The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service

What's needed for the future – the view of the auditor

James Robertson

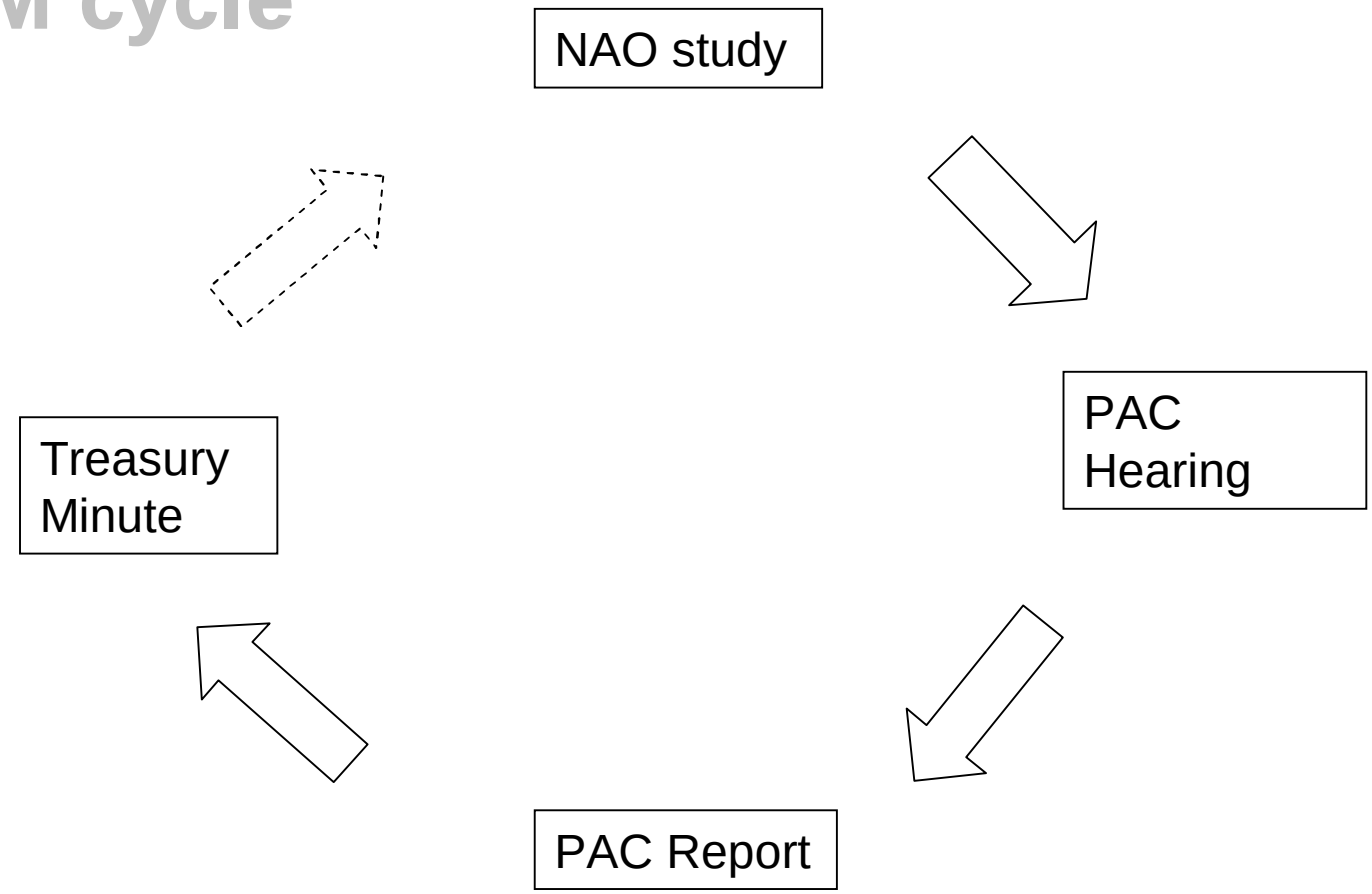
National Audit Office

Presentation will cover

- Background
- Areas to address

Background

VFM cycle



NAO report

7 March 2008

http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/07-08/0708310.pdf

OLASS Objective

- Ensuring offenders have the underpinning skills for life (literacy, language, numeracy and basic IT skills), and have developed work skills, to enable them to meet the real needs of employers in the area where they live or will settle after their sentence is complete

Overall NAO conclusion March 2008

- The value for money of OLASS across almost all aspects of delivery is below the level of which the service is capable in time. Many of the problems which led to the establishment of OLASS have not been substantially overcome since its introduction.

