

REPORT

February 2015

# A Prison within a Prison

The provision of ESOL education and training for prisoners and ex-prisoners

## REPORT AUTHORS

Catherine Carroll, Jane Hurry, Anita Wilson,  
CECJS, Institute of Education



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 Funded by  
the **bell** foundation



## Acronyms

<b>BIS</b>	Department of Business, Innovation and Skills
<b>EPEA</b>	European Prison Education Association
<b>ERIC</b>	Education Resources Information Centre
<b>ESOL</b>	English for Speakers of Other Languages
<b>FE</b>	Further Education
<b>FNP</b>	Foreign National Prisoner
<b>HMIP</b>	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
<b>HMP</b>	Her Majesty's Prison
<b>ICPS</b>	International Centre for Prison Studies'
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>ILPs</b>	Individual Learning Plans
<b>IOE</b>	Institute of Education
<b>IRC</b>	Immigration Removal Centres
<b>JHA</b>	Justice and Home Affairs
<b>MIAP</b>	Managing Information across Partners
<b>MOJ</b>	Ministry of Justice
<b>NIACE</b>	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
<b>NOCN</b>	National Open College Network
<b>NOMS</b>	National Offender Management Service
<b>OCN</b>	Open College Network
<b>OLASS</b>	Offenders' Learning and Skills Service
<b>PCZ</b>	Prisons Canton Zurich
<b>QIA</b>	Quality Improvement Agency
<b>RCTs</b>	Random Controlled Trials
<b>SEN</b>	Special Educational Needs
<b>SFA</b>	Skills Funding Agency
<b>SIFA Fireside</b>	A Charity working to tackle homelessness and alcohol misuse
<b>TESOL</b>	Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages
<b>UKBA</b>	United Kingdom Border Agency
<b>VC</b>	Virtual Campus
<b>YOI</b>	Young Offender Institution

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# SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

### 1.1

This review was completed over four weeks during July 2014. The aim was to review the relevant literature in order to help inform The Bell Foundation's long term offender and ex-offender programme. The Bell Foundation was established in 2012. It is part of the Bell Educational Trust Limited. The Trust was established in 1972 by Frank Bell with the aim of promoting intercultural understanding through language education. This review was funded by The Bell Foundation and whilst it does make reference to a range of wider prison subjects, this is only when English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) issues are integral to or associated with these subjects. Due to the lack of available data on ESOL within an offender context, for the purposes of this report we also include the literature on Foreign National Prisoners (FNPs). However readers are reminded that this does not cover the full intended target group, and that indeed some (five out of seven of the highest proportion of foreign born prisoners) come from countries with English as their official language.

### 1.2

The review is divided into six sections. Section 1 offers an overall Introduction. Section 2 provides the Summary, Section 3 provides a brief background to the main findings with an emphasis on the challenges of identifying a 'typical' ESOL learner and the context for Foreign Nationals in prisons and after release. Section 4 describes the data collection methods for the review. This is followed by a presentation of the four key findings as a result of the literature review and professional conversations in Section 5. Section 6 provides a brief commentary on the current Bell Foundation offender projects. The final section addresses the main conclusions of the review.

## SECTION 2: SUMMARY



## Summary

### 2.1

The importance of education and training as a means of reducing re-offending is widely acknowledged and there is an emerging evidence base as to what the most effective strategies are (Lukklen and Johnston 2013). Increasingly, attention from all relevant groups has been focussed on particularly vulnerable groups in prison such as those with literacy and language needs (Gregory and Bryan 2011). One identified group that has received, thus far, very little attention with respect to specific policy or research are those offenders and ex-offenders with English as a second language. The Bell Foundation commissioned this short literature review of ESOL provision for offenders and ex-offenders in order to inform the Foundation's long term programme in this field. The focus of the review was to include data on prevalence of ESOL needs within this population, ESOL needs as a risk factor for re-offending, current practice for supporting offenders with ESOL needs, challenges to effective ESOL provision and recommendations for further research.

### 2.2

Currently, no national figures exist for the numbers of offenders/ex-offenders with ESOL needs. However, in the last ten years the number of FNPs in prison has doubled. As of June 2014, there were 85,493<sup>1</sup> prisoners incarcerated in prisons in England and Wales. Although no definitive numbers are available, it is estimated that less than 25% have access to education<sup>2</sup>. Within this population are 10,834 foreign nationals, making up 13% of the overall prison population. No comprehensive figures appear to exist that document how many of them have access to ESOL classes, how long or how much they can access provision, or how that provision can be carried over into the outside world should leave to remain be granted. It should be noted, however, that for some FNPs, English may well be the mother tongue. The only thematic review of FNPs in prisons in the United Kingdom (UK) includes interviewing 121 FNPs with 26% of this group reporting that English was their main language (HMIP 2006).

### 2.3

No literature was found which explicitly demonstrated ESOL needs as a risk factor for re-offending. Nevertheless, it would be reasonable to assume that offenders/ex-offenders with ESOL needs experience many of the same literacy and language difficulties that are widely acknowledged as risk factors (Social Exclusion Unit 2002). However, the literature did clearly show that ESOL needs presents a very real challenge for how offenders/ex-offenders experience prison life and have access to rehabilitation opportunities both during incarceration and after release.

