

# HMP Leyhill

Prison education interim visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Nick Crombie, Her Majesty's Inspector

**Visit date(s):** 2 - 3 March 2021

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## Interim visit

### Ofsted context and focus of visit

On 17 March 2020, all Ofsted routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspections, we are carrying out interim visits to prisons and Young Offender Institutions (YOIs). Interim visits aim to help prisoners, parents, employers and government understand how establishments are meeting the needs of prisoners during this period, including prisoners with special educational needs and disabilities. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

The visit was conducted by Ofsted alongside HMI Prisons. The visit was conducted fully remotely.

### **What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that responds to the reasonable needs of prisoners and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?**

Senior prison leaders, managers and teaching staff developed and implemented a workable education, skills and work curriculum following the first lockdown in March 2020.

The number of prisoners taking Open University or distance learning courses had increased during the pandemic. A small number of socially-distanced one-to-one tutorials were provided for prisoners. Full-time work now occupied 350 prisoners, just under three-quarters of the prison population. Prisoners could also complete paper-based work packs which had been created by education and prison staff in collaboration with other prisons. These packs were designed to develop prisoners' underpinning theory and knowledge in a range of subjects in preparation for a return to practical studies. The work pack curriculum included independent living skills, English and mathematics courses, together with vocational options including painting and decorating, bicycle maintenance, barbering, and catering. Teaching staff intended that prisoners who completed work packs would return to face-to-face practical teaching first.

Our survey showed that only a small proportion of prisoners had used the work pack courses. Senior leaders agreed and considered this was because there were numerous competing activities available, including work, and prisoners did not have digital technologies to support their learning in their cells. However, we found that most prisoners who started a work-pack course completed it.

Prisoners were being offered some initial skills action planning, but the number of prisoners engaging with this activity was much reduced. Resettlement advisors had offered a broad range of face-to-face, pre-release support services largely without interruption during the pandemic, but the Job-Club was suspended.

Teaching staff valued the cross-prison subject group meetings convened during the pandemic and found the sharing of peers' professional expertise and experience particularly helpful. Staff hoped these would continue in the future.

Senior leaders had reflected on the education, skills and work curriculum and intended to make some changes after lockdown. For example, they planned to use the Leyhill estate more effectively to extend learning opportunities. They believed the curriculum in future would include face-to-face and elements of remote, in-cell learning.

All the prisoners we interviewed had completed one or more in-cell work packs. They told us the packs were effective, and that they had enjoyed and benefitted greatly from their new learning. All were committed to learning either for its own sake or for specific employment, for example becoming a painter and decorator. They all praised the support for learning they had received from teaching staff.

**What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of prisoners?**

Teaching staff had ensured that work packs included appropriate content and level of challenge for prisoners and used relevant technical language. Packs contained a range of learning activities including short and long answer questions, reading comprehension, extended writing and labelling and drawing tasks.

Teachers marked prisoners' work and most teachers gave pertinent and constructive feedback to develop prisoners' understanding or skills, including using correct spelling and grammar. This had helped keep prisoners motivated, engaged and keen to complete the programme. Prisoners wrote a self-evaluation at the end of each week to demonstrate how much they had learned and most felt they were making good progress. Similarly, tutors also wrote regular and constructive commentaries on each prisoner's learning.

Teachers adapted the work-pack content – where necessary – to meet the needs of individual prisoners. For example, in painting and decorating the trainer had used targeted assessments and multiple-choice questions at the end of each section to check the prisoner had remembered the underpinning knowledge.

All prisoners new to the prison had completed a face-to-face induction which included an initial assessment of their English, mathematics and information technology skills as well as a screening for any additional learning needs. Teachers and trainers had used this information to ensure that prisoners would be placed on the correct level of activity.

Instructors in some work areas such as estates and woodworking had changed working practices to include smaller working parties and additional health and safety measures. Prisoners in the woodwork workshop were building the component parts of a modular house for a charitable organisation. The estates working party had been tasked with building covers for all the external walkways around the prison.

Teachers and trainers were in the process of identifying how best to manage the logistics of a return to classroom learning, such as how to hand out and retrieve resources safely and how best to communicate while wearing a mask.

### **Next steps**

Increase substantially the number of prisoners engaging with work-pack learning and prioritise their enrolment in practical learning, once restrictions are lifted.

Recommence classroom-based and vocational learning as soon as it is safe to do so.

Recommence the Job-Club to support prisoners into employment on release as soon as it is safe to do so.

Improve prisoners' access to digital learning technology so that they are better supported in their learning and skills development as part of their resettlement plans.

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