Learning and Skills Strategy 2016-2021
This Strategy has been drafted in consultation with the SPS Executive Management Group, Scottish Prison Service College, Prison Governors, SPS Learning & Skills Team and a wider range of SPS staff and partners. In particular, we would like to thank our strategic partners for their innovative and insightful comments that have helped shape and inform our strategic intentions. These include:

- Education Scotland
- Creative Scotland
- Scotland’s College Network
- Scottish Qualifications Authority
- Skills Development Scotland
- Fife College
- New College Lanarkshire
In partnership, we have designed and enabled innovative opportunities for learners to build on their strengths, preparing them to meet the challenge of responsible citizenship on their release. Examples include New College Lanarkshire’s award-winning, prisoner-led ‘STIR Magazine’ and Fife College’s numeracy development programme ‘Money for Life’.

While the immediate benefits of these initiatives are evident in the creativity of the work produced, the range of skills and qualifications gained, this investment, from our staff, our partners and ultimately, from learners themselves, produces many more benefits that are less tangible, but equally valuable for both the individual upon their release, and for wider society.

It is for this reason, that the SPS places such prominence on learning and skills, believing, as we do, that education is central to our vision of unlocking potential and transforming the lives of those within our care.

Yet, we recognise that we have a long way to go before the provision of learning and skills opportunities matches the need for them in custodial settings. We must consider how we make best use of resources, partnerships and opportunities, to ensure we can build upon the success we have had to date with our partners, and address the needs and aspirations of all those in custody.

The publication of this Learning and Skills Strategy makes clear our strategic intention to ensure that everyone in our care has the opportunity to engage in creative and flexible learning that unlocks potential, inspires change and builds individual strength.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with our key partner agencies, without whom realising this ambition would be impossible. I would like to record my sincere thanks to these partners for all of the expertise and support that has been provided over the years. I am especially grateful for the time spent working with us on the design and publication of this Strategy in recent months.

We look forward also to nurturing new collaborations, promoting to all SPS stakeholders our belief that education is at the heart of what it means to be part of a flourishing, inclusive and democratic community.

Colin McConnell
Chief Executive
Scottish Prison Service
Introduction & Background

Learning and skills provision in Scotland’s thirteen public sector prisons is currently provided through a strong partnership between the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and two Further Education (FE) colleges: Fife College and New College Lanarkshire.

These contracts will conclude in July 2017, and a new specification for learning services is currently being developed. Future requirements for the proposed New Generation Contract beginning August 2017 will shortly be published. Our current contracts are founded on the principles of Curriculum for Excellence, seeking to produce: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. These services are primarily structured around a traditional education curriculum including literacy and numeracy development, arts and humanities, as well as embedding core-skills support within the fabric of vocational skills courses, life-skills, peer mentoring and employability initiatives. Each establishment also has its own blend of additional learning and skills activities, provided by SPS staff and external partners such as arts organisations. A range of distance learning courses and opportunities to engage in higher-level learning, are also available, to extend curricular choice for those who are able to meet the relevant access criteria. This Strategy recognises that learning and skills provision takes place primarily through the learning service contracts, but it will apply to all learning and skills activities across prison establishments.

The type of learning services within each establishment will vary depending on the needs of the population, the physical environment and the range of associated activities. In creating a Strategy that meets the wide-ranging needs of the Scottish prison population we aim to support the three core principles of the Scottish Government’s, ‘Adult Learning in Scotland: Statement of Ambition’ (2014) in developing learning that is: lifelong, life-wide and learner-centred. Underpinning the Strategy will be a clear focus on developing adult literacies learning to support the vision that:

‘By 2020 Scotland’s society and economy will be stronger because more of its adults are able to read, write and use numbers effectively in order to handle information, communicate with others, express ideas and opinions, make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners.’

(Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020: Scottish Government)

Literacies are complex capabilities which extend beyond the purely functional skills of encoding or decoding text and include the ability to form ideas, express opinions and make decisions in different contexts. This often requires innovative strategies to promote engagement among reluctant learners. In taking forward a creative approach to engagement, we often utilise the arts in developing literacy skills, improving esteem, increasing employability prospects and cultivating better relationships with family, peers and ultimately, with communities on release. While we fully appreciate that access to information technologies is fundamental to any modern educational ambitions, there are particular issues in providing secure communications and equipment within a prison context. At present the Scottish prison estate does not possess the necessary infrastructure to support the implementation of secure technologies. Moreover, in the current economic climate when all public sector agencies are being challenged to make savings and promote economies, there is no available additional investment to explore possibilities for technological change. We will, however, be working with our future service providers to explore the potential for the use of secure technologies during the lifetime of the Learning and Skills Strategy.

Our proposed New Generation Contract will commence in August 2017 and the Learning and Skills Strategy will help shape the outcomes of the reconfigured service. Recognising that the delivery of learning and skills within a custodial setting is often constrained by the operational environment, we need to improve our capacity to meet the potential for increased demand. By making better use of our available resources for education, we can provide opportunities for learning that both inspire and motivate potential learners to engage.

Improving integration and coordination of services will be a demanding agenda that will challenge and motivate SPS staff and learners alike. This will mean supporting SPS staff in their professional development to ensure they possess the levels of knowledge and skills to assist partners and those in our care to access and sustain learning. Through embedding a positive learning culture across all Scottish prisons we will endeavour to harness the potential of each individual encounter between staff and prisoners as a unique opportunity to promote positive relationships and to learn. Although we work in a unique and complex environment, our commitment to continuous improvement in the shape and delivery of learning services is the responsibility of all staff. Therefore, improved motivational efforts by SPS staff in conjunction with our strategic alliances and shared vision will place SPS at the forefront of prison education and interventions that will indeed unlock potential and transform lives.

To deliver on our strategic objectives, we have received invaluable support, advice and guidance from our key partner agencies, especially in the construction of our Strategic Framework for Learning and Skills that has been structured under five principal themes:

- Engaging Learners;
- Strengthening Partnerships;
- Ensuring High Quality Learning Opportunities;
- Improving Our Capacity to Respond;
- Evidencing Success.
Engaging Learners

Strategic Priority 1: Through a person-centred approach we will increase participation, encouraging learners to become responsible citizens and desist from offending.

Current Provision

It is essential that learning services within our custodial environments are needs-led, effective and attractive to potential learners, who can often be disaffected and lacking motivation to engage. For those voluntarily attending learning services, the priority has often overtly focused on the provision of basic skills to the exclusion of the more mainstream and higher level needs of some learners. While it remains a priority to address the educational needs of those operating at an elementary level, it is also important to recognise the benefits of a richer and broader curriculum to attract participation from a wider group of learners. The basis of our person-centred, social practice approach to learning has enabled us to design learning that is relevant and of interest for learners in addressing their everyday lives and future concerns.

By promoting participation in creative ways with our current learning service partners, a range of themed learning activities has been made available around contemporary issues, grounded in equality and diversity to both challenge learners and develop critical thinking skills. Likewise, designing contextual learning that complements vocational training has reinforced the relevance of essential literacies skills for future employment prospects and enabled individuals to gain recognition for their progress. The creative arts have also proved crucial in this respect, helping raise levels of esteem and confidence to promote self-reflection and further develop learning challenges.

Having accumulated multiple examples of good, flexible practice in educational provision, we need to build on this progress and improve levels of participation through better planning, coordination and integration of activities.

What are the challenges?

At present, the range of interventions across establishments are often delivered in isolation from each other, resulting in competition for the most engaged individuals. This can be exacerbated by higher payments awarded to some types of activities, such as production workshops and key work-related activities that help keep each prison functioning, e.g. catering, laundry, and cleaning. While some of these activities offer opportunities for work-based qualifications, many do not and can often function solely as activities to keep individuals busy.

Furthermore, there is often an absence of structured planning to determine who should be prioritised for such places and who would perhaps benefit from pre-activity training in appropriate core-skills, especially those with lower levels of literacy and numeracy ability. As participation in educational activity is voluntary, we need to encourage more reluctant learners to become involved in educational activities.

