

# HMP Bure

Prison education interim visit report

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## Interim visit

### Context and focus of visit

1. 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 education and skills training needs of prisoners during this period, including prisoners with special educational needs and disabilities. They also help to identify what next steps are needed as prisons start to return to full education and skills programmes, taking into account the need to ensure safety throughout. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

### **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 leaders had a clear vision for education, skills and work. They expressed the impact they wanted to achieve by utilising a model of education that combined face to face teaching and remote learning. Their intention was to help prisoners improve their life chances.

Leaders believed that the regime in place prior to the COVID-19 restrictions was serving the needs of prisoners well but had only been able to provide a limited curriculum throughout the pandemic. The introduction of new subjects to the curriculum as taster packs attempted to encourage prisoners to engage with education. Managers spoke about how they intended to return to a full regime of education, skills and work once restrictions allowed it.

Leaders recognised that the current regime did not meet the needs of the prison population. Only around a fifth of prisoners accessed in-cell education. Recently, managers had opened two workshops with a reduced capacity for a small number of prisoners. However, a large proportion of prisoners had not engaged with any form of education or training for the duration of the pandemic.

At the start of the pandemic leaders ceased teaching and training in line with national restrictions. Prisoners were able to access a range of in-cell education packs covering a basic curriculum. However, for prisoners involved in training in the industry workshops there was no related learning to help them to maintain their industrial skills and knowledge.

Managers had risk assessed all classrooms and workshops and had planned for smaller groups to re-start face-to-face activities. Managers had identified prisoners

needing support with their functional skills and those who needed to revise for their functional skills tests as the priority groups to return to learning first.

Managers recognised that the provision of information, advice and guidance had been compromised during the pandemic. Staff had continued to work with prisoners remotely. However, managers felt that there was a need to return to deliver these services face-to-face as soon as the restrictions allowed.

The prisoners we spoke with told us that they were aware of the reasons why education and training in the workshops had been suspended as a consequence of the imposed national restrictions. They thought that the current education offer was inconsistently promoted across the prison. They found the work very basic and easy to complete. They did not think it helped them build on their knowledge of the subject or help with their resettlement plans.

### **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?**

The curriculum available to prisoners throughout the pandemic had a clear focus on helping prisoners improve their English and mathematics skills and their personal and social development. Prisoners had not had access to classes in education since March 2020. Managers had ensured that prisoners had access to a small proportion of the curriculum and introduced new subjects, such as cycle maintenance in the form of taster packs. These were intended to attract more prisoners into education once restrictions were lifted.

Managers and tutors provided in-cell education packs that were intended to meet prisoners' individual needs. Tutors on vocational courses, such as bricklaying, continued to help prisoners develop their theoretical knowledge of the subject through dedicated revision packs. Tutors devised projects in English and mathematics to make learning more interesting for prisoners. For example, a combined English and mathematics project about a national pizza chain resulted in prisoners demonstrating more interest and engaging with their learning.

Tutors marked prisoners' work and corresponded with them frequently. They provided helpful feedback that included what prisoners had done well and what they could do to improve the quality of their work. However, leaders, managers and tutors did not evaluate the knowledge and skills that prisoners had learned prior to the pandemic and those that they had gained during their in-cell learning.

Leaders and managers had supported tutors in the development of remote learning methods, such as the in-cell education packs for prisoners. In addition, tutors had undertaken professional development opportunities to help them better support prisoners with additional learning needs. For example, tutors provided visual learning packs for those prisoners who had poor reading skills.

## **Next steps**

Leaders should safely re-introduce formal education, vocational training, work and adequate face-to-face information, advice and guidance sessions for prisoners as soon as possible.

Managers should increase the proportion of prisoners who engage with the in-cell education packs in preparation for prisoners attending face-to-face teaching and, continuing with their vocational training.

Leaders and managers should ensure that they have a clear understanding of how successfully prisoners have retained the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they learned prior to the pandemic and those they have gained during their in-cell learning.

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