

House of Commons
Committee of Public Accounts

**REDUCING PRISONER
REOFFENDING**

Fifty-third Report of Session 2001–02

House of Commons
Committee of Public Accounts

**REDUCING PRISONER
REOFFENDING**

Fifty-third Report of Session 2001–02

*Report, together with
Proceedings of the Committee,
Minutes of Evidence and an Appendix*

Ordered by The House of Commons to be printed 17 July 2002

HC 619
Published on 5 September 2002 by authority of the House of Commons
London : The Stationery Office Limited
£11.00

Committee of Public Accounts

The Committee of Public Accounts is appointed by the House of Commons to examine “the accounts showing the appropriation of the sums granted by Parliament to meet the public expenditure, and of such other accounts laid before Parliament as the committee may think fit” (Standing Order No. 148).

Current Membership

Mr Richard Bacon MP (*Conservative, South Norfolk*)
 Mr Ian Davidson MP (*Labour, Glasgow Pollok*)
 Geraint Davies MP (*Labour, Croydon Central*)
 Rt Hon Frank Field MP (*Labour, Birkenhead,*)
 Mr Barry Gardiner MP (*Labour, Brent North*)
 Mr Nick Gibb MP (*Conservative, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton*)
 Mr George Howarth MP (*Labour, Knowsley North and Sefton East*)
 Mr Brian Jenkins MP (*Labour, Tamworth*)
 Mr Nigel Jones MP (*Liberal Democrat, Cheltenham*)
 Ms Ruth Kelly MP (*Labour, Bolton West*)
 Mr Edward Leigh MP (*Conservative, Gainsborough*) (Chairman)
 Mr George Osborne MP (*Conservative, Tatton*)
 Mr David Rendel MP (*Liberal Democrat, Newbury*)
 Mr Gerry Steinberg MP (*Labour, City of Durham*)
 Jon Trickett MP (*Labour, Hemsworth*)
 Rt Hon Alan Williams MP (*Labour, Swansea West*)

Powers

Powers of the Committee of Public Accounts are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 148. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. The Committee’s reports are on the Internet at: <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm/cmpublic.htm>; press notices are at: <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/pacpnot.htm>. A list of reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this Report.

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to The Clerk of the Committee of Public Accounts, Committee Office, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general inquiries is: 0207-219-5708. The Committee’s e-mail address is: pubaccom@parliament.uk.

Footnotes

In the footnotes of this Report, references to oral evidence are indicated by ‘Q’ followed by the question number; references to the written evidence are indicated by the page number as in ‘Ev’.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
FIFTY-THIRD REPORT	
Introduction and list of conclusions and recommendations	5
The impact of current programmes	8
Improving access to programmes	11
Support provided prior to release	13
PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE RELATING TO THE REPORT	15
EVIDENCE (<i>Monday 11 February 2002</i>) (HC 619-i, Session 2001–02)	
WITNESSES	
Mr Tim Burr, Deputy Comptroller and Auditor General	Ev 1
Ms Lorraine Constable, Assistant Treasury Officer of Accounts	Ev 1
Mr Martin Narey, Director General, and Mr Nigel Newcomen, Head of Sentence Management Group, HM Prison Service	Ev 1
APPENDIX	
1 Supplementary memorandum submitted by HM Treasury	Ev 24

FIFTY-THIRD REPORT

The Committee of Public Accounts has agreed to the following Report:

REDUCING PRISONER REOFFENDING

INTRODUCTION AND LIST OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Over 70,000 offenders populate prisons in England and Wales—the highest rate in the European Union but for Portugal, and many prisoners are involved in a cycle of reoffending. Recent figures suggest that 58 per cent of prisoners are reconvicted within two years of being released, whilst for those serving sentences for burglary and theft the figures are higher, 78 and 73 per cent respectively.¹ The cost of reoffending to victims, the community and the public purse is high. It costs about £34,000 a year to keep someone in prison.

2. Underlying the figures for reoffending are some significant social issues. Eight out of 10 prisoners admit to taking drugs in the year before prison. The Home Office estimates that one third of crime related to theft can be linked to the purchase of heroin or crack cocaine. On leaving prison the three key factors to reducing reoffending are work, accommodation and family support. The difficulty of finding work after prison is often compounded by a lack of basic education. Around two thirds of prisoners are ineligible for 96 per cent of jobs because of a lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills and nationally more than two thirds have no job or training to go to on release, although there are local variations such as Durham.²

3. In many cases, the Prison Service provides young prisoners with their first secondary education. In Young Offender Institutions 75 per cent of those aged 17 or under have not attended school beyond the age of 13.³ We find it significant that 75 per cent of prisoners had been excluded from school. The ethnicity of excluded pupils is reflected in the prison population. Without a basic education many of these young people are unemployable. Whilst our examination did not encompass the provision of basic skills education in schools, these figures underline the importance of keeping young people in the education system to attain minimum levels of literacy and numeracy.⁴ Ten per cent of the Government's numeracy and literacy targets are amongst inmates.