### 2.4

National guidelines exist as to the characteristics of more effective ESOL provision in prison but evidence of this practice in the literature is mainly limited to self report case studies from the internet. There exists just one empirical study in the UK that sought to examine ESOL provision in depth using both quantitative and qualitative methodology (Dalziel and Safres 2005). The review was able to identify some limited examples of particularly innovative and effective practice.

1. <http://www.howardleague.org/weekly-prison-watch/>
2. [http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2013/prison\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2013/prison_en.pdf)

## 2.5

The challenges to providing more effective ESOL provision were identified at three levels. These included those organisational challenges that exist with respect to the provision of education and training for all prisoners such as movement around the system of prisoners, and which are all previously well documented. The second level relates to how these challenges are further complicated by a prisoner having the status of Foreign National in prison including changes of status and impending removal from the UK. The final challenge is concerned with how system changes at a national level may need to be considered when planning for ESOL provision and/or when considering areas that may require further research. The review does provide some examples of approaches being adopted in settings to try and reduce the effect of some of these challenges.

## 2.6

Finally three key themes emerge for future research and consideration for The Bell Foundation's long term programme. The first is directly concerned with the ESOL curriculum, including, for example, the assessment of ESOL. The second is concerned with the needs of FNPs at a more strategic level such as the pressing call for a national policy and direction on provision for Foreign National offenders and ex-offenders. The final theme relates to the need for all those concerned with this subject to develop, over time, a well-informed evidence base of research and how The Bell Foundation wishes to place itself strategically within this context.

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## SECTION 3: BACKGROUND

## Background

### 3.1 Population with ESOL needs

The review together with the professional conversations conducted for this review clearly demonstrate the different contexts from which learners with English as a second language are drawn and that any definition of ESOL is quite fluid. Four main groups were identified. The first group consists of those who are resident in England and have probably been here for some time. The second includes those who are here as a migrant (non-national) who have committed an offence. In addition are those in immigration removal centres (IRC) who are awaiting removal. The final group includes offenders who remain in prison after their sentence has been completed, rather than being sent to an Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) to await deportation or repatriation. At this point they revert back to the status of 'remand' which means they have no obligation to attend education (which may include ESOL).

#### 3.1.1 Foreign National Prisoners: the wider context

The first and only thematic review of FNPs to date was published in 2006 in response to the increasing number of foreign nationals in English prisons and at the time of the 'foreign national crisis' when a number of foreign national serious offenders were released back into the community without being considered by the then UKBA as eligible for deportation. The review was undertaken under a different government and since then some policy changes have been made. For example, the 'hub and spoke' model of management referred to in greater detail below. More recently, in an effort to address the issues connected to foreign nationals a move has been made to disband UKBA and place responsibility for immigration and removal under one arm of the Home Office. Nevertheless, the review highlighted three immediate areas for change in order to meet the needs of FNPs. Firstly, persistent urging over the previous five years by the Inspectorate of individual prisons, the Prison Service and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to draw up and implement national standards for the conditions and treatment of this group had failed (HMIP 2006). This remains the current situation (Cooney 2013). The thematic review also identified a second essential need for change in the shape of improved liaison between UKBA and prisons. Ignorance, confusion and concern about immigration were some of the main concerns identified by both staff and prisoners. Removal at the end of sentence was faced by some prisoners; others risked having deportation action taken against them. Both staff and prisoners expressed significant frustration at the lack of support and contact from the immigration authorities (Canton & Hammond 2012). Thirdly, a 'building block' of provision was to ensure that all FNPs were prepared for their removal or release whenever it arrived. Prisoners who took part in the interviews for the review reported significantly poorer support and sentence planning than British nationals due, for example, to the fact that their participation in activities did not contribute to prisons' key performance targets. It also highlighted that essential links with statutory services, such as probation, were sometimes unsuccessful. In 2014 as in 2006, these issues remain major challenges within the system (CJJI 2013).

### **3.1.2 ESOL needs as a challenge for the prison and probation systems**

Whatever the background of an offender or ex-offender with English as a second language, the literature is very clear that, '...language difficulties ...experienced by foreign national prisoners permeate and exacerbate almost all other problems faced by this section of the prison community (Barnoux and Wood , 2012: 242). The thematic review had previously identified language as one of the top three main causes of concern (the other two were contact with families and immigration issues) from the perspective of foreign nationals. Prison staff had also identified the same three priorities but underestimated the effect for prisoners. They reported language barriers as by far the biggest challenge of working with FNPs. Language was associated with all other problems such as isolation, health, legal and immigration matters and food to name just a few. Almost 20 years on from one of the earliest studies to focus on FNPs in prison, the analogy of describing having ESOL needs in prison as a 'prison within a prison' remains the experience for an unknown number of foreign national offenders today (Richards, 1995:201).

This review seeks to throw some light and point the direction towards finding out just how accurate a description this analogy remains today and what action might be taken to build upon and develop the progress that has taken place over the past two decades.

## SECTION 4: COLLECTING THE DATA

## Collecting the data

### 4.1 Literature Review

Four searches of the literature were conducted and are described below.

#### 4.1.1 Search 1

A search was conducted using the electronic databases: the British Education Index, ERIC, Australia Education Index, Applied Social Sciences and Social Services Abstracts. A key word search using the following terms and