational training and literacy/numeracy support
- Most clients are on the early stages of the employability pathway
- Organisations claim to have post-prison engagement rates of between 65% and 90%

The key messages from community based criminal justice services were that:

- 62% of the (8) organisations worked with prisoners released into the community, those on community-based sentences and young people at risk of offending
- Self-referral and 3rd party referral were the most common routes into these services
- Clients are more evenly spread across the employability pipeline (than prison-based providers) but still with a minority in the latter stages
- 4 of the 5 organisations providing learning/skills/employability support directly supported around 1,100 offenders in 2009/10 with individual agencies supporting between 100 to 500
- 8 organisations refer clients on to others for additional employability support and only 2 of these struggled to find appropriate providers
- Scottish Government, local authority, EU and trust funds were prevalent financial sources

The key messages from other community based organisations were that:

- Of these 11 organisations, 6 actively target offenders whilst the others do not. Only one of the latter group was unaware of offender user numbers
- 10 of them support short-term prisoners, 50% support long term prisoners and 36% provide a service to remand prisoners
- 64% of them are working with ex-prisoners who they have already been supporting
- Self-referral is the most common route into these services
- Apart from learning and skills, other support needs their clients present with include addictions (90% of organisations), housing (70%) and mental health (60%)
- Around 1,730 offender clients were supported in 2009/10 by these organisations with a caseload ranging from 20 to 1,000 clients
- Local authority funding was the most common funding source amongst these providers

Making Sense of the map – key fieldwork messages

Glasgow has a long track record of promoting offender employability. As part of this process, stakeholders identified what is already working well as well as the areas where there is room for improvement. They also pinpointed the threats and opportunities arising from the economic and policy changes.

What's already working well?

- The existence of a cross-city strategic partnership focused on offender employability
- Consensus on the core problem – high reconviction levels and limited statutory support for (the majority) of prisoners on short term sentences
- Range, scale and quality of provision – Glasgow relatively well-served with a mix of specialist and generic provision
- Significant resources – although reducing, still of some scale

- Partnership collaboration and innovative practice – latter often driven by city-based Trust Funds (in particular the Robertson Trust and Big Lottery Scotland)
- Understanding of what works – emerging consensus around models of effective practice

What's not working so well?

- Failure to reduce reoffending rates – raises questions around the impact of this investment
- Lack of a shared strategic vision
- Structural barriers – culture of competition amongst providers encouraged by funding models
- Lack of clarity and mutual understanding between the key professions
- Poor data and tracking problems – no consistent means of measuring impact, national reoffending data out of date
- Patchy support for families
- Limited employer engagement – and shortage of job opportunities

Where are the opportunities?

- Less money – may encourage collaboration and efficiency increases
- Organisational restructuring – key changes within most partner organisations
- Policy changes – including Community Payback Orders and the Work Programme
- One Glasgow's focus on young offenders
- Focus on step-changes (for example MOJ drivers supporting development of Social Impact Bonds)

Looking ahead, what might we worry about?

- Reduction of funding exacerbates competition amongst providers
- Loss of skills and experience within partner agencies
- Organisational changes hinder partnership working
- Negative impact of welfare reform on this client group

Emerging/Good practice and what it can teach us

There is a growing body of good practice in promoting offender employability. The report identifies some of the key features of these and provides examples already in place.

- Early intervention in prison – sustained through the gate

Established relationships which move 'through the gate' are widely recognised as being effective. A number of organisations throughout the UK already provide these, with the Routes out of Prison and Passport models already in place for city residents. In each case, the relationship with the offender is established pre-liberation. The 'Moving On' project which operates for young Renfrewshire prisoners takes this principle further by building the relationship from the induction point in prison.

- Trusted relationships and peer support models

Credibility with offender clients is another important success factor for support services. A number of organisations establish this by employing ex-offenders within their staff team. The Wise Group does this through its RoOP Life Coaches whilst in England this is the basis of the St Giles Trust model used in Peterborough Prison.

