

European Commission
Transnational Exchange Programme

MAKING IT WORK FOR OFFENDERS:

A toolkit for developing employment projects for offenders



E·O·E·F
European Offender
Employment Forum
website: www.eoef.org

centre for economic & social
Inclusion

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It has been a privilege to work with real experts in the offender employment field from across Europe for many years now. I have learnt a lot from them. I hope I have done justice to their skills and experience by producing something that will last long into the future by offering practical help to people throughout Europe who want to develop and run employment projects for offenders.

Mike Stewart | *Inclusion*

1. INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is one of the products resulting from a project called 'Making it work for offenders' which ran between 2005 and 2007. The project was one of a number funded by the European Commission under the Transitional Exchange Programme. The programme was designed to promote transnational co-operation and exchange and to encourage mutual learning between member states.

The 'Making it work for offenders' project had three specific objectives:

- **An offender employment toolkit**

To develop a toolkit in a form that would be of use to all organisations in any member state wishing to develop employment projects for offenders

- **A study into the feasibility and costs of establishing an on-line offender employment observatory**

To consider the options for providing a single source of authoritative information on any aspect of work in the offender employment field (eg statistics, research, good practice examples)

- **A strategy for engagement with the key actors in this field**

To help develop a mechanism for mainstreaming good practice through engagement with all the key partners.

A full report outlining the work of the project can be found at www.eoef.org

1.1 HOW THIS TOOLKIT WAS DEVELOPED

The partners in the 'Making it work for offenders' project have worked with each other for many years and most are key members of the European Offender Employment Forum (EOEF).

An earlier research project undertaken by the EOEF:

- considered information provided by over 100 offender employment programmes with representation from each member state
- heard detailed representations from over 40 organisations delivering offender employment programmes
- shared information and experiences with over 200 experts in this field who attended three good practice seminars during the lifetime of the project¹.

¹ www.eoef.org

The final report noted among its conclusions that:

'It is of primary importance for agencies, funders and project providers across the European Union to build on the good practice that has been established and jointly focus on the development of an appropriate, robust infrastructure to enable programmes to be delivered effectively'.

It was a feature of many of the offender employment programmes studied that:

- the ability to develop and sustain projects is very sensitive to fluctuations in social policy priorities funding is often short-term
- the context in which employment programmes are developed varies enormously across the European Union
- there is very little evaluated evidence of good practice to draw on
- there is still no systemic mechanism for sharing good practice within or between member states.

Nevertheless, the report did highlight a range of features which were considered to be critical to success:

- adequate funding
- effective management
- qualified staff
- effective partnerships
- an individualised approach.

From these generalised conclusions, the partners decided to develop a resource in the form of a toolkit that would assist the development of effective offender employment projects. The aim was to create a form of road map that experience suggests will:

- enable realistic budgets to be prepared
- help identify key management and staff structures
- create the conditions that will encourage the support of key partners
- increase the likelihood of projects working effectively overall but which can specifically address individual needs.

1.2 THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE OFFENDER EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS

There are clear indicators of links between unemployment and crime. A UK government report² summarised research evidence to show that:

- two-thirds of prisoners arrive in prison from unemployment
- three-quarters leave prison with no job to go to
- employment reduces the risk of re-offending by between a third and a half.

There is no single source of information for the numbers of unemployed offenders across the European Union. However latest prison figures³ suggest that there may well be upward of 600,000 prisoners across the EU at any one time. There are in addition many offenders supervised by the probation services, over 200,000 every year in the UK alone. There are many ex-offenders in the community not subject to any statutory supervision who are also unemployed. Whichever way the figures are counted, an estimate of over 1 million unemployed offenders at any one time across the EU is likely to be conservative. The evidence suggests that effective employment programmes for offenders are likely to reduce crime and increase community safety.

There are many competing priorities for resources and offenders as a group may not be considered among the more deserving. In this context, it is obviously very important to ensure that, as far as possible, the resources that are obtained to develop offender employment programmes are used as effectively as possible.

We hope that this toolkit may evolve into an ever more comprehensive guide. It was conceived as one element of a wider European network to which all the key partners working in this field would contribute, including academics, policy makers and practitioners. The hope is that the toolkit will sit alongside the offender employment observatory now being developed.

1.3 THE SCOPE OF THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit provides a basic framework for developing offender employment projects that should be relevant and applicable in any member state, in any setting, with any particular target group. It cannot and is not intended to be a fully comprehensive guide providing answers to all possible questions.

The development of every project is different and a wide range of variable factors needs to be taken into account. What the toolkit aims to do is identify those factors specific to unemployed offenders that experience suggests will need to be taken account of during the project development and management processes. It proposes a framework within which these issues can be considered. Where appropriate, reference is made to sources of information or evidence and examples of projects.

² Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners. Social Exclusion Unit, UK 2002 http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/publications/reports/html/Reducing_Re-offending/contents.htm

³ <http://www.prisonstudies.org/>

The toolkit offers guidance not instruction. There are no right or wrong answers to the issues highlighted. It is for individual projects to decide what is best for them.

It also seeks to avoid using fixed or predetermined systems of identifying 'good' or 'best' practices. This is because:

- the context in which projects are developed differs from country to country and from place to place within countries
- everyday experience in working with offenders may not fit easily into a pre-determined, rigid system.

The structure of the toolkit reflects the different stages of project development:

- project planning
- project design
- project development.

Specific attention has been paid to factors that make a big difference to the effectiveness of projects:

- partnerships
- marketing and promotion
- evaluation.

The toolkit is based on the experiences of experts who have worked for many years in this field. It is hoped that project developers will be able to draw on this experience and help create projects that stand a better chance of:

- helping offenders into employment
- reducing crime
- becoming financially sustainable.

1.4 LINKS TO EVIDENCE

Each section of the toolkit contains links to documents, websites or presentations. These are intended to enhance the usefulness of the toolkit by providing information, examples of good practice or evaluated evidence from throughout Europe.

