



Response to IAG Review Questions

October 2019

The Prisoner Learning Alliance is a network of individuals and organisations with expertise and an interest in prison education. It is coordinated by the Prisoners' Education Trust who provide the secretariat for the Alliance.

We very much welcome the opportunity to respond to this review. This response incorporates responses from our members and a session with Prisoners' Education Trust staff.

Do different prisoners need different IAG services at different points in the sentence?

All our members that responded to our call out for views agreed that the service needs to be different at different points of the sentence.

For shorter-term prisoners, the primary needs are often employment and accommodation. There are potentially huge benefits for remand and short-term prisoners if they are able to access advice quickly. They may be able to retain a place in education or their job, and the Money Charity pointed out that advice soon after being received into custody can mean dealing with debts that can have interest and payments suspended during their sentence. Initial advice can also assist with making arrangements that will make retaining accommodation more likely.

A good practice example that PET is aware of was that HMP Peterborough (women's) education inductions staff contacted a college for a woman who was part way through her course when entering prison. They arranged for the course materials to be available for her so that she could continue her course while in custody.

An initial skills assessment/analysis can support prisoners to make the best use of their time in prison and work out what areas to develop or opportunities to follow while inside. In terms of future employment, developing transferable skills is fundamental and prisoners, prison staff and other staff need a better framework to identify and record these.

For long-term prisoners, IAG can be a support as people settle in to their sentence. It can support with the process of assimilation and can help people to come to an understanding how to best make use of their time. It can assist with setting goals over a period of year that can support progress, motivation and hope. The Prison Reform Trust's publication "*What do you need to make best use of your time in prison*" uses the voices of prisoners to evidence powerfully the importance of purpose and hope for serving prisoners. It details the fundamental importance of getting good advice and the difference that educational opportunities can make to a sentence.

([http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/PPN/What do you need to make best use of your time in prisonlo.pdf](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/PPN/What_do_you_need_to_make_best_use_of_your_time_in_prisonlo.pdf)).

IAG can help to set realistic goals over a long-term sentence. For instance, people engaged in education can begin to think about the theory behind learning, develop study skills, and information technology skills to support further study. In terms of future employment, developing transferable skills is fundamental.

If IAG is part of other planning and sequencing work within the prison (sentence plan, key work plan) etc. it can support reducing reoffending goals effectively. Many long-term prisoners struggle with the enormity of entering prison and being faced with a long or indeterminate sentence. Education can be a way of maintaining focus and marking achievement over time. Education training and employment often have to fill a gap where offending behaviour courses are not available or for prisoners who won't be allocated to them early in sentence

Advice should not just be early on in the sentence or in the last three months of the sentence, but for long term prisoners should accumulate, and be a continuous and coordinated process during the sentence.

We also received comments about accessing advice before leaving prison. A number of respondents mentioned how difficult it can be for prisoners to access this advice- or for agencies to access them. It can be complicated to coordinate the different services at this time, and ensure that the agencies share information and progress as needed.

Any system needs to be appropriately flexible about the realities of sentencing and time in custody. One challenge that the CRCs have faced is that their model picks people up at 12 weeks prior to sentence end. However, many people will not be in prison for as long as 12 weeks (remand, recall, very short sentences). For people who will be in prison a short time, there needs to be a model where significant assessment and advice happen quickly after entry to prison, rather than a generic basic screening that does not always lead to activity or support.

It is important that specific support is available for different groups in the population. People with LD/D may require IAG in different formats and young adults, who are the hardest group to engage in education and employment, may need additional time to build rapport and trust with services, may respond better to specialist provision and may need more support around motivation.

Employability advice is clearly important. However IAG should also support prisoners on a longer-term journey of learning and development that may take them into learning and development options beyond release - training and education, including possible moving into voluntary work should also be seen as valid and valuable progression routes once released.

How should IAG differ under plans to reconfigures the estate?

Reconfiguring the prison estate could mean that specialist provision could be directed to different functions of prisons. For instance, if open prisons could focus more on their resettlement function, supporting longer-term prisoners, who can access ROTL, IAG could effectively support the needs of long-term prisoners as they prepare for life in the community.

