

# *Learning Skills Council*

## *From Possibility...*

### BACKGROUND

The Learning and Skills Councils exist to make England better skilled and more competitive. They have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to make sure we have a workforce that is of world-class standards. Yorkshire and the Humber Learning Skills Council (LSC) is one of nine LSC regions. The organisation is in a co-commissioning relationship with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) for Offender Learning and Skills. Significant funding is provided to commission provision from a number of partner organisations in delivering key skills to offenders.

The LSC chairs the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) Partnership Board. At the beginning of 2007, the Partnership Board agreed that it would be important to map the processes around Offender Learning and Skills to highlight areas where suitable provision is in place and areas where there may be gaps in provision. Ad Esse Consulting were invited to carry out this work.

The key partners for the LSC are Prisons, Probation, Job Centre Plus and the Voluntary and Community Sector. Much good work was already in place, notably that often difficult area, the commitment of partners and their ability to work in partnership. However, a number of issues needed to be resolved, among them being: offenders not completing courses provided, the transfer of information about offenders' skill level and the need for greater clarity around shared outcomes and targets.

### OUR APPROACH

After our initial diagnostic work, we agreed that mapping key processes within and across agencies would give the Partnership Board a sound foundation for policy and implementation in the coming year. Individual organisations had a good grasp of the work they were doing with offender learning and skills but no-one had previously mapped the offender journey from end-to-end i.e. as offenders transferred into and out of the community and prisons.

We believed that mapping the end-to-end journey would allow not only the Partnership Board but also the commissioners and providers of services to see take an overview of processes and provision across the Region. They would then be able to use this model to challenge how delivery could be improved and to set clear and shared performance measures across the system which would drive joined-up activity. The mapping work would also be used to drive the specification of future work/ contracts as a result of looking at the 'whole system'. At a time of potential change for offender learning, it would also i) provide the Board with a baseline from which they could assess how future changes within the Criminal Justice system or in approaches to learning might impact on provision in Yorkshire and the Humber ii) inform future specification and commissioning of provision.

## To Actuality

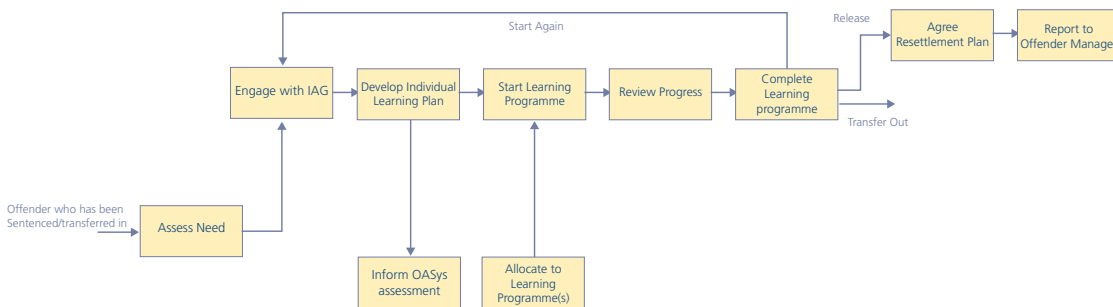
Yorkshire and the Humber is a large region and the LSC funds over £20 million of offender Learning and Skills activity. To make the task manageable we agreed to focus on adult male and female offenders and not look at the slightly different processes for Youth Justice. We agreed to map a high level model initially and then drill down into the greater levels of detail required to fully understand the process. Within these limits, we would look at the pathway from the offender manager being notified of a case to the resettlement of that individual.

### HOW WE APPROACHED THE MAPPING

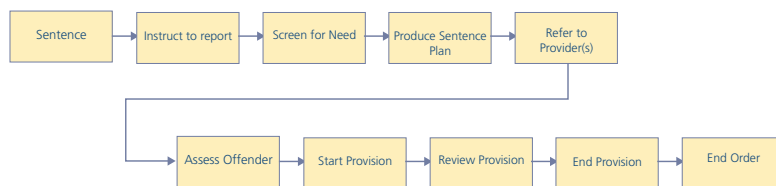
Yorkshire and the Humber covers a large geographical region of around five million people. Although the LSC is responsible for Offender Learning and Skills across the whole region, adult offenders are supervised in 4 Probation Areas and 12 Prisons. Additionally, a number of Colleges and Voluntary & Community Sector Agencies contribute directly to provision of skills, the exact make-up varying according to locality.