The links are by no means comprehensive and there is considerable scope for increasing the information available. Readers can add links to presentations, documents or websites by e-mailing details to mike.stewart@cesi.org.uk .

2. PROJECT PLANNING

Planning is essential to the successful development of offender employment projects, given the wide range of variable factors that need to be taken into account:

- there is no single blueprint for the development of offender employment projects
- no single offender employment project, however large, will meet the needs of all offenders in an area.

This section considers the key issues that need to be considered in planning any project for unemployed offenders.

2.1 GETTING THE MOST OUT OF MAINSTREAM PROVISION

After compulsory schooling, most of us get jobs and develop our careers by obtaining the necessary skills through mainstream academic or vocational training routes or by finding work which offers on the job training such as apprenticeships.

All of these routes are in theory available to offenders – or at least they are not specifically closed to offenders.

In practice, offenders can often find that mainstream routes to education and training are barred. This may be as a result of their offending behaviour. It is often the case that a record of disruption and a sense of failure at school make them reluctant to return to a school-like learning environment.

In these circumstances, a strong case can be made that something additional to or different from mainstream provision is needed to meet the specific needs of offenders.

However it should not be automatically assumed that this is the case. For example:

- there are adult learning providers, including colleges and universities, which offer or may be prepared to offer outreach or specialist services to cater for the types of problems that some offenders present
- there are many examples of projects where offenders are placed directly with employers to undertake training.

Rather than setting up a separate resource, therefore, it may be possible to secure access for offenders to mainstream provision by setting up local protocols and provider support mechanisms.

At the very least, all the options for improving access to mainstream provision should be fully explored.

2.2 EXISTING PROJECTS AND PROVIDERS

It is not known precisely how many offender employment projects there are or who runs them. There is a wide spectrum both of project types and of providers. This is entirely appropriate given the broad range of needs that projects aim to address.

However for a variety of historical, national policy reasons and the variable availability of resources, projects for offenders have tended to be developed in a piecemeal fashion rather than being part of any co-ordinated strategy. They are often small scale and subject to short-term funding.

Some projects work only with offenders. Other projects may have significant numbers of offenders as service users, even if that is not their primary purpose (eg projects working primarily with homeless people or drug misusers).

Some projects are mainstreamed, run by state agencies, and operate country-wide. Others may be very small-scale, run on the margins by local NGOs or faith-based organisations.

The following table summarises the main types of employment projects currently operating.

PROJECT PLANNING: RANGE OF PROVISION

Organisation	Type of project
State agencies: eg prison service, probation service, employment services, colleges	Using mainstream or specifically allocated funding designed to help offenders into work
Mainstream vocational training providers	Delivering vocational training for all who need it but offering access to offenders
Specialist training providers	Offering vocational training for specific groups, some specialising in working with offenders
Issue-based, specialist organisations	Agencies offering employment-related services to specified groups (eg drug misusers, homeless people)
Locally-based NGOs, charitable groups, faith-based organisations	Local groups with a tradition of working with offenders which may offer employment-related services

Scarce resources should not be expended in replicating provision offenders could access through other routes.

Before setting up a new project, it needs to be tested out whether the same or similar outcomes could be delivered for the same people as effectively and efficiently in other ways.

Key questions at the initial stages should include:

- are there any mainstream resources that offenders may be eligible for?
- who else targets people with similar needs in the area?
- can any barriers to access be negotiated with relevant key agencies?

Project planners should consider other current provision in their area before starting on a new development.

New projects should represent a strategic intervention, designed to complement rather than duplicate existing provision.

2.3 WHO IS YOUR PROJECT FOR?

It is important to be clear from the outset who the project is for and what it is trying to achieve. This is not always as simple as it sounds.

Offenders are not a homogenous group. People who share apparently similar characteristics in terms of their pattern of offending or who may be identified by other labels, such as homeless or drug misuser, may have different needs in terms of their employability. Offending or other problematic behaviour may not be a good indicator as to what type of intervention is required to make them more employable.

For example, to describe someone as an offender or a drug user does not indicate a great deal about their employability and in particular:

- what specific barriers to employment they face
- what their work aspirations might be.

Projects should be addressing barriers to employability based as far as possible on an assessment of individual need.

It should not be assumed that all offenders, whatever their criminal or personal backgrounds, will need additional support to find employment. Many people of working age with a criminal record are likely to be in work or be able to find work without a great deal of extra help.

On the other hand, offenders in prison or subject to statutory supervision by the probation services generally are more likely to have, among other characteristics:

- a poor school record
- a low level of accredited work skills
- an intermittent work record

- low self esteem
- a poverty of aspiration.

As well as unemployment, it is also known that offenders are also more likely to have a range of other barriers to employment, including:

- homelessness
- drug issues
- mental health issues
- financial problems
- unstable relationships.

Some offenders will also face additional problems. Some groups are more likely to face discrimination in the labour market as a result of:

- ethnic background
- gender
- age – older and younger offenders.

Specific offending backgrounds may pose significant risks for employers and can have a major impact on the suitability for some occupations. For example:

- sex offenders should not be placed in an environment that may bring them into contact with vulnerable people
- offenders with a record of offences involving a breach of trust in the workplace will find it difficult to obtain similar jobs
- violent offenders should not be encouraged to work in potentially confrontational work environments that may trigger re-offending.

Some projects specialise in working with particular groups of offenders, eg homeless people, drug users, people from ethnic minority groups. Many other projects have an open door policy, taking referrals from anyone. Either model can be effective if managed properly.

It is unlikely that offenders needing additional support to find work will face a single barrier to employment. In practice, many offenders have multiple barriers. It is often very difficult to separate out issues that are causing the most difficulty - what is a problem for one person may not be for another. Projects, irrespective of the basis on which they are established, will need to consider how a broad range of issues will be addressed. However, some barriers do require specialist professional interventions, and care is needed to avoid project staff intervening inappropriately and taking on too much.

