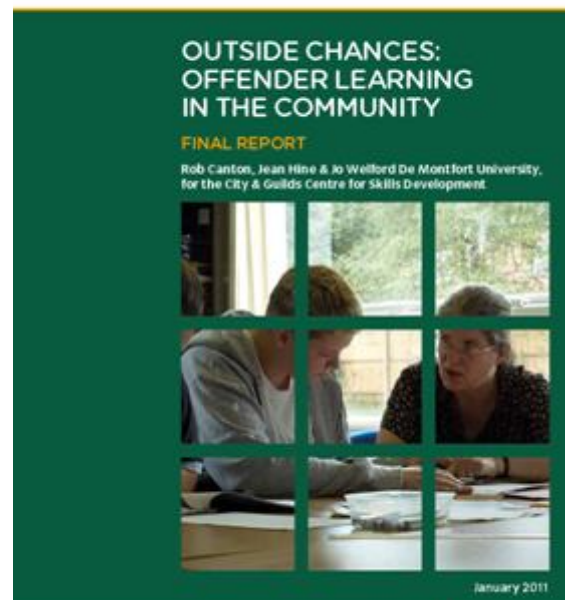




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Outside Chances

Research on Offender
Learning in the Community

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De Montfort University and the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development



- CSD's vision – a world in which everyone has access to the skills they need for social and economic prosperity
- Promoting an evidence-based approach to policy and practice
- De Montfort - leading research and training body in criminal and community justice
- City & Guilds - the main vocational awarding body in the criminal justice sector



Outside Chances

- Listening to offender learners in the community
- Research into the experiences of offenders on probation, and of probation staff and training providers
- To highlight the learning and skills support needed for effective probation and community sentences
- To help engage learners



Key findings

- Diverse motives for learning and diverse benefits
- Complex learner needs
- Giving offender learners an active, aspirational role
- Good provision held back by economic uncertainty
- Opportunities to make greater use of peer mentors, volunteers and smaller charities
- Support needed for greater cooperation between probation staff and training providers



What did we hear? The offender learner voice

“All I want to do is read my daughter a book. I would like qualifications, but I’d love to be able to pick up a book and read it.”

“I was scared in case I did things wrong, and then half the time because of that fear I would refuse to do things.”

“I would do anything [job-wise], anything, again it comes down to that certificate at the end of the day, that’s the big thing, that bit of paper.”

“ At the end of the day it’s about, improving yourself, improving your abilities... growing as a person. ”

“At school I didn’t see the point, here I can see where it is leading me.”

“I think it’s a load of shit to tell you the truth, the skills for life. I don’t feel like I am learning anything from it.”



What did we hear? The practitioners' voice

“I would like to see more peer teaching... ‘you’re an expert in this, forget your folder today, can you sit down and teach him about...’”

“Offender managers could be more aware of how well matched the key skills course is to unpaid work, so it is often not given enough priority ... they don’t know enough about it.”

“I think, to be honest, things could perhaps be promoted better... [but] it comes down to caseloads for Offender Managers.”

“The biggest gain is self-esteem and confidence in gaining awards, the ‘yes I can do this – I can achieve’, they see themselves as people who aren’t achievers”

“We would like to offer more but it is difficult to find the right things to deliver on work sites”



What works best

- No one size fits all
- Most valued and successful programmes featured:
 - A range of choices
 - An emphasis on aspirations and learner strengths
 - Active and continuing interest of offender managers
 - Individualised learning programmes balanced with group activity
 - Opportunities for peer support
 - Connections between learning and broader rehabilitation concerns
 - Referral decisions supported, not determined by First Move and earlier assessments
 - Practitioners helping learners *use* their newly gained qualifications



What next?

- Sharing this research with policymakers, researchers, the probation service and learning and skills providers.
- Developing an offender learning toolkit for training providers





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Any questions?



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