We ran an initial workshop to develop a high level map giving us an overview of the offender's journey and a clear understanding of the number of interfaces where information needed to be passed within and across organisations. For ease of use, we split this into two:

The offender pathway in prisons:



And the offender pathway in the community:



## DETAILED INVESTIGATION

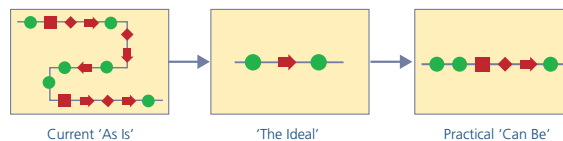
Once we had in place a high level overview, we agreed to map in detail the offender pathway in all four Probations Areas and in three of the Prisons. We used a range of methodologies to analyse the pathway and thereby to draw up a clear map of existing provision for the Board and its constituent members. In general, we used a workshop approach, supplemented by individual interviews, performance information, a review of source documents which recorded offender assessments and their learning and skills achievements, and a literature study of policy and consultation documents etc.

By the time we had completed our work, we had engaged with over 50 people from prisons, probation, colleges, Jobcentre Plus and the Voluntary and Community sector. There was also an additional benefit in the approach we took. Because we were mapping the end-to-end journey for offenders, the workshops were invaluable in allowing participants from the various organisations to consider the whole offender pathway and thereby to put into context their own specific area of provision. Previously, and particularly for provision in the community, although some individuals knew each other and worked together, the whole group had rarely, if ever, been in the same room at the same time to discuss offender learning and skills. This allowed them not only to map the process but also to consider problems and good practice.

## MAKING IT REAL

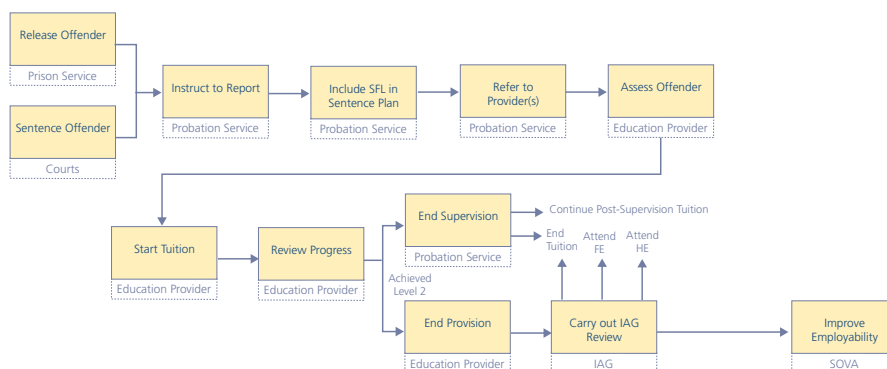
Process mapping as a technique can be used in a number of ways. At this stage, Yorkshire and the Humber LSC have chosen to utilise the following:

- As a technique for gathering information (our workshops, interviews etc)
- As a technique for process improvement (by comparing what exists with what might be developed).



One of our key recommendations was for the mapping of the best possible offender journey based on best practice identified in both prisons and the community. This would provide a shared road map of the whole learning process and define the relationships between different interventions. The roles and responsibilities of all those involved would need to be communicated effectively to all involved.

Ad Esse consultants analysed the outputs of the workshops and interviews and provided the LSC with detailed analysis of each stage of the offender pathway. The following is an example of one area of community provision.



\*NB Each down arrow in a process box indicates there is at least one further level of detail to drill down to.

The maps have been linked together in a process mapping software package so that a user can drill down from an initial gateway page to specific areas of detail indicated above.

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## IMPROVEMENTS IDENTIFIED.

On completion of the mapping work, Ad Esse Consulting presented the Offender Learning and Skills Partnership Board with both the outputs of the mapping and a report based on our analysis which made a number of recommendations for improvement. At the time of writing, the Partnership Board has set up Task and Finish Groups to implement the recommendations.

## BENEFITS

The work carried out by Ad Esse Consulting has provided the Partnership Board and the LSC with:

- An understanding of the end-to-end learning pathways for offenders
- A view of where there are gaps and overlaps in processes and provision across the Region
- An understanding of where individual agency performance targets and measures may conflict with the aims of the overall system
- An overview of how often offenders are assessed by different Learning and Skills professionals across the whole pathway.
- An ability to look at the way in which professionals from different disciplines and organisations inter-relate to provide learning and skills as part of the offender management.

This work and the outcomes of the consequent Task and Finish Groups will inform the future specification and commissioning of provision

*The work of Ad Esse Consulting for the OLASS Partnership Board has proved invaluable and it has helped us to focus on processes to make effective referrals and improve our interventions.*

### Philippa Lester

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