- Offering a holistic service – and the key role of housing

“You’re gonna be out in five weeks and then there’s a change and before you know it you’re in a hostel in a place you don’t know, surrounded by junkies and with £56 in your pocket. It’s no long before you’re back in here...” (Young man in Polmont Prison)

It is impossible to consider employability support in isolation. Unless primary considerations such as housing and addictions are addressed then it is difficult for offenders and those supporting them to plan further ahead. This study endorses other research showing that for women offenders housing is a particular priority. Across the city there are examples of agencies providing this holistic service to offenders.

- Involving employers and links to real jobs

Across the city there are ex-offenders gaining employment on a regular basis. There are also employers providing them with opportunities, including some who have made a commitment to supporting those who want to make a lifestyle change by taking up work. The Marriott Hotel group, through its work in Scotland and in North East England, is one such employer. There is scope to make better use of these success stories to tackle prejudices and attract other employers.

- Shared spaces for professional development – learning through doing

Although there is extensive collaboration in place, lack of mutual understanding between Justice and Employability staff was a recurring theme in this work. There are a number of successful examples of tackling this. One is the Changing Lanes pilot in Barlinnie which involved SPS staff delivering a guidance programme and working in tandem with the LRAs. Another is where LRAs have collocated Bridging Service staff with colleagues in CJSW – undertaken by GERA and others.

In addition there is the legacy of Equal Access to build upon.

- Shifting the financial risk

In a time of reduced budgets, securing public funds to support this agenda is increasingly challenging. In England the MOJ in partnership with a group of social philanthropists has developed the Social Impact Bond pilot in Peterborough Prison. This is a six year programme designed to support 3,000 prisoners released into the local community. Finance has been

- The Role of the college sector

The important role of mainstream providers – such as colleges – is another important issue from this work. The Passport programme – whereby prisoners enrol in college and are taught in prison – provides a good example of this. This kind of experience builds confidence and encourages offenders to enrol in Further Education. Equally, the work of John Wheatley College in Cornton Vale acknowledges the significant number of women returning to the city’s East End from that establishment.

However, the prevalent SPS contracting culture – where 2 colleges cover all establishments – is widely perceived as a deterrent for colleges to further engage with offenders. There are also reports that as budgets tighten and competition for places intensifies, those with offending backgrounds may struggle to gain college places.

- The importance of literacy and numeracy support

The survey returns highlight the significance of literacy and numeracy support for offenders and the range of organisations that currently offer this type of support. Of particular note is the Glasgow Literacies Link Project (ALLP) which provides “across the gate” support to offenders returning to the city from Barlinnie, Polmont, Cornton Vale - and more recently - Greenock prison. The approach of the project demonstrates many of the features of good practice suggested elsewhere in this report: initial engagement within the custodial setting; practical support on and after release; and linking/signposting offenders to a range of community based literacy and numeracy services. A further interesting development, which may have the potential to improve prison to post prison links to literacy and numeracy supports, is the introduction of the use of the Scottish Qualification and Credits Framework credit rating within the education offer provided by Motherwell College in Barlinnie¹. This process increases the options for agencies in the community to understand the nature and level of support provided to offenders whilst in prison, and to consequently “join up” their learning journey.

- New interventions

Glasgow has been fortunate to have been at the forefront of much of the innovative practice aimed at supporting offenders. Several of these – RooP and Passport amongst them – have already been mentioned. At the time of writing other models – such as Plan B which is being introduced at Polmont and Cornton Vale – are starting off.

Trying new approaches will remain important until the problem is solved. However, the Glasgow landscape is now congested with projects which began as pilots. Some balance is

¹ As of December 2010, four SCQF credit rated units were available within the Barlinnie service offer.

required with a priority being to establish agreed ways to evidence impact so that successful approaches can be mainstreamed.

The client perspective

The research included focus group discussions with prisoners in Barlinnie, Polmont and Cornton Vale. 17 prisoners participated in these, of whom 9 were first time offenders.