We also need to continue to tackle negative views and apathy towards learning, possibly through rebranding our learning activities in context of ‘College’ attendance which may be more acceptable to potential learners. This might present a more positive outlook and acceptable status for disaffected learners for whom terms such as ‘Learning’ Centre or ‘Education’ can be construed as remedial literacies learning. Improved screening and promotion of services is also needed to help overcome poor previous educational experiences, perceived lack of relevance and low aspirations. This means presenting initial screening and assessments as a positive first step to determining needs and future aspirations.

We also need to improve our practice in the provision of screening to identify those requiring additional support for learning. In association with Scottish Government ambitions, we will work with our learning service partners to provide appropriate interventions such as one-to-one support, small group-work and where required, the use of assistive learning technologies. These measures will help promote an improved range of quality learning services, ensuring a more creative approach to teaching and engagement for those who have not undertaken learning for some considerable time. These measures will also help to identify those requiring reasonable adjustments because of additional support needs.

How do we address the challenges?

To improve levels of engagement we will:

- Work creatively with partners and staff to raise the status of learning and promote levels of engagement;
- Improve screening process that better identifies individual abilities and enables better sequencing and integration of activities;
- Promote integration of activities within each establishment so that complementary skills such as vocational training and life-skills, can be better developed and recognised;
- Work with partners to develop services and interventions for those requiring additional support for learning.

Expected Outcomes:

- Improved levels of engagement in learning;
- Cultural change in the perceived status of learning;
- Improved integration and coordination of learning services to maximise resources;
- Improved delivery of services and outcomes through more embedded learning;
- Improved process to determine needs and inform services for those requiring additional support.

‘Although reluctant initially, James has recently been attending ICT classes. With support from teaching staff, learning how to use a computer has been a revelation to James. He now enjoys typing letters to his family and appreciates that computers are part of everyday life. Since attending education, SPS Hall staff have stated that they have observed a positive improvement in James’ overall physical appearance as cleaner and tidier, as well as, how he interacts with others in the Hall.’

New College Lanarkshire Lecturer, HMP Low Moss
Strengthening Partnerships

Strategic Priority 2: We will continue to nurture relationships with existing partners and develop a holistic approach towards future collaboration with partners across multiple sectors.

Current Provision
Collaborative work with partners is at the heart of Scottish Government policy and fully embedded within the corporate intentions of the SPS Organisational Review. Partnerships for the delivery of learning and skills operate at both strategic and operational levels, with the latter often providing the greater challenge. From a strategic perspective, we continue to work closely with our college partners, Education Scotland, Scotland’s College Network, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Skills Development Scotland and Creative Scotland. Each of these partners have contributed invaluable advice and expertise across a range of objectives and we will continue to nurture these partnerships to promote a high quality education service that helps transform the lives of those in our care.

Links with creative arts organisations have proved extremely fruitful in nurturing emergent writers and identifying latent artistic talents in the appreciation of art, literature and language. As we continue to develop these partnerships to progress creative interventions, we need to improve our processes for identifying learner needs, detailing outcomes and ensuring appropriate evaluations.

What are the challenges?
The range and complexity of our work necessitates both on-going engagement with our strategic partners and better collaboration with, and between, individual establishments and our own training college for staff development. Internal partnerships are equally important in ensuring the promotion, engagement and flourishing of learning activities across the entire organisation.

Prisoner Learning Hours (PLHs) are targets based on accumulated hours of activity that are assigned to distinct areas of learning service delivery in each prison. This Government measure can often hamper the development of shared activities. For example, if learning providers are supporting SPS vocational training staff through the teaching and accreditation of core-skills in a workplace context, it can create confusion as to who claims the allocated intervention hours. Moreover, quantitative targets can also drive the wrong types of behaviour with the focus being placed on inputs rather than meaningful progress, or accumulative achievement at the expense of quality and personalised intervention.

Going forward, we intend to establish a National Advisory Group on Education in Scottish Prisons to inform on strategic developments and educational innovation. Improved planning processes will enable better coordination and integration of learning activities to achieve both economies of scale and stronger collaborative engagement. The drafting of Annual Learning Plans for each establishment, with Quarterly Planning Reviews, will help overcome such issues and enable more effective planning and delivery of services at a local level. Annual Learning Plans will be drafted in partnership between the Learning and Skills Team, the contracted Learning Provider(s) and local establishments to better coordinate and integrate learning.