4. The Prison Service (the Service) seeks to reduce the risk of reoffending by providing programmes which help prisoners address their offending behaviour and tackle issues such as drugs misuse, and poor literacy and numeracy. However, these programmes are not generally available to short-term prisoners, for whom each sentence increases the risk of further offending.

5. The Prison Service also works with other agencies, including the probation service, to help prisoners resettle in the community on release. The Service currently spends around £265 million (14 per cent) of its annual budget of £2 billion on programmes to reduce reoffending. However, four out of ten prisoners are homeless on release.

6. Active work between prisoners and their families to reduce the risk of family disintegration during the sentence is impractical for the 25,000 prisoners held over 50 miles from their home and the 11,000 prisoners held over 100 miles from their home.

¹ C&AG's Report *Reducing Prisoner Reoffending* (HC 548, Session 2001–02) para 1.1

² Qs 9, 13, 62–63, 78–79, 127, 187

³ Qs 9, 62–63

⁴ Q63

7. On the basis of a Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Committee examined the Prison Service on the development and delivery of programmes, and the support given to prisoners prior to release.

8. We draw five main conclusions:

- Nearly six out of every 10 prisoners are convicted of one or more offences within two years of being released. Breaking this cycle of crime requires action to address drug misuse and offending behaviour, and to improve literacy and numeracy. The effectiveness of many of the Prison Service's current programmes in these areas has, however, yet to be fully proven, partly reflecting their relatively recent introduction. The Home Office and the Prison Service should obtain and evaluate evidence on which programmes, including joint initiatives between agencies, have a sustainable impact on reducing reoffending.
- Targets should be set to put prisoners near to their family home, to reduce reoffending caused by family disintegration. As the Prison Service strives to accommodate a rising prison population, prisoners may not be kept in one place long enough to complete reoffending programmes, and education programmes in particular. The Prison Service should review the impact of transfers on the ability of prisoners to continue with education programmes, and design, deliver and make such programmes available in a way that mitigates the impact for a prisoner if moved while on a programme. Care should be taken to avoid a move whilst on a programme if this is at all possible.
- Many of the Prison Service's current programmes are designed for longer term prisoners, and yet prisoners most likely to reoffend are predominantly young and serving short sentences. Working with the probation service, the voluntary sector, and others, the Prison Service should develop programmes which meet the needs of short term prisoners. More emphasis should be put on providing basic literacy and numeracy for short-term offenders. Training should extend beyond prison release, including personal presentational skills and interview techniques. Short-term prisoners are the stage army of prisoners who will return to swell prison populations if not given intensive support in and out of jail to reduce reoffending rates.
- A prisoner's access to programmes owes much to where he or she is sent. The average annual expenditure per prisoner on education varies significantly – even amongst prisons of the same category. For example, amongst prisons holding lower security risk (Category C) prisoners, the amount spent per head in 1999–2000 varied between £205 and £1595. The Prison Service should determine which programmes are appropriate to which categories of prisoners, and work to make those programmes available equally across the prison estate. We find figures in the region of £205 per head for education for a whole year totally unsatisfactory.
- The extent and nature of assistance provided to prisoners prior to release has been uneven across the prison estate, reflecting the priorities of individual prison governors. In developing a strategic approach to resettlement issues the Prison Service should, building on the good practice already existing in some prisons, put in place arrangements across the prison estate for helping prisoners to find jobs and accommodation, and maintain family ties.

9. Our more specific conclusions and recommendations are:

On the impact of current programmes:

- (i) We agree with the Director of the Prison Service in seeking to give priority to constructive programmes to reduce reoffending, given the urgent need to get more prisoners to resume law-abiding lives on release. However, programmes should be available to short-term prisoners to lower the risk of them becoming repeat offenders.
- (ii) The Prison Service should increase the role of volunteers in helping prisoners improve their basic numeracy and literacy skills, and improve family support by imprisoning offenders close to home. Given that the high incidence of reoffending must be linked to some extent to the ex-prisoners' unemployability, which is itself based on their lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills, we believe that Government should offer basic literacy and numeracy courses tailored to the period of imprisonment.
- (iii) Over 5,000 prisoners suffer from a functional psychosis and many are in need of in-patient treatment for mental disorders. The Prison Service and the National Health Service should agree targets for reducing the length of time such prisoners spend waiting for in-patient treatment.
- (iv) The Prison Service should identify measures to enable it to routinely compare the success of individual prisons in reducing reoffending so it can build on best practice and bring about improvements where necessary.