However, our members expressed the concern that the populations will not be as clear or straightforward as expected. Local (reception) prisons will be working with people who have long sentences and have not yet transferred, alongside people on recall and people who have been convicted of sex offences. The service needs to be flexible enough to adapt to the needs of the prisoners held rather than having a distinct model for each function of prison. One of the challenges of CRCs and some other organisations providing IAG has been that the service design has not been responsive enough to prisoner need.

In addition, there needs to be specialist support for people convicted of sex offences and specialist support that understand the additional pressures in an indeterminate sentence. Open prisons often hold people on shorter sentences too, as their risk has been deemed suitable - but they will not need the same sort of support as someone readjusting to the idea of life in the community after a long sentence.

Respondents suggested that it would be helpful to have a single point of contact coordinating IAG provision in each prison. Part of this role could be a needs analysis and regular scoping to identify what provision is available from each department and the organisations working in the prison, to ensure consistency, coordination of services, referral routes and identify any gaps. It is crucially important that keyworkers are aware of the organisations and support available in the prison.

How should IAG work with the New Futures Network?

IAG has clear links with employment outcomes. The NFN can support IAG provision by providing market information, careers fairs and information about potential employment opportunities.

However, it is important that prisoners can trust IAG to support them personally as individuals. It should be driven by individual goals and choices, rather than simply the local employment market. Sustaining employment depends on applying for work that someone is motivated to do. Many prisoners may welcome advice about employment sectors offering lots of opportunities. However, others may have very specific and realistic ambitions, which also need to be supported. Employability advice also needs to be focused on developing and identifying transferable skills. It might also need to include financial capability or other life skills advice that will support in maintaining employment post release.

Ideally, IAG links with the work choices within the prison and understand the different pathways available. IAG could feed in to the allocation process for activities. There should also be clear communication and collaboration between all IAG providers in each prison and their regional NFN teams.

In the light of the above, what needs to be commissioned separately from the above?

It is difficult to respond to this question without knowing about the IAG already commissioned, and at the moment the picture is very varied. It will be essential for HMPPS in developing future plans for IAG to review and share analysis of the different models currently in place.

Responses to this question emphasised the benefits of coordinated services and working in partnerships and the risks associated with stand-alone services.

We very strongly support the use of peer mentors to assist in the delivery of IAG services. However, they must be properly trained, supported and supervised and ideally, their work should be accredited.

In addition, any services that are supporting employability need to have expertise in advising on disclosing criminal records, restrictions on prisoners' employment opportunities arising from the nature of their offences and the ability to support people to access ID, NI numbers and bank accounts.

How should IAG provision interact with CRCs/NPS, DWP, third sector provision etc?

The future arrangements for NPS support and supervision, and the services that will be provided to people leaving prison are as yet unclear. However, there is an expectation that there may be an in-reach model rather than staff based within the prison. If this happens, and no personnel are based in the establishment, it will be even more important that there is a key point of contact within the prison team.

There is considerable frustration that despite attempts to streamline provision, there are still a number of organisations involved in providing pre-release IAG, and some duplication of activities. Alongside this, though, there are still large numbers of prisoners falling through the gaps and not accessing support

In any prison, it is worth scoping the range of organisations that provide advice pre-release.

Prisoners could be receiving pre-release IAG from any, or all of the following:

Keyworkers	Offender supervisor (in prison)	Offender managers in the community	Local FE colleges	Careers/job fairs
CRC (may be commissioning a number of services)	Education staff	New Futures Network	Friends and family	Peer mentors (various)
Drug and alcohol teams	DPS funded services (could be numerous)	Other prison officers	External helplines	IAG peer mentors eg St Giles
ROTL/working out teams	External education advice - Prisoners Education Trust	Workshop instructors	Third sector organisations	Debt/money advice services
CF03 funded services	Employability services	Gym teams/sports projects	Prison/university partnerships	DWP

Coordinating these services is complex and ensuring that prison managers have the tools to analyse the need of their population, map and scope their provision, identify gaps and commission services is crucial. Referral routes and criteria for services needs to be crystal clear. A central record (in each establishment) of who is getting support from which organisation would help minimise duplication, but raises questions about confidentiality and data sharing that are not

straightforward to navigate. Prisoners may have a number of different plans. It is not uncommon for one person to have a sentence plan, resettlement plan, drug recovery plan, mental health care plan, personal learning plan and key working plan. Coordination of these could be something that keyworkers hold, or take responsibility for, as their role develops in the future.