How do we address the challenges?
To improve our partnership arrangements we will:

- Continue to build on our productive partnerships with establishments and learning service providers through annual learning plans, curriculum planning and governance processes;
- Annual learning plans will feature as part of operational plans with quarterly reviews of learning;
- Implement new governance arrangements making explicit the responsibilities of each SPS establishment and their partners in achieving the agreed outcomes.

Expected Outcomes:
- Improved planning, evaluation and governance, and better use of resources;
- Improved local accountability and coordination through detailed Annual Learning Plans and Quarterly Reviews;
- Shared understanding of local contribution to national strategies and improved service to meet the needs of specific populations;
- Improved governance and identification of indicators of success.

‘Kate engaged enthusiastically in additional learning opportunities provided such as the Glasgow School of Art Project, Music projects and the ‘Introduction to Philosophy’ programme run by the College with the University of Edinburgh. Kate said that the philosophy project in particular, with its emphasis on reflection, listening to others and critical thinking, had a profound effect on her.’

New College Lanarkshire Lecturer,
HMP & YOI Cornton Vale
FOLLOW ME
Keith, Barlinnie
Ensuring High Quality Learning Opportunities

Strategic Priority 3: We will develop a range of high quality, creative and flexible learning opportunities to meet the changing needs of our population.

Current Provision

The 2015 review of learning and skills services across the Scottish prison estate demonstrated a wide range of high-quality and innovative educational initiatives currently taking place. By continuing to adopt a learner-centred and social practice approach, we are better placed to provide creative and appropriate educational opportunities structured around promoting engagement within a population who have often not engaged in formal learning for some considerable time. While this point is evident in the large number of qualifications attained at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 3 and 4, we also have a significant number of learners who achieve at higher levels. This includes a range of distance learning opportunities at Higher National level and around 60-70 learners each year achieving degree level modules through our service providers and a higher education opportunities.

We intend to build on these successes by seeking to develop a broader and richer offering of learning in each prison establishment, in line with Curriculum for Excellence. While retaining a strong focus on literacies development, we need to also ensure that the curriculum caters for the significant number of middle range and high-level learners, affording creative opportunities for personal development. While time factors can be an inhibitor to the completion of long-term programmes, and the attainment of full qualifications, we wish to increase participation and stimulate wider interest in learning. Our on-going commitment to a person-centred individual approach to engagement dovetails with the underpinning principles of the SPS Organisational Review with its vision of ‘Unlocking Potential - Transforming Lives’. This recognises the diversity of those taking part in learning in prison, their different backgrounds, skills mix and contrasting aspirations for future development. In particular, the Vision for Young People in Custody sets out particular expectations for the learning provision for young people, based upon their stage of development and needs. The Strategy for Women Offenders envisages a greater emphasis on community-based custodial settings; this will have implications for the provision of learning for women in custody in the future.

What are the challenges?

Access to modern information technology underpins almost all modern educational services. This is clearly evident in the educational intentions of the Scottish Government’s Digital Inclusion Strategy, as well as forming the cornerstone of key learning strategies as described by the Scottish Government in their strategic guidance on Adult Literacies in Scotland (ALIS) 2020. The provision of digital technology is also a key feature within the SPS Organisational Review and Purposeful Activity Review, to improve engagement, access to employment opportunities, facilitate benefit claims, complete housing applications and engage in wider social practices. As indicated earlier, however, there are a number of complexities associated with implementing secure technologies within a custodial environment. When feasible and subject to availability of resources, we will work with our learning providers to explore the potential for utilising secure technologies during the lifetime of the Strategy.

How do we address the challenges?

To ensure the continuity of high quality and flexible learning we will:

• Promote the extension of project-themed learning and opportunities for creative approaches to learning and teaching that harness the interests and aspirations of learners;
• Explore the use of secure technology for use within a custodial environment during the lifetime of the strategy;
• Implement a review of practical life-skills to identify best practice that will inform the key constituent elements of such courses ensuring individuals are better prepared and informed for liberation;
• Review the range of learning services to support employability and link interventions to the needs of employers and local employment markets.