On improving access to programmes

- (v) Non-accredited programmes⁵ within prisons can play a valuable role, for example, in helping to meet the needs of short term prisoners. The Prison Service should maintain a central record of the objectives and content of these programmes, identify good practice and encourage the development and delivery of worthwhile new programmes.
- (vi) The Prison Service should examine why some prisons have significantly fewer hours of purposeful activity than the average, and reduce the current range in performance.
- (vii) The education option in the New Deal for Young People should be offered to youth offenders while in prison.

On the support provided prior to release

- (viii) The Prison Service should monitor prison performance against its performance standard on resettlement and hold prison governors accountable for implementing good practice in resettlement activities.
- (ix) Maintaining family relationships can be an important influence in reducing re-offending, yet only around a fifth of all prisons have involved families in working with offenders to prepare them for release. The Prison Service should give prisoners' families the opportunity to contribute to resettlement planning.

⁵ A non-accredited programme is one which has not been accredited by the Joint Accreditation Panel, an advisory non-departmental public body sponsored jointly by the National Probation Service and the Prison Service.

- (x) Forty per cent of prisoners are homeless on release. Many prisons provide help to prisoners to find accommodation, and the Prison Service pays a one off discharge grant to prisoners to help the meet the initial cost of accommodation. The Prison Service should measure the success of individual prisons in finding accommodation for discharged prisoners, so that performance can be compared between prisons. The Prison Service should give greater emphasis to helping prisoners find accommodation on their release.
- (xi) Fewer than one in three prisoners enter employment or some form of training on release. Some prisons, however, exceed this rate. At Thorn Cross prison, for example, 44 per cent of prisoners leave with a job or training place. The Prison Service should investigate why some local programmes are more successful than others, and replicate good practice across the prison estate.
- (xii) The nature of work undertaken in prison does not, in many instances, enhance prisoners' prospects of jobs outside. Working with employers and others, the Prison Service should provide more relevant work in prisons and thereby increase the proportion of prisoners gaining related jobs on release.

THE IMPACT OF CURRENT PROGRAMMES

10. Around six in every ten prisoners are convicted of one or more offences within two years of leaving prison. The reconviction rate varies by age, gender, the number of previous convictions (Figure 1) and the length of sentence. Reconviction rates are particularly high for younger male prisoners – 72 per cent amongst 18 to 20 year olds compared to 55 per cent for male prisoners between 25 and 34.

Figure 1: Prisoners discharged in 1997 and convicted by gender, age and number of previous convictions

Prisoners released and convicted within 2 years	Number of previous convictions					
	None	1 or 2	3-6	7-10	11 or more	Total
Males aged under 17	51%	81%	94%	96%	99%	84%
Males aged 18 - 20	30%	61%	79%	88%	97%	72%
Males aged 21 - 24	18%	42%	63%	79%	89%	67%
Males aged 25 - 34	12%	25%	42%	61%	80%	55%
Males aged 35 and over	5%	13%	25%	33%	65%	38%
All males	72%	40%	59%	68%	79%	59%
All females	12%	39%	64%	77%	84%	51%
All prisoners	17%	40%	59%	69%	79%	58%

11. The Prison Service acknowledged that current reconviction rates were disappointing. In the mid-1990s, escapes from prisons, particularly by convicted terrorists, led to an emphasis on improving security, and the Service's objective of keeping prisoners in safe custody took priority over tackling prisoners' behaviour. There was a significant reduction in constructive work with prisoners, and over the same period a rise in the prison population. In 1998, following a significant reduction in the number of escapes, the Government allocated the Prison Service an additional £155 million over the period 1999-2002 to spend on programmes accredited as reducing reoffending and on factors which

research suggests, can contribute to reoffending, specifically drugs misuse, and poor literacy and numeracy. Further sums have been allocated since.⁶

12. The Prison Service considered that constructive programmes were more likely to reduce reoffending than regimes focused predominantly on physical activity. During the 2000 Spending Review the Prison Service assessed the benefits of its programmes. The analyses were crude, and limited by the available data, but suggested that the benefit/cost ratio of the drugs treatment programme was 11:1; for basic literacy and numeracy programmes nearly 7:1; and for medium intensity offending behaviour programmes 3:1. Independent evidence of the effectiveness of these programmes is, however, still limited.⁷

13. The Prison Service said that the single action most likely to impact on reoffending was investment in education to enable prisoners to obtain jobs on release. International research suggests that improving prisoners' education, for example, can reduce reoffending by 10 to 14 percentage points. In 2001, prisoners gained 60,000 education qualifications. The Prison Service was likely to meet 10 per cent of the Government's objective to improve the literacy and numeracy of 750,000 adults. In 2000–01, however, 76.5 per cent of prisoners were discharged at Level 1 or below for literacy against the Service's target of 52.8 per cent, whilst 67.6 per cent of prisoners were discharged at Level 1 or below for numeracy against the target of 61.9 per cent. Level 1 is the performance of an average 11 year old.

