

MAYOR OF LONDON

Marina Ahmad AM

Chair of the London Assembly Economy Committee
C/o jack.booth@london.gov.uk

Our ref: MGLA250423-5669

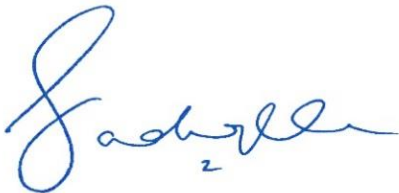
Date: 31 July 2023

Dear Marina,

Thank you to the London Assembly Economy Committee for its investigation into barriers to work for people who have had contact with the criminal justice system and for the recommendations of the Committee.

Please see my responses to the recommendations in the annex below.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small number '2' written below the name.

Sadiq Khan

Mayor of London

MAYOR OF LONDON

Annex

Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the London Assembly Economy Committee's investigation into barriers to work for people who have had contact with the criminal justice system

Recommendation 1

The Mayor should share with the Committee an assessment of the impact of his AEB funding allocation in providing skills and employment support for ex-offenders. He should also share details of the impact of other Mayoral skills and employment initiatives, including the No Wrong Door initiative, on the employment outcomes of people who have had contact with the criminal justice system.

The Mayor has commissioned the Positive TurnAround Project (PTA), funded through the Greater London Authority's European Social Fund (ESF) programme, which provides skills training and employment support to ex-offenders aged 18+ in London, who have completed all statutory supervision and licence requirements, and no longer have recourse to statutory offender services.

This target group is part of the large numbers of Londoners who are missing out on opportunities the city has to offer. Many lack the education and skills needed for London's labour market and have other complex needs e.g. drug/alcohol issues, homelessness and or mental health conditions.

Scope and engagement

The primary focus of PTA is to get participants into sustained employment.

To date 945 ex-offenders have been supported of which:

- 741 (78%) are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities
- 104 (11%) are female
- 169 (18%) are 50+
- 109 (11.5%) are people with disabilities.

Outcomes and impact

Of 945 Starts:

- 406 have completed short occupational skills training and achieved accredited qualifications.
- 349 have progressed into employment and Further Education.
- 113 have sustained their employment for at least 26 weeks.

The short vocational training courses have been varied and are offered to participants according to their interests or work requirements. The achieved accredited training has ranged from Construction Skills Certification Scheme (159) certification, health and safety at work (88), warehouse safety (16), workplace first aid (20), manual handling (15) and customer service (13). Lower numbers of qualifications varied across sectors that included railway engineering (12), safeguarding (9), security (9), traffic marshal (8), Hazardous substances (5), food hygiene (2), working with heights (1) and scaffolding awareness (1).

MAYOR OF LONDON

The Adult Education Budget (AEB) itself makes no specific provision for people who have had contact with the criminal justice system (CJS). However, the Multiply numeracy programme, as part of the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund, does work with this specific cohort of disadvantaged Londoners, and officers will, in due course, be in a position to report progress made through learner participation data and evaluation.

Recommendation 2

The Mayor should share with the Committee an assessment of the impact of his £3 million pilot project to reduce reoffending amongst young adults in 2021 in relation to getting people into work.

The Mayor established the Youth 2 Adult Hub pilot in April 2022, and this is currently funded until March 2024, with robust evaluation underway. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's (MOPAC) Evidence and Insight unit is completing performance and impact evaluation, and academics commissioned by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) are leading on the qualitative findings.

Findings from the academics' interim reports have been promising; however, these are internal reports owned by the MoJ and cannot be shared. MOPAC's first performance and throughput analysis is due shortly and will be published. The Mayor would be happy for officers to send this on. Impact analysis, looking at reoffending, is due in early 2024 and can be shared with you then.

Recommendation 3

The Mayor should work with MOPAC to signpost skills provision that could particularly be directed towards women in order to help them overcome the gendered disadvantages they face in prisons and upon their release.

In December 2022, a new co-commissioned service for London Women in the CJS was launched. The new co-commissioning process brought in over £7.4m of investment from the Mayor, London Probation Service, Lambeth Council and NHS England. This will mean that 1,350 women per year (a 14% increase on previous numbers) will be engaged in holistic support to reduce reoffending and safeguard them from violence against women and girls. The new service will benefit from a 26% increase in overall delivery funding each year compared to the previous co-commissioned service. The service provides specialist, holistic, gender specific support for women being released from prison, in the community and at risk of offending, and includes additional new elements for women in prison on remand, girls aged 15-17 and those acquitted or released on bail but still in need of support.

Amongst the specialist strands of support in this holistic service, it includes a pathway for Employment, Training and Education (ETE) that engages with women to improve their skills, gain qualifications and access specialist VCS support for women to move towards employment. The consortium of agencies who deliver this service includes partners such as Working Chance, who offer specialist ETE support to women, as well as practical support, such as help to obtain interviews and job start clothes. In 2021/22 this service supported over 200 women and girls with ETE needs. To date this year in the new service 42% of all women referred have had an identified ETE need and 68% of those worked with reported increased confidence, skills or experience in readiness to access education, training or employment. This support is carefully sequenced with other measures to meet the complex needs of women in the CJS and provide long-term and flexible provision to address these needs in turn. The new service now includes an extra element of pre-release planning and support, including support in custody with finance, benefits and debt for women on remand or after sentence at HMP Bronzefield (where the majority of London women are held).

