



## ***THROUGH THE GATEWAY:*** **How Computers Can Transform Rehabilitation**

**Nina Champion  
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The Prison Reform Trust (PRT), established in 1981, is a registered charity that works to create a just, humane and effective penal system. PRT aims to improve prison regimes and conditions, uphold human rights, address the needs of prisoners' families, and promote effective alternatives to custody. PRT's activities include applied research, advice and information, education, parliamentary lobbying and the provision of the secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Penal Affairs Group.

Since 1989, Prisoners Education Trust has been providing access to broader learning opportunities for prisoners, to enhance their chances of building a better life after release. We do this through a grants programme which assists some 2,000 prisoners each year to study distance learning courses in subjects not available in prison. We also provide advice and support, and we make the case for improving policy and practice.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
Foreword	iii
1.Introduction and Executive Summary	1
2.Logistics and Security	5
3.ICT for Resettlement: Employment, Housing and Finance	9
4.ICT for Education and Training	13
5.ICT for Family Relationships	27
6.How ICT Could Transform Resettlement	35
Appendix A:Methods of gathering evidence	37
Appendix B:Glossary	38
Appendix C:Expert roundtables	41
Sources	43

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We thank the governors, staff and prisoners at the nine prisons we visited for enabling us to see directly how information and communication technology (ICT) is being used and to learn from them about how the provision could be improved. We also thank the prison managers who kindly responded to our request for information about the use of ICT. We have also benefited from support from senior officials and managers in the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), and we are grateful for their advice.

As part of the project, we jointly facilitated three expert roundtable meetings: on resettlement; on families; and on education, training and employment. We are grateful to all who participated, as their evidence enriched this report. The lists of the experts who attended are presented in Appendix C. We thank Action for Prisoners' Families, who kindly allowed us to hold a focus group at their Family Forum with prisoners' families.

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Finally, we are grateful to Dr Stefan Fafinski, of the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists, for his insightful comments on a draft of this report and for his broader support for the project.

## FOREWORD

Think how much use of the internet and computers has changed for most of us over the last few years – staying in touch with family and friends; applying for a job, housing and a host of other services; managing our finances; obtaining information and education – laptops, tablets, PCs, smart phones, the cloud...It's hard to think of an area of our lives that has not been touched by the new technologies or the way in which we operate not transformed.

There is a dark side to these developments too. We have learnt some hard lessons about how these technologies can be abused and our children have had to be taught how to use them safely.

Most prisoners are excluded from all this and are placed at the far end of the digital divide. Neither helped to obtain any of the benefits these new technologies bring nor supported and supervised to avoid its risks.

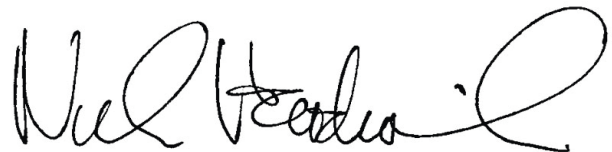
We can't go on with prisons in a pre-internet dark age: inefficient, wasteful and leaving prisoners woefully unprepared for the real world they will face on release. I have not met one prison professional who does not think drastic change is needed.

Of course, there are security issues that need to be managed but the technology itself allows every key stroke to be monitored and access

can be risk-assessed. Perhaps there are some who will say computers and the internet are luxuries prisoners should do without. There was probably some grumbling when they first put telephones on the wings too and if we want prisons to rehabilitate those they hold, we have to give them the tools to do so.

A couple of years ago I visited the British military detention centre in Camp Bastion, Afghanistan. The army had fixed it so the detainees held there could use Skype to communicate with their families in Kabul. If the army can do it for their enemies in a desert in Afghanistan, it's hard to see why we can't do it with low risk prisoners here.

So this is an important report that I very much welcome. I commend it to Ministers, policy makers and the prison service. I hope we will all now get on with getting this part of prison policy to make its long overdue entrance into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



**Nick Hardwick CBE**  
**HM Chief Inspector of Prisons**



# THROUGH THE GATEWAY: HOW COMPUTERS CAN TRANSFORM REHABILITATION

## The uses of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) for education, family ties and resettlement

*“Digital will be at the heart of achieving a transformed justice system that is more effective, less costly and more responsive for our users.”*

(The Right Honourable Chris Grayling, MP, Secretary of State for Justice, 2012)

*“ICT must not be allowed to replace face to face contact.”*

(Education, Training and Employment roundtable participant)

## INTRODUCTION

The Prison Reform Trust and Prisoners Education Trust have worked together to identify more effective ways of using information communication technologies (ICT) in prison, and the benefits that are likely to come from expanding their use. ICT for education, resettlement and family ties can be an important tool in reducing reoffending.

In this report, ICT refers to computers, telephones, video conferencing tools, wing-based pc terminals, e-readers, internet and intranet technology. For all other terms, please see the glossary in Appendix B.

In December 2012, the Ministry of Justice issued a strategy that highlights the importance it gives to ICT in the way it operates as a modern department of government:

*“This means wherever possible our services, including information and transactions, will be delivered through digital channels, rather than face-to-face, phone or post. It will involve changing the way we work, and transforming our processes and practices. Most importantly, digital services will be designed around the needs of our users, whether public, practitioners, staff, partner organisations or stakeholders. Those who may struggle to*

*access or use these services by themselves will be given support so they’re not excluded by these changes.”*

(The Right Honourable Chris Grayling, MP, 2012)

This study considers to what extent the strategy could benefit prisoners’ rehabilitation and what more could be done to use ICT in prisons to help reduce reoffending after release.

This report is based on a survey of prisons, sent to all governors and directors in England and Wales, visits to nine prisons, and three expert roundtables: on education, family ties, and resettlement. It is also based on a survey of prisoners’ families and a focus group of prisoners’ families. Further details of the methods employed are provided in Appendix A.

Exploring the use of ICT has not been straightforward, due primarily to three aspects:

- Pace of change – the ways that prisons make use of ICT, the extent of coverage, and even policy have been changing constantly during the course of the project; in particular, the survey of prisons which was conducted in mid-2012, reflected the use of ICT at that time in a fast-changing environment

- Numbers of partners and interests – prisons draw on a wide range of providers of ICT services; many of these have distinct objectives
- Commissioning, contracts and commercial interests have meant that part of the explanation for dimensions of ICT delivery are not in the public domain.

The report discusses the use of ICT and makes recommendations in four key areas:

- logistics and security
- resettlement (primarily housing, finance and employment)
- education and training
- family relationships.

At the end of the report we set out a vision for what a prison using ICT as an effective tool to improve rehabilitation would look like. We outline its scope to work as a complement to, not a substitute for, good quality face-to-face staff engagement. We hope this report helps to shape the future strategy for expanding and developing the considerable potential of ICT to help reduce reoffending.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The Digital Divide.** Using ICT and the internet is a functional skill of increasing significance for communication, accessing public services, research, education, banking and employment. The digital divide between people in prison and in the community is rapidly widening and will make resettlement more difficult if these skills have not been developed.

### **Managing risk and reducing reoffending.**

There is huge potential to use ICT and controlled internet access as a tool to improve prisoners' rehabilitation and reduce reoffending. There are of course security risks which need to be managed. However, given the high cost to the tax payer and victims of reoffending, security risks need to be managed in a more proportionate way to enable ICT to become an effective tool for rehabilitation.

**Maintaining social interaction.** Opportunities for face-to-face social interaction with officers, teachers, peers, families, and others remain crucial for desistance from crime. ICT should be used as a means of expanding and complementing current provision as part of a blended model; not to reduce social interaction and staff costs.

**A national strategy.** There should be a clear national strategy and Prison Service Order:

- defining the requirement for prisoners to have access to interactive, updated and secure web content
- integrating the uses of ICT by prisons, OLASS providers and other contracted out service providers
- ensuring that ICT systems are compatible, so that prisoners can easily transfer their work.

**Current use.** Prisons surveyed for this project were using ICT mostly for education; ICT was less often used for training and employment; much less for resettlement and hardly at all to help maintain family ties.

**Barriers.** The main barriers for prisons using ICT to improve rehabilitation are concerns about security, financial constraints, lack of a co-ordinated strategy for using ICT to improve rehabilitation, licencing issues and insufficient central resources.

**The Virtual Campus (VC)** is a secure intranet, with potential to support education, training, employment, resettlement and family ties. However access, co-ordination with other support services, content and usability need significant improvement.

**Internet access.** Nearly three quarters (74%) of respondents to the prison survey agreed that prisoners should have access to the internet. There remains a need for prisoners to use interactive, updated and secure web content to be able to carry out educational research, as well as to take responsibility for planning their resettlement.

**Secure access.** Access to interactive, updated and secure web content depends on three aspects:

- controls that protect the system from misuse
- the quality, extent and nature of the content
- the accessibility of the ICT system within the prison environment and regime.

These criteria are more fully defined in the main report (see Logistics and Security). Throughout the report, we use the phrase 'interactive, updated and secure' as a short-hand for the complete set of these criteria.

**Category D prisoners.** All prisons should enable the majority of prisoners to access interactive, updated and secure web resources for the purposes of rehabilitation. In addition, selected low risk category D prisoners, who are eligible for release on temporary licence (ROTL) and can therefore access the internet in the community, should have enhanced access to online resources within the prison to prepare for release and become accustomed to life in the community.

**Wing-based terminals.** A few prisons have touch screen computer terminals on the wings, which enable prisoners to conduct a range of functions electronically. These can improve efficiency by reducing the need for paper-based applications and enhance the prisoner's ability to take responsibility.

**Secure relay messaging and email.** Secure relay messaging (SRM) – a controlled email-type system – is mainly used for making job applications. SRM and email have wider potential to support education and family ties.

**Practical help with resettlement.** Access to information, utilities, government departments, and support is increasingly designed for internet use. 94% of staff who responded to the prison survey agreed ICT skills were necessary for everyday living. 67% said that prisoners should be able to set up bank accounts while in prison via ICT.

**ICT for education and training.** ICT has the potential to improve individuality, flexibility and continuity of learning in prison and after release. There are clear opportunities for ICT to engage more prisoners in learning, as well as to expand the range of subjects and levels of education available through e-learning, remote tutorials and virtual academies. ICT in prisons is not yet being used to its full potential to

exploit these opportunities and is therefore not providing a level-playing field with learners in the community.

**ICT for learning support.** ICT can be used to provide better support for prisoners with learning disabilities, low literacy levels and English as a Foreign Language to access education and cope with prison.

**Through the gate.** The 'bringonpotential.com' website, which enables former prisoners to access their saved work after release, could be developed further to help bridge the gap between custody and the community.

**Promoting family ties.** Very few prisoners are able to make use of ICT for improving their relationships with their families. Use of email, in-cell telephony, video-calling (like Skype), virtual contact / video conferencing, in addition to face-to-face visits, would help to maintain family ties and provide opportunities for family learning and relationship counselling.

**ICT to support prisoners' families.** Options to book visits and send money into prisoners online would help prisoners' families. Prisons can be poor at communicating with families and this could be improved by using ICT. Prison visitors' centres could provide opportunities for access to ICT for prisoners' families, who can also be digitally excluded.