14. Spending on education has not always kept pace with the rapid rise in the prison population (Figure 2). Since April 2001 prison education funding had been ring-fenced and was now administered jointly by the Home Office and Department for Education and Skills. This funding is to increase from £58 million in 2001–02 to nearly £70 million in 2003–04. For those aged 17 and under, education provision was now reasonable but research carried out with the Social Exclusion Unit suggested that an extra £50 to £80 million was needed to improve significantly the provision for the 18 to 20 age group.⁸

Figure 2: Prison Service expenditure on education 1991–92 to 2000–01 and prison population

Year	Expenditure £ (million)	Prisoner population
1991–92	29.372	46,500
1992–93	31.227	44,600
1993–94	31.089	45,900
1994–95	36.756	49,500
1995–96	39.965	51,600
1996–97	34.507	56,700
1997–98	36.174	62,600
1998–99	39.049	65,400
1999–00	47.450	64,800
2000–01	50.890	65,000

Note: These figures may not be fully comparable from one year to the next because of differences in accounting procedures for VAT.

⁶ C&AG's Report, para 1.5; Qs 5, 8, 13, 179

⁷ Q155; Ev 28 (ref. to Q195)

⁸ C&AG's Report, para 3.15; Qs 9, 13

15. On the scope for making greater use of volunteers to improve literacy and numeracy amongst prisoners, there were currently about 4,000 volunteers working in prisons and funding had been received for projects which would increase the number by 1,000 in the three years 2001 to 2004. At present voluntary groups had little involvement in helping to improve prisoners' numeracy. But voluntary groups such as the National Literacy Trust and the Writers in Prison Network Ltd ran projects in over 40 prisons to help prisoners improve their literacy or reading skills and support their children's learning development. Around 3,000 prisoners also volunteered, some offering reading support to other prisoners.⁹

16. The Prison Service's strategy for tackling drugs misuse included a number of elements, all of which had targets and dates for their achievement. The Service had achieved most of the targets set to date, for example ensuring every prison had access to a drug dog. It had not, however, managed to achieve the target of getting all drug treatment programmes to the standard required to be accredited as reducing reoffending. Of the 26 programmes currently running in prisons only one (run by the charity Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust (RAPt)) had been accredited. This was running in seven prisons. The remaining 25 programmes were at various stages in their progress towards accreditation. The Service was confident that all programmes were effective in reducing drugs taken in prison and after release. Also, with some programmes, for example, the one run by RAPt, there was encouraging evidence of a reduction in crime by participants after release.¹⁰

17. The Prison Service ran 10 offending behaviour programmes which had been accredited by independent experts. Five of the programmes were for the treatment of sex offenders; three were designed to improve prisoners' reasoning and problem solving skills; one was a programme for high risk violent offenders, and one was a programme for offenders for whom anger had played a part in their offending. The programmes sought to deal with the impetuosity which lay behind much offending, particularly by young men and, in the case of sex offending, with the twisted thinking that can rationalise such offences. Currently, around 6,000 prisoners a year completed accredited offending behaviour programmes, a seven fold increase in the last seven years but still less than 10 per cent of the Prison Service's current population.¹¹

18. Most accredited offending behaviour programmes were directed at adult male prisoners serving 12 months or more, who accounted for 56 per cent of the prison population. There were very few programmes specifically designed for those serving short sentences, many of whom were young male offenders who were likely to be most at risk of reoffending. The reconviction rate of this category of prisoner was 72 per cent. The Prison Service said that the lack of programmes was primarily because accredited programmes had to be delivered meticulously and intensively if they were to be successful. Those serving short sentences were not in custody long enough to complete such courses. Programmes which were delivered poorly, or which did not adhere to research evidence of what worked in reducing reoffending, could have a detrimental effect. One option would be to prepare short term prisoners for courses while in custody and for the prisoners to complete the courses in the community. At present, however, short term prisoners were not supervised by the Probation Service when they were released.¹²

19. The Prison Service was able to provide limited help to short-term prisoners in tackling drugs misuse and in raising their educational standards. In the case of drugs, for example, short-term prisoners could undergo detoxification and benefit from the Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare (CARAT) service now offered in all prisons.