At best, all these different sources of advice could be complementary, drawing on different sources of expertise. At worst, it could be contradictory, superficial (because resources are spread too thinly to be more than token) and confusing from the point of view of the individual prisoner. In this context, the role of the keyworker could be pivotal.

How should IAG link into personal learning plans?

IAG should be part of the process that creates the personal learning plan. IAG therefore needs to draw on expertise on learning and development as well as employment pathways.

IAG providers should be able to view the PLP on Curious or whatever HMPPS system holds the plan. It is also important to define the role of key workers in this process, as they will have a key working plan, which needs to relate to the PLP.

Is the DPS a suitable route to commission IAG services and how long should contacts be?

Respondents felt that the DPS could be an appropriate route to commission DPS, however, the variety of outcomes requested and some of the inconsistencies in the system at the moment are problematic. Tenders for IAG vary widely - prison governors and HOLS are designing their own outcome requirements. This means that there is no straightforward way of evaluating or comparing provision across the estate. There is also a concern that the lowest cost bids appear to be successful with insufficient regard to quality criteria.

There is universal agreement on the need for longer-term contracts. Three years is considered a reasonable minimum length of contract for IAG. Longer-term contracts could also facilitate opportunities for continuous improvements from service providers

Should contracts be at a prison, regional or national level?

It is difficult to see how a national contract would be consistent with the principle of governor autonomy. Respondents that expressed a view on this felt that regional was likely to be most effective.

We are keen to see a national framework to ensure quality and consistency, particularly as prisoners move between regions during their sentence. Individual prisons could commission top-up or more specialist services.

Other points

IAG needs to support developing skills in digital literacy as a matter of course. Next year, the Department of Education is putting Digital Literacy Skills on the same footing as English and Maths.

There is significant amounts of information available to support IAG online and this should be available via the virtual campus and (eventually) though in cell technology. Guidance to prisons about external organisations and helplines that prisoners can access alongside the provision in the prison would be useful.

Ideally, providers will work from a strengths based rather than deficit model and have skills in engaging and motivating prisoners. It is important that prison managers know how to assess and evaluate this when developing and commissioning services.

We would prefer commissioned IAG services to be separate providers to the core PEF provider; although we hope they would work very much in partnership. We believe that independent IAG that is focused on the individual's needs, rather than potentially on the existing PEF provision in the prison, is preferable. This is not a comment on any of the IAG services currently provided by the core PEF providers, but is a matter of principle that the design of IAG provision needs to address.

We would like there to be a national outcomes framework. Any recording or monitoring system should be capable of identifying and describing progression, including progression around transferable skills accurately. Skills acquired through all programmes and activities including creative and sports could be included.

Recent data on employment outcomes (now collected six weeks after release) could also collect training and education outcomes.

For organisations providing IAG, getting access to prisoners and appropriate facilities (which ideally mean a confidential room, with a networked computer and a phone) are essential. We are aware that services coming into prison sometimes advise on wings, in other communal areas or even sometimes through cell doors. This is not conducive to effective IAG and safe working practices.

It is important that wing and other officers understand the importance of IAG and the difference that it can make to someone's future, so that they are motivated to facilitate access, by ensuring prisoners are in the right place at the right time and escorting prisoners to the correct location when necessary.

The biggest challenge about IAG appears to be the coordination of delivery. Prison staff need good guidance about how they can ensure that the right organisations offer the right IAG to the right prisoners at the right time.

We also wish to say that this is an area of huge importance and interest to our members, who have expressed that they are very willing to continue the dialogue and wish to support HMPPPS in promoting and developing IAG provision.