## LOGISTICS AND SECURITY

*“HMP must bring itself into the digital age, if it doesn't then learners, especially long term offenders will be released into a world they have no knowledge of. Their first port of call will probably be a fully computerised job centre with touch screen technology, having first tried to buy an automated train ticket or use a self service check out till in the supermarket. Automation of our everyday lives will increase year on year. For most this is an acceptable learning curve that we adapt to on a daily basis. For long term prisoners this is a complete and instant life change. Without preparation and appropriate training, they may find it difficult to cope. Training for them is essential.”*

(Prison Manager, prison survey)

During one of the prison visits, the head of security listed a range of potential abuses of access to computers which prisons have a duty to prevent:

- attempts to use USB ports to charge illicit mobile phones
- creating hidden folders to store prohibited images
- using social networks to taunt or intimidate victims or witnesses
- committing further crimes or planning an escape.

Security – in the sense of robust systems to prevent abuse – is an important part of the prison's service to the public. But so, too, is preparing people to lead law-abiding lives after release. Getting the balance right is crucial. Prisons must protect the public from abuses of ICT such as victim intimidation, access to pornography, and continuing criminal enterprises. Equally, ICT skills are a functional requirement: successful resettlement (reducing reoffending) depends on prisoners being able to practise the full range of computer skills (including navigating the internet). It also

requires systems that enable prisoners to access information. When security inhibits genuine efforts at rehabilitation, prisoners are released ill-prepared and more likely to re-offend. Paradoxically, the risk-averse approach increases the risk to the public.

*“Engaging offenders in education is hard enough without the regime being obstructive. What we're trying to do completely goes into the NOMS objective of reducing reoffending. The regime is actually working against that.”*

(Education, Training and Employment roundtable participant)

Current policy about the internet is based on Prison Service Order (PSO) 9010, which states:

*Prisoners must not be allowed uncontrolled access to the Internet and/or to a computer that has software installed enabling Internet connectivity to be achieved.*

This PSO adds:

*The accessibility of learning materials by prisoners must be balanced against security considerations.*

Neither of these confirms what we were told on many of our visits, namely that, ‘there is a complete ban on prisoners accessing the internet, unless they have been released on temporary licence (ROTL)’. Under PSO 9010, it would appear that prison governors currently do have discretion over whether prisoners are given controlled, secure and restricted access to the internet or none at all; but in practice, there is a blanket ban, exacerbating the digital divide.

74% of staff who responded to our prison survey agreed that prisoners should have access to the internet. In this report we make the case for ‘controlled internet access’ in custody for rehabilitation purposes. The PSO

prohibits access to 'uncontrolled internet access', so by implication permits 'controlled internet access'. A new PSO is not strictly needed to enable the recommendations of this report to become practice in prisons. However, a new PSO on ICT, which brings out the positive benefits of access to interactive, updated and secure web content, would enhance the contribution ICT in prison makes to reducing reoffending. Such a PSO should cover controls, quality and accessibility as discussed below.

### **Criteria for controlled access to web content**

Prisoners' access to web content, which is essential for education, resettlement and family ties, should be based on three criteria:

- controls which protect the system from misuse
- the quality, extent and nature of the content, and
- the accessibility of ICT within the prison environment and regime.

#### **Controls -**

Supervised (either physically or virtually by a supervisor with an appropriate level of trust)

Restricted content (to cleared sites)

Limited (limiting functions, e.g. preventing uncontrolled following of online links)

Select (only available to cleared users; not available to prisoners screened as likely to attempt misuse)

Identified (registered pin number system for cleared users)

Monitored (automatically records every keystroke and alerts supervisor to any attempted misuse).

#### **Content –**

Automatically updated (to ensure the content is current and relevant)

Interactive (to respond flexibly to the users'

needs and to be engaging)

User-friendly (easy to navigate and accessible where possible to prisoners with learning difficulties)

Reflective of prisoner needs and characteristics (e.g. resources suitable for different populations of prisoners including age, gender, ethnicity, locality, etc.)

Allows controlled and secure direct communication with approved contacts (similar to clearance process for phone PIN contacts)

Useful content for multiple rehabilitation purposes (e.g. education/training/employment, resettlement and children/families).

#### **Access –**

Available to cleared prisoners in locations, and at times of day, that enable them to make full use of the resources available.

Security clearance to be made a priority at induction to enable access as soon as possible.

Throughout the report, we use the phrase 'interactive, updated and secure' as a shorthand for the complete set of these criteria.

### **Commissioning**

Increasingly, services in prison are commissioned from outside organisations.

*Transforming Rehabilitation*, the government's strategy to reduce reoffending, aims to broaden the range of resettlement services through competition to manage 21 contract package areas.

As this report makes clear, using ICT to communicate information to people in prison is far more efficient than print. Greater use of ICT provides efficiencies for the costs of custody; it also carries a competitive advantage in bidding for, and providing services in prisons.

However, there are a number of concerns about the way ICT could be affected by contracting services:

- Reliable provision of ICT
- Consistent and co-ordinated ICT
- Fair access to ICT.

As we show below, effective use of ICT can support the delivery of resettlement and education outcomes. When bidding for contracts and operating services, providers need to know that they can rely on a baseline of effective ICT provision to support them in achieving the outcomes for prisoners that they are contractually committed to delivering.

People are frequently transferred during a sentence, disrupting education and resettlement plans. Transfers between contract package areas could exacerbate this problem, particularly where there are disparities in the provision of ICT from one area to another.

Contract providers stand to earn bonuses under Payment by Results if low to medium risk prisoners show a significantly reduced reoffending rate. There may be a perverse incentive to exclude prisoners not in this cohort, for example longer term sentenced prisoners, from ICT resources.

People in prison will receive a more consistent service if:

- there is a clear national strategy and Prison Service Order, defining the requirement for prisoners to have access to interactive, updated and secure web content
- ICT systems are compatible, so that prisoners can easily transfer their work
- Prisons, NOMS, Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) providers, and other contracted out service providers co-ordinate the use of ICT for rehabilitation and resettlement across the estate.

In the absence of a national strategy to ensure access to interactive, updated, and secure web content, the importance of getting relevant

information to prisoners could be neglected. Contracts for all services should include mechanisms to ensure an integrated ICT provision for everyone in prison.

### ***The needs of short sentence and remand prisoners***

#### **Prison facts:**

41,875 people entered prison to serve sentences of less than or equal to six months in the year to September 2012.

*Ministry of Justice (2013) Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin July to September 2012, Table 2.1a*

ICT for resettlement can be even more relevant and decisive in reducing reoffending for prisoners serving short sentences. Information available online could be crucial for prisoners on remand, and an argument could be made that their legal status should entitle them to greater access. Yet, little has been done to identify the particular ICT needs of people on remand or serving short sentences. Not one prison in the survey reported that ICT was used to access bail information, to which remand prisoners have a legal right. Currently the process for being security cleared to use ICT can take a long time, by which time a prisoner may have been transferred or released. Therefore security clearance to access ICT should be made a priority on induction.

### **Staff skills in ICT**

*Many of the staff don't have the skills to help us.*

(Prisoner, on prison visit)

The needs of prison staff for ICT skills training have not been identified. If staff have some expertise, they will be more likely to promote wider use of ICT and encourage prisoners to gain these skills. In particular, if security staff

fully understand the technologies, they could work with education and other staff together to enable better use and access.

*“The VC [Virtual Campus] should be run by highly trained and skilled staff who know the VC inside out. They should be content and technical experts who have a deep understanding of IT, ICT and its potential.”*

(Prisons survey)

Maintaining security requires an active combination of technology and people. As technology evolves, the programmes used to protect content must also evolve. But active supervision of security by staff is also vital. This

means that select staff members need to continuously to develop their expertise, to keep pace with emerging technologies, and to ensure that systems are operating as intended.

In consultation with the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists, the Prison Reform Trust and Prisoners Education Trust intend to work further with NOMS on resolving some of the problems about secure access to, and use of, computers and other IT.

## ICT FOR RESETTLEMENT: HOUSING, FINANCE, AND EMPLOYMENT

Resettlement stands for what is done, in prison and after release, to ensure that people lead law-abiding and productive lives on their return to the community. Resettlement is fundamental to reducing reoffending. A focus on resettlement should mean that people start early in their time in prison to deal with problems they might face on release, that they are respected as partners in making plans for release, that they have the information they need to choose among options, and that they receive support in their plans.

Fewer prisons were using ICT to enable people to prepare for resettlement than for education or training (prisons survey).

### **Uses of ICT for Resettlement (survey, September 2012)**

Use	Number of prisons (out of 42)
Job applications by secure relay messaging	22
Contact agencies by secure relay messaging	17
Use ICT in prison workshops	16
Virtual interview practice	11
Learn about benefits	9
Contact through the gate services	9
Seek housing	6
Get advice on personal finances	4
Open bank accounts	3
Set up email account for after release	1

### **Prison facts:**

Prison has a poor record for reducing reoffending – 47% of adults are reconvicted within one year of release. For those serving sentences of less than 12 months this increases to 58%.

*Ministry of Justice, Proven Reoffending Tables, July 2010 to June 2011, Table 19a.*

The cost of reoffending per year, £7-£10 Billion, is the same as the cost of hosting the London 2012 Olympics.

*National Audit Office and Olympic Delivery Authority, Annual Report and Accounts 2011-2012 Quoted in 'Fit for Release' by Prisoners Education Trust (2012)*

### **The digital divide: ICT as a functional skill**

*Technology is so tightly woven into the fabric of society today that ICT deprivation can rightly be considered alongside, and strongly linked to, more traditional twentieth century social deprivations, such as low income, unemployment, poor education, ill health and social isolation. To consider ICT deprivation as somehow less important underestimates the pace, depth and scale of technological change, and overlooks the way that different disadvantages can combine to deepen exclusion.*

(Dr. Helsper, Oxford Internet Institute 2008)

The ability to use ICT and the internet is a functional skill of increasing significance for communication, accessing public services, applying for housing and benefits, information research, managing finances, employment and self-employment. The digital divide between people in prison and in the community is widening and will make resettlement much more difficult if these skills have not been addressed while in custody.

## The need for controlled internet access

In the prisons survey, 94% of staff who responded agreed that ICT skills were necessary for everyday living. 88% agreed that prisoners need computer skills for most of the jobs they could enter on release. In 67%, respondents suggested that prisoners should be able to set up bank accounts for after release through ICT. 74% agreed that prisoners should have access to the internet.

Traditionally, giving prisoners access to ICT and online resources has been seen as a potential risk to security. While the possibility of misuse must certainly be managed, the essential roles of ICT in the community mean that not allowing prisoners to access ICT increases the risks of prisoners not successfully resettling after release and reoffending. In the interests of improving resettlement outcomes and reducing the risk of reoffending, prisons urgently need to focus on how security risks can be managed in a more proportionate way so that ICT can be an effective tool for resettlement.

Prisoners we met on the prison visits advocated secure access to the internet as an essential tool for preparing to return to society.

*“Here’s why you need internet for resettlement: to keep up with changes outside – job criteria can change while you’re inside; checking on housing by particular postcodes – co-ordinated with your conditions of release.”*

(Prisoner)

*“It’s a bit of a risk – being linked into the internet – but the bigger risk is sending people out who are not able to cope and who cannot find gainful employment.”*

(Prisoner)

Adequate preparation for release requires

information and access to processes that are available online. As one prisoner commented, *“There is so much potential for the use of computers to provide us with information – it is a completely wasted opportunity.”*

On the prison visits, we found that staff often downloaded useful resources from online sites on behalf of prisoners. In addition to staff downloading material and printing it off, some prisons use ROTL to enable prisoners to access the internet in libraries. We heard of one open prison setting up an internet room just outside the prison wall for this purpose. These actions highlight the growing need for people in prison to have access to up to date content which is available online.