⁹ Qs 93–97; Ev 25

¹⁰ Qs 47, 53–55

¹¹ C&AG's Report, para 1.10; Qs 5, 31, 36, 69

¹² C&AG's Report, para 1.1; Qs 2–4

They were not, however, in custody long enough to participate in a drug treatment programme. On education, a start could be made on improving the literacy and numeracy of short term prisoners but typically a prisoner needed six to eight weeks training to raise them from Level 1 to Level 2, for example. Many short term prisoners therefore left with their training unfinished and did not continue their education on release.¹³

20. For some prisoners, intensive medical treatment is needed to address mental illness. The Prison Service estimated that since the introduction of Care in the Community, the proportion of the prison population suffering from medium to severe psychosis had risen sevenfold. At the end of December 2001, 121 prisoners had been accepted for admission for in-patient treatment for mental disorder and were awaiting a place. A further 132 were waiting assessment or, having been assessed, were awaiting a decision. In hospital, the mentally ill could, if necessary, be given medication against their will. This was not possible in prison and if the prisoner did not co-operate there was little the prison could do. As a result mentally ill prisoners could get worse while in custody, rather than better. The Service was receiving help from the National Health Service, and was recruiting more psychiatric nurses to look after mentally ill prisoners. It believed that this would contain the danger posed by such prisoners.¹⁴ We are very concerned that too many mentally ill people continue to be held in prisons.

21. In 2001, the Home Office set the Prison and Probation Services a joint target to reduce the rate of reconvictions of all offenders punished by imprisonment or by community supervision by 5 per cent by 2004 compared to the rate that might be expected, taking account of the age, sex and offence and previous criminal history of discharged sentenced prisoners. The Prison Service has no plans to provide information on reconviction rates for prisoners discharged from individual prisons, and therefore has no means of comparing performance across the prison estate. The Prison Service would like to measure the success of individual prisons in reducing reconvictions, but considered that the need to move prisoners because of the rising prison population would make it difficult to attribute any reduction in reoffending to a particular prison.¹⁵

IMPROVING ACCESS TO PROGRAMMES

22. The Prison Service has no routine mechanism for forming an overall picture of prisoners' need for programmes, and therefore has no method for assessing any potential mismatch between need and programme provision. The Prison Service was addressing this gap by testing every new prisoner for literacy and numeracy, and by providing all prisoners with an opportunity to address their drugs misuse. It believed the implementation of a new system, OASys, a joint development with the Probation Service, would provide a more strategic and systematic basis for assessing prisoner risks and needs.¹⁶

23. The National Audit Office found that, despite the expansion of places on offending behaviour programmes, prisoners' access to the programmes owed much to where they were sent to serve their sentence. For example, in March 2001 the proportion of prisoners attending a prison where the Enhanced Thinking Skills or Reasoning and Rehabilitation programmes were on offer ranged from 40.6 per cent in Lancashire and Cumbria to 100 per cent in Manchester, Mersey and Cheshire, Wales and East Midlands (South). The Prison Service does not have a complete picture of the demand for offending behaviour programmes. The Prison Service thought provision probably needed to expand by 3,000 places, from 6,000 to 9,000 to meet demand. The programme had not expanded as quickly as desired because, for example, of the difficulty of recruiting and retaining professional

¹³ Q143

¹⁴ Qs 76–78, 148, 187; Ev 27 (ref. to Q187)

¹⁵ C&AG's Report, para 2.2; Qs 42, 89

¹⁶ C&AG's Report, para 3.6; Qs 14, 44, 105–108

staff. Programmes had therefore initially been rolled out to those prisons best equipped to make them work, for example because they had psychologists in post. The proportion of prisons providing accredited programmes had increased from 72 per cent in 2001 to 86 per cent in April 2002.¹⁷

24. The Prison Service has sought to improve the availability of drug treatment services across the prison estate. By March 2002, there was a Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare service (CARAT) available in all prisons. However, the National Audit Office found that drug treatment programmes were running in just 50 out of 135 prisons, with marked variations in provision between different types of prison. Virtually all prisons holding high security risk prisoners, for example, had drug treatment programmes, but only one in three closed young offender institutions had such programmes. The Prison Service noted that young prisoners tended to serve shorter sentences and there was therefore often insufficient time to put them through a programme. Nevertheless, the Service had recognised the need to expand the number of places on drug treatment programmes in the juvenile estate, and had made funds available for programmes in three additional institutions. Unfortunately, delays in recruiting staff, due to a shortage in the market, had meant that only one of the three institutions had the programme running by March 2002.¹⁸

25. The National Audit Office found wide variations in education provision across the prison estate. In 1999–00 the annual average expenditure on education per prisoner varied significantly, even within prisons of the same category, ranging, for example, from £89 to £1,493 amongst male open prisons. The Service said that some prisons spent very little on education because they were concentrating on providing full time work instead. A review was underway to address some of the differences identified by the National Audit Office.¹⁹

26. A National Audit Office survey found that 90 out of 134 prisons were providing other programmes, courses and activities described as reducing reoffending but which were not accredited. The Prison Service did not have any central record of what these programmes involved, their target group, their objectives and costs, and who was providing them. Voluntary bodies with an interest in prison matters had expressed concern that the focus on accredited programmes ran the risk of depriving non-accredited programmes of the resources they needed to continue. The Prison Service had issued a Direction in 2002 to encourage the use of non-accredited programmes for prisoners who were not in custody long enough to complete accredited programmes. The Service planned to issue a National Framework in 2002 giving further advice to prison governors on the kinds of activities most likely to be effective.²⁰