A project is far more likely to succeed if there is a clear sense of who it is aimed at. It allows a much more accurate assessment of the risks and management challenges that may arise, given the nature of the target group. It also enables projects to identify and secure the resources to obtain staff with the right blend of skills and experience.

PROJECT PLANNING: SERVICE USER CRITERIA

Personal characteristics
Age
Gender
Ethnic background
Common employability barriers
Offending behaviour
Homelessness
Debt
Drug misuse
Alcohol misuse
Mental health
Physical health
Learning difficulties
Other

2.4 WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

This often is not as easy a question to answer as it sounds. However it is one which requires clarity from the point of view of both funders and potential service users.

Offender employment projects cover a broad spectrum of interventions. However their key objectives can be summarised in terms of:

- **education and training** - increasing skills and thus employability
- **employment** - finding and keeping a job and progressing in work
- **criminal justice** - reducing re-offending.

Projects may have one, some or all of these objectives.

It needs to be clear to all partners, especially those who are funding the project, what the project’s primary objectives are and how success will be measured.

It is rare for offender employment projects to be funded from a single source. Even quite small projects may require quite complex packages of funding.

All funding comes with conditions attached. Specific funders will require projects to account for the work that they do in terms of their own agency priorities:

- funders primarily from an education background are likely to be more interested in accredited skills and qualifications
- employment agencies are most likely to be interested in how many project participants get jobs
- criminal justice agencies will want to judge success in terms of reduced re-offending
- outcome requirements for European funding are often described in terms of tackling discrimination in the labour market and combating social exclusion
- other funders such as charitable trusts may be interested in working with specific groups, such as people from particular areas or with specific problems
- project staff may consider that service users who show signs of greater motivation or have significantly improved their attendance attitude and behaviour have been successful in terms of 'distance travelled'.

Projects in these circumstances can become driven by the funding rather than by their original purpose and can end up satisfying no-one. Without clarity of purpose, perceptions can become distorted and projects can lose the confidence of their key partners.

Most importantly, service users need to know what they could achieve from their participation, what is expected from them in order to achieve it and what they can expect from the project. If clarity of purpose is distorted, it will become much harder to engage the service users and results will inevitably suffer.

2.5 MEETING CUSTOMER NEEDS

Offender employment projects are often working with limited resources and are of short duration. They tend to be operationally demanding, and setting one up and getting it going is often a major achievement in itself. It is in these circumstances that a loss of focus on outcomes can occur.

There are numerous examples of offender employment projects which worked well in terms of the parameters they set themselves, but ultimately did not survive. This is often because they tended to work on the basis that any intervention was better than no intervention at all, or they did not shape their services:

- to respond to local labour market needs

- to meet the needs of employers
- to provide service users with the specific skills they need to get the jobs in the labour market they are aiming for, taking account of their existing skills and their aspirations.

Projects are more likely to achieve their stated objectives if initial planning includes market research to help ensure they are effectively addressing each of these three areas. Market research is an important tool in this initial planning process, to better inform decisions about the development of new products and services.

LOCAL LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

- what are the trends in the local labour market?
- what are the job growth areas?

This information is often readily available at local, regional and national government level.

EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS

- how do they recruit?
- what specific skills and qualifications do they require for their jobs?
- what is their attitude to employing offenders?

Local employer organisations will be able to provide an overview, but most practical information will come from individual employers.

SKILLS

- what are the current skills levels of the project target group?
- what is their employment record?
- what are their employment aspirations?

This type of information is often not readily available. However prison and probation sources may be helpful, along with employment services and other local providers working with offenders. Sample interviews with local unemployed offenders will provide a useful benchmark which can be built on over time.

2.6 MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

What project developers think is best for their service users may not necessarily be what the service users themselves want. Similarly, what service users say they want to do may

not be in their best interests if in the end the intervention does not make them more employable or get them a job.

The more attractive and interesting an intervention is, the more likely offenders are to respond. On the other hand, designing 'supply' side projects to appeal to the service users without taking the job market fully into account will not provide the desired result either, for either the provider or the service user. Getting the balance right is important.

A variety of marketing and promotional techniques can be used to sell projects to service users and employers. These are important, especially in the early stages.

Ultimately the most effective selling point for projects is a good quality service that delivers a high rate of desired outcomes.

2.7 TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE BIGGER PICTURE

Any project, however small, will be operating in the context of overarching policy and strategic approaches to education, employment and criminal justice.

Project developers need to be aware of developments in these three fields and to be able to demonstrate how their project complements and adds value to the overall strategic picture.

3. PROJECT DESIGN

The choice of methodology to deliver the desired outcomes is of crucial importance in developing a project.

Methods can range in complexity from more straightforward processes such as CV preparation through to complex programmes applying theories of learning behaviour.

The type of methodology used has significant resource implications in terms of staff competences required, time needed to complete programmes and funding requirements.

The method of intervention chosen will be subject to a range of factors. This section assumes that all partners have:

- worked through the planning process
- are in agreement about the purpose of the project
- have an idea of the methodology they wish to use.

3.1 NATIONAL POLICY

National policies in relation to crime, education and employment all have an impact on the range, scale and scope of new projects.

In some member states, the resettlement of offenders has a relatively high priority with policies across the main state departments being aligned. Projects in these conditions can be planned and developed with the reasonable confidence that, if successful, they will be supported over the longer term.

At the other end of the scale, resettlement has a lower priority and the key government departments may have only a marginal interest in the issues.

For example, governments take different views and adopt different policies over time in relation to:

- whether it is possible to set up projects in a prison setting
- whether education and training is favoured over a work first approach
- whether specific groups are considered to be a priority
- whether the state or NGO sector should run projects.

Policies also change over time. For example, what may be very difficult to do at one stage can become easier as a result of changes in policy at a later date.

At best, individual offender employment projects should be aligned as far as possible with the overall aims of national policy. Where this is not possible or practical, those developing projects need to be fully aware of the opportunities and limitations that national policies are likely to offer or impose.

