

HMP East Sutton Park

Prison education interim visit report

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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). The visit was conducted alongside HMI Prisons. The visit was conducted partly remotely.

Interim visits aim to help prisoners, employers and government understand how establishments are meeting the education and skills 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.

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?

Prison leaders have focused on ensuring that women have access to education and work activities. During the national restrictions they worked closely with the education provider to ensure that women had access to in-cell learning packs in English, mathematics, customer services and barista. Leaders quickly realised through feedback from women that there was a need to increase the subjects covered to engage more women in education. Consequently, they developed extra in-cell learning packs in subjects such as, history and assertiveness and decision making. Managers recognise that women are unable to achieve qualifications in some of these areas due to the closure of the training kitchen.

Women continued to work in and outside the prison during the national restrictions. Women on release on temporary licence (ROTL) work in key roles such as, in supermarkets. Leaders have ensured that extra work placements in the prison gardens and the farm are available to women who do not have key worker roles and not able to go out on ROTL. This has led to more women accessing and achieving qualifications in these areas.

Leaders and managers use their knowledge of the local and national priorities to inform the curriculum offer. They work with local employers to put in place interesting and useful curriculum projects. For example, some women take part in a partnership project between the prison and a local employer which enables women to grow plants on site and sell them online and at the prison farm shop. Leaders have had early discussions with an external partner to offer women courses in butchery skills. They also recognise the need to extend the wider skills development to include topics such as, how to use click and collect when shopping online.

The small number of women we spoke with told us they really appreciate the help they receive from their teachers and instructors. They feel staff go above and beyond for them. Teachers help women continue with the learning they started at

previous establishments and help them to plan the continuation of their learning when they leave the prison.

Women who complete courses in horticulture recall confidently how they have gained knowledge in specific topics such as, conservation. Women completing Open University courses feel particularly well supported by staff. However, they have been frustrated with the lack of opportunity during the pandemic to access IT to complete their assignments. They have found hand-writing their assignments challenging.

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?

Teachers have attended a wide range of training activities to help them implement the in-cell learning packs. Learning packs are clear and informative. They contain appropriate tasks that check women's understanding and build on existing knowledge. In the assertiveness and decision-making learning pack women complete tasks that help them identify how confident they are at making decisions. They then reflect on how they can improve their confidence and become more assertive..

Teachers give women helpful and detailed feedback on their completed work. This helps women understand what they have answered correctly and what they need to do to improve their answers. Teachers use one-to-one sessions with women to check they respond to the feedback.

Managers quality assure the learning packs and activities. They listen to women's suggestions to improve the packs and make appropriate changes. For example, women on lower level courses requested more visual examples. Managers have not extended their quality assurance activities to the teaching and learning of qualifications offered in industries and work areas.

Staff use the induction period to identify women's additional learning needs and to give them advice and guidance on the education and employment opportunities available at the prison. This helps women choose the appropriate course to take.

Teachers provide extra help to women who struggle to complete their in-cell learning packs. For example, staff supporting women on the barista course have worked collaboratively to produce short video clips on techniques such as, how to froth milk correctly. Teachers identify how they have worked together to embed English and mathematics skills into all learning packs. For example, in the business for hairdressing learning pack, teachers have added tips on how to skim and scan when reading.

In work areas, such as the farms and gardens, instructors do not formally recognise the progress women make in developing their skills beyond the requirements of the

qualification. They do not set or track targets in relation to wider employability skills such as, timekeeping and communication skills.

Next steps

Leaders should quickly re-open the training kitchen to ensure women can complete accredited learning in customer services and hospitality and catering.

Leaders must ensure that they extend their quality assurance activities to the prison work areas. They should ensure that the actions set after these activities focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Managers and staff should ensure that women can access resources and information that helps them retain the new knowledge they gain from the in-cell learning packs while they wait for practical areas to open.

Managers should ensure that staff supporting women in work areas recognise the progress women make in developing their wider skills beyond those required for the qualifications.

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