*“What we have now is a closed system where it takes months to get on it and no sooner on it than your content is out of date because it has moved on outside and the current system is not a preparation for what you get when you walk out that door.”*

(ETE roundtable participant)

## ICT uses to access resettlement services

### Jobs

The Virtual Campus (VC) was focused on education in its early development. Therefore, its uses for resettlement – e.g., to find housing or a job – were less well developed. Over half of the prisons (52%) who responded to the survey said they used ICT for job searches through secure relay messaging (SRM). SRM is an electronic mail system (like emails). The message is not sent directly to the recipient; it gets read by a nominated person and once checked is forwarded to the recipient.

The VC should be able to search for live job opportunities that are advertised by Job Centre Plus; then people should be able to use SRM to apply for them. At one site we visited, the link was broken; prisoners searching for a job



received an incorrect message that there were no jobs available.

Where SRM was used for this purpose, according to the prison survey, the most common return email address used was:

- ‘HMPS’ (9 prisons)
- 9 used ‘another address’
- 6 used the address of the OLASS provider
- 1 used the prisoner’s email address

The problem of employers stereotyping ex-offenders suggests that a return email address of HM Prison would make it difficult to obtain a job via SRM.

**Prison facts:**

37% of prisoners did not expect to return to their jobs upon release.

*Ministry of Justice (2012) The pre-custody employment, training and education status of newly sentenced prisoners*

In 2011-12, just 27% of prisoners entered employment on release from prison.

*Ministry of Justice (2012) National Offender Management Service Annual Report 2011/2012: Management Information Addendum, Table 13*

A recent survey of young people found that a majority of young people used computers to create word documents, updating their CVs, or searching for jobs online. However, young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) were:

*“significantly less likely to carry out these sorts of tasks. For example, only 30 per cent of NEETs created a Word document in the past year, compared to more than half (55 per cent) of all young people.”*

(Prince’s Trust, 2013)

Further, one in 10 young people (12 per cent) do not think their computer skills are good

enough to use in the job they want, while almost one in five NEETs (18 per cent) claim to feel this way. More than one in six NEETs (17 per cent) believe they would be in work today if they had better computer skills (Prince’s Trust, 2013).

**Housing**

ICT could contribute far more to resettlement outcomes if prisoners were enabled to apply for housing online. On a prison visit, a resettlement officer said that they work with 35 different housing agencies and local authorities, each with its own applications, which can run to 30 pages. He explained that being able to complete them online would save a considerable amount of paper and time. That prison was processing about 200 housing applications a week. Accommodation availability is also short-term and information must be updated regularly. In addition, the areas in which people might wish to resettle are quite local and require the flexibility and reach of online resources.

**Advice and information**

40% of respondents to the prison survey said they used SRM to contact agencies and 21% said they used it to contact through-the-gate services. Therefore it has potential for much wider use to communicate with agencies and services that can assist with resettlement.

Information online comprises a vast resource, regularly updated, which could be vital to successful resettlement. The current method for the intranet is to screen material then upload it as pdfs. For example, the VC recently added 40,000 pages from Business Link in a pdf format. The individual pages are not interactive, and many will quickly become out of date. An interactive, updated and secure system would enable people in prison to access online resources – such as voluntary sector help and support – in a timely manner. Some prison libraries subscribe to Adviser Net,

a CD which is an invaluable source of information for social advice: on benefits, employment rights, disputes, and debt.

In HMP Send, the St Giles Trust runs a phone-in advice centre, with trained peer advisers. The project depends on a staff supervisor using the internet in a separate room to gather information, which peer advisers then pass on to callers when they phone back. It would be far more efficient if the peer advisers had access to interactive and automatically updated secure sites with such content. Prisoners who are released on temporary licence to do peer advice routinely access online support.

Most prisons offering resettlement services rely on a range of voluntary sector partners with experience in providing support in the community. As the VC develops its resettlement resources and controlled web based content, it should be pro-active and systematic in consulting these organisations about the resettlement content it provides.

### ***Encouraging personal responsibility***

A few prisons have installed touch-screen, wing-based computer terminals by which prisoners can access information. These terminals also facilitate prisoners managing their time in prison: pay, private cash, diet selections, applications and grievances, or booking visits. A lot of prison procedures, such as applications, private cash, meal ordering, are more secure if conducted via electronic formats, are cheaper to transact, and leave an audit trail that is more efficient than paper. A great advantage of this use of ICT is that the prisoner does not become so dependent and institutionalised. The prisoner is able to take personal responsibility. Managing their day-to-day finances inside enables them to practise or develop budgeting skills that will be important after release.

An important caveat is that, given the prevalence of learning disabilities and learning difficulties among people in prison, many will need support and skilled assistance from staff to make best use of these opportunities.

## ICT FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

*“ICT is just a means to an end.”*

(Prison Educator)

### The purposes of ICT in education

What are the objectives of prison education and training, which ICT can support?

The Council of Europe recommends that:

*“Education for prisoners should be like the education provided for similar age groups in the outside world, and the range of opportunities for prisoners should be as wide as possible.”*

(Council of Europe, 1990)

A recent survey of over 500 people in prison by Prisoners Education Trust (PET, 2012) revealed some key areas they would like to see improved. These include:

- A wider range of provision
- More opportunities for progression
- Increased screening and support for prisoners with learning difficulties
- Improved use of individual learning plans
- More engaging learning
- Better advice and guidance about education and training opportunities
- Better access to learning materials and resources
- Better access to learning opportunities outside the core day
- Fewer waiting lists
- Less disruption to education caused by transfers
- More support with accessing employment, self-employment and learning opportunities after release.

A respondent to the prisons survey commented that prisoners should have . . .

*“everything that is available in mainstream colleges. How else can an ex-offender hope to compete on a level footing unless they have had the same learning opportunities delivered to the same standard, using the same hardware and software without restriction?”*

#### **Prison facts:**

47% of prisoners say they have no qualifications. This compares to 15% of the working age general population in the UK.

21% of prisoners reported needing help with reading and writing or ability with numbers

*Ministry of Justice (2012) The pre-custody employment, training and education status of newly sentenced prisoners*

One way ICT can help is that it enables a better fit between the teaching that is delivered and the specific learning needs and interests of each individual. However ICT has a particular role in prison education and should not be seen as a substitute for person-to-person interaction.

*“Technology is not a replacement for good teaching and learning and should be viewed as complementary to, and supporting, existing systems. However there are three areas in particular that I consider technology can make a difference: individuality, flexibility and continuity.”*

(William Lockett, Technology in prisons, 2011)

Using ICT to improve education and training dates back to 2006, when the government set out in a Green Paper the priority of developing a secure intranet called the Virtual Campus. Two test beds were established and were evaluated by NatCen and the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies (NatCen, 2010). The two overarching aims of the intranet were:

## 1. Streamlining provision

- reducing duplication of assessments
- improved communication of learning plans / achievements
- increasing the diversity and quality of ETE provision.

## 2. Modernising provision

- enabling a move away from ‘chalk and talk’ methods of delivery to increase participation and engagement with learning
- improving ETE outcomes
- reducing reoffending by providing a ‘cross-pathway one stop shop’
- joining up with mainstream skills provision systems when a sentence ends.

The government reaffirmed a commitment to rolling out the VC in the Review of Offender Learning in 2011, with a quote from the test-bed evaluation:

*“Having spent three years evaluating the VC, I am of the opinion that for offender-learners to gain maximum benefits from ETE opportunities, and for ETE provision to have the widest possible reach within prisons, the use of technology to deliver learning is an essential part of the offender learning strategy.”*

(Stephen Webster, NatGen)

Although the VC is rapidly becoming the main ICT tool currently used in prisons, it is not the only use of ICT for prison education. This report explores other technology which is being used, or has the potential, to enhance education and training, including the internet.

## Overview of the uses of ICT for education in prison

The prisons survey revealed that ICT was being used in prisons mostly for education. ICT was less often used for training and employment; much less for resettlement and hardly at all to help maintain family ties.

The most common uses of ICT in education were the VC and interactive whiteboards. 62% were using it to support distance learning.

Less than half of prisons were using ICT to screen or support those with learning difficulties. None of the responding prisons were using ICT for virtual teaching (for example, linking to a college outside via a video link); and none were making use of e-books. In-cell terminals were operating in only about 5% of prisons.

### ***Uses of ICT for education and training (survey, September 2012)***

Use	Number of prisons (out of 42)
Virtual Campus	33
Interactive whiteboards	33
Distance learning	26
Web design or graphic arts	24
Aids for learning disabilities	20
Screening learning disabilities	18
Prison workshops use of ICT	16
Translation into English	9
Apply for funding for learning	5
In-cell terminals	2
Virtual teaching	0
E-books	0

## Education on the Virtual Campus

Most prison managers and staff responding to the survey said that they had between 11 and 30 VC-enabled computers. Over 100 prisons in England & Wales now have the VC; and the ETE roundtable heard that there are about 1000 new users registering per month. The intranet has potential to support a wide range of learning:

*“[The VC is] a fantastic asset.”*

(Prison survey respondent)

*“The content is growing and it is a good resource.”*

(Prison survey respondent)

*“The virtual campus is an excellent idea that has the potential to bring offender learning into the modern era. I believe it is nowhere near its true potential just now.”*

(Prison survey respondent)

This project found evidence that access, co-ordination, content, usability and capacity need significant improvement for the intranet to reach its potential for enhancing education and training provision in prison.

### Access to the Virtual Campus and ease of use

*“The initial plans for installation [of the VC] were made without an accurate brief about its use and potential. I would have located it differently if I had understood it better. The requirement to have this supervised is a resource issue that was not explained as part of the initial brief and is a limiting factor in extending or disseminating more widely and to different work or residential areas.”*

(Governor, Prisons Survey)

Local arrangements for the VC vary: no two prisons use it in exactly the same way. On the visits to prisons, we learned that its location is crucial in determining how often and for what

purposes it is used. In some prisons, the intranet-enabled computers were found only in education departments; others had specific rooms for it; and others had computers in a range of locations throughout the prison including resettlement departments and libraries. The pilot at HMP Thameside has the VC enabled in-cell.

In one prison, the project heard that due to staff cuts, prisoners could no longer be escorted to the VC room. To move the terminals would incur added cost, so it remained un-used. In hindsight, they acknowledged that they should have located the computers in areas already accessed by the prisoners.

#### Prison facts:

Following the 2010-11 spending review the National Offender Management Service has to make overall resource savings of almost 25% in real terms by 2014-15.

*National Offender Management Service (2013) NOMS Business Plan 2013-14*

A comment made in the ETE roundtable was that:

*“Learners aren’t actually getting to the Virtual Campus because there isn’t the support to escort them there. Access used to be every working day, now it’s down to half a day, three hours a week.”*

(ETE roundtable participant)

In one of the prisons visited, the prisoners who worked in the Prison Information Communication Technology Academy (PICTA) room were reluctant to go to the education department as they found the location and support offered in the PICTA room more helpful. No VC computers had been placed in the PICTA room.

