



**MAYOR OF LONDON**  
OFFICE FOR POLICING AND CRIME

## **Reducing Reoffending Board (RRB) | Public Note**

20<sup>th</sup> March, 1:30-3:30pm, Hybrid Meeting

### **Theme: Employment for people on probation including community sentences**

#### **Attendees:**

Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)  
London Probation (LP)  
Ministry of Justice (MoJ)  
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)  
Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)  
Greater London Authority (GLA)  
NHS England  
Youth Justice Board (YJB)  
His Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS)  
EAB Wormwood Scrubs  
New Futures Network  
Clinks

#### **Agenda Item 1 | Welcome & Context:**

The meeting opened with a focus on recent updates to the Mayor's Police and Crime Plan, which emphasises criminal justice system (CJS) reform and reducing reoffending. A pressing concern raised was the forecasted prison capacity shortage by 2026, highlighting the critical role of employment in successful rehabilitation. To maximise discussion time, formal business was deferred to the end of the meeting.

#### **Agenda Item 2 | Theme context setting**

##### Probation Employment, Training & Education (ETE) Landscape:

An update on London's probation ETE environment noted mixed progress since last year. Specialised programmes, like CFO Evolution, target individuals with complex needs, but awareness of these services varies. Local authorities across London's 32 boroughs offer

diverse ETE provisions, with some boroughs collaborating to share resources, such as the South London Partnership.

A pilot project with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) places work coaches within probation offices in several boroughs, aiming for wider expansion. This co-location supports more consistent ETE access regardless of location. Challenges include discontinuation of key programs (e.g., Work Health Programme), bureaucratic delays, and the cessation of the MAXIMUS ETE service in March 2024, which left a gap in direct support. Partnerships with organisations in sectors like hospitality offer flexible job brokerage for probationers, including relocation opportunities.

#### Co-location Pilot Progress:

DWP staff embedded within probation offices report positive collaboration and a “one team” approach, improving understanding of individual needs. However, vetting processes cause delays, prompting calls for streamlining. Data sharing between probation and job centres has improved, enhancing coordination of support services. Regional expansions and monthly cross-borough meetings aim to spread best practices.

#### Employment Support in Prisons and Regional Strategies:

Insights from prison employment boards highlighted the significant barriers faced by individuals leaving prisons with high rates of substance dependency and homelessness. Technological solutions to better match individuals with employers were emphasised, alongside stronger integration between probation and employer networks.

The London Regional Employment Council, formed under a government manifesto commitment, brings together stakeholders to enhance employment outcomes for prison leavers. Although focused on prison leavers, discussions are underway about extending support to those on community sentences. Funding shortages from government and local bodies remain a challenge, despite employer willingness to offer jobs.

#### Inclusive Talent Strategy & London Growth Plan:

The strategy targets workforce development to address skills shortages and inclusion over the next decade, with a focus on disadvantaged groups, including those with CJS involvement. It promotes tailored employment support, improved career guidance, and expanded work experience. The strategy focuses on building a workforce that meets the demands of growth sectors and critical enabling sectors such as childcare and health and social care. The strategy also emphasises tackling barriers to employment, such as affordability and access to training, which can prevent people from entering the labour market.

A consultation on the strategy will launch soon, with a final version expected in the autumn. Youth-focused Trailblazer programmes are expanding to assist young people with barriers to employment.

### Ministry of Justice Update:

Prisons lack systems to connect prisoners with employment. Prison workshops are often limited to low-skilled tasks and a robust system similar to Job Centres is needed to assist reintegration.

The ongoing prison capacity crisis and the shift towards reducing reoffending and alternative sentencing are key concerns. Probation and collaborations with the DWP are crucial for providing targeted interventions but concerns over limited funding and competition for resources remain.

The Board emphasised providing pathways that build confidence, sector-specific work trials, and mentorship to tackle underlying issues like accommodation and substance misuse.

### **Agenda Item 3 | Workshop: Strengthening the System**

**The Board discussed the following questions:**

- 1. One of the priorities of the Inclusive Talent Strategy is to: *'Support Londoners who face barriers to work to get quality jobs, adding to London's supply of workers'*. What are the key priorities to achieve this for people with experience of the CJS?**
- 2. In what ways will the approach for prison leavers and people on community sentences need to be different?**
- 3. What opportunities are there to increase access to ETE for people sentenced to Unpaid Work Hours?**

Participants discussed key priorities to support CJS-experienced individuals into quality employment, recognising differing needs of prison leavers and people on community sentences. While both groups face significant challenges, those released from prison may have had some prior access to employment support, which is not always available to those on community sentences. There was a suggestion that for community sentences a more integrated, pre-engagement approach similar to what is offered in prisons could be beneficial from the start of their sentence.

The importance of co-locating services, particularly the collaboration between probation and job centre staff, was emphasised. This approach allows individuals to access a range of support services in one place, helping to break down barriers and facilitate smoother transitions into work.

Barriers identified included digital skill gaps, stigma, substance misuse, and accommodation instability. Expanding awareness of employment opportunities beyond entry-level jobs was stressed. Role models and mentoring were highlighted as vital for encouraging long-term employment.

Discussions covered how unpaid work orders could be enhanced with rehabilitative training and meaningful work placements. A key challenge highlighted was the reliance on online learning, which, while accounting for up to 30% of unpaid work hours, does not adequately serve all individuals, especially those with complex needs or specific restrictions within their community orders. The importance of face-to-face education, particularly for those with complex needs, was noted, alongside the need for better integration with third-sector organisations.

Job centres play a crucial role in providing tailored support, and ongoing collaboration with local authorities and third-sector partners can create a more seamless support network. Successful models from the voluntary sector demonstrate the benefits of linking unpaid work with skill-building and employment outcomes.