27. A prisoner's attendance on a programme may be disrupted by transfer to another prison. Prisoner transfers could occur for a variety of reasons, including changes in their security risk and medical condition. In 2000–01 there were at least 60,000 transfers amongst the prison population of 65,000. The recent steep rise in the prison population meant that transfers were an increasing problem as prisoners were moved around to fill available space. The Prison Service had tried to avoid moving people on offending behaviour programmes and drug treatment programmes because much of the benefit to be derived relied on uninterrupted group working. The Service estimated therefore that just three (0.4 per cent) out of 851 prisoners had been unable to complete the sex offender treatment programme because of transfers; just four (1.7 per cent) out of 235 on CALM, an anger management programme, and only 84 (1.7 per cent) out of 4,974 on the cognitive

¹⁷ C&AG's Report, para 3.7, Figures 14 and 15; Qs 5, 101

¹⁸ C&AG's Report, paras 3.10–3.11 and Figure 17; Qs 47, 50; Ev 24 (ref. to Q50)

¹⁹ Q6

²⁰ Qs 29–30, 35–39, 43

skills programme. The Service admitted however, that it was not possible to avoid disruption to people on education programmes.²¹

28. The Prison Service has a Key Performance Indicator which measures the time prisoners spend on “purposeful activity”. This measure includes not only programmes aimed at reducing reoffending but also, for example, cleaning work on prison wings, support to works and maintenance staff and use of library. In the nine years from 1992–93 to 2000–01, purposeful activity rose by approximately 25 million hours a year. However, because of the 45 per cent increase in the prison population over that period, the average number of hours spent on purposeful activity by prisoners had remained largely unchanged. The amount of purposeful activity varied enormously between prisons, even of the same category. In 2000–01, in the case of Category C prisons, for example, it ranged from 54.3 hours at Kirklevington Prison to just 16.7 hours at Haslar Prison. The Prison Service said that the performance of some prisons was due largely to their nature. Kirklevington, for example, was a resettlement prison where prisoners spent most of their time outside in full-time work. Nevertheless, it was trying to reduce the range by improving the performance of the poorer prisons. It believed, however, that reducing the range appreciably would require considerable time and investment. The Prison Service had no target for how much time prisoners spend on activities which contribute directly to reducing reoffending but the Service thought it was unlikely to be more than five hours per prisoner per week.²²

29. Private sector companies running nine of the 135 prisons in England and Wales have been supportive of work to reduce prisoner reoffending. There had been two cases where major changes in provision of programmes had resulted in additional costs to the Service, at Ashfield Young Offenders Institution and at Parc prison. Changes at other private prisons had been on a smaller scale and were generally cost neutral. There had been little opposition from prison officers to the increased emphasis on rehabilitation. More than half of the tutors on offending behaviour programmes were prison officers. The Prison Service was trying to effect a cultural change within the Service, which involved greater use of the skills of probation officers and psychologists.²³

SUPPORT PROVIDED PRIOR TO RELEASE

30. Historically, the support provided to help prisoners prepare for life after release reflected the priorities of individual governors. As a result, the extent and nature of the assistance varied widely across the prison estate. More recently, the Prison Service had begun to take a more strategic view of resettlement. In October 2001, it published a Prison Service Order on Resettlement setting out the policy framework for its resettlement activity. The Order underpins a Performance Standard on resettlement which the Service issued in November 2000 to prisons, and which specified actions to be taken and the measures by which performance would be monitored.²⁴

31. Currently, around 40 per cent of prisoners are homeless on release. The Prison Service aimed to increase the number of prisoners with adequate accommodation on release, although no specific target had been set. Prisoners lacking a place to stay were two and a half times more likely to reoffend than those with accommodation. When prisoners leave custody they receive no benefits for two weeks. To help meet the initial costs of accommodation, the Service pays a one off discharge grant to prisoners but, in the Prison Service’s view, this amount was inadequate.²⁵

²¹ Qs 7, 163–164; Ev 25 (ref. to Q163)

²² C&AG’s Report, paras 3.24–3.25 and Figure 20; Qs 8, 122–123, 168–171

²³ Qs 58–59, 67–68, 119, 172–174; Ev 25 (ref. to Q59)

²⁴ C&AG’s Report, paras 4.6–4.7; Q12

²⁵ Qs 129–131, 148

32. The Government has set the Prison Service the target of doubling by 2004 the number of prisoners getting jobs or training places after release. The Service had increased the number of released prisoners going into jobs or training from 10 per cent in the mid to the late 1990s to around 29 per cent. However, some individual prisons were achieving much higher figures as a result of specific local initiatives, for example, Durham at 34 per cent and Thorn Cross at 44 per cent.²⁶