Respondents to the prison survey described other problems of access, which included

broadband connection problems, confusion about licences, and slow functioning.

*“Currently [there are] several issues with the Virtual Campus. Although up and running it is difficult to log onto the system and the system keeps freezing.”*

(Prison Survey)

Another widely reported problem was service being cut off due to non-payment of bills. We welcome the introduction of a ‘one bill’ process which should resolve this, provided all prisons with the VC sign up to this initiative (Virtual Campus News, Summer 2013).

One prison that had particularly good outcomes using the intranet was HMP The Verne, who paid a full time member of staff to co-ordinate it. As a result, even with only 22 machines, four-fifths of the prisoners were using it. But The Verne has since been de-commissioned as a prison.

Prisoners and staff raised concerns that the VC could be hard to navigate. For examples courses are lumped together, with no distinction by learning abilities.

*“Whenever possible the content should be intuitive and navigation around a particular programme should be icon driven, similar to a modern smart phone app.”*

(ETE roundtable participant)

This is particularly important if prisoners are going to be able to use it without direct supervision, such as in their cells. The in-cell pilot has highlighted that content must be user-friendly and easy to navigate; otherwise, learners might struggle to gain the benefits.

A useful tool, accessed through the VC, is an information cloud, [www.bringonpotential.com](http://www.bringonpotential.com). This enables the student to save work (such as

a CV, business plan, creative writing or assignments) so that it can be accessed from another prison (after a transfer) or anywhere in the community (post release). A drawback of this information cloud is that prisons must make an internal referral for people to be able to log on after release from custody, which can cause delays or be a barrier to access. Even when the internal referral is made, some people have contacted Prisoners Education Trust to report problems accessing their saved documents as there is no specific helpline or email address for them to get assistance. The ETE roundtable heard that there was a lack of awareness of this website for people leaving custody. The website has the potential to be developed further to help bridge the gap between custody and the community and be a ‘one stop shop’ for advice and support and to signpost former prisoners to agencies and organisations who could assist them.

### **Content on the Virtual Campus**

The prison visits provided examples of innovative uses of the intranet. For example, in HMP Lewes, the VC Champion had written an interactive course in English as a second language, specifically designed for foreign national prisoners:

*“We have an ESOL course for prisoners who want jobs in the prison and need better English. It is very inter-active and includes audio and is well targeted at vocabulary needed for in-prison jobs such as cleaning or servery.”*

Prisoners can rate the VC content using a star rating system. The most popular pages are interactive, such as the national learning network.

Unfortunately too much of the content is not interactive, comprising pdf files which need to be printed off (not much of an improvement on holding paper copies in the library). At the

Education, Training and Employment roundtable, the development of content on the intranet was described:

*“Historically we had a system with not a lot of content. So the education providers started to send us their content. Then the VC started to be populated, but with materials designed for face to face delivery, not online delivery. So the next stage was to take the content and turn it into interactive content. To do that, costs are through the roof. You normally have to employ developers. So we’ve been looking at a content-altering tool, where a non-techy can convert their own materials into a VC course.”*

(ETE roundtable participant)

Part of the solution, meeting the demand for more engaging and interactive content, would be to turn to prisoners to develop more of the content:

*“We are looking at getting prisoners to create content that links to a qualification. We are only just starting, but prisoner-created content is one of the solutions.”*

(ETE roundtable participant)

In addition, further and higher education courses could be put on the VC, if agreement can be arranged among the parties involved – the VC, the Open University (OU), OLASS providers, etc.

Content is also subject to contracts to cover intellectual copyright. Thus, there are many large sources of information (such as the BBC website) which are not available to people in prison, in part because of the legal costs of ownership.

The survey asked for ideas about how the content could be expanded. Suggestions included:

- A comprehensive library of up to date PSI (Prison Service Instructions) and PSO (Prison Service Orders)
- The British Safety Council courses
- ‘Box of Broadcasts’: library of radio and TV programmes for class use
- Information about legal cases
- More interactive material
- Driving licence theory test
- Web searching facility
- A mock Outlook programme to learn to write emails
- Mock online banking platform
- Health and safety pages
- Healthy living and diet
- Business start-up information
- Women-specific content
- Young people specific content.

Since the survey was completed, the VC now includes driving theory resources as well as 40,000 static pages and video content from ‘Business Link’.

The process to get content approved and on the system is very slow. Respondents to the survey and staff on prison visits said that long delays for local content to be approved were causing frustration, and content was already out of date when it was added.

*“New materials are being created by tutors and interested parties. However, it takes far too long for the resources to be uploaded to the system.”*

(Prison survey respondent)

#### **Piloting secure access websites**

NOMS are currently working with the OU to pilot secure access to a cloned version of their website which is automatically updated but does not allow users to link onto the wider web or to join student chat rooms. This is a welcome development and much more controlled web content should be made available through the intranet in this way.

## Interactive whiteboards

78% of respondents to the prison survey used interactive whiteboards, however a participant at the ETE roundtable suggested that they could be used better if staff received more continuing professional development training in their use.

## Distance Learning

About 4000 prisoners are pursuing distance learning at any time (Schuller, 2009, cited in Pike and Adams). Distance learning is often the only opportunity for prisoners to study a wider range of subjects and to gain higher level qualifications.

### Word processing

Many distance learners find accessing a computer to type up assignments difficult. In the PET Brain Cells survey (2012) 70% of prisoner respondents said better access to a PC would help them learn.

*“I’d like a basic laptop in my cell so I can type up my OU assignment. We can have playstations, why not something for people on courses requiring computers?”*

(Prisoner respondent to PET Brain Cells survey, 2012)

*“Laptop loan to do work evenings and weekends if I feel like it and in the long term I would pass exams quicker, thus freeing place for someone else.”*

(Prisoner respondent to PET Brain Cells survey, 2012)

In some prisons, laptops on loan can be used by prisoners preparing legal cases. In one prison we visited, specially converted laptops were available for purchase which had the USB port removed and could be used for basic functions such as word processing for writing essays, etc. These should be much more widely available.

## Online distance learning courses

In the PET Brain Cells survey (PET, 2012), 47% of prisoner respondents said that they would like access to online courses, but only eight per cent said that they had access to them.

Many distance learning courses now have an online learning element or are only available as online courses. Although there are still sufficient providers of paper-based correspondence courses, they are limited and will become rarer as online courses grow in popularity.

As more providers move to the online distance learning model, this restricts the choice of courses on offer to people in prison, particularly for more vocational, skills-based courses. For example all the REPS [Register of Exercise Professional] courses are now only available online and include a requirement for an online submission of a video recording of the learner delivering a fitness session. Although there are alternative paper-based courses available, they are not accredited by the industry standard REPS, which many employers ask for (Meek and Champion, 2012).

This means that PET, who fund over 2000 prisoners a year to do distance learning courses, have to fund the best available paper-based course. The shrinking number of providers who offer these therefore limits the range of subjects and levels PET can fund prisoners to study. PET Advice Manager says:

*“Being able to fund online courses would give us a much wider choice of courses as there are some amazing high quality online courses. The more courses prisoners can choose from, the more appropriate those courses are likely to be in meeting both their individual needs and the needs of employers. This in turn would help prevent reoffending.”*



We mentioned above the welcome initiative from NOMS to develop access to OU material via a version of their website. ICT in prison should be developed to accommodate access across the prison estate to many more online distance learning courses and research materials.

### ***Electronic submission of distance learning assignments***

Secure relay messaging (SRM) could be used by students in prison to send a distance learning assignment to their course tutor, rather than posting it in the mail. This would have the advantage of reduced risk of getting lost and enabling quicker feedback. Access to the SRM function is patchy. Currently only one nominated person per prison can check the message. Hopefully this will improve with the new 'NEO-4' platform which will enable multiple staff members to be nominated to reduce the burden on one individual member of staff (Virtual Campus News, Summer 2013). However a system ran along similar lines to the PIN-code phone system for email would be preferable and less time consuming for staff. This would enable prisoners to apply for the email of their distance learning tutor or provider to be approved and they could then correspond directly with their tutor and submit assignments, being made aware that like telephone conversations, their correspondence was not private and could be monitored closely.

Technology could also be used to pick up certain key words which might cause particular concern. This would be much more effective two way communication between the learner and tutor than by post or by the current system of SRM. This PIN - email system could also be useful for other resettlement and family purposes.

### ***Online research and resources***

People studying distance learning courses in prison are also disadvantaged by not being able to carry out online research to supplement their core texts, whereas students in the community would have access to online journals and other resources. A prisoner explained that where courses included an element which had to be researched online, prisoners can never earn full marks. A tutor at a prison visit told us:

*“Prisoners have limited resources for their coursework when they can’t go online for desk-top research. Also, some distance learning courses require you to do the exam online so they have to wait until they are released to complete it.”*

Massive Open Online Learning Courses (Moocs) are rapidly opening up learning in the community. For example, the OU have a Mooc called 'Futurelearn' which includes content from twelve universities and will be available to students in the community free of charge. Again this is another example of the lack of parity between provisions for students in the community compared to those studying in custody.

The Open University also have an online library where students in the community can access academic journals to support their studies. As people in prison are now required to take out student loans to fund further and higher education course fees, the lack of parity on online resources becomes more significant, as you can only take out such a loan once. Therefore prisoners who take out a loan to study further or higher education while in prison should be able to access appropriate online resources through ICT in prison to enable them to achieve the best possible grades.

We are aware of prisons that have to rely on releasing people on temporary licence to

enable them to access online courses and resources in Youth Offending Team offices, community libraries or even in specially constructed portable cabins built just outside the prison wall. All prisons should enable most prisoners to access interactive, updated and secure web resources for the purposes of rehabilitation. In addition, selected low risk category D prisoners, who are eligible for ROTL and can therefore access the internet in the community, should have enhanced access to online resources within the prison to prepare for release and become accustomed to life in the community.

For the majority of prisoners who are not able to be released on a temporary licence, controlled, monitored access to the internet, through interactive, updated, and secure internet sites, has clear advantages over a closed intranet system.

*“You need a system in which you curate an open education resource, for example using semantic technology to weed out stuff, and then make it available.”*

(ETE roundtable participant)

We found that some tutors or librarians therefore downloaded course materials on behalf of the prisoner, printed off a copy, and brought it in for the prisoner to use. Some staff had access to the internet for this purpose in the prison, while others had to do this from home.

In the prisons survey, one in four (23%) said staff regularly download material from the internet for prisoners to use. Only six per cent said this never happens at their prison. Almost one in three (31%) stated that their prison did not have a policy regarding staff downloading resources for prisoners. This practice shows the need and demand for internet based resources for learning. Relying on staff

accessing material from home is a significant barrier to prisoners getting access to information and puts pressure on staff. If online resources were more accessible prisoners could take responsibility for finding their own information.

