

Speech: Matt Hancock speaking at the Association of Chief Executives Conference

Everybody in this room gets out of bed and goes to work to improve the lives of our citizens, the citizens of the UK and in some case those across the world.

And our task is to do that to the very best of our ability. And you can't do anything to the very best of your ability unless you use the very best technology that is available.

And the message that I wanted to give today is the vital importance of renewing that effort to double down on the use of digital technology and in particular data.

We have been talking about digital transformation for some time. We have made progress in certain areas, but the speed at which opportunities are advancing is faster than the speed at which we are adopting them.

So we need to, as the session after this will put it, 'do more for less', and take the enhanced opportunity to deliver improved services for the people who rely on us.

Technology is of course at the heart of many public sector organisations now.

For all of us who believe in the power of technology and in the fundamental importance of public service, this is a very exciting time. And ultimately these two things are two sides of the same coin.

There's three areas that I wanted to touch on today. The first is the importance and value of embracing opportunities. The second is thinking much more about the use and power of data. And third is the importance of the ethical frameworks in which this all sits.

Embracing opportunities

Now, I am a great believer in embracing opportunities when they come to you.

I started life working in the tech sector, and then drove digital transformation in the Cabinet Office.

And now that I am Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, I can see the opportunities right across government.

And I also personally try to embrace them. For instance I introduced my own app.

Thus far we've only got 10,000 people on it, but I often say there are only

two types of people in the world.

The people who are on the Matt Hancock app, and people who are not on the Matt Hancock app yet...

So the first thing I want to talk about is embracing these opportunities and in particular embracing them through the smart use of procurement. So we can save billions of pounds of taxpayers' money whilst also delivering better public services.

The magic of 'more for less' is now very very clear. It is possible, desirable and efficient to improve procurement practices and crucially culture, so we actively look for the very best way of delivering a service or tackling a problem.

Asking the question 'what is the user need?' and then putting the user need first can deliver enormous improvements.

Now as a central government, we've done this in a whole series of different areas. The first of course and most iconic was the gov.uk website, bringing together all of our different websites.

We can now do everything from registering a ferret to getting a divorce on gov.uk. So I challenge any arms length body to tell me that there is not a role for digital transformation if we can improve the service to our nation's ferret owners using digital transformation.

We need to ensure that procurement is simple and does not have burdensome requirements like the need for indemnities, or years of years of accounts, which simply stops the most innovative companies from applying.

And we need to use the innovative frameworks that are available to bring huge advances and improvements.

I was very excited that the Prime Minister this week talked in great detail and with great enthusiasm about the potential for artificial intelligence to transform cancer diagnosis in this country.

The analysis is that it can save over 20,000 lives every year. So we need to also look at what changes are going on outside these walls and think about how we can bring them inside by being open and enthusiastic.

Using the power of data

This leads me onto my second point; the power of data.

The development of AI relies on the underpinning of data and getting the data architecture right for every organisation is so important.

It's important for two reasons; firstly and rather prosaically and mundanely it's important to make sure we fit within the rules.

And you may have heard a obscure EU law coming into force ... Someone might

have sent you an email about it.

But I hope that the GDPR rules will be a forcing mechanism to make people stop and think “Is my data being held in the right sort of way” and “Is my data architecture good enough?”.

Because ultimately the innovative use of data and the protection of people’s privacy is not a trade off.

Because a good structure for how you hold and secure your data can lead to both the more innovative use of data and the use of some of the most cutting-edge machine learning and AI techniques, as well as better privacy and better services for citizens.

So I think we need to be ready to practise what we preach on GDPR, not just to avoid the glare of the Information Commissioner. But because by using our data better we can improve people’s lives and there are legions of examples of how this is being done well.

Real time open transport data from TFL has allowed us to know how quickly it’ll take to get from x to y.

The Environment Agency’s LiDAR programme uses 3D maps and landscapes to model flood risk.

And the Border Force’s analytics programme uses flight information to assess the risk of modern slavery.

There are a whole series of examples across the whole public service landscape.

My favourite is a fire service using data from the Food Standards Agency to predict the risk of fire, an absolutely brilliant cross-cutting use of data.

And the reason they could work it out was that premises with low food hygiene ratings have a strong correlation with a poor fire safety record.