MAYOR OF LONDON

The Mayor is now liaising with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) New Futures Network leads within the Women's Prison Estate to ensure that this programme links to other plans to bring in employers and improve training and skills in prisons and that this is also reflected in the London Blueprint for Women in the CJS.

Recommendation 4

The Mayor should convene London employers in order to share experiences and best practice around hiring people who have had contact with the criminal justice system, such as planning prison visits for recruitment drives, similar to the successful model at Timpson. As part of this work, he should explore how more employers could be encouraged to hire people who have had contact with the criminal justice system and adopt best practice in doing so

Officers from the Mayor's Skills & Employment and Business Engagement Teams are working with colleagues in HMPPS New Futures Network to raise awareness of capital investments made by Skills for Londoners into training facilities in two London prisons, and to better understand good practice among employers working with people who have had contact with the CJS, through the London chairs of Employment Advisory Boards operating in custodial settings.

Recommendation 5

The Mayor should review the policy across the GLA Group, including when work is contracted, on disclosing criminal convictions on job applications, and consider signing up to the Ban the Box initiative. Having evaluated the policy, he should report back to the Committee on the action taken in each part of the GLA Group and reasons for it.

The GLA requests that applicants complete a self-declaration form to provide details of unspent criminal convictions, cautions or bind-over orders. The GLA does not request any information on spent convictions, cautions or bind-over orders at the application stage. While applicants are requested to self-declare, this information is not passed onto the selection panel and will not prevent an applicant from being shortlisted or interviewed for the role. Only at the conditional offer stage will the self-declared information provided be reviewed by colleagues in the People Function.

GLA posts require a criminal record check, and some posts will require an enhanced check due to the nature of the work – most commonly where a postholder will be required to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults as part of their duties.

If it is a condition of the role to hold enhanced DBS clearance and if this clearance fails, it is highly likely the offer will be withdrawn. However, prior to making any decision based on information from a DBS check, the GLA will gather further information on any unspent convictions and assess whether the nature or severity of the offence will pose any risk to the GLA or impacts on the role that the candidate has applied for.

Within MOPAC similar provision exists requesting applicants to disclose any previous convictions or current charges against them at the point of application. This is due to the requirement for all MOPAC staff to be approved through Police vetting, hence wanting to understand potential issues that may be raised at the earliest opportunity. The vetting process is mandatory for all MOPAC staff.

The policies within the GLA and MOPAC reflect the need to balance equity, fairness and encouragement for those who have had contact with the CJS with the need to ensure that all

MAYOR OF LONDON

relevant risk information is known and considered for those working in sensitive environments, especially for roles that include access to and protection of vulnerable people. All policies are kept under review.

Recommendation 6

The Mayor should lobby the government for more funding and resources to enable adequate provision for employment and digital support for those serving sentences in prisons in London.

Officers from the Mayor's Skills & Employment and Business Engagement Teams and MOPAC are working with colleagues in the HMPPS New Futures Network to support new government investment in prison-based employment support and ensure the impact of this is maximised in London.

This new investment has included the implementation so far in 92 prisons nationally (including all 9 London prisons) of Prison Employment Leads; Identification and Bank Account Administrators; Employment Hubs; Employment Advisory Boards and Heads of Education Work and Skills; and new training curriculums to support prison employment skills. Additional Education Innovation Funding (EIF) opportunities are also emerging from the HMP Academies and the Future Skills Programmes.

The Mayor is supportive of this investment and keen to see this fully implemented so that it matches the demand for people leaving custody. The resources above only focus on sentenced prisoners. Most London prisons have a high remand population, and as a result, these prisoners fall outside of the support available. Across all the prisons in England and Wales, there is one 'remand population pilot' that is happening in HMP Wandsworth. The Mayor is hopeful that this pilot proves the additional need across the country.

Digital support for prisoners still remains a huge void, and as a result, research shows that prison is a de-skilling environment. The Mayor and officers across the GLA and MOPAC will continue to liaise and lobby colleagues within HMPPS to continue this investment in prison based employment support and address the key areas above for London, around support for remanded prisoners and with digital skills.

Recommendation 7

The Mayor, on behalf of MOPAC, should liaise with HMPPS to encourage probation services to be more flexible so that prison leavers can meet with their probation officers outside of their working hours. The main goal should be to ensure probation appointments do not act as a barrier to work for prison leavers.

The Mayor has consulted with the London Probation Service on this issue, to emphasise the importance of flexible reporting arrangements for people on probation, in recognition that sustained employment is one of the key factors in desistance from crime. The London Probation Service has stated that it ensures that those who are working are given the opportunity to report outside of normal office hours (9am to 5pm). Every office in London has evening reporting at least once a week, normally between 5pm and 8pm.

Additionally, the London Probation Service provides weekend projects for those subject to Unpaid Work Requirements of Community Orders and evening groups for those subject to Accredited Programme Requirements.