

Section 1

Sector summaries: Learning in the justice sector

Context

In Wales, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation leads on inspections of youth offending teams, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons leads on inspections of prisons, including the young offenders' institution, and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) leads on inspections of the secure children's home. Estyn joins these teams to inspect the quality of education and training.

Estyn's inspection guidance for inspecting prisons in Wales can be found here:

[Estyn, Inspection Guidance](#)

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Inspecting Probation Services

HMI Probation has not undertaken inspections of Youth Offending Services in Wales during this year.

Inspecting secure children's homes

CIW has not inspected the education provision in Hillside Secure Centre this year.

Inspecting prisons

In nearly all prisons in Wales, education and training is delivered by the prisons, rather than external agencies. In HMP Berwyn, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service contracts with Novus Cambria to deliver education.

This year, Estyn worked with partners to inspect the provision for adults in Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Swansea and for young people in Young Offender Institution (YOI) Parc and HMP Usk and Prescoed. Estyn also maintained contact with other prisons in Wales (HMP Cardiff, HMP Parc and HMP Berwyn) through telephone interviews.

HMIP's published inspection reports can be found here:

[Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons](#)

Wellbeing

Under direction from the UK Government, the priority within prisons in Wales has been to minimise the transmission of illness during the pandemic. This has meant that in nearly all prisons, for much the period of restrictions, prisoners have been confined to their cells for up to 23 hours a day. All prisons made arrangements to isolate prisoners who showed symptoms of illness and to enable those with pre-existing medical conditions that made them additionally vulnerable to isolate themselves.

Prisons were instructed to suspend arrangements for families and friends to visit prisoners in the early stages of pandemic restrictions, owing to the risk of visitors introducing infection to prisons. All prisons gave prisoners additional telephone credit to enable them to maintain contact with their families. They also set up facilities that enabled prisoners to stay connected with families through a secure video call system, which most prisoners found very helpful.

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In HMP/YOI Parc, the education provision has engaged young people in learning throughout the pandemic effectively and enabled them to progress in their learning. Throughout the period of restrictions, the young people's unit has continued to provide its learners with education, enabling them to access workshops or class-based sessions for a minimum of two hours each weekday, while managing their risks of exposure to infection by allocating them to small cohort bubbles.

Swansea's education staff outreach workers engaged well with prisoners on wings to help them continue with their education. This has enabled a majority of prisoners to gain accredited qualifications at a range of levels while COVID-related restrictions were in effect. HMP Berwyn staff began to use in-cell telephony to support learners pursuing qualifications, enabling a few prisoners to progress towards gaining accreditation. In other prisons without this technology, staff have been responding to requests from a few prisoners and supplied them with printed or photocopied learning resources to enable them to continue to study. A few prisoners in Usk and Prescoed made good progress towards Open University courses or courses funded by the Prisoner Education Trust. In Usk, a few prisoners had been supplied with art materials, which they found benefited their mental health.

In all prisons, prisoners' access to library materials has been very limited. Education staff responded quickly to lockdown restrictions by producing distraction packs for prisoners. These contained quizzes, wordsearch exercises and, in several prisons, articles written by prisoners. The packs also focused on wellbeing resources.

Teaching, learning and the curriculum

HMP/YOI Parc's management of learners' provision gradually increased the level of activities they could access over the year, and from 19 April 2021 the offer of educational activities for learners was extended to 4½ hours a day. This was made possible by the fact that there was only a small number of young people in the institution and they are isolated from the main prison population. The continued provision of education and skills activities enabled them to gain many qualifications between April 2020 and March 2021.

While access to education activities elsewhere has been very restricted, all prisons have continued to allocate a minority of prisoners to essential work roles.

In HMP Swansea, essential jobs allocated to prisoners, such as tailoring, building maintenance work, cleaning or food pack assembly have remained open. There were good arrangements in place for prisoners to maintain hygiene in workshops. The prison adapted work activities to respond well to the impact of COVID-19. For example, prisoners in the tailoring workshop began to make protective clothing for front line health care staff. Identifying the need for increased levels of hygiene within the prison led to the prison increasing the number of prisoners training as cleaners, with several being trained to undertake bio-cleaning on wings.

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Throughout the pandemic, prisoners in HMP Prescoed have been employed to keep the prison's farm running, gaining skills in an authentic work setting. Prisoners also maintained Prescoed's market garden to grow food for prisoners. Managers increased the work opportunities in the prison by opening a new bricklaying workshop, enabling more prisoners to be involved in work and training. Prescoed also made effective use of its links with external employers to place prisoners into work opportunities within the community throughout the period of restrictions.

Developing education resources for prisoners

While access to online resources is highly restricted in all prisons, HMP Cardiff has begun to produce and develop TV-based education resources for prisoners. Prisoners can access these materials from their cells. The prison will continue to use these resources after COVID restrictions are lifted to enhance the learning experience for prisoners. Other prisons, such as Usk and Swansea, have worked in partnership with Cardiff to explore how they may be able to develop this facility in their prisons.

Leadership

Leaders and managers in all prisons placed a high priority on minimising the risk of infection transmission in their prisons. They have managed social distancing well within their institutions. Many prisoners in HMP Swansea reported that senior managers had communicated well with them to ensure that they understood how arrangements were being managed to ensure prisoners' safety.

In all prisons, leaders and managers introduced routine testing of staff early. Many education and training staff were invited to work at home for part of the week, where they were able to develop and update learning resources. This reduced the traffic into prisons.

All prisons have paid close attention to UK Central Government and Welsh Government guidelines regarding safety in prisons. Education and training staff carried out early risk assessments of classrooms to identify how many learners each could accommodate once prisons were instructed that education activities could resume while observing social distancing. However, in HMP Usk, this reintroduction has been limited by the building's very small classrooms.

Education and training staff in prisons across Wales worked well with each other to share resources to include in resource packs for prisoners.

Maintaining good communication with prisoners

The governor of HMP Swansea made frequent tours of the prison's accommodation wings regularly to communicate with prisoners through the period of pandemic restrictions. Prisoners appreciated these attempts to keep them informed and this gave them opportunities to understand how the arrangements staff improved prisoners' safety.