So by using this data they were able to improve fire safety and food standards at the same time.

We want to see the innovative use of data and the use of open data wherever possible.

So not data published through PDFs, thank you very much, but through APIs instead.

Developing strong ethical frameworks

The third point is the importance of doing this work within a strong ethical framework.

Our overriding approach is to bring liberal values to the use of new technology and the Internet. Making sure we support its great freedoms, new

technology and innovation, but not the freedom to harm others.

So getting the ethics right, particularly in the delivery of public services, is mission critical.

We're setting up the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, an independent advisory body.

This has a remit to advise government and regulators on the measures we need to ensure ethical safe and innovative uses of data, including AI and other emerging technologies.

And my fear is that the pace of technology is changing so fast, that too often it's outstripped by our ability to develop codes and standards.

So the Centre will recommend changes in policy, setting standards which can come become industry norms in the public and the private sector. I think it's very exciting.

We've also refreshed the data science ethical framework, which is about how to maximise the value of data to the UK whilst also retaining that public confidence.

So making sure we use these new technologies in ethical ways is important.

It's not a trade off, because if we think carefully about how to use the data ethically we'll also be better at innovating in the use of that data.

Conclusion

We've made good progress. I was absolutely thrilled that we've recently been recognised as a world leader in digital government.

It is vital to deliver the best possible services to the public and I would challenge anyone to say their organisation can't benefit from this sort of improvement.

It requires the technology, being open to the world and crucially it requires a culture that embraces change.

And I urge you to look to your own organisations to see what you can do to use this technology and feel the benefits.

Thank you very much.

[Speech: From the wings to the](#)

workplace: the route to reducing reoffending

It's a pleasure to be at HMP Isis today to see some of the excellent work being done to help prisoners get a job when they are released.

The impressive workshops being run here are helping prisoners to learn a trade and gain the practical skills and confidence they need to succeed in that trade beyond these prison walls.

The power of work

Why is that important? Well, I believe in the power of work to change people's lives.

As Work and Pensions Secretary, I saw how making work always pay supports people to take the right path in life and create a better future for themselves and their family.

It's not just the financial security of having a pay packet, although of course that is important. It's everything else that comes with being in work: purpose, structure, networks, having a stake in something. Nearly 400,000 more people have moved into work since this time last year; almost 3.3 million more people since 2010.

This sustained increase in employment and the strong jobs market that has supported it are great success stories.

Indeed, the employment rate in the UK has been increasing over the last few years. At over 75% – it is now the highest it has been since records began in 1971.

Yet, there is one group in society – former prisoners – where only 17% are in PAYE employment a year after they are released.

I want those ex-offenders who are committed to change to share in this country's remarkable jobs story.

Prisoners who come out of prison and do not get a job are a burden on our welfare state and on hard-working taxpayers. Without the focus of a job, they then often fall back into crime. That reoffending costs the UK economy £15 billion a year.

Ensuring ex-offenders come out of prison, not onto benefits but into work, reduces the financial burden on taxpayers and the welfare state. It reduces reoffending and, therefore, the number of victims of crime.

Prison as a turning-point

In my first prisons speech as Secretary of State in March, I set out what I

saw as the purpose of prison: to protect the public, to punish by depriving liberty and to rehabilitate.

I am clear that offenders are sent to prison as punishment, but they should leave with prison having been a turning-point in their lives.

Delivering on that third purpose – rehabilitation – is at the heart of the education and employment strategy I am launching today.

Although prison cannot help those who are not willing to help themselves, for those offenders who see prison as a crossroads in their lives, as a chance to change, I want prison to provide them with the impetus and incentives to set them on the path to a better life.

The foundation for creating that better life is work. This strategy will unlock opportunity and put prisoners on a path to employment.

Because the evidence is clear: if a prisoner gets a job after coming out of prison, they are less likely to commit more crime.

As a window on the world of work opens for a prisoner, we often see the door to their criminal past close behind them.

I want to make breaking through into that world a more realistic prospect for prisoners.

Education

The first step is education – as Dame Sally Coates' 2016 report made clear.

Over half of offenders assessed on arrival into prison have the English and maths skills of an 11-year-old.

Now, we have made good progress over the last few years in improving the quality of education in prisons:

70% of the education provided by the Offender Learning and Skills Service is now rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding, That's up from 51% in 2015.