PAC Hearing
19 May 2008

HELPING THE NATION SPEND WISELY

NAO
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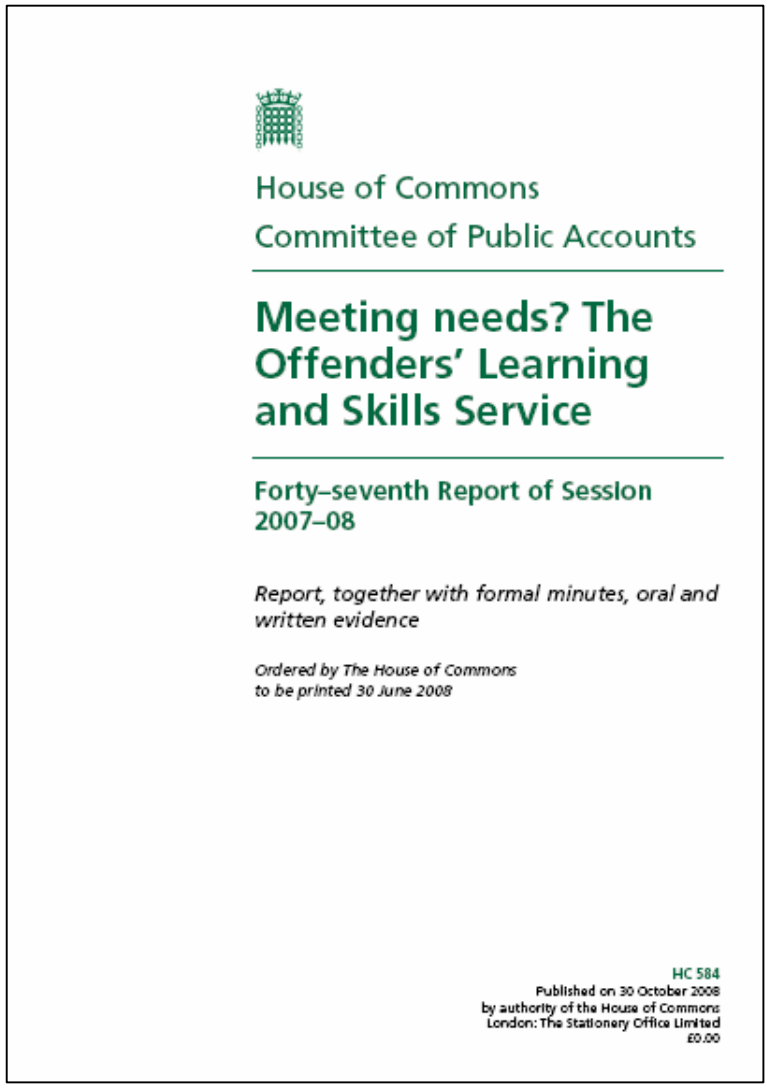
PAC Report
30 June 2008



House of Commons

Committee of Public Accounts

Meeting needs? The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service

Forty–seventh Report of Session 2007–08

Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence

Ordered by The House of Commons to be printed 30 June 2008

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HELPING THE NATION SPEND WISELY