* USEFUL LINKS

European governments on line sites

<http://www.gksoft.com/govt/en/europa.html>

European Commission: DG V Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

http://europa.eu/pol/socio/index_en.htm

National Offender Management Service

<http://noms.homeoffice.gov.uk/managing-offenders/reducing-re-offending/education/?version=2>

Wales probation working group, UK

<http://noms.homeoffice.gov.uk/noms-regions/wales/wales-rr-strategy/wales-strategy-working-grps/Wales-ETE/>

Avon and Somerset probation strategy, UK

<http://www.aspa-online.org.uk/Main/default.asp?t=eteteam&a=view>

Dyfyd Powys probation strategy, Wales, UK

www.dyfedpowysprobation.org/pages_eng/Employment%20Training.htm

Nothumbria probation strategy, UK

<http://www.northumbria-probation.co.uk/ete/emp.htm>

Staffordshire probation strategy, UK

<http://www.staffordshireprobation.org.uk/probation/ete.html>

Warwickshire probation strategy, UK

<http://www.warwickshireprobation.org.uk/probation/other.html>

3.2 FUNDING

No member state has a single source of state funding specifically geared to the set-up and running costs of offender employment projects.

Other potential sources of funding tend to be very specific in scope and short-term.

It is therefore rare for offender employment projects to have a single source of funding and project budgets can often resemble a complex funding cocktail.

There are disadvantages but also some advantages to this.

The more complex the budget, the more time consuming and costly it is to assemble the package and administer it:

- different funders have different requirements, may well be looking for different outcomes and ask for different ways of reporting on how the money has been used
- project time and energy is expended on securing funding
- the project infrastructure needs to include accounting resources to manage this.

On the other hand, a balanced package of funding can:

- reduce dependency on any one source and spread the financial risk
- enable projects to do a wider range of work
- enhance the quality and effectiveness of the offer they are making to offenders.

There is a wide range of potential sources of funding. Broad categories are outlined in the table below:

PROJECT DESIGN: POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING

Type	Description
Mainstream state funding	From criminal justice, training and education ministries with specific outcome requirements
Area-based funding	Regeneration or economic development funds targeted at regional, sub-regional or area level
Beneficiary funding	Linked to disadvantaged groups (eg long-term, unemployed, socially excluded)
Charitable trusts	Prioritise grants around specified priorities which may include offenders or related themes such as education, training, work, social exclusion
Employer contributions	Brokerage agencies and projects offering other services to employers may secure contributions
European funding	The European Commission has supported many offender employment projects on a competitive tendering basis over many years: availability, eligibility and application processes change regularly

Every member state will have funding potentially available for offender employment programmes from these sources. However, each state is different in terms of what is available under each category and how it can be applied for. Funding opportunities vary in scope, scale, timescale, ease of access and the amount available from place to place and over time.

Funders prepared to support a project will specify the outcomes they expect. These are usually described in terms of:

- **volume** – the numbers using the project
- **category of service user** – who they are and where they are referred from
- **specified outcomes** – entry to training, qualifications, jobs.

Project design will always be influenced to some extent by what funding is available. Compromises often have to be made to programmes in order to fit funding criteria and often these can be accommodated into the design without too much difficulty.

It can be very tempting, especially under financial pressure, to follow the money at the expense of the integrity of the project. It is essential that projects do not reach the stage where the design of the programme has to be so compromised that the original purpose is either lost or outcomes become so difficult to deliver that performance suffers.

It is important that project developers do the research and make themselves fully aware of what funding opportunities there are and how to go about securing them.

A realistic timescale for securing resources needs to be built into the development timetable.

* **USEFUL LINKS**

European Commission, Employment and Social Affairs, Calls for funding proposals
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/tenders/index_en.cfm

3.3 PARTNERSHIPS

Project partners will have a major input into all aspects of how projects are developed and operate.

Each has its own priorities and exerts influence accordingly.

Partners should be consulted and closely involved in all aspects of project design and ongoing operations.

If partnership arrangements are managed effectively, partner contributions are more likely to be constructive.

The reverse is also true. Inadequate or ineffective engagement with project partners can create distance and misunderstandings which will ultimately harm the performance of the project.

3.4 LOCATION

Where projects are located will have a major influence on project design.

WORKING IN PRISONS

Project design in a prison environment will need to be shaped around the specific demands of the institution.

Although there are common features in any closed institution, all prisons are different. No assumptions should be made about what is or is not possible. Detailed discussions and negotiated agreements of how projects will operate will be necessary for each institution.

Key factors that need to be taken into account include:

- **security and safety considerations**
 - where the project is located within the prison
 - how prisoners and staff access the project
 - what kind of supervision is required
- **the specific institutional regime**
 - the type of prison
 - movement throughout the prison
 - prison design
- **length of sentence**
 - projects will need to take into account the stage prisoners have reached in their sentence: programmes for prisoners due for release in a few weeks will be very different from those where they have years left to serve
- **project staff access**
 - staff will need security clearance to gain entry and agreed protocols for movement within the prison environment
- **prisoner availability**
 - projects need to plan programme delivery around when prisoners can actually be made available, not set up a programme and hope that prisoners will be able to attend

- **other operational pressures**

flexibility will be needed to cope with short notice changes brought about by operational issues (eg prisoners are often moved between institutions at short notice, crises can cause a shut down).

These issues will have a major influence on what can be done and when and on how many could benefit from it.

WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY

Projects located in communities should be designed around the requirements of the service users and not shaped by the physical facilities. Factors that need to be taken into account include:

- **environment**

buildings used for the delivery of projects set the tone for how they are perceived by users, funders and the general public. However, they do need to be in good decorative order, equipped in a way that encourages learning and set an appropriate tone.

- **cost**

the amount available to pay for the infrastructure will obviously strongly influence what can be done and where projects can be located.

- **capacity**

the facility needs to be of sufficient size to cater for the anticipated volume of usage: being either too big or too small can create problems.

- **service user access**

location will have a bearing on how service users perceive projects. Projects that can be accessed easily by potential users are more likely to achieve attendance targets.