Expected Outcomes:

• Enabling the development of skills required for 21st century learning, life and work;
• Provision of an innovative and interesting curriculum to harness the creative potential of learners;
• Better integration of the range of life-skills with basic literacy and numeracy interventions;
• Better integration and coordination of learning activities to support employment;
• Improved learning offer for learners.

‘Edward started off with one-to-one learning in the Hall and then moved to a small group once or twice a week in the Learning Centre, working on the literacy and communication skills. Edward is a traveller and had a poor record of attendance at school. He was very keen to take the opportunity to learn whilst in custody. He wanted to work on reading, writing, spelling and vocabulary to gain certificates so that he could go to college later. He discovered that he really enjoys learning. He now has the skills he needs to do things he wants to in life. He recently joined the Maths Group and is currently doing the CSLA (Sports Leadership) award. Edward’s reading and enjoyment of reading has improved and he now regularly uses the library.’

Fife College Lecturer, HMP Perth

‘In the [STIR Magazine Editorial Team] we are all getting the benefits of experiential learning. We are given responsibility; we work to a deadline, we edit and create the art magazine, we do outside commissions, and we are learning to use software programmes and are learning graphic design skills.’

Participant, HMP Shotts, New College Lanarkshire
Improving Our Capacity to Respond

Strategic Priority 4: We will manage our resources effectively and creatively to maximise the capacity of learning environments within each establishment.

Current Provision
At present learning is supported in Learning Centre classrooms, vocational training workshops, officer-led programmes and, where appropriate, in residential halls. Although the Scottish prison estate has undergone significant improvements in recent years, the increased numbers and diversity of the prison population means that several groups cannot be mixed for operational reasons, including those individuals in Separation and Reintegration Units. This can prove challenging for many establishments in attempting to maximise engagement while ensuring a safe operating environment for all. Ensuring safety and separation within a highly controlled environment can sometimes result in inflexible timetables resulting in exceptionally lengthy learning sessions that can prove counterproductive for many subject areas. While the arts and associated activities such as creative design can require extended sessions, learners operating at lower levels with more basic activities can become frustrated or tired through attempting to concentrate for longer periods of time. Consequently, we need to consider ways of changing timetables for some classes while retaining lengthy sessions for others. This situation can be compounded by the allocation of individual target quotas from each area of activity, which can help sustain lengthy sessions while also providing barriers to better integration.

What are the challenges?
Production workshops with bonus payments and the designation of ‘key worker’ status in catering and laundry can also impinge on proposals to better integrate and coordinate learning activities. While these activities are often central to the operational functioning of the establishment, better planning and equal pay could enable job share and so free individuals to attend learning services in addition to their allocated job. Prioritising and rewarding achievement in learning activity is also an effective strategy for encouraging engagement. This will require a fresh look at the levels of remuneration for work, workshops and educational engagement. Often the priorities are aligned in favour of production workshops where release from activity can prove problematic due to current bonus payment arrangements. This limits integration and individual opportunities to undertake learning to complement work activities, and reinforces the need to move towards a whole prison approach to learning.

External agencies often approach prisons to offer interventions in a range of activities, and this can perpetuate a ‘supply-led’ model of activity that is no longer sustainable. Although well-intentioned, such approaches often have undefined outcomes that do not take account of the actual need for the proposed activity in the establishment or how best such proposals can sit with existing learning and skills services. When such activities are approved, they may distract learners from their existing plans and have no direct relevance to their long-term educational aspirations. Moreover, when such activities are approved at a local level, the Learning Centres may be required to oversee the management of these temporary activities, thereby reducing their capacity and ability to deliver learning services as contractually agreed.

The proposed changes to the prison estate in catering for the needs of women prisoners in community-based units will have implications for the future provision of learning services. The relatively small proposed populations for these units and the wide range of structured learning interventions which are likely to be required will present challenges. From a wider perspective, increasing sentence lengths and cumulative historic convictions has resulted in an increasingly ageing population with a wider range of social and educational needs. Consequently, we are increasing the focus on learning services for those with a range of additional support needs or who do not possess the physical mobility to attend services in the traditional learning centre locations. A further challenge is the need to balance the response to the high demand for educational provision by certain population groups with the need to provide more encouragement and qualitative interventions for individuals who have significant need for education but are more difficult to engage.