But we must go further.

We need to ensure that offenders not only leave prison with the basic skills they need to enter the workplace, but with the skills that employers are looking for.

Frankly, there are too many low-level qualifications being delivered that reap little or no reward for prisoners and are of little relevance for employers.

Education in prisons needs to be much more closely tailored to the skills that employers in the local area need.

That's why our Prisoner Apprenticeship Pathway is helping link training with

employment opportunities by giving a 12-month apprenticeship on release – that's a guaranteed job and a guaranteed income.

And governors know their prisoners and local areas best. I've said before that governors should govern. That's why from April next year, they will be given full control of over how education is delivered in their prisons, able to tailor it to meet the needs of local employers and the local labour market.

From jobs on the wings to jobs in the workplace

Alongside education, it is also important to get experience of work.

At any one time, thousands of prisoners are working in prison. A third of prisoners have a job of some kind.

That could be a job working for one of the 300 businesses that have set up shop in prison, or it could be a job that directly helps with the running of a prison.

Whether working in a call centre, cleaning the wings, cooking in the kitchens or cutting hair in the prison barbers...

...prison work gives prisoners something purposeful to do and helps prisons run effectively. Prisoners can pick up some useful skills along the way.

However, that work has not been geared up in a way that properly prepares prisoners for employment or provides a clear route from a job on the wings to a job in the workplace.

This strategy will build on the success we have had in getting prisoners doing jobs in prison and translate that into supporting prisoners into jobs when they come out of prison.

The Clink Partnership

We will be putting rehabilitation into the prison work routine by incorporating more on-the-job training and vocational qualifications into traditional prison jobs.

In three prisons – HMP Bristol, Styal and Risley – we will work with The Clink charity to give make working in a prison kitchen more focussed on training, work experience, placements out of prison and ultimately employment and mentoring on release. I hope this is a model that can be adopted more widely.

Workplace ROTL

A key aspect of The Clink model is getting prisoners experience of work outside prison.

That real-world experience from is vital. The evidence shows that it can reduce the risk of reoffending.

So, for prisoners who have earned it, and who have been properly risk-assessed, we will get more prisoners out of their cells and into real workplaces.

We intend to do this by expanding and increasing the use of release of prisoners on temporary licence for work – or ‘workplace ROTL’.

This will give more prisoners the chance to prove themselves to an employer, to build relationships and their CV, and to get that real-world experience before they leave prison.

Prisoners who go to work under ROTL are treated just like any other employee: they earn the same wages and have similar deductions made for tax and national insurance, as well as making contributions from their pay packet to victims’ funds.

So this is a foot through the door to work and to many of the benefits of being a real employee and it is an important step towards re-joining society and committing to the obligations that are required in doing that.

Workplace ROTL is also a powerful incentive to promote good behaviour in prison.

If you do not cause trouble, if you take the right path and play by the rules, that behaviour will be recognised and you will be rewarded with a more liberal prison regime.

In that sense, expanding the use of positive incentives like workplace ROTL, has an important role to play in reducing the levels of violence and disorder in prisons, alongside the other measures we are taking.

Personal prisoner stories

As part of the launch of this strategy today, you will see and hear stories of prisoners who have successfully taken that path, whose lives have been transformed from the opportunity workplace ROTL provides – and as a result of their own drive and determination.

Let me give you just three brief personal stories.

Yasmin used workplace ROTL to start work at an engineering firm in the West Midlands. Since then, she has successfully applied for an apprenticeship and started full time work. She is now hoping to study for a degree.

Mikey got three months of work experience under his belt before being released from prison. He now works for Balfour Beatty. His advice to others if they are given the same opportunity he had is: “grab it with both hands”.

And Luke, whose story features in one of our campaign videos, went to a jobs fair in HMP Brixton. There he met a lady who signposted him to construction company Keltbray, who took him on. He says that if you have no prospects and nothing to lose, it’s very easy to fall back into what you know.

Luke says it's a good feeling being self-sufficient. He doesn't have to claim benefits. He can pay his rent. He is grateful to Keltbray for giving him a chance and now wouldn't even consider doing anything that could put his new life at risk.

Employers

These stories show what is possible.