- **visibility**

decisions will need to be taken about how visible a project should be to the wider community. Depending on the type of project, a case can be made for either high or low profile operations. Decisions made about this will influence the project's design.

3.5 TYPES OF INTERVENTION

Offender employment programmes can vary in intensity - from 'light touch' interventions offering one or two sessions of advice and guidance, through to a full programme providing basic skills, vocational training, help into work and support after entry into jobs.

The table below lists the range of interventions projects could offer:

PROJECT DESIGN: TYPES OF INTERVENTION

Needs assessment
Motivational techniques
Information advice and guidance
Interpersonal skills
Language skills for non-native language speakers
Basic skills
Academic training
Vocational training
Customised training
Work trials
Temporary paid work
Apprenticeships
On the job training
CV preparation
Interview technique
Job search
Job brokerage, labour market intermediaries
Permanent job
Job retention: in-work support
Employer troubleshooting service
Job progression: career development

Some projects do all of these.

Some interventions are short-term, relatively light touch and low cost, such as the provision of advice and guidance. Others are longer term, resource intensive and

relatively high cost. Delivering a course of vocational training to job entry standard, for example, could take many months.

The type of intervention needed becomes more apparent, from a project development perspective, once it is clear who the project is aimed at and what outcomes are expected.

Priorities need to be balanced between:

- the level of intensity required
- the time it takes to deliver the required outcome
- cost.

3.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

In most member states, the curriculum of more mainstream academic and vocational training is prescribed by those funding it. In most cases there are tried and tested methods of delivery, subject to a regulatory framework. Where such regulation does not exist, it should be possible to identify best practice examples from other member states.

Good practice examples of different methods of delivering assessments, motivational techniques and interview techniques appropriate for this client group are increasingly available.

The more employment-orientated interventions tend to draw on the experiences and techniques used by commercial recruitment agencies, shaped to the particular needs of the service users. Training in interview techniques, CV preparation and job search activities are all core components of commercial recruitment agency practice.

Such interventions are primarily supply-side measures, designed to make service users more job ready. There will always be a need for this, but increasingly more demand-side measures are being used in offender employment projects.

Direct employer engagement and the provision of services to employers, including job brokerage and troubleshooting functions, are examples of this. These methods too draw on the best of recruitment agency practice and emerging labour market intermediaries, including on-line services.

4. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Projects stand a much better chance of succeeding if a clear and thought-through infrastructure is part of the plan and in place from the outset. As a minimum, projects need to:

- create the right physical working environment
- employ the right number of staff with the right level of skills and experience
- structure a programme around the needs of the service users
- create and maintain strong management and administrative systems.

Offender employment projects have historically tended to be established as self-contained entities, with projects likely to have their own learning or workshop facilities.

A combination of new technology, fresh thinking and a need to consider costs has opened up possibilities. There is increasing recognition that, if possible, creating a 'real world' working or learning environment is preferable to one that is simulated, however good that simulation is.

4.1 THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

IN-HOUSE PROJECT DELIVERY

Typically, in-house projects are delivered in rented premises configured to create an appropriate environment:

- workshop/factory
- classroom
- shop front – eg job brokerage, job search facilities.

For obvious reasons, prison service project delivery is largely undertaken within the institutions. However, depending on the type of prison and the security category, there are now many examples of prisons having developed links with employers and learning institutions, such that prisoners can attend facilities outside the prison on day release or temporary parole.

Other statutory bodies, such as probation services, tend also to use their own facilities for the delivery of training and employment services for people under their own supervision. In this case too, provision is increasingly being sub-contracted to NGOs or commercial agencies.

The main advantage of in-house provision is that the provider has total control over the environment and can adapt and change it as required.

Depending on what service is being provided, the in-house option may well be the most appropriate one, but other ways of delivering services may be as or more effective.

For non statutory bodies, the big disadvantage is cost. As well as initial set-up costs, an ongoing commitment to rented premises involves, as a minimum, payments for rent, fuel, furniture, equipment, maintenance.

OUTSOURCED DELIVERY OPTIONS

Outsourced services are increasingly being provided in the following areas of activity:

- e-learning
- job brokerage
- college enrolment
- employer placement.

Technology is increasingly enabling distance learning on-line from any location. Specialist on-line job brokerage services are also emerging. There are now many examples of projects working directly with employers or mainstream learning providers. In these cases, the role of project staff changes from deliverer to enabler and/or problem solver. The mainstream provider offers the specialist service, while projects offer additional personal support and a troubleshooting function.

The advantage of an outsourced provision is that it does offer a more 'real world' environment, and arrangements are far more flexible without fixed buildings and equipment to be concerned about. It is significantly less expensive. On the other hand, this approach relies on strong partnership arrangements. Even where these are in place, projects can fold if the partner terminates the arrangement.

4.2 STAFFING

Project staff are critical to the success of any project. The capacity of projects to deliver effectively depends on getting the balance right between:

- **the number of staff:**
projects often try to do too much with too few staff
- **skills:**
working with people with multiple barriers is a complex task requiring a wide range of skills

- **experience:**

however well run, offender employment projects are subject to problems arising from time to time due to challenging behaviour: appropriate experience and the confidence and competence that brings is essential.

The following checklist shows the range of tasks necessary in even the smallest project in recruiting and managing staff. It indicates the degree of thought necessary at the recruitment stage to try and ensure the right people are appointed and then retained.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT: STAFFING CHECKLIST

Item	Purpose
Identify competences required	What skills are needed
Job description	Setting down what the job entails
Person specification	The essential requirements of the post
Advertising	High visibility in the right places
Selection process	Criteria and selection procedure including who is involved in decision making
Recruitment	Application form, tests, interview etc
Induction	To ensure smooth arrival and settling in
Supervision	Ongoing assessment and review
Reviews/appraisals	Formal assessments of progress
Training	To address skill shortage or development
Career development	Planning for the future

4.3 PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Anyone entering learning or training wants to know what they are getting into, what is expected of them and what they expect to get out of it. Offenders are no different. For many of them their previous history of learning or training is one of failure.