The need for a flexible supply services contract will be a crucial consideration in determining the arrangements for the proposed small community-based units for women and to accommodate population fluctuations and changing locations. The underpinning feature for improving our capacity to respond is the nurturing of a strategic approach to development, ensuring compliance with national strategies while maintaining flexibility at a local level to meet the disparate range of learner needs.

‘Euan said that the ‘Money Management Course’ gave him a chance to develop his money management skills and to develop team-working and communication skills. He also appreciated that the group arrange events to showcase the work to their families. Euan feels that education staff working in the work sheds is a good thing as it allows people to access education and still attend their work party. Similarly, education staff working in the Hall is good as it means the men can access education more during the lead up to exams as extra revision sessions are available.’

Fife College Lecturer, HMYOI Polmont
How do we address the challenges?

- Work with establishments to implement flexible learning environments that promote and enable wider access to, and better support for a wide range of learning activities across prisons;
- Work with establishments to create Annual Learning Plans that better reflect their population’s learning needs while ensuring delivery of Scottish Government strategic ambitions;
- Review the levels of remuneration to ensure that learners are entitled to attend education without any detriment to their wages or conditions of work;
- Work with establishments to ensure appropriate processes for managing unsolicited ‘supply-led’ interventions and to scope the educational and arts needs of each establishment.

Expected Outcomes

- Expansion and better integration of learning other activities and services;
- Better planning, identification of learning needs and addressing strategic ambitions;
- Equality of remuneration for learning engagement;
- Better planning, integration and evaluation of activities to ensure ‘supply-led’ services are consistent with our overall aims and strategic direction for learning.
Evidencing Success

Strategic Priority 5: Our approach to prisoner learning will be evidence-based, and the progress towards our outcomes will be clearly evidenced with a commitment to continuous improvement.

Current Provision
At present, the indicator of success in educational interventions in Scottish prisons is primarily derived from quantitative data detailing the number of hours of service delivery, the number of dedicated literacy/numeracy classes, the number of literacies screenings undertaken, the number of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and the number of ILP reviews. While there is value in measuring output quantities to determine input resources, there is strong evidence to suggest that quantitative values that focus solely on targets and the lack of associated measures influences behaviours. Accordingly, the current approach does not serve the needs of learners striving for quality in their learning experience, recognise the complexity of work that may be required with some individuals or provide balanced evidence of achievement. Moreover, the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence promotes embedding key literacy and numeracy skills within the fabric of courses to help learners develop the skills they need for learning, life and work in an ever-changing world. This negates the need to differentiate between embedded or stand alone literacies interventions.

What are the challenges?
The concentration on annual increases in individual certificates does not provide a full picture of improved outcomes, or the utility of those qualifications as a basis for further learning. Increasing cumulative numbers of low-level qualifications are not in of themselves indicators of educational progression. We therefore propose a more rounded approach to gathering and analysing evidence that demonstrates learner progress and provides more evidence on the wider benefits of engagement in learning.

We also lack information on the education, literacy and numeracy of those who are not engaged in learning activities. This is difficult information to gather. However, it is possible to address this issue when screening individuals as they come into custody through the screening and induction processes.

How do we address the challenges?
To better evidence success we will:

• Develop an evaluation plan which sets out how we will monitor and evaluate progress;
• Implement a framework that measures progress towards the delivery of all outcomes within this Strategy;
• Develop a new set of quantitative and qualitative indicators for evaluating, recording and reviewing learner progression and how well provision is meeting the needs of learners;
• Embed self-evaluation in the provision of learning;
• Review and fully embed a national annual audit, evaluation and assurance process for learning and skills.

Expected Outcomes:
• Clarity on responsibility and accountability for data collection and reporting on progress;
• Better understanding of the learner’s journey and how they are able to reach their learning achievements;
• Greater transparency of service delivery and more effective and efficient learning service for learners.