33. An evaluation of prison work and training in 1998 had found that less than half of a sample of 88 former prisoners obtained work in the months following release, and in only five cases did the work bear any relation to their jobs in the prison workshops. The Prison Service said, however, that prison workshops helped keep good order and control. It was preferable to give prisoners low quality work to take them out of their cells than the alternative of keeping them locked up for 23 hours a day.²⁷

34. In July 2000, the Prison Service had established a Custody to Work Unit with funding of £30 million over the three financial years ending in 2004 to increase the number of prisoners going into jobs on release. The Unit was trying to realign vocational training into the four areas where research suggested that there were jobs available for discharged prisoners: the construction industry; catering; leisure activities; and industrial cleaning. The Service was also working with the Employment Service to make it easier for released prisoners to get jobs. In some prisons, electronic job kiosks had been installed to help prisoners many miles from their home to find out about jobs available in local job centres.²⁸

35. The Prison Service's guidance on sentence planning encouraged staff to seek contributions to the planning process from families and community based agencies who knew the prisoner, or who might usefully become involved in resettlement plans. A National Audit Office survey had found, however, that only 22 per cent out of 134 prisons had involved families in sentence planning; with just 6 per cent involving community groups; and 5 per cent prisoners' help groups. The Prison Service said that it was now quite common for the families of the 3,000 or so young people in custody aged 17 or under to be involved in discussions with prison staff about their progress.²⁹

36. The Prison Service does not have a target for the proportion of prisoners serving their sentences close to home. Prisoners are allocated to prisons where space is available. At 31 March 2001, 25,000 prisoners were held over 50 miles from their home town and 11,000 over 100 miles away, making it difficult for prisoners to maintain family ties. The Prison Service agreed that lack of family support could be a factor in reoffending and that imprisonment could strain family relationships and marriages. It would like to house more prisoners nearer their homes but population pressures made this difficult. It was important, however, to ensure that the visiting facilities were welcoming.³⁰

²⁶ Qs 32-33, 111

²⁷ Q11

²⁸ Qs 11, 114, 142

²⁹ C&AG's Report, para 4.8; Q57

³⁰ Qs 132-138

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF
THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

SESSION 2001-02

MONDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2002

Members present:

Mr Edward Leigh, in the Chair

Mr Richard Bacon
Mr Ian Davidson
Geraint Davies
Mr Brian Jenkins

Mr George Osborne
Mr David Rendel
Mr Gerry Steinberg
Mr Alan Williams

Mr Tim Burr, Deputy Comptroller and Auditor General, was further examined.

The Committee deliberated (Confidentiality of the Committee's proceedings).

Ms Lorraine Constable, Assistant Treasury Officer of Accounts, was further examined.

The Comptroller and Auditor General's Report on Reducing Prisoner Reoffending (HC 548) was considered.

Mr Martin Narey, Director General, and Mr Nigel Newcomen, Head of Sentence Management Group, HM Prison Service, were examined (HC 619-i).

The witnesses withdrew.

The Committee further deliberated.

* * * * *

[Adjourned until Wednesday 13 February at Four o'clock.

* * * * *

WEDNESDAY 17 JULY 2002

Members present:

Mr Edward Leigh, in the Chair

Mr Richard Bacon
Geraint Davies
Mr Frank Field
Mr Nick Gibb
Mr Brian Jenkins
Mr Nigel Jones

Mr George Osborne
Mr David Rendel
Mr Gerry Steinberg
Jon Trickett
Mr Alan Williams

Mr Tim Burr, Deputy Comptroller and Auditor General, was further examined.

The Committee deliberated.

* * * * *

Draft Report (Reducing Prisoner Reoffending), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 8 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 9 postponed.

Paragraphs 10 to 36 read and agreed to.

Postponed paragraph 9 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fifty-third Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That the provisions of Standing Order No. 134 (Select Committees (Reports)) be applied to the Report.

* * * * *

[Adjourned until Monday 21 October at Four o'clock.]