Projects should clearly set out what their journey through the programme will consist of and have an open and transparent system of assessment, review and ongoing support. This is far more likely to engage and retain service users than less structured projects with unclear and inconsistent practice.

The same principles apply equally well to funders and other key stakeholders. They too respond best when it can be demonstrated clearly to them what is going on, how the project works and with what results.

The following checklist identifies the kind of systems that can be put in place to reinforce the proposed structure for the project:

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT: SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURE

Item	Purpose
Marketing and promotion	Selling to referral agencies and potential service users
Eligibility criteria	Who the project is for
Referral	Sets out the referral process
Selection	Sets out the criteria for selection
Initial assessment	Skills and barriers
Action planning	What the project will offer and when What is required of the service user
Reviews	Progress reports at least monthly
Personal support	Ongoing time to address any personal issues arising
Exit	Managing the departure from the project
Follow up	In work support to aid retention and progression

4.4 MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Another key element of the project infrastructure is the management information system. Most of the information listed in the table below is likely to be required by funders and stakeholders in any event.

This can be perceived as an unnecessary imposition, particularly by project staff, who tend to be more interested in working with their service users than in performing administrative tasks.

On the other hand, if embraced at the project development stage, creating systems of this type can help define and embed the purpose and style of working into the project design from the start.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT: MANAGEMENT INFORMATION CHECKLIST

Item	Review
Business plan	At least annually
Budget	Annually
Project performance information	Monthly
Financial control	Monthly
Formal reporting: all key stakeholders	At least quarterly
Quality control	Ongoing
Monitoring and evaluation	Monthly
Marketing and promotion	Ongoing
Partnership development/maintenance	Ongoing

4.5 PROJECT BUDGETS

Decisions taken at the project planning, design and development stages have a direct impact on the project budget.

Sometimes the amount of funding available for the project is broadly known in advance. There may be a bidding round, for example, or a specific funding package may have been allocated. This clearly helps to shape what is possible in terms of the overall design and infrastructure.

It is often the case that funding applications begin once the project design has been determined. Knowing the volume of anticipated participation and the predicted success rate enables average unit costs per participant and per outcome to be calculated. As decisions are made during the development stage, this will provide a useful guide for assessing whether a budget is likely to represent value for money for a funder.

New projects often struggle to secure the necessary resources. Choices will often need to be made between what is essential, what is desirable and what is possible.

Although it can be quite hard to say no, it is important not to set up projects on resources that are so thinly spread that it almost inevitably means a struggle to survive from the start.

When results suffer, it tends to be the project that is blamed and not the lack of resources in the first place. Projects and their service users can pay a high price for trying to do too much with too little.

4.6 SUMMARY

Once the project has been designed, its infrastructure needs to be configured in such a way as to set the tone for how the project intends to run from the start.

There is no right and wrong way to develop the infrastructure. It will differ from project to project. It is often the case that the choice is not between one particular approach or another, but how to blend the most effective package together from all the options available.

The process of putting together a realistic and robust infrastructure is an essential part of identifying what resources are needed and for what purpose. Such a structure can help demonstrate the benchmark against which funding decisions need to be made.

How these issues are addressed will have a direct impact on performance. If developed and implemented at the start of a project, they will help to anticipate and avoid problems that affect performance and will become useful management tools.

5. PARTNERSHIPS

Even the smallest project needs good working relationships with a range of key stakeholders.

All successful projects have strong and successful partnership arrangements with their main stakeholders.

5.1 FUNDERS

It is rare for there to be a single funding source. Funders are likely to comprise a combination of:

- **Statutory agencies:**
those with a specific interest in criminal justice, employment or education
- **Charitable trusts:**
organisations with a particular interest in a geographical area or in specialist issues such as drugs, mental health or offenders
- **European Commission:**
often a significant funder of offender employment projects
- **Welfare benefits agencies:**
all service users are by definition unemployed and reliant on state benefit to pay rent and subsistence. Arrangements with welfare benefits agencies are therefore crucial to the financial viability of offender employment projects.

5.2 REFERRAL AGENCIES

Even if projects are organised within a statutory agency, such as prison or probation services, projects rely heavily on others to maintain an agreed volume of referrals.

Protocols are needed between colleagues in prisons, for example, to ensure appropriate service users can get to where they need to be at appointed times. Projects need to understand the needs of the institutions. Institutions need to be helped to understand the purpose of projects and set up workable systems.

Referral agencies may well also be funders, such as prison and probation services, state employment services.

* USEFUL LINKS

Prison to community, Access to Industry, Scotland
www.accesstoindustry.co.uk

The Ex-offenders Employment Project (EEP), Leicester City Council, UK
<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council--services/ep/regeneration/employment-advice/ex-offenders>

5.3 EMPLOYERS

Employers are critical to the ultimate success of any offender employment project.

Many employers are sympathetic to the aims of projects but, however supportive in principle, they will not want to employ people who are not capable of holding down a job. Training programmes will not succeed in helping someone to find a job unless they are both of the right quality and directly relevant to what employers want.

All projects working in the training and employment field should have a twin customer focus, where the needs of the employer and the service users are considered to be equally important. Employment projects will not work effectively if job preparation for the service user is not matched by attention to the business and support needs of the employer.

The approach to employers therefore needs to focus on what involvement in a particular project will do for the employer's business, rather than what the business can contribute to the project.

If projects do not have the in-house skills or experience to work directly with employers, links can be made to intermediary agencies that specialise in employer engagement.