‘After arranging an appointment and speaking with Billy, it was clear his self-esteem and confidence were extremely low and that he also suffered from dyslexia. However, he agreed to attend for one half-hour session twice a day, to be reviewed after one month. I tailored a one-to-one course whereby he slowly gained confidence in both his surroundings and myself. In the open prison environment, form filling is inevitable for home leaves, visits, etc; therefore I focused activities around crucial aspects such as Billy’s name, address and family members’ details. Discovering he enjoyed word searches, I incorporated Billy’s personal details and used these to motivate and challenge him. He has recently passed core skills communication speaking and listening at level 3, whilst on home leave, he is now able to assist his young son with his reading homework.’

Fife College Lecturer, HMP Castle Huntly

Page 15 Learning & Skills Strategy
How We Will Measure Success

In taking forward the Scottish Prison Service Strategy for Learning and Skills, monitoring and oversight of our strategic objectives will be undertaken through a National Advisory Group that will promote and further develop our shared ambitions for learning and skills across the prison estate.

The creation of an Annual Learning Plan within each prison establishment will ensure better coordination and integration across the range of learning activities at each site and improve opportunities for shared activities and embedded learning.

This work will be informed by national strategies, and the needs of each establishment and will be monitored through quarterly planning reviews. The annual learning plan will be drafted in consultation between the SPS Headquarter’s Learning and Skills Team, contracted learning provider and individual establishments.

Improved governance structures involving the Headquarter’s Learning and Skills Team and prison contracts and procurement services will ensure oversight of the implementation and monitoring of the Learning and Skills Contract. These arrangements will include regular quarterly review meetings with Heads of Offender

Outcomes at local establishments. Annual secondary assurance visits will be arranged to review learning and skills provision, discuss achievements and future objectives.

Proposed changes and improvements will be progressed through the annual learning plans with key input from strategic partners, learning and skills providers and local establishment representatives.

An accompanying guidance document will be developed to help establishments develop and manage the new arrangements.
Implications of the Strategy

The Learning and Skills Strategy has implications for the Scottish Prison Service, both within individual establishments and at national level, for the learning and skills contract holder, for partner organisations and for learners.

Individual Establishments
• Providing a wide range of high-quality learning activities in each establishment, designed to make best use of available resources in order to enable learners to progress;
• Providing the best mix of learning activities to meet the range of individual needs, working in partnership with prison staff and other partners;
• Enabling learners to have records of their progress which they can build upon in work or further learning in the community;
• Participating in joint planning and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement in the learning and skills provision, ensuring that the range of learning opportunities in each establishment continues to develop to meet the needs of its varied population;
• Offering expertise to support the potential for future use of technologies for learning.

Partners Who Provide Additional Learning Opportunities
• Providing learning activities that meet identified needs and purposes and contribute to a coherent whole;
• Engaging in joint planning with the Learning and Skills Team and contracted learning providers;
• Support and review shared activities, providing evidence of quality and of learners’ progress in their learning.

National Education and Skills Partners
• Providing strategic advice and information (such as on future skills requirements, new courses and qualifications and best practice) to help to guide the implementation of the Strategy and the evolution of practice in the future;
• To participate in the National Advisory Group for prison-based Learning and Skills.

Learners
• Participating in a wider range of relevant learning activities to enable them to progress in their learning, skills and attitudes and so promote their desistance from offending;
• Having access to support, if they need it, for their learning;
• Gaining evidence of progress and recognition of achievements which they can use when they return to their communities in work or further learning.

We believe that the implementation of this Strategy will enable us to build upon our successes and further promote and expand educational engagement for men, women and young people in custody. As more of the people in our care gain the skills, insights and opportunities to transform their lives through learning, we will be contributing towards making Scotland a safer place.

(These points will be addressed as part of each establishment’s Annual Learning Plan.)

Scottish Prison Service at National Level
• Keeping relevant policies and practices under review to ensure that they support the Strategy, and seeking to reduce barriers which prevent learners from accessing learning opportunities;
• Supporting and promoting developments in technologies which will improve and support learning, the recording of progress and other functions needed to support the intentions of the Learning and Skills Strategy;
• Selecting and implementing performance measures and processes for monitoring, reviewing and improving practices that align with and support the intentions of the Learning and Skills Strategy;
• Ensuring that the arrangements for procurement of learning and skills provision enable a wide range of learning activities to be available and flexibility in delivery and outcomes;
• Ensuring that Prison Officers have the knowledge, skills and attributes to encourage the people in their care to participate in learning activities.