REPORTS BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
SESSION 2001–02

		<i>Publication Date</i>
1	Managing Risk in Government Departments (HC 336)	23/11/01
	Government Reply (Cm 5393)	14/02/02
2	Improving Construction Performance (HC 337)	05/12/01
	Government Reply (Cm 5393)	14/02/02
3	The Cancellation of the Benefits Payment Card Project (HC 358)	06/12/01
	Government Reply (Cm 5393)	14/02/02
4	The Renegotiation of the PFI-type Deal for the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds (HC 359)	12/12/01
	Government Reply (Cm 5450)	28/02/02
5	Ministry of Defence: Major Projects Report 2000 (HC 368)	28/11/01
	Government Reply (Cm 5450)	28/02/02
6	Ministry of Defence: Major Projects Report 2000—The Role of the Equipment Capability Customer (HC 369)	28/11/01
	Government Reply (Cm 5450)	28/02/02
7	Sale of Part of the UK Gold Reserves (HC 396)	19/12/01
	Government Reply (Cm 5470)	14/03/02
8	Office of Water Services (OFWAT): Leakage and Water Efficiency (HC 397)	04/01/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5470)	14/03/02
9	Tackling Obesity in England (HC 421)	16/01/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5477)	20/03/02
10	The Acquisition of German Parcel (HC 422)	11/01/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5477)	20/03/02
11	Office of Gas and Electricity Markets: Giving Domestic Customers a Choice of Electricity Supplier (HC 446)	17/01/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5481)	09/05/02
12	The Radiocommunications Agency's Joint Venture with CMG (HC 447)	23/01/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5470)	14/03/02
13	Regulating Housing Associations' Management of Financial Risk (HC 470) ..	09/01/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5470)	14/03/02
14	The Millennium Dome (HC 516)	01/02/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5487)	25/04/02

15	How English Further Education Colleges can Improve Student Performance (HC 528)	07/02/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5487)	25/04/02
16	Access to the Victoria and Albert Museum (HC 559)	14/02/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5487)	25/04/02
17	Ministry of Defence: Maximising the Benefits of Defence Equipment Co-operation (HC 586)	15/02/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5487)	25/04/02
18	Inland Flood Defence (HC 587)	01/03/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5512)	23/05/02
19	Ship Surveys and Inspections (HC 608)	15/03/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5512)	23/05/02
20	Educating and Training the Future Health Professional Workforce for England (HC 609)	08/03/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5512)	23/05/02
21	Better Value for Money from Professional Services (HC 309)	14/03/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5512)	23/05/02
22	The Channel Tunnel Rail Link (HC 630)	21/03/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5512)	23/05/02
23	Report on Inland Revenue Appropriation Account (HC 631)	22/03/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5524)	20/06/02
24	Ministry of Defence: The Risk of Fraud in Property Management (HC 647) ..	20/03/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5512)	23/05/02
25	Excess Votes 2000–2001 (HC 648)	07/03/02
26	Better Regulation: Making Good Use of Regulatory Impact Assessments (HC 682)	12/04/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5524)	20/06/02
27	The Medical Assessment of Incapacity and Disability Benefits (HC 683)	10/04/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5524)	20/06/02
28	Better Public Services Through Joint Working (HC 471)	18/04/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5524)	20/06/02
29	Non-competitive Procurement in the Ministry of Defence (HC 370)	19/04/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5524)	20/06/02

30	The Auction of Radio Spectrum for the Third Generation of Mobile Telephones (HC 436)	26/04/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5524)	20/06/02
31	Postcomm: Opening the Post (HC 632)	01/05/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5549)	16/07/02
32	The Implementation of the National Probation Service Information Systems Strategy (HC 357)	03/05/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5549)	16/07/02
33	Income Tax Self Assessment (HC 296)	09/05/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5549)	16/07/02
34	Policy Development: Improving Air Quality (HC 560)	24/05/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5549)	16/07/02
35	Losses to the Revenue from Frauds on Alcohol Duty (HC 331)	17/05/02
	Government Reply (Cm 5549)	16/07/02
36	Progress on Resource Accounting (HC 349)	19/06/02
37	Handling Clinical Negligence Claims in England (HC 280)	13/06/02
38	NIRS 2: Contract Extension (HC 423)	07/08/02
39	Giving Confidently: The Role of the Charity Commission in Regulating Charities (HC 412)	03/07/02
40	NHS Direct in England (HC 610)	10/07/02
41	Ministry of Defence: Major Projects Report 2001 (HC 448)	04/07/02
42	Managing the Relationship to Secure a Professional Partnership in PFI Projects (HC 460)	11/07/02
43	The Use of Funding Competitions in PFI Projects: The Treasury Building (HC 398)	17/07/02
44	The Misuse and Smuggling of Hydrocarbon Oils (HC 649)	18/07/02
45	Inpatient and Outpatient Waiting in the NHS (HC 376)	18/09/02
46	Inappropriate Adjustments to NHS Waiting Lists (HC 517)	18/09/02
47	The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme (HC 338)	25/07/02
48	Department for International Development: Performance Management— Helping to Reduce World Poverty (HC 793)	01/08/02

49	Ensuring that Policies Deliver Value for Money (HC 541)	31/07/02
50	Pipes and Wires (HC 831)	08/08/02
51	Agricultural Fraud: The case of Joseph Bowden (HC 684).....	22/08/02
52	e-Revenue (HC 707)	29/08/02
53	Reducing Prisoner Reoffending (HC 619)	05/09/02