A recent inquiry by the Scottish Justice Committee into purposeful activity firmly recommended that prisons provide internet access:

*“The Committee strongly agrees that secure access to the internet is both achievable and highly desirable to provide a learning environment which is comparable to that in the community. Not only would this support staff and learners but it would also help prisoners continue their learning in the community following their release.”*

(Scottish Justice Committee, 2013, page 4)

### **Educational support for people with learning disabilities or learning difficulties**

It is estimated that 20-30% of the prison population have a learning difficulty or disability (Loucks, 2007). A range of strategies, technologies and methods are being used across prisons to respond to the learning needs of people with learning disabilities. Our prison survey indicated that only 47% of prisons responding used ICT as aids for learning difficulties/disabilities and 42% used ICT for screening for learning difficulties. There are many ICT programmes for screening and assistive technologies which more prisons could use.

In a report on ‘Offending, E-learning and Dyslexia’ six advantages are highlighted of using ICT with dyslexic learners:

**Interactive:** good for those with kinaesthetic learning preference, helps keep learner actively engaged and can provide instant feedback

**Multi-sensory:** auditory, visual and hands on learning recommended for dyslexia

**Work at their own pace:** is non-critical and patient, can repeat sections as often as you like

**Help with literacy:** read-back software and/or speech input, text highlighting, spell checking, predictive software

**Help with organisation:** electronic organisers, drafting facilities like cut and paste, mind mapping programmes

**Accommodate individual learning styles:** adapting colour of background and foreground, changing font size and type.

(Jameson, 2007, page 31, paraphrased)

#### **Prison facts:**

25% of children in the youth justice system have identified special educational needs, 46% are rated as underachieving at school and 29% have difficulties with literacy and numeracy.

*Youth Justice Board (2006) Barriers to engaging in education, training and employment*

23% of young offenders have learning difficulties (IQs of below 70) and a further 36% have borderline learning difficulties (IQ 70-80).

*Harrington, R., and Bailey, S. (2005) Mental health needs and effectiveness of provision for young offenders in custody and in the community, London: Youth Justice Board*

In ‘Dyslexia Behind Bars’ (2012) dyslexia specialist Jackie Hewitt-Main at HMP Chelmsford describes how she took laptops with specialist dyslexia software onto the wings and workshops to engage prisoners who otherwise would have not entered the education department. She concluded that

specialist software should be available in all prisons and should be available on laptops so that access does not need to be limited to the classroom.

Some prisons have made their wing-based ICT terminals more user-friendly by facilitating peer mentoring and ‘buddying’. We were also shown that the wing-based terminals had picture images to help those with lower literacy levels to access it. The PICTA academy at HMP Lewes had a very inclusive ethos which encouraged mutual support and own-paced learning:

*“We work with partners such as learning disability specialists; the aim being to mainstream people, not label them. If it takes ten weeks to write a letter, that’s ok. This workshop is big on networking skills – they share what they have learnt. Most of what we do is based on individual wants, their interests. We have low behavioural problems and see a shift as men come here. We also have an embedded literacy and numeracy tutor.”*

#### **Uses of ICT for web design and arts – based learning**

ICT enabled students to practise artistic skills, including web design. Some arts-based activities lead to qualifications. At HMP Lowdham Grange, a tutor explained:

*“Prisoners use computer graphics software and 3D imaging software to illustrate videos for their children with Storybook Dads. They can gain NOCN level 1 and 2 qualifications for this. We are looking into a BTEC in 3D animation.”*

Arts draw students into ICT, even when they do not lead to qualifications. The arts can enhance employment prospects, for example by

developing skills in graphics and web design. Some of the prisons visited allowed for user-generated content and in others there were prisoners engaged in real work, using computers for outside contracts. A tutor commented:

*“Many prisoners find graphic design seductive and satisfying. They don’t feel it is dull like other learning and therefore barriers are less of a problem with this course. All my students are studious and have the opportunity to enter their work in a local art exhibition.”*

A prisoner learner said:

*“I used to be an IT technician before I came to prison. I’m doing a graphic design course now. I had not done it before but I enjoy it. When I get out I want to set up a business designing nightclub promotion flyers. I have designed some for this course.”*

ICT-based music production, such as at HMP Lowdham Grange, inspired some prisoners to learn the skills as a means of seeking work upon release. The tutor explained:

*“We have a small music recording studio. Prisoners can use [programmes] to produce tracks with a music tutor. Between 30-40 entries have gone into the Koestler awards this year. This can lead to careers including DJ-ing, music, film and radio.”*

## **Virtual Academies**

None of the prisons who responded were using virtual academies. In the community, virtual academies are used to link up students who are studying the same subject and are geographically distant. Other participants might have been in hospital or excluded from school. Learning takes place through a tutor using virtual contact technology. A prison may only have one person wanting to study a particular

subject or level. Virtual academies make possible a virtual class with prisoners from around the UK. Students in the virtual class do not know the identity of other students. We are told the VC has this capability, but security concerns have thus far prevented its development.

The virtual academy model has the potential to widen the range and levels of courses that could be studied in prison. Recent research into virtual academies (Anita Devi and Andy McGarry, 2013) shows that online learning can provide an effective way of reaching hard to reach learners. Distance learning tutor support could also be delivered in this way.

William Lockitt has highlighted examples of ICT use and virtual academies abroad. In Sweden, prisoner learners are allocated ‘virtual support tutors’ who have expertise in particular curriculum areas. Prisoners have access to their help, support and advice via secure links. Lockitt says *“This is extremely cost effective as tutors can be case-loaded with learners throughout the Swedish prison system as physical location is not an issue.”* In Sweden, a special intranet also allows teachers to set up virtual classrooms and access to the internet is under staff supervision.

## **E-readers**

None of the prisons used e-readers. E-readers could enable prisoners access to a wider range of reading materials. E-readers can also change the font size and type which can be of benefit to those with reading difficulties.

## **Training in ICT skills**

88% of respondents to the prison survey agreed that people in custody need computer skills for most of the jobs they could enter on release. ICT training is available under the statutory prison education OLASS provision

(Offender Learning and Skills Service); however, the level of ICT qualifications available varies. Traditionally prisons offered CLAIT or the ECDL qualifications. Many prisons visited as part of this project are now focused on ensuring 'industry-standard' qualifications and as a result some now have a larger range of ICT qualifications, including a few that go beyond level 2.

In one of the prisons visited, PICTA, with 50 computer terminals, offered prisoners access to high level ICT and computer engineering qualifications. However ICT academies are not found in every prison. Therefore if a prisoner is transferred in the middle of a course they cannot complete their qualification.

When visiting the PICTA academy we heard of prisoners who had been taught specialist ICT skills such as web design or computer engineering and had successfully secured jobs in the field after release. On the prison visits, many staff commented that ICT is needed for most jobs these days and that ICT can also be a career in itself. However, due to the lack of controlled access to the internet or email, these ICT skills, used in many jobs, were not able to be taught. One staff member commented:

*"I'd like to see more for a career in IT: our training doesn't go that far. I can't teach them how to use the internet."*

*"I'd like to introduce coding."*

(Governor of a YOI)

In one prison cited at the ETE roundtable, prisoners with ICT skills were taken on as mentors to teach basic computer skills to other prisoners, in particular younger prisoners teaching older prisoners.

### **Digital learning plans and records**

In PET's survey Brain Cells (2012) 56% of prisoner respondents did not have, or did not

know if they had, an individual learning plan. Individual learning records held by OLASS only detail learning funded by the Skills Funding Agency, so excludes informal or distance learning. ICT-based learning plans and records, which can be contributed to by prisoners and a range of staff, could therefore be a solution to ensure prisoners' achievements and learning goals are held in one place and can be reviewed easily. Having an ICT based system would also enable this information to be transferred if prisoners moved prison or were released. Details of learning assessments could also be held here, again to avoid replication when a prisoner is transferred or returns to prison after being released.

### **Co-ordination of ICT provision**

The prison visits showed evidence of disjointed commissioning, which seriously impinged on the prisoners' experience of ICT. Computers and ICT equipment in prisons are owned and funded by different organisations, with different targets to meet, which lack strategic co-ordination.

Typically either the prison education (OLASS) provider or the prison pays for the VC licence. OLASS providers also have their own computer equipment. Thus, in one prison we visited, students could save their work either on the intranet or on the OLASS provider's system, but the two did not link up. A new hybrid system has been introduced which means other computers can be enabled for VC access (Virtual Campus News, Summer 2013). We hope the new system will improve co-ordination between the VC and the ICT provided by the OLASS providers.

If OLASS providers are paying for the licence then this can influence how the VC is used. OLASS are paid only for qualifications completed; we visited prisons where prisoners

were not allowed to use their computers for 'personal use' (which could include, for example, writing a letter to a housing association to secure a place to live). As the system was originally set up for education, other functions such as connecting families, helping with banking or debt, or finding housing, tend to be neglected.

As independent academics Anne Pike and Anne Adams stated in a recent report:

*“Despite good IT skills and improved technologies, prison learners’ access and use of technology is hampered by conflicting priorities amongst the multiple organisations controlling prisoner activities.”*

(Pike and Adams, 2012, page 362)

They explained:

*“There were many organisations with control over the student-inmates’ learning: the Prison Service, the OLASS [Offender Learning and Skills Service], the CIAS [Careers, Information and Advice Service] and the distance learning providers, all of whom had conflicting priorities and different views of the role of higher level distance learning.”*

(Pike and Adams, page 370)

Pike and Adams found that when the various organisations worked together, the students’ learning experience was enhanced. But in most prisons, conflicting perceptions among stakeholders resulted in a “lack of interest in student-inmates’ IT needs” (*ibid.*)

It appears that commissioning is often aimed at keeping providers happy rather than efficiently meeting the educational and resettlement needs of prisoners:

*“We want the education provider and prison to work together better. It comes down to money as well. Education providers get paid when students pass courses. Reducing reoffending would be good, but that’s not what they get paid for. The goals don’t conflict, but they pull the two apart. Linking targets might be useful to ensure they work together.”*

(ETE roundtable participant)

## **Blended learning**

A recent inspection report of HMP Thameside, which has in-cell telephones and piloted in-cell ICT access, highlighted the potential benefits of in-cell ICT access for learning, but also re-enforced the importance of time out of cell and interaction with staff:

*“There were too few activity places for the prison population. Around 30% of prisoners had no activity at all . . .*

*“In our spot checks during the inspection, we found an average of 60% of prisoners locked in their cells and most of them were in bed, sleeping the day away. The poor level of time unlocked was mitigated slightly by access to showers and in-cell telephones but there were low levels of daily activity and restricted opportunities for engagement with staff.*

*. . .*

*“Although all cells had interactive computing equipment which could allow in-cell study, this had not been fully utilised. A small pilot programme of in-cell learning was under way and allowed access to distance learning programmes for 24 prisoners.”*

Opportunities for face-to-face social interaction with teachers, officers, peers, families, and

others remain crucial for desistance. ICT should be used as a means of expanding and complementing current provision as part of a blended model; not as a way to reduce social interaction.

As a recent report on prison education in Europe (Hawley and Souto-Otero, 2013) states:

*“Where e-learning is used, it is important to make sure that it is not simply understood as self-study, which could lead to the isolation of learners. The method should not be seen as a means to reduce the number of teachers/trainers working in prisons. Tutor or mentor support is still required, since a relationship between an educator and learner is often necessary for effective learning to occur, particularly in the case of learners with negative previous experiences or perceptions of education or training.”*

A way forward, to get the full benefits of ICT for education, was suggested by a prison educator who responded to the survey:

*“Trust the staff who are champions and guardians. Empower them to be able to offer the content that courses need. Allow them to access what is required to bring offender learning on to a more level playing field to external colleges. The technology is already available and in place to ensure the system is safe. Let’s start using it.”*





## ICT FOR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

### Importance of maintaining and developing family ties

For many, family relationships are supported when contact is maintained. Contact with one's family during imprisonment has a positive knock-on effect on resettlement outcomes such as finding a job or accommodation, and desistance from offending (May, Sharma, & Stewart, 2008; Niven & Stewart, 2005).