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Treasury Minute
17 Dec 2008

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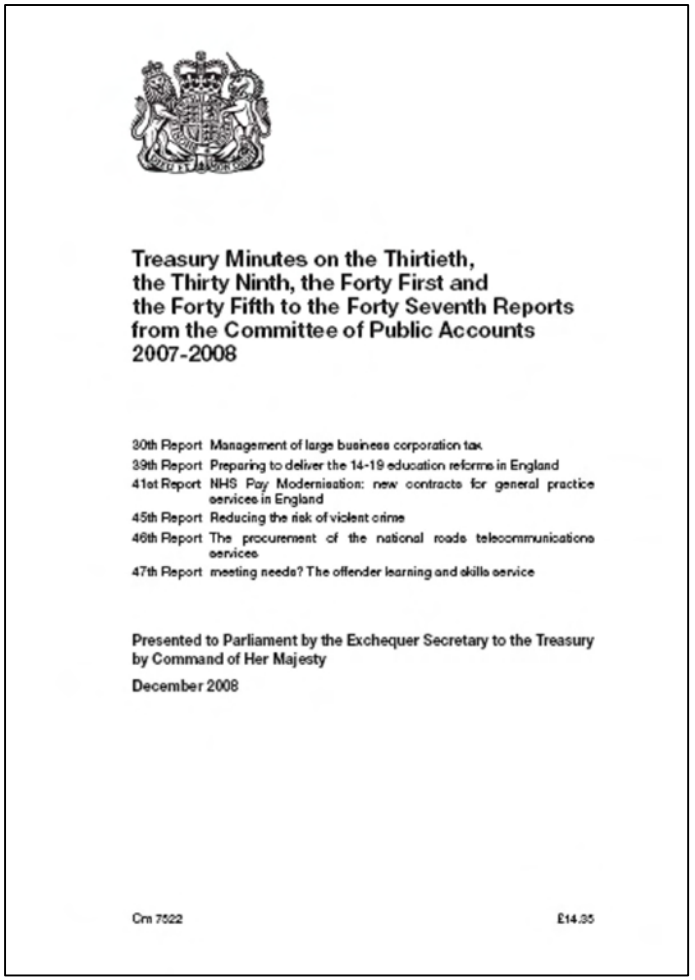
Areas to address



Treasury Minutes on the Thirtieth, the Thirty Ninth, the Forty First and the Forty Fifth to the Forty Seventh Reports from the Committee of Public Accounts 2007-2008

30th Report Management of large business corporation tax
39th Report Preparing to deliver the 14-19 education reforms in England
41st Report NHS Pay Modernisation: new contracts for general practice services in England
45th Report Reducing the risk of violent crime
46th Report The procurement of the national roads telecommunications services
47th Report meeting needs? The offender learning and skills service

Presented to Parliament by the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury by Command of Her Majesty

December 2008

Cm 7522 £14.35

PAC 1: Unresolved tension in meeting two objectives given resource constraints

- Purposeful activity
- Learning and skills to raise employment chances and reduce re-offending

Response (December 2008)

- LSC contracts from Aug 2009 to start a redistribution of learning provision in a controlled way, to avoid destabilisation
- Physical space constraints for new workshops & classrooms. Requires better use of existing resources
- Explore viability of joined up performance targets to reflect both priorities

PAC 2: Develop evidence based programmes for offenders serving sentences under 12 months

- LSC and prison service disagreed over what can be delivered and what priority the <12 months group should be given

Response

- LSC NOMS agreement that flexible modular interventions are appropriate

- OLASS providers ensure that learning offer for those on short sentences is flexible and focused on employment/employability

PAC 3: A quarter of prisoners have no screening or assessment

- Assessment for learning and skills a requirement of OLASS

Response

- Probation service should screen all offenders under supervision for basic learning and skills at the court report stage

- NOMS working towards a risk and needs screening tool for offenders, to be tested and rolled out within resources

PAC 4: Learning Plans are poor quality

- A single consistent record of learning needs required, the learning plan to undertake, and progress made

Response

- Contractual requirements will be enforced

PAC 5/7: Prisoner moves

- Learning unnecessarily disrupted by prisoner moves in the absence of a core curriculum
- Learning records frequently not transferred

Response

- The LSC's current procurement process puts in place a core curriculum to be delivered throughout the prison estate

- Data from the new LSC data system will be available to OLASS partners

PAC 6: Providers are paid regardless of attendance or completion

- Payments need to be partly conditional
- Minimum acceptable standards in contracts for offender engagement and course completion

Response

- The LSC's current procurement process puts in place financial penalties for not achieving LSC contractual performance indicators, and for not devising ILPs or recording progress

- Minimum acceptable standards for retention in learning and progress

PAC 8/9: What works in gaining employment?

- Probation service information should be shared and analysed

- Sample based research should be carried out to measure the effectiveness of different interventions for those not supervised by the probation service

Response

- DIUS and MOJ examining ways to measure the effectiveness of helping offenders gain employment
- Past research on what works to underpin final contract negotiations with successor OLASS contractors
- Further research
- NOMS/LSC/JCPlus to offer training to offenders that meets local employer needs
- Links between partners to ensure Provider offer consistent with skills most in demand

Conclusions

- The partners have plans to address the concerns
- The timing is right
- The challenge is to deliver on the promises, given that public finances are under pressure

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