

CAMBRIDGESHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL	Agenda Item No. 7
2nd December 2020	Public Report

Report of Acting Police and Crime Commissioner

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POLICE AND CRIME PLAN – OFFENDERS THEME – EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel (the “Panel”) with a response to its question regarding how effective does the Acting Police and Crime Commissioner (the “Acting Commissioner”) feel the Government’s Education and Employment Strategy 2018 for adult prisoners has been, and will be, in future years in which unemployment rates may exceed 10%.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Panel is recommended to note the report.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 3.1 Item 6 – to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, by the Police and Crime Commissioner in connection with the discharge of the Commissioner’s functions.

Item 8 - To support the effective exercise of the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, a Commissioner is required to produce a Police and Crime Plan (the “Plan”). The Plan became effective from April 2017 and is structured around four key strategic themes: Victims, Offenders, Communities and Transformation. Each theme has its own aim and has a framework through a series of shared outcomes to enable all agencies with a part to play in community safety and criminal justice, to strategically direct the future delivery of services through these common goals. Each theme is supported by key objectives and priorities for action.
- 4.2 The Offenders section of the Plan seeks to ensure offenders are brought to justice and are less likely to reoffend. A partnership approach is needed which helps to prevent crime in the first place, and makes people less likely to re-offend when they go through the criminal justice system.
- 4.3 The needs assessment on offending prevention and management was commissioned by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and published in June 2017. This highlighted the scale of complex needs of offenders, especially in relation to housing, employment and skills, drug and alcohol misuse, and mental health. The priority issues identified by the needs assessment continue to be addressed through the appropriate partnership governance mechanisms. The Offender Sub Group of the Cambridgeshire Criminal Justice Board (the “Offender Group”) supports the statutory agencies in the delivery of the multi-agency approach to tackling offending and reoffending.

4.4 The needs assessment identified that those offenders receiving short sentences who are most likely to re-offend are most excluded from Education, Training and Employment (ETE) provision and that a criminal conviction can act as a barrier to future employment opportunities. It highlighted that further work is required to establish the ETE requirement across the system and how this links with local economic drivers as well as further work with employers around open recruitment.

4.5 Nationally, the Government continues to recognise employment as a key route out of reoffending. The Education and Employment Strategy 2018 for adult prisoners set out its approach in prisons. In 2019 the Government announced a national partnership agreement between the Ministry of Justice and Department for Work and Pensions to jointly drive rehabilitation and reduce reoffending. More recently, the Government's Sentencing White paper published in September 2020, reinforced the need to work across government and across agencies to address the key drivers of crime such as a lack of employment. Legislation will also be brought forward to reform the criminal records regime to reduce the time periods after which some sentences become spent, to help people into work.

5. KEY UPDATES

5.1 While the Acting Commissioner cannot comment on the overall effectiveness of the Government's strategy outlined at 4.5 above, he can update on partnership working locally, recognising that key responsibilities sit with statutory agencies such as prisons and Jobcentre Plus. It is the role of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons and the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) to provide independent scrutiny of the work of prisons. Locally we are aware that the IMB has commented on concerns about rehabilitation provision which is provided at HMP Littlehey, but recognised good learning and skills provision at HMP Peterborough.

5.2 Jobcentre Plus Prison work coaches provide specialised support for offenders in prison custody. Historically there had been a focus on work to support clients through the Universal Credit process until first payment. Facilitated by the OPCC, links between Jobcentre Plus, HMP Peterborough and probation were strengthened pre-Covid to maximise take up and impact of available skills provision. At the end of October 2020 the Government announced 4,500 new Work Coaches to help jobseekers get the support they need to find a job, retrain or gain practical experience.

5.3 Pre-Covid it was identified there may be opportunities to further target ETE to target local skills gaps. This may be an area where Community Safety Partnerships could also provide local co-ordination and input. In light of the new Cambridgeshire skills strategy and arrangements, the OPCC facilitated new links between local skills partners and criminal justice agencies. This meant that at the end of last year local employers were able to undertake a session in HMP Peterborough to talk to residents about career options in the built environment on their release. Employer feedback was positive about the enthusiasm and energy with which residents were planning their next steps. We were able to build on this working with Cambridgeshire Skills at the start of this year to facilitate a workshop with key partners. While Covid has impacted on planning and delivery, there is still a proposal under development to pilot a construction work academy for ex-offenders. While the impacts of Covid on the local employment market are evident there are still sectors, such as construction, where there remain skills gaps.

5.4 Partners are mindful of the potential impact of the current employment market on those who pre-Covid already had significant barriers to the employment market. The Offender Group will continue to monitor arrangements.

6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

'Police and Crime Plan 2017-20 – Community Safety and Criminal Justice', Police and Crime Commissioner

<http://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/police-crime-plan/>

'Education and Employment Strategy', Ministry of Justice, May 2018

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/education-and-employment-strategy-2018.pdf>

'Police and Crime Plan – Offenders Theme – OPCC and broader partnership support', Business Coordination Board, 29th September 2020

https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/media.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/uploads/2020/09/20-09-29-BCB-Agenda-Item-6.1-Police-and-Crime-Plan-Offenders-Theme-PCC-and-Broader-Partnership-Support.pdf?sm_aui=iVVZvv6DTjqTtJts8sV46K3tJ6Jc

'A Smarter Approach to Sentencing', Ministry of Justice, September 2020

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/a-smarter-approach-to-sentencing.pdf>

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