(These points will be addressed through the business plans of the relevant SPS Directorates.)

Learning and Skills Contract Provider
• Providing a wide range of high-quality learning activities in each establishment, designed to make best use of available resources in order to enable learners to progress;
• Providing the best mix of learning activities to meet the range of individual needs, working in partnership with prison staff and other partners;
• Enabling learners to have records of their progress which they can build upon in work or further learning in the community;
• Participating in joint planning and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement in the learning and skills provision, ensuring that the range of learning activities in each establishment continues to develop to meet the needs of its varied population;
• Offering expertise to support the potential for future use of technologies for learning.

Cover image: EDUCATIONAL MIND
Shy, Shotts
Back image: HIGHWAY TO FREEDOM
Dean, Shotts
Annex A

Learning takes place in the context of a range of Scottish Prison Service and Scottish Government policies. The following key policies and strategies have shaped the Scottish Prison Service strategic approach to learning and skills:

- **SPS Organisational Review (2013)** aims to transform the way in which SPS operates and improve the effectiveness of the delivery of custodial services.
- **SPS Purposeful Activity Review (2014) Delivering a Strategy for Purposeful Activity in the Scottish Prison Service** outlines how the SPS will implement key recommendations from the Justice Committee Inquiry into Purposeful Activity.
- **SPS Vision for Young People in Custody (2014)** outlines how the SPS will work with our partners to enable young people in custody prepare for a positive future and promote desistance from offending.
- **Education Scotland Adult Learning in Scotland Statement of Ambition (2014)** outlines the ambition that Scotland is not only the best place to grow up in but also the best place to learn. At the heart of the ambition is the principle that everyone in Scotland has the right to access high-quality learning to meet their needs and aspirations – throughout their lives.
- **SG Adult Literacies in Scotland (ALIS) 2020 Strategic Guidance** outlines detailed plans to improve the literacies capabilities of Scotland’s adults.
- **SG Curriculum for Excellence** aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum across four capacities: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.
- **Education Scotland National Youth Work Strategy 2014-19** sets out the ambition for improving outcomes for young people through high-quality and effective youth work.
- **Welcoming our Learners: Scotland’s ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Strategy (2015)** outlines the importance of high-quality English language learning opportunities for New Scots and, where appropriate, members of settled ethnic minority communities to improve their English language skills.
- **SG Keys to Life – Improving Quality of Life for people with Learning Disabilities (2013)** Scotland’s learning disability strategy which follows on from, and builds on the principles and success of ‘The Same as You?’ - the original review of services for people with a learning disability.
- **Scotland’s Creative Learning Plan (2014)** aims to encourage educational policy makers and practitioners to utilise creativity to benefit learners in schools and places of learning. It also recognises and aims to build on achievements following the publication in 2010 of the Scottish Government’s Education and the Arts, Culture and Creativity Action Plan.
- **Working for Growth: A Refresh of the Employability Framework for Scotland (2012)** provides a framework to strengthen the Scottish Governments’ and partners’ combined focus on jobs and growth.
- **Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland’s Youth Employment Strategy (2014)** sets out how the Scottish Government will implement the recommendations from the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce.

**Equality Statement**

The SPS is an equal opportunities employer where all employees are treated with dignity and respect. We are fully committed to equality, diversity and human rights and to ensuring our culture, working environment, policies, processes and practices are free from bias. This policy applies to all employees regardless of protected characteristics, and, subject to any eligibility criteria, length of service, grade, working pattern or operational status.

**Vision for Equality**

Everyone in SPS values diversity in all aspects of our work;
Everyone in SPS is responsible for respecting and promoting equality and human rights;
We have sustainable and effective policies and procedures that place equality, diversity, inclusion and respect for human rights at the centre of everything we do.

This publication has been designed and produced by prisoners from the creative media group MPG-Shotts, a graphic design facility run by prisoners in HM Prison Shotts, supported by Iñigo Garrido, STIR Magazine Coordinator from New College Lanarkshire.