Projects can shape what they offer to meet the needs of employers in these key areas:

PARTNERSHIPS: EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Programme content	Focus training on growth sectors in the local labour market
	Tackle skills gaps identified by employers
	Customised training for specific job vacancies
Employer support	Help cut recruitment costs
	Intermediary/brokerage services
	Troubleshooting
	Training for small employers, eg health and safety, first aid

* USEFUL LINKS

Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD), UK
Survey report: Employing ex-offenders to capture talent www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/CC2DF252-2364-4214-9A7A4C4212CC4EFA/0/empexoffndcaptal.pdf

CIPD Employer resources for ex offenders, UK

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/dvsequil/exoffenders/default.htm?lsSrchRes=1>

Employer Engagement Practitioners Toolkit, Ministry of Justice, UK

[http://noms.justice.gov.uk/news-publications events/publications/guidance/working-with-employers-toolkit](http://noms.justice.gov.uk/news-publications/events/publications/guidance/working-with-employers-toolkit)

Business in Prisons, UK

<http://www.businessinprisons.co.uk/background.htm>

MegaNexus, On-line job brokerage, UK

www.meganexus.com/index.jsp

5.4 PROVIDERS OF SPECIALIST SERVICES

Many projects use outside agencies to provide specialist services to enhance service delivery where core operational staff do not possess the necessary skills.

These could be educational, such as colleges, or related to personal problem areas experienced by service users such as debt, drugs, mental health.

*** USEFUL LINKS**

1. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

European Prison Education Association

<http://www.epea.org/>

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/index.asp?section=5>

Offenders Learning and Skills

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/Whatwedo/AdultLearner/OLASS.htm>

Offender learning net, NIACE, UK

<http://www.offenderlearning.net/?q=node/77>

Basic Skills, Action Acton, UK

<http://www.actionacton.com/Ex-Offender.htm>

bfw, Germany

<http://www.bfw.de/index.html>

2. ARTS-BASED INTERVENTIONS

Prison Arts Education Network
<http://www.panproject.org/>

Art Without Bars
<http://www.artwithoutbars.be/management.html>

3. DRUG MISUSE

Kethea Greece
<http://www.kethea.gr/pub/Category.asp?lang=en&catid=1>

Prosalis, Portugal
<http://www.prosalis.pt/>

Fundacion Diagrama, Spain
www.fundaciondiagrama.es

PATIM, Spain
<http://www.patim.org/>

4. NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AREA-BASED ORGANISATIONS

Apex Scotland
<http://www.apexscotland.org.uk/>

Apex, UK
<http://www.apextrust.com/>

Blanchardstown New Directions, Ireland
<http://www.bondproject.com/pages/background.html>

SOVA, UK
<http://www.sova.org.uk/projects.php?value=011>

NACRO, UK
<http://www.nacro.org.uk/services/employment.htm>

NIACRO, Northern Ireland
<http://www.niacro.co.uk/>

5. HOMELESSNESS

Homeless Network, FEANTSA, pan-European
<http://www.feantsa.org/code/en/hp.asp>

Off the streets and into work (OSW), London
<http://www.osw.org.uk/>

St Mungo's, London, UK
www.mungos.org/projects_sm/Offender%20Management%20Services.htm

6. PRISON TO COMMUNITY

PS Plus, UK
<http://www.psplus2.org/>

Access to Industry, Scotland
www.accesstoindustry.co.uk

R'Libre France
<http://i.ville.gouv.fr/divbib/doc/279a282Roubaix.pdf>

7. YOUNG PEOPLE

Rentray, Netherlands
http://www.rentray.nl/_files-cms/File/Corporate%20Brochure%20ENG.pdf

Work Wise, Netherlands
http://ace.axis.nl/ventura/engine.php?Cmd=see&P_site=402&P_self=10&P_skip=0&P_max=0&Push=1004041027

Arsis, Greece
www.arsis.gr

6. MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Staff working in offender employment projects are often so focused on operational matters that the marketing and promotion of the project can be perceived as an unnecessary distraction and may be neglected.

Effective targeted marketing can have a major impact on a project's ability to:

- attract service users
- keep funders and potential funders up to speed on progress
- engage employers
- keep the wider community informed.

These in turn can have a major influence on financial viability and sustainability.

Care is needed however. Marketing is a complex process. Poorly thought-through marketing can backfire, at best missing its target and at worst proving counterproductive. Wherever possible, projects should obtain professional advice.

The following chart proposes a basic framework for considering what type of marketing is required. It is by no means comprehensive but may help projects new to marketing to consider what they need to prioritise in terms of presenting their services to the different audiences and what methods may be most effective:

MARKETING AND PROMOTION: KEY THEMES

Theme	Methods
Branding	How the project looks
	How it presents itself
Target audiences	Referral agencies
	Participants
	Funders
	Employers
	The wider community
Methods	Paper based: leaflets, brochures
	e-based: websites
	CD/DVD
	Events, visits
	Media: newspapers, TV, radio

7. EVALUATION

Projects should build in an evaluation process as early as possible in the planning process. This is to ensure that progress and outcomes can be monitored from the start and the project shaped accordingly. It is also important that others are able to assess what the project has achieved and how it has done it, in order to share good practice and help inform the development of future projects.

7.1 THE NEED FOR RELIABLE INFORMATION

There is a surprisingly small evidence base for the effectiveness of offender employment projects, even though work has been going on in this field across the EU for many years now.

A research project undertaken by the EOEf in 2006 to identify and disseminate good practice in this field was unable to obtain sufficient data to establish a clear sense of:

- the scale of offender unemployment
- the number of operational offender employment projects
- the different types of projects
- how, or if, they are evaluated
- what outcomes are being achieved
- how outcomes are achieved.

This in turn means there is little reliable information to help projects to:

- identify what works best, for whom and why
- compare project performance within member states and across the EU
- learn from and disseminate best practice.

This is not to say that there is no information or that it is not shared. Indeed opportunities to share information have significantly increased in recent years, not least with the help of ESF-funded transnational projects and specialist groups. Nevertheless the current position is that:

- much of the information is anecdotal
- it is not collected systemically
- it is often lost as projects close with the end of funding programmes.

