



Independent Monitoring Boards Secretariat
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DC 11/08

Dear Chair

IMB LEARNING AND SKILLS SURVEY

A key role of a Board is that it must 'satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in custody within its prison **and the range and adequacy of the programmes preparing them for release.**' One of the major components of any resettlement programme is the provision and delivery of learning and skills.

Education also has a value in its own right and there are many prisoners for whom specific vocational training is not relevant in the short term or even at any time, but there is still a need for learning.

In 2007 a Learning and Skills Support Group (LSSG) was set up under the leadership of NC member John Weightman. This group was tasked with researching the current situation regarding the provision and delivery of Learning and Skills, identifying issues that needed to be taken up with appropriate bodies, and providing guidance to Boards on effective monitoring in this area.

An early decision of the LSSG was that a comprehensive survey of the current provision, and the extent to which this was being delivered, should be undertaken and especially to obtain information on any operational obstacles to delivery.

This survey was piloted late in 2007 by 10 Boards. The questionnaire is now being issued to all Boards and is enclosed with this DC letter, **although it is inappropriate for prisons with only juveniles or, in the case of split YO/Juvenile sites, for the Juvenile side of the prison.** These groups of prisoner have separate provision. The questionnaire is comprehensive so that the findings will be robust.

It is recognised that research will be required to complete the survey. It is therefore suggested that the work is shared between 2 or 3 Board members and that over the course of the target period your Board may consider releasing colleagues from other duties for this important task. It may, of course, be possible, to use members who would not otherwise be on duty at that time.

Initial contact in the prison should be made with the Head of Learning and Skills (HOLS). It is important, however, that the survey is completed by Board members and where possible any information provided by the prison is independently corroborated.

The proposed timescale is as follows:

Monday 12 May to 25 May 2008 – collection of data

Friday 30 May - submission to the Secretariat.

Completed survey forms should be sent to Anne-Marie Stephens at the Secretariat.

Once the results have been received and collated, a report will be prepared for the National Council with a view to sending to Ministers and other stakeholders. In due course it is expected that the report, together with any Ministerial response, will be published on the IMB website.

On behalf of the LSSG, I would like to thank your Board for their assistance in this vital matter. Meanwhile, if you require any further information or assistance please contact one of the LSSG members whose names are listed below. Their contact details can be obtained from the Secretariat.

Yours faithfully

John Weightman
National Council

Anne-Marie Stephens
IMB Secretariat

LSSG Members:

Sue Ash	- IMB HMP Birmingham
Reg Cartner	- IMB HMP Lindholme
John Cook	- IMB HMP Acklington
Gill Hinds	- IMB HMP Chelmsford
Gordon Johnson	- IMB HMP Nottingham
Mike Noddings	- IMB HMP Hull
John Weightman	- IMB HMYOI Castington