But the fact is, half of employers wouldn't even consider hiring an ex-offender.

Beyond the prison walls, we need to change the mind-set of many employers.

We also recognise the argument in favour of financial incentives and will balance this against wider government objectives. We will consider how to take forward a national insurance contributions holiday alongside wider work on employer obligations and incentives.

However, the basic incentive for employers should be that prisons provide a pool of potential recruits just like Yasmin, Mikey and Luke – hard-working and loyal.

Some employers see that, including many of the employers here today.

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

How do we do that?

Well, we do it by working more closely with employers so they open their eyes to the benefits of hiring ex-offenders.

Our New Futures Network will do just that. It will create stronger links between prisons and employers, championing prisoners and acting as a broker between prisoners and employers.

But this is not just about creating paths from institutions to employment, but about creating cultural change from within organisations themselves.

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

Fostering that cultural change 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 we can 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.

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

Labour markets

As I mentioned at the start of my speech, we currently have a thriving jobs market. We know that demand for workers in some sectors is very high.

Leaving the European Union is also likely to have an impact on the workforce in sectors such as catering, construction and agriculture.

I see an opportunity here for both prisoners and employers, particularly those operating in these sectors.

By expanding the use of ROTL for work, more prisoners will not only be able to get a foot through the door to sectors like these, but employers will be better able to fill short-term skills gaps whilst also developing potential permanent employees for the longer term.

That in my eyes is a 'win-win'.

Ultimately though, a lot of this is down to an employer's mind-set and their recruitment policies. I want an employer's head, as well as their heart, to be in the right place.

As a government, we are doing our part.

We have already 'banned the box'. That means we no longer ask about criminal convictions upfront in the recruitment process, which can put off ex-offenders from applying in the first place and lead to preconceptions on the part of the person recruiting.

We are also working with prisons to place ex-offenders into fixed-term jobs in the Civil Service. That way, an ex-offender can build up confidence and experience and have a good chance of being successful when they apply for a permanent role.

Conclusion

For those prisoners who are prepared to change, this education and employment strategy will help to break down both the barriers and the prejudices prisoners have faced.

I say to prisoners: if you treat prison as a pivotal turning-point in your life, if you commit to change and to bettering yourself, if you are prepared to step up when you step out of prison, this strategy will work for you and empower you to prepare for, and move into, work.

I want prisons to be places of hope and aspiration that can propel prisoners into employment when they are released. In doing so, they will be able to

start a new chapter in their lives, contribute to society and join their place in this country's extraordinary jobs story.

Thank you.

[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.

[News story: The Insolvency Service newsletter: Spring 2018](#)

The [Spring 2018](#) edition of our quarterly stakeholder newsletter is now available.

The newsletter explains what we are doing to strengthen the insolvency regime, improve our services and provides updates on important developments.

You can also:

- [subscribe](#) to future editions of the newsletter (distributed by email)
- [view previous editions](#) of the newsletter

[Press release: Solicitor General visits law students in Reading](#)

The Solicitor General will meet with law students who help to give free legal advice to some of the most vulnerable people in the community through the law school's involvement with nine Pro Bono initiatives.

One of these is the Streetlaw project, where students visit local schools to help raise legal awareness in their communities. The University also works with Flag DV, a Newbury-based charity, to offer advice to victims of domestic violence. Family Law students assist by conducting preliminary interviews and participating in subsequent interviews alongside the charity's qualified volunteer advisers.

The Solicitor General said:

“It is fantastic to meet future lawyers offering advice through pro bono initiatives. Their work provides a vital contribution to our society and

makes a real difference to those who receive it.

“I strongly encourage both students and established lawyers to explore what sort of pro bono help they might be able to provide, as it will enhance their careers and help them to maintain strong connections to their communities.”

Harry Stewart, President of the University of Reading Law Society said:

“The University of Reading Law Society is delighted that the Solicitor General will be meeting with students on Thursday. We are very excited to discuss some of our great participation in pro bono, public legal education and mooting. The Solicitor General’s visit will be very insightful, and we look forward to hearing about his own experiences in law and public legal education.”

The Solicitor, who superintends the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), will also visit the CPS Thames and Chiltern office in Reading. He will meet with CPS staff from across the office to discuss their current work and upcoming priorities.