Most of the male prisoners had some previous work history. Four of the young offenders had previously worked in some sort of family business. Amongst the female participants, work experience was less likely.

Overall awareness levels of the available support were low. The Barlinnie participants were not well informed about available employability support. In Polmont the prisoners had been involved in various vocational training options as well as accessing services including RooP. The Cornton Vale group were clear that moving towards work was a low priority after housing and family issues.

In terms of throughcare priorities, the Barlinnie group also stressed the importance of housing. The young men were split between those with a supportive family and those without. The latter group were cynical of any offers of support (“They’re all full of false promises”) and saw their future prospects being entirely linked to their own efforts.

The key points emerging across these groups were:

- Low levels of awareness of available support – linked to issues around promotion and communications
- The centrality of secure accommodation as part of breaking the cycle
- Poor information sharing between support agencies

Conclusions and recommendations

Only 2.75% of prisoners returning to Glasgow in 2009/10 received statutory CJSW support. A large majority were those on short term sentences recycling between disadvantaged communities and prisons who are ineligible for such support. Although Glasgow has seen a growth in employability provision aimed at offenders in the past decade, it lacks co-ordination and coherence. Consequently, the employability support offer remains uneven.

The key priorities and our linked recommendations for the city’s offender employability strategy group are set out in the table below.

PRIORITY	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>1. Improving the community resettlement process for short-term prisoners returning to the city – especially from Cornton Vale and Polmont</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore the options to improve advance information sharing about prisoners being released to Glasgow 2. Ensure that the strategy group contributes to the city’s plans under the One Glasgow proposal – particularly relating to accommodation as a basis for employability 3. Promote the introduction of an end-to-end service identifier for all prisoners
<p>2. Improving the evidence base – particularly in relation to re-offending data, and the way in which projects funded within the city measure and report performance</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Co-ordinate the production of a shared set of indicators for use by offender employability projects 2. Provide a forum for sharing performance data on offender employability projects 3. Lobby the Scottish Government to improve the available data sets on reoffending
<p>3. Optimising the scope for improved strategic collaboration and co-commissioning across the city</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree the respective roles and responsibilities in relation to service commissioning at city level 2. Establish a mechanism which allows strategic partners to contribute to one another’s commissioning processes 3. Test this mechanism in relation to the design and procurement of CPOs
<p>4. Ensuring the existing offender employability support is aligned to the Work Programme</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine pros and cons of Day 1 entry and whether this would be worth pushing for 2. If so, use Glasgow’s established relationship with the DWP to lobby for a city pilot whereby ex-prisoners have Day 1 access to the Work Programme 3. Maintain close contact with the DWP and Ministry of Justice to ensure that Glasgow is well placed to host any Scottish pilots relating to Breaking the Cycle² 4. Contact the Work Programme Prime responsible for Glasgow (once appointed) to consider the strategic fit

² Although the Ministry of Justice Green Paper does not extend to Scotland it is possible that the DWP, at the request of the MOJ, will test some new approaches with this client group. In this even there may be scope for one of these to be piloted in Scotland

	between established provision and their delivery model
5. Promoting culture change and fostering improved joint working across the justice and employability sectors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share the output from this work and produce a glossary of terms relating to offender employability 2. Build on the EAS legacy through the design and promotion of events for operational staff across sectors supporting offender employability – focus on sharing good practice, clarifying roles and responsibilities, encouraging collocation etc. 3. Build on the Barlinnie pilot and strengthen links between Prison Officers and external providers 4. Actively engage supportive employers to showcase their work with service providers and other employers
6. Ensuring that offenders have access to mainstream services and that those services assign resources to meet their support needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support mainstream organisations which can play an important role in offender employability (e.g. Glasgow Life) to ensure that staff are aware of the client group’s support issues 2. Clarify with colleges and the Scottish Funding Council the role of the sector in supporting offenders – particularly ex prisoners

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