There are a number of practical reasons why reliable information is hard to come by:

- for a long time, no-one particularly wanted to know: a general sense that projects were helping offenders to find work seemed to satisfy most funders until fairly recently.
- evaluations cost money, which until recently was not readily available to most projects.
- even where funding does exist, it is often not the methodology or the outcome that is evaluated but compliance with administrative and financial processes. This tends not to provide an overview of how projects are working, what they are achieving and why.
- for many smaller projects, operating in unhelpful funding or policy environments, survival is more of a priority than an apparently abstract concept like evaluation.
- there is as yet nothing approaching a common framework for evaluating offender employment projects. Although good quality evaluations do exist, they are largely single project based. This is better than nothing and helps individual projects make their case, but they are of limited strategic value overall.
- even the most robust evaluations find it difficult to establish whether the results flow as a direct consequence of the intervention or not. Complex and expensive methods would be needed to give definitive answers to questions about the relationship between a project and reduced re-offending, for example.

7.2 A POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

Nevertheless there is a growing body of evidence to show that some interventions are likely to work better than others. Governments and other funding bodies are increasingly requiring projects to demonstrate the evidence base to justify their interventions.

The following framework is offered as a basis for considering what types of basic information will be needed for most evaluation purposes. It can be adapted or added to as required for individual projects.

It is important to agree an evaluation framework with all the key partners at the planning stage, so that appropriate systems can be identified at the outset for information gathering and monitoring purposes.

EVALUATION: POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK CRITERIA

Category	Possible indicators
Evaluation methods	Quantitative research
	Qualitative research
	Longitudinal studies
	Analysis of management information

Infrastructure	Location
	Equipment
	Staffing
Programme structure	Induction
	Action planning
	Core curriculum
	Training programme
	Job related activity: eg CVs, work trials
	Post-programme support
Methodology	Theoretical framework
	Programme integrity
Participant characteristics	Age
	Gender
	Ethnic minority background
	Multiple barriers: eg drugs, homelessness
	Prior learning
	Work history
	Offending background
Volume	Referrals: numbers and sources
	Accepted on project
	Early leavers
	Successful programme completions
Outcomes	Jobs
	Job retention
	Basic skills
	Interpersonal skills
	Academic qualifications
	Vocational qualifications
	Distance travelled – other outcomes
	Reduced re-offending
Customer satisfaction	Project partners
	Participants
	Local communities

Cost	Total annual cost
	Cost per participant
	Cost per outcome

* **USEFUL LINKS**

1. EVALUATION DOCUMENTS

• **Barriers to employment for offenders and ex-offenders**

Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No. 155, UK
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/155summ.asp>

Employment and training for ex-offenders, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1998
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/Knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/pdf/spr628.pdf>

• **Basic skills**

Evaluation of family literacy, language and numeracy for offenders, NIACE, UK
<http://www.niace.org.uk/Research/keyfindings/family-lit-offenders.htm>

Inspection of the delivery of employment and basic skills with offenders by the National Probation Service, HM Inspectorate of Probation, UK 2004
http://inspectors.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspect_reports/thematic-inspections1.html/ebsthematic.pdf?view=Binary

• **Drug misuse**

Education training and employment for former drug users, literature review, Scottish Executive
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/158882/0043156.pdf>

• **Employability**

Increasing the Employability of Offenders: An Inquiry in Probation Service Effectiveness. Probation Studies Unit Report No. 5, Andrew Bridges, Centre for Criminology, University of Oxford, 1998
<http://www.crim.ox.ac.uk/Site%20archive%20files/publications%20old%20site/pubdetpsu.htm#employ>

- **Policy**

Social policy and rehabilitation of offenders in Europe, Sonja Snacken, Vrije Universiteit, Brussel, Congr s penitenciarial internacional 2006

http://www.gencat.net/justicia/doc/doc_29848202_1.pdf

The Employment of People with Criminal Records in the European Union, European Commission and the Northern Ireland Office, European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/u33ujh57t0080251/>

What works principles. Crime reduction website, Home Office, UK

www.crimereduction.gov.uk/workingoffenders/workingoffenders1.htm#intro

- **Prison**

Building bridges to employment for prisoners, Home Office, 2001, UK

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/hors226.pdf>

Including prisoners and ex-offenders in employment and society, conference report, 1998, Ireland

<http://www.iol.ie/~wrc/integra/ipesall.pdf>

Prison based employment schemes, Home Office research, UK

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/r151.pdf>

Reducing prisoner re-offending, National Audit Office, 2002, UK

http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/01-02/0102548.pdf

Through the Prison Gate, a Joint Thematic Review by HM Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation, UK 2001 (80-89 for employment issues)

http://inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspect_reports/thematic-inspections1.html/through-the-prison-gates-sept01.?view=Binary

- **Women**

Women, crime and an informal economy: female offending and crime for gain: Papers from the British Criminology Conference, Queens University, Belfast, 15-19 July 1997

<http://www.britsoccrim.org/volume2/001.pdf>

- **Young people**

Youth Justice Board, Evaluation of Employment Training and Education Projects

<http://www.yjb.gov.uk/Publications/Resources/Downloads/ETProjSum.pdf>

2. SEARCHABLE DATABASES

Campbell Crime and Justice Group

www.campbellcollaboration.org

www.aic.gov.au/campbellcj

Searchable database of all Equal programme offender projects

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/equal/jsp/index.jsp>

Equal works. Good practice from Equal GB Projects

<http://www.equal-works.com/>

3. STATISTICS

World Prison Statistics, International Centre for Prison Studies, UK

http://www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/rel/icps/worldbrief/world_brief.html

European Statistics, Eurostat

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1090,30070682,1090_33076576&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

European Sourcebook of Crime & Criminal Justice Statistics

http://www.wodc.nl/onderzoeken/onderzoek_212.asp?loc=/onderwerp

European crime statistics, international comparisons

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/international1.html>

Labour market statistics, UK

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/Default.asp>

Crime and criminal justice research and statistics, Home Office, UK

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/>

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Camelford House
89, Albert Embankment
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E·O·E·F
European Offender
Employment Forum
website: www.eoef.org



centre for economic & social
Inclusion