Services and conditions to help maintain family ties have improved (e.g., Boswell & Wedge, 2002; Pugh, 2004). This is important because little or no contact between children and imprisoned fathers is likely to undermine their longer term relationships.

Recent research by the University of Cambridge (2012) found that predictors most consistently linked to positive resettlement outcomes for fathers, mothers and children included:

- high quality of family relationships
- good communication between the father and family during imprisonment
- high frequency of contact during imprisonment
- participation in family - oriented programmes (when controlled for the quality of the parents' relationship).

Studies have documented the difficulties families face in maintaining contact during imprisonment (see for example, Social Exclusion Unit, 2002) which include:

- Difficulties with visiting including cost, time, distance, stress, restrictive visiting hours and practical difficulties such as lock-downs and weather causing travel difficulties.

- Children's experiences of the visiting process and search regimes
- Cost of telephone calls.

ICT can be a useful tool to enhance contact and communication; however it should never be a replacement for face to face contact.

### ICT to improve relationships between prisoners and their families

The prisons survey found that most prisons were making little or no use of ICT to enhance family relationships. Although 16 (of 42) offered a service which enabled families to send emails to their imprisoned relatives, none of the prisons responding offered virtual face-to-face contact to enable prisoners to contact families who could not visit. Only one of 42 prisons said they offered prisoners a chance to send emails out; and only one offered video links for family contact.

#### **Prison facts:**

Maintaining contact with children is made more difficult by the distance that many prisoners are held from their home area. In 2009, the average distance for men was 50 miles. The average distance adult women in prison are held from their home or committal court address is 60 miles.

*(Prison Reform Trust, Bromley Briefing Prison Factfile, Autumn, 2013)*

The prison managers who responded to the survey said they would like more uses of ICT to enhance family ties. In particular:

- 73% said they would like to use ICT for family contact by secure relay messaging
- 71% wanted to see more family contact via Skype
- 71% wanted more family contact by video conferencing

### **Email and secure relay messaging**

There is an email facility available whereby the family can contact a relative in prison. The email is received by the prison, printed off, and the letter is delivered to the prisoner with the usual post. A prisoner told us that whereas a letter could take over a week to arrive, he received a print-out of his sister's email the following day. One such system also allows the prisoner to reply with a letter, which is scanned and then emailed by staff. The ability to communicate by email is popular with family members:

*"They are much cheaper, 30p per letter rather than 60p for a stamp."*

(Family member)

However, there can be administrative problems:

*"I have to number the emails as they can sometimes get lost or delayed then arrive in bulk. Some are ready by the next afternoon, others take 2-3 days, and the late ones can be 5-6 days late."*

(Family member)

The email systems are a step in the right direction towards improving electronic communication between prisoners and their families. However, it is time consuming for prison staff to print out the emails, put them in envelopes and then scan handwritten letters back.

*"It would be really helpful if prisoners were able to email back using the [same] service. They do that in America and it is a great way of staying in touch."*

(Family survey respondent)

A roundtable participant highlighted that prisoners' children in particular, who are used to using technology such as email and social media, might benefit from using ICT to communicate with their parent in prison.

*"We were involved in the COPING research about mental health resilience of children with imprisoned parents. Children and young people advocate for more ICT communication with their parents and then it becomes a question of their rights as children. It's not about security or finances – it's how to maintain the child's right to have contact and communicate with their parent."*

#### **Prison facts:**

Approximately 200,000 children in England and Wales had a parent in prison at some point in 2009.

*Ministry of Justice (2012) Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds*

Only half of the women who had lived, or were in contact with, their children prior to imprisonment had received a visit since going to prison. *(Prison Reform Trust, Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile, Autumn, 2013)*

Under the current arrangements, only one person per prison is authorised to check the emails sent via SRM, limiting its usefulness. We have been told that this role will be extended to more staff, which should increase the use of SRM. Limited access to VC terminals also inhibits the use of SRM. A secure pin-code system could be operated with approved email addresses to facilitate greater communication between prisoners and their families. This would be no more insecure than the existing practice of prisoners phoning their families via a PIN operated phone.

#### **Virtual face-to-face contact**

71% of the prison managers who responded to the survey wanted to see more family contact via Skype or video conferencing. Video-conferencing technology exists to enable prisoners to communicate with courts and their legal advisors. This technology could be

extended to be used for other purposes. The capacity already exists but is not currently being used. One prison we visited enabled foreign national prisoners to have contact with their family members via virtual contact.

**Prison facts:**

At the end of December 2012 there were 10,592 foreign nationals (defined as non-UK passport holders) held in prisons in England and Wales, 13% of the overall prison population.

These prisoners come from 157 countries.

*Ministry of Justice (2013) Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin, July to September 2012, Table 1.6*

On one prison visit we spoke to a prisoner who told us he had two children, but he didn't want them to come into the prison to visit as he felt it would be scary for them. He thought virtual contact would be a useful alternative and would enable him to see his children. This idea was also popular with families at the Action for Prisoners' Families Forum:

*"My partner hasn't seen his son in over a year because of difficulty travelling to the prison."*

(Family member)

*"Extremely beneficial in cases where it is difficult to travel, especially if you can't get in when you arrive at prison when it's on lockdown or flooding etc."*

(Family member)

*"It would be beneficial in terms of foreign national inmates, inmates with family abroad or who have elderly relatives."*

(Family member)

*"It's very expensive to travel to the prison and takes all day to get there and back."*

(Family survey respondent)

*"Would be lovely for special occasions, birthdays, Christmas, etc."*

(Family survey respondent)

A family roundtable participant mentioned that it could be useful for 'inter-prison' visits, where for example a couple were both imprisoned so could not visit each other.

One family member raised a potential concern:

*"May be difficult in cases of domestic violence, as the abusive partner may be able to further emotionally or verbally abuse the victim due to being able to see inside the house, and influence and initiate bullying."*

(Family member)

However, another family member came up with a solution:

*"If there are concerns over the safety and security of a connection between a family/friend and inmate who is based a long way away, then perhaps the family/friend can use a computer in a prison local to them and use that secure location to contact their loved one."*

(Family member)

Another mentioned that there is an important emotional dimension to be considered. On one hand they felt that it could possibly help:

*"Sometimes it's the face to face visit that's too difficult. Appearing on a screen has different emotional dimensions."*

However, the risk could be "you might just transfer that awkward visit to a video camera."

A roundtable participant explained the logistical difficulties they found when attempting to use court video conferencing equipment so families would not have to travel so far:

*“The system never worked. In prison you need a system to make sure he gets from A to B to receive the call. Unless you set up equipment on the wing, you were using the court equipment.”*

Susan Phillips explored the use of video visits for children of imprisoned parents for the Sentencing Project in Washington, D.C. She reported that, as of mid-2012, at least 20 states had the capacity for video visits or were developing the idea. The attraction for prison authorities was that video visits required fewer staff, reduced the risk of contraband entering, and in some cases raised revenue. Phillips found that families and prisoners felt the visits were less meaningful than in person. She concluded:

*“Video visitation can be expected to have the greatest benefits when used as an adjunct to rather than a replacement for other modes of communication, particularly contact visits.”*

(Phillips, 2012)

The charge to families for a video visit was as high as \$15 for a half hour (in Virginia). The Ada county jail in Idaho allows two free 25-minute video contacts, in addition to regular visits. In Pennsylvania, priority is given to those who participate in parenting skills classes. The Albion Correctional Facility in New York provides free 45-minute video visits for mothers in prison with their children, in addition to regular visits. Phillips recommended that fees for families should not be prohibitive.

It is clear that there are some significant potential benefits to this type of contact; however, further detailed exploration of the emotional, security and logistical elements of using virtual contact/video conferencing for contact is required. A pilot could help to iron out problems and evaluate outcomes.

All the family members strongly agreed that it should only be used in addition to face to face visits, not as a replacement:

*“Skype cannot be an excuse for not going to see their loved ones, should not be used instead of a visit.”*

(Family member)

*“Video conference should never replace the face to face visit.”*

(Family roundtable participant)

### ***In-cell telephones***

Telephones have been installed in cells in a small number of prisons. Recently one prison piloted in-cell telephones, to find out how they would be used and gauge their effect. The families roundtable discussed the implications of in-cell telephones. One benefit would be that the family could be more certain that the person would ring.

The current system of a limited number of phones, available for set periods in the evening, means that a family can wait by the phone for a call, and if no line is available, the prisoner might not ring and would not be able to let them know. A drawback is that phone calls are charged to prisoners at an exorbitant rate. And families very often bear the financial cost.

Notwithstanding a successful supercomplaint submitted to Ofcom, the cost of phoning landlines remains exceptionally high. These charges conflict with the Prison Service’s aim to enhance family ties.

One prison we visited had in-cell telephony so prisoners could call home at times other than association. The prison had secured a cheaper call rate and staff reported that it had a positive impact on reducing trade in mobile phones and disputes about use of the wing-based phones

during association. A roundtable participant suggested looking into a voicemail facility whereby a family member could leave a short message for the prisoner. In-cell telephony should not however be used as a reason to reduce association as social interaction with officers, peers and others remains crucial for desistance.

### **Family learning**

Research by Royal Holloway University (Coles-Kemp, 2012) found that participation in family oriented programmes was a protective factor in maintaining family ties.

At the families roundtable, we heard that Storybook Dads is in about 110 prisons. The main branch in HMP Dartmoor receives tapes from other prisons, transfers them onto a CD or DVD and posts them to the families. They send out 6,500 DVDs and CDs a year. The imprisonment of a relative often causes distress and leaves families with emotional tensions. It is extremely difficult to discuss these in a crowded and public visits room.

When families are experiencing conflict, indirect means of communication can help. For example, fathers reading stories to their children can increase a sense of their presence, in the emotionally secure setting of a story. For older children, we heard that Storybook Dads had expanded its media production to produce DVDs showing the child their parent's daily life (for example one prisoner produced a short film of him doing exercises in the gym for his 12 year old son who was taking an interest in sport). In some prisons the prisoners can gain qualifications in computer graphics for this work, too.

Storybook Dads mentioned that ideally they would want to increase the amount of more interactive work they do to improve relationships between parents and their children. For example, they would like older

children to be able to produce content at home using a webcam, which could be uploaded to show the parent. The advantage of this sort of interactive contact is that it is a:

*“Really nice stepping stone. Plus, it gives a focus to the contact when they phone up. Sometimes the relationship has broken down and the story can be the first step to rebuilding it. It can also have an effect on the mother to see he is making an effort with the children.”*

(Roundtable participant)

However, a lack of internet access is a problem for involving some families in producing content.

### **Family conferencing /counselling**

A roundtable participant had been involved in using video calling as a means of providing facilitated family conferencing or relationships counselling in the community. This involved a professional third party facilitating a positive conversation by a three way video conference.

