

Press release: Jobs strategy aims to cut reoffending

- Governors to be given control of education, tailoring it to prisoners' needs
- Offenders to receive training designed to meet local labour market requirements
- New vocational training route – the Prisoner Apprenticeship Pathway – will offer guaranteed jobs on release
- New Futures Network will match prisons to employers to cut £15 billion cost of reoffending
- Call on employers to shift attitudes 'from shop floor to boardroom' as Government commits to employ ex-offenders

The [Education and Employment strategy](#) sets out new measures to boost prisoners' skills while in custody and improve their chances of securing work on release. This will help to cut the £15 billion annual cost of reoffending as ex-offenders in employment are up to 9 percentage points less likely to commit further crime. At present, however, just 17% of offenders are in P45 employment a year after release.

In this strategy, education and training, work in custody, and the availability of employment opportunities in the community are highlighted as the key areas of focus in achieving this.

Prison governors will be given the power to commission education and training programmes which provide offenders with the skills that real-world employers are looking for. This will be tailored to meet specific labour market requirements in the prison's local economy. Meanwhile a vocational route, the Prisoner Apprenticeship Pathway, will offer an alternative means of delivering training in custody which guarantees jobs on release.

There will also be a renewed focus on encouraging offenders to take up prison work, including piloting a new approach which better matches this activity to job opportunities in the local community. A consultation on how to get more risk-assessed prisoners out of their cells and into real workplaces, while on temporary licence, is also being launched today.

The strategy also sets out how offenders will be helped to find jobs on release – a major incentive to turn their backs on crime. A new body, the New Futures Network, will work side-by-side with employers to generate job opportunities.

Secretary of State David Gauke was announcing the strategy at HMP Isis today, after touring workshops at the prison which help inmates build the skills they need to secure jobs in future. He said:

I want prisons to be places of hope and aspiration that propel offenders into employment, and ultimately help to reduce the number

of victims of crime in the future.

I believe passionately that through work, people can turn their backs on crime and start a new chapter in their lives. Today's announcement should signal to offenders that we will reward good behaviour and hard work with opportunity, and to employers that ex-offenders can make a positive contribution to their workforce, society and the economy.

And the Secretary of State also called on employers to drive 'cultural change' within their organisations.

I want more employers to look past an offender's conviction to their future potential.

We do that by working more closely with employers to open their eyes to the benefits of hiring ex-offenders...

...but this is not just about creating a path to employment from institutions to employers, but about creating cultural change from within organisations themselves.

I want employees, from the shop floor to the boardroom, to call out and challenge employers who turn a blind eye to attracting and representing ex-offenders in their workplace.

Fostering that cultural change within workplaces will send a message that says: we believe in what you can contribute now and in the future, not what you have done in the past.

And let me tell you why I believe now is the moment to seize the opportunity to do that.

I think the public mood has changed somewhat in recognising that when an offender comes out of prison we, as a society, don't want them to return to crime and reoffend. The public expects them to get a job and become law-abiding citizens.

That makes good sense for society. It also makes good sense for business, in some ways, now more than ever.

Fred Sirieix, the maître d'hôtel of Channel 4's First Dates restaurant, founded The Right Course programme which works with offenders in prison kitchens with a view to helping them secure work in catering and hospitality on release. He developed the scheme in conjunction with HMP Isis, the venue for today's launch event. He said:

With The Right Course we are bringing industry skills and knowledge to the prisoners and creating supported employment pathways to help in their transition to work on their release.

We know that by securing meaningful work, this directly helps reduce the risk of reoffending. More than that, the course grows self-confidence in the learners and a sense of hope and purpose for the future.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Esther McVey added:

We're determined to help everyone who can to get into work, no matter what their background. I welcome this new employment strategy and its aim to boost prisoners' skills.

Our dedicated Jobcentre Plus work coaches and See Potential campaign are supporting ex-offenders who are keen to leave their past behind, get into work and earn a steady wage. With over 800,000 job vacancies, there are plenty of opportunities and I'd encourage more businesses to work with us to help turn lives around.

Jane Gratton, head of business environment at the British Chambers of Commerce, said:

Businesses are experiencing skills shortages at all levels in the workforce. We welcome this initiative, which gives an opportunity to train up offenders with those workplace skills that everyone needs to succeed.

Providing different ways of training for those in custody will help boost the talent pool in the workforce, and enable regional economies to thrive.