Facilitated conversations can be very useful between prisoners and family members to resolve particular difficulties, particularly when planning for release. This can involve exploring how the imprisoned family member is going to fit into family life by discussing anxieties, boundaries and solutions. Where face to face family conferencing is not possible, ICT could be a useful tool.

## **ICT to support prisoners' families**

### **Booking visits**

Prisoners' families can find it a time consuming process booking visits via telephone. The option of online or email based booking for visits could help families. For example, in the West Midlands, the Assisted Prison Visits Unit (APVU) can take email or telephone bookings for ten prisons via a centrally located booking system. An email confirmation of the visit is

sent with a specific reference number for improved clarity.

The APVU can help families with the cost of visiting relatives in prison. Currently families are not able to receive their payments electronically. A participant in the roundtable suggested that this become an option to enable family members to get payments more quickly.

### ***Sending in money***

Families often want to be able to send in money to top-up prison wages, so prisoners can call their families and purchase items from the prison canteen. Currently most prisoners' families have to send cheques or postal orders. A roundtable participant highlighted that:

*“The resources spent on cashing cheques is huge. The audit trail would mean it was much safer through an electronic route.”*

(Families roundtable participant)

Another participant added,

*“a prison holds onto cheques til they pay them in, in a batch and that doesn't happen very often causing delays.”*

One prison we visited was setting up a system whereby families could send in money through their online accounts. Family members told us this can make a huge difference:

*“A postal order for sending money is £5 per £40 sent, plus a stamp. If you're inside for a long time, this amount really adds up. Online money transfers are incredibly cheap in comparison, and relatively easy to navigate.”*

(Family member)

*“Please increase online money transfers in prisons nationwide, as cheques take forever and a day to clear.”*

(Family member)

### ***ICT as a means of communication with the prison***

Roundtable participants discussed the need to have better mechanisms to get information to prison staff or governors.

The Prison Reform Trust's advice and information line often hears that a family cannot get information to a prisoner or voice their concerns about the prisoner directly to someone at the prison. Family members suggested that there would be enormous value in a direct way to email prison management. Various roundtable participants had heard of examples where this had been tried, but there is no consistency between prisons.

### ***ICT as an information source***

Lizzie Coles-Kemp (2012) found that

- Prisoners' families require a complex range of information delivered in a variety of ways
- Some of the formal information available lacked relevance to their circumstances
- Many of the information needs were dynamic ranging from complex financial advice, information about prisoners safety and welfare, travel advice and planning for uncertain weather conditions, welfare and benefits advice and sentence planning
- The format of information can be a barrier to engagement and families expressed a preference for access to information through a wider range of mechanisms, including DVDs and interactive means such as games.

A families roundtable participant observed:

*“The information online about each prison is so variable. For example for one prison the first thing it says was that this was a place of execution until 1966 – as a family member you don't want to read that.”*

Respondents to the prison family survey said they couldn't find the following information online:

- Rules about what can and cannot be sent into prison
- Email address for prison contacts including the governor
- The chair of the IMB for a particular prison
- How risk assessments are calculated
- The HDC (home detention curfew) process – no specifics about the procedure
- Advice regarding Open University courses for prisoners
- Clear information on re-categorisation and prison legalities.

Some said that it would be useful to have more local support and information. One added, *“It’s always a long search because of the number of different bodies/charities out there – a one stop shop would be good!”*

A families roundtable participant provided an example of how prisons could show courtesy to families:

*“A simple message for the prison saying, ‘We know there are train troubles, so we will honour your VO,’ – the prison could tweet. The prison might say they don’t have the resources, but this is basic communication with people who depend on you. It would alleviate a lot of families’ anxiety.”*

Respondents to the family survey said they would most like to receive prison updates, for example about activities in the prison, family days, visits information, travel information, support services etc, by email. They didn't want to be inundated, though:

*“A text or email notification in case of an event that will stop visitation, such as lockdown or flooding. Not everyday updates. Monthly might be interesting.”*

A few family members mentioned a social networking site, however a family member commented that privacy was important:

*“A lot of people wouldn’t want to have on their social media sites that their partner and loved one is incarcerated as this could affect family, work, friends etc. So I would think that private email would be best.”*

(Family Survey respondent)

### **ICT as a means of support for prisoners’ families and children**

As well as websites with information, there are a number of online forums which prisoners’ families can access to get ‘virtual support’. One family member who had set up a support group for other family members affected by imprisonment told us that they had a social networking group as a platform for chatting, as well as offering face to face support.

A scoping study by University of Holloway into how to engage prisoners’ families with advice and support services, recommends further research into exploring the role of social networks (both face to face and virtual) in supporting families of prisoners.

#### **Prison Facts:**

Children of prisoners have about three times the risk of mental health problems and/or anti-social behaviour compared to other children.

*Murray, J., & Farrington, D. P. (2008) ‘The effects of parental imprisonment on children’*

One of the key questions children have, which was highlighted by the COPING research into the mental health resilience of children with imprisoned parents, was *“Why can we not have a support group set up for children who are going through the same thing... all I want is a friend?”*

Face to face support and advice given by staff and volunteers in prison visitors centres, on helplines and in community support groups remain vital, however ICT can help complement this important work.

### **Access to ICT for prisoners' families**

Two concerns with increasing the use of ICT are to ensure that prisoners' families are able to access computers and the internet, and second, to ensure they have the skills and confidence to use it as they may also be digitally excluded:

*“Things like internet bookings for visitations and money transfers are great if you use the internet a lot, but for some people who don't have computers it is difficult if it is the only option.”*

(Family member)

*“An idea for families without computers would be to have access in community centres, schools and libraries. Sort of ‘up-skilling family members.’”*

(Family member)

One roundtable participant mentioned good practice of a charity going into a prison visitors centre with a laptop and teaching family members how to use emails so they send them to their relative. Other participants commented:

*“It would be good to have prison visitors centres have greater access to computers. Simple interactive processes to give them information, this could include interactive games for children, something about them visiting their dad; it's not complicated.”*

*“We have advocated for putting [computer terminals] in the visitors centre to provide people with information.”*

A family member commented that, *“for those with no internet access at home I think it would be useful and more informative than the odd information leaflet.”*

Three quarters of the family members who responded to our survey said they did not have any ICT qualifications. When funding is available, the London-based charity ‘Prisoners' Families and Friends Service’ offer training in ICT to family members of prisoners in their family support centre or local library.

A family roundtable participant highlighted the specific barriers for the families of prisoners who had been arrested for crimes relating to the internet:

*“They say, ‘It's the internet that got me into this. The police have our computers. I don't want to go online again because I'm scared’.”*

Therefore even if access and support for using ICT were to be provided, it was strongly felt that ICT is

*“not an alternative. It's part of the menu of options.”*

(Family roundtable participant)



## **OUR VISION FOR HOW ICT COULD TRANSFORM REHABILITATION**

### **Prisons where ICT is used effectively to facilitate rehabilitation would have:**

#### **A co-ordinated ICT strategy**

- The prison recognises that a digital divide between people in prison and in the community is rapidly widening which will make resettlement more difficult if these skills have not been developed
- ICT has a central place in the prison's reducing reoffending strategy
- Service users are regularly consulted on the uses of ICT in the prison, e.g. on content, usability, location and access
- ICT is implemented in a prison-wide, co-ordinated way
- Security risks inherent in ICT access are managed in a proportionate and robust way to enable ICT to be an effective tool for rehabilitation and resettlement.

#### **Controlled access to interactive and automatically updated internet content**

- Security cleared prisoners have controlled and monitored access to selected secure websites for rehabilitation and resettlement.

#### **Content**

- Available ICT content expands and supports provision of education, training, preparation for resettlement and family ties.

Interactive, updated and secure websites enable prisoners to:

- Apply for housing
- Search for employment
- Set up and learn to use online banking
- Look for education and volunteering opportunities for after release
- Research through-the-gate services
- Access accredited online distance learning courses and exams
- Carry out educational research including use of moocs and online journals
- Use informal / open learning resources and taster courses
- Access careers advice information
- Access online benefits advice and applications
- Use websites of relevant voluntary sector organisations
- And suggest other sources of information that should be white-listed.

Virtual Academies link students in different prisons in subject groups, taught online by tutors.

#### **Communications by prisoners**

- Prisoners apply to have an email address approved for direct email contact with family members, probation officers, tutors etc
- Prisoners send secure relay messages to prospective employers using a non-hmps email address
- Trained peer advisers, who have enhanced online access, are available to prisoners everywhere via secure relay messaging to provide personal resettlement advice
- Prisoners can apply to communicate with approved persons, such as family members, tutors, probation officers, support services and mentors via email, virtual contact, Skype, or video conferencing, in addition to face to face visits.

## **Communications by families**

- Electronic private cash systems enable families to send in money online
- The children of prisoners use the internet to send communications to their parent in prison (maintaining the child's right to keep in contact with parents)
- The prison has a monitored email address and telephone number to enable family members to contact the prison directly if they have any concerns about the prisoner
- Prison staff make use of social networks and email to keep families informed of urgent visiting information
- Families use secure email to communicate, free of charge, with their relatives in prison

## **Location**

- Access to ICT and interactive, updated and secure web content are facilitated throughout the prison including wings, gym, library, resettlement, health care centres and induction
- Security enabled computers, VC and e-readers can be used by prisoners in their cell
- Telephones are available in-cell
- Computer terminals in visitors' centres provide current information in an accessible format
- Visitors' centres have information about where families can access ICT and ICT training.

## **Time is provided to access ICT**

- Prisoners are given sufficient time to use ICT and explore the online resources, including outside of the core day

- Processes for security clearance for prisoners to access interactive, updated and secure web content use the Virtual campus should be carried out as a priority on induction.

## **Support / skills training**

- Relevant staff are trained to a higher standard in ICT; in particular, more staff are trained in the use of the Virtual Campus
- The prison provides for peer mentoring in ICT skills
- The role of Virtual Campus administrator is open to trained, security cleared prisoners
- Prisoners can access high level ICT training in a specialist ICT academy.

## **Social interaction is maintained**

- Social interaction with teachers, officers, peers, families and others is seen as being vital for desistance. ICT is used to expand and complement current provision as part of a blended model and does not reduce face-to-face contact and social interaction.

## **Making this vision a reality**

The Prison Reform Trust and the Prisoners Education Trust will work with independent expert members of the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists to establish a shared understanding and analysis of the need, potential and benefits of digital inclusion for prisoners; and to support the National Offender Management Service so it can realise the potential of ICT in transforming rehabilitation.

## APPENDIX A: METHODS OF GATHERING EVIDENCE

The project gathered evidence on the uses of ICT in prisons from the following sources:

- A survey of prisons across England and Wales (September 2012)
- Visits to nine establishments
- Three roundtable expert meetings at the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, on ETE, resettlement, and family relationships
- A survey, conducted by PET, of prisoners' families
- A focus group of prisoners' families who attend the Action for Prisoners' Families forum
- Visit to Unilink offices to see its kiosk system (wing- or cell-based self-service computer terminals)
- Day-to-day work with prison staff and prisoners by PET and PRT.

For ease of reference, we indicate the source of the evidence by referring to:

- The prisons survey
- The prison visits
- Quotes from staff or prisoners and each of the three roundtable meetings
- ETE, resettlement, or families.

The prisons survey was sent by NOMS to all governors and directors in September 2012, with 42 responses (a 30% response rate).

Almost half were completed by heads of learning and skills; other respondents included heads of reducing reoffending and ICT tutors.

<b>Types of prison responding</b>	
Local adult male	12
Adult male training (sentenced)	10
Open or resettlement	4
Women's	3
Young offender	3
Mixed function	3
Not specified	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>

## APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY

### CLAiT –

CLAiT stands for Computer Literacy and Information Technology and is an internationally recognised course. ... It shows employers you can use the main applications on a computer. CLAiT is available at levels 1 (New CLAiT International), 2 (CLAiT Plus International) and 3 (CLAiT Advanced International).

*(<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/courses/typesoflearning/Pages/computerskills.aspx>)*

### Cloud (information cloud) –

Cloud computing entrusts remote services with a user's data, software and computation (Wikipedia). 'Cloud' refers to a remote bank that stores the user's files, documents, photos, or other data, which can be retrieved from different PCs (usually via the internet, although the VC can work as a cloud).

### Digital inclusion requires:

- access (to digital resources, including the internet)
  - capability and confidence
  - engagement - understanding how ICT is relevant to one's life, needs, and interests
  - variety of uses and creativity in using ICT
- (paraphrased from Digital Inclusion, Fresh Minds, July 2007)

### E-books –

an electronic version of a printed book which can be read on a computer or a specifically designed handheld device.  
(Oxford Dictionary online)

### ECDL –

European Computer Driving Licence  
(See **PICTA**, below)

### ETE –

education, training and employment

### Government Gateway –

The Government Gateway is the website you use to register for online government services. It is an important part of the government's strategy of delivering 'joined up' government, enabling people to communicate and make transactions with government from a single point of entry. The centralised source for government e-services in the UK  
(From the Government Gateway website).

### Koestler Trust –

The UK's best-known prison arts charity. The Koestler Trust has been awarding, exhibiting and selling artworks by offenders, detainees and secure patients for over 50 years. Over 8,000 entries [are received] a year - inspiring offenders to take part in the arts, work for achievement and transform their lives. Its national exhibition attracts 20,000 visitors - showing the public the talent and potential of offenders and people in secure settings.  
(paraphrased from the Koestler Trust website)  
*[www.koestlertrust.org.uk/index.html](http://www.koestlertrust.org.uk/index.html)*

### Learning disability –

"Learning disability includes the presence of: A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with A reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning) which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development."  
(Department of Health, 2001: Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century, A White Paper, page 14)

Learning difficulty encompasses a wider range of needs, as explained by the Prison Reform Trust's programme, No One Knows:

"The term learning disabilities or difficulties thus include people who:

- experience difficulties in communicating and expressing themselves and understanding ordinary social cues

- have unseen or hidden disabilities such as dyslexia
- experience difficulties with learning and/or have had disrupted learning experiences that have led them to function at a significantly lower level than the majority of their peers
- are on the autistic spectrum, including people with Asperger syndrome.”

(Prison Reform Trust, 2008, *No One Knows: Report and final recommendations*, by Jenny Talbot, page 3)

### **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) –**

A massive open online course (MOOC) is an online course aimed at large-scale interactive participation and open access via the web. In addition to traditional course materials such as videos, readings, and problem sets, MOOCs provide interactive user forums that help build a community for the students, professors, and TAs. MOOCs are a recent development in distance education.

(Wikipedia, accessed 03/06/2013)

### **National Offender Management Service (NOMS) –**

“The National Offender Management Service is an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Justice. Our role is to commission and provide offender management services in the community and in custody ensuring best value for money from public resources. We work to protect the public and reduce reoffending by delivering the punishment and orders of the courts and supporting rehabilitation by helping offenders to reform their lives.”

(National Offender Management Service Annual Report, 2011-2012)

### **OLASS –**

Offender Learning and Skills Service:

“Development of a new Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) began in January 2004 following the creation of the National Offender

Management Service (NOMS) to commission services for offenders on a regional basis. NOMS brings an integrated approach to the custodial and non-custodial aspects of a sentence. The new delivery arrangements put in place co-commissioning arrangements between the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and NOMS’ Regional Offender Managers. This brings offender learning funding and delivery arrangements in line with the LSC’s broader responsibilities for Post-16 learning across England.”

(Accessed 03/06/2013 online at

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/further-education-skills/learners/offender-learning/policy/olass>)

### **PICTA –**

Prisons Information Communication Technology Academy

“Picta is an HM Treasury funded project that aims to promote IT training within Prisons and later via Probation. The industry recognised qualifications and practical work that is available can lead to employment. The project had its first site running in April 2004.”

(Accessed 03 06 2013 online at:

[www.pictaswaleside.co.uk/id1.html](http://www.pictaswaleside.co.uk/id1.html))

### **Polaris: The Programme for Offender Learning and Resettlement Information Services –**

“offenders ... using a secure IT network to access on-line learning and job-hunting resources using internet technology.”

(Source: <http://estep.iscavision.com/uploads/polaris.pdf>)

### **Prison Service Order (PSO) / Prison Service Instruction (PSI) –**

Rules, regulations and guidelines by which prisons are run. These are outlined in Prison Service Instructions (PSIs) and Prison Service Orders (PSOs).

(Source and list of PSOs and PSIs:

[www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis](http://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis))

### **Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) –**

Release on temporary licence means being able to leave the prison for a short time (see Prison Service Order 6300). If the governor thinks the person is safe to go out of the prison there are 4 main types of licence:

- Special purposes licence
- Resettlement day release licence
- Resettlement overnight release licences
- Childcare resettlement licence

(Source: Prison Reform Trust website, accessed 10/09/2013:

[www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/PIB%20-%20Release%20on%20temporary%20licence.pdf](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/PIB%20-%20Release%20on%20temporary%20licence.pdf))

### **Secure relay messaging –**

Developed through the Virtual Campus, secure relay messaging enables prisoners to send work to their tutors and submit assignments.

(Source: [www.open.ac.uk/about/offender-learning/data-and-developments/virtual-campus](http://www.open.ac.uk/about/offender-learning/data-and-developments/virtual-campus))

### **Universal Credit –**

Six working-age benefits will be merged into one. So, those receiving income-based jobseeker's allowance, income-related employment and support allowance, income support, child tax credit, working tax credit and housing benefit will receive a single universal credit payment. ... It will be paid once a month, rather than fortnightly or weekly, and will go directly into a bank account. ... An online system will be used to make an initial claim, and then to check payments and to organise budgets.... Potentially, the change will affect nearly eight million people.

(Source: BBC; 5 September 2013:

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11735673](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11735673))

### **USB –**

“Universal Serial Bus” is a type of connection to facilitate the transfer of data from computers. A flash drive, or memory stick, holds data and can plug into a USB port on a computer. USBs come in different sizes and offer different data transfer speeds.

(Source: Wikipedia article, accessed 10 September 2013, paraphrased)

### **Virtual Campus (VC) –**

“The Virtual Campus is a secure web based IT platform which allows learners to register and carry out a range of activities based around education, training and employment. It is being used in prisons across the UK. The Virtual Campus delivers courses and resources and supports learners in developing the skills needed to apply for and succeed in employment. The Virtual Campus provides a secure one-stop shop for offenders on their journey toward resettlement.”

(Source: Dan Brown, Virtual Campus Evaluation Report, powerpoint presentation, online:

[stats.cesi.org.uk](http://stats.cesi.org.uk))

## APPENDIX C: EXPERT ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS AT THE ESMÉE FAIRBAIRN FOUNDATION

### Education, training and employment

<b>Victor Arnott</b>	Deputy Head of Professional Services, Meganexus
<b>Paul Astley Lloyd</b>	HMP Stafford Start Up service user who runs a web design business
<b>Tracy Coombes</b>	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Prison Library Group
<b>Alan Fletcher</b>	Research and Business Development Manager, Knowledge Media Institute, Open University
<b>Jackie Hewitt-Maine</b>	Author of 'Dyslexia Behind Bars'
<b>Melanie Jameson</b>	Dyslexia Consultancy, Malvern
<b>Mark Kingston</b>	PICTA Instructor, HMP Lewes
<b>Dr. William Lockett</b>	Research and Policy Director, G2G Communities CIC
<b>Andy Moss</b>	Lead Accreditor & IT Security Manager, Ministry of Justice ICT
<b>Danny O'Connor</b>	Virtual Campus manager and Director, e-learning consultancy Demm, Ltd.
<b>Dhruv Patel</b>	CEO, Nisai Group
<b>Anne Pike</b>	Independent Academic
<b>Luke Taylor</b>	Head of Immediate Priorities and Future Developments Team, Commissioning Strategies Group, NOMS
<b>Andy Woodley</b>	HMPS Cluster Lead, HMP Grendon

### Resettlement

<b>Victor Arnott</b>	Deputy Head of Professional Services, Meganexus
<b>Chris Bath</b>	then Executive Director, UNLOCK
<b>Mark Blake</b>	Project Development Officer,

Black Training and Enterprise Group

<b>Wendy Cranmer</b>	Recruitment and Retention Manager, BeOnSite/Lend Lease
<b>Rachel Halford</b>	Director, Women in Prison
<b>Chris Holmes</b>	Commissioning Adviser, Families Group, NOMS
<b>Juliet Hope</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Startup
<b>Abbie</b>	Startup service user
<b>Maria McNicholl</b>	Head of Prison Projects, St Giles Trust
<b>Zarin</b>	Independent Consultant

### Re-building family ties

<b>Sharon Berry, OBE</b>	CEO, Storybook Dads
<b>Clair Carver</b>	G4S HMP Parc
<b>Lizzie Coles-Kemp</b>	Information Security Group, Royal Holloway, University of London, Author of 'Families Disconnected by Prison: A Scoping Study'
<b>Diane Curry, OBE</b>	CEO, Partners of Prisoners (POPS)
<b>Ellen Dacre</b>	Spurgeons, HMP Pentonville
<b>Chris Holmes</b>	Directorate of Commissioning and Commercial, NOMS
<b>Patrick Hunter</b>	NOMS Offender Safety, Rights and Responsibilities Group
<b>Nancy Loucks</b>	Chief Executive, Families Outside
<b>Adam Moll</b>	Business Development Director, Safe Ground
<b>Hayley Morris</b>	G4S HMP Parc
<b>Sarah Salmon</b>	then Assistant Director, Action for Prisoners' Families
<b>Noreen Thomson</b>	





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Information and communication technologies (ICT) and the internet have increasing significance for communication, accessing public services, banking and employment.

This report, jointly published by the Prison Reform Trust and Prisoners Education Trust, shows how prisons can use ICT effectively to improve rehabilitation. It sets out a vision for better use of secure, controlled access to computers in order to transform education, family contact and resettlement in prisons and reduce reoffending on release. In this role, ICT should always work as a complement to, not a substitute for, good quality face-to-face staff engagement.

The digital divide between people in prison and in the community is rapidly widening and will make resettlement more difficult if these skills have not been developed.

“We can’t go on with prisons in a pre-internet dark age: inefficient, wasteful and leaving prisoners woefully unprepared for the real world they will face on release. I have not met one prison professional who does not think drastic change is needed.” (Nick Hardwick, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, from the Foreword)

ICT should have a central place in each prison’s strategy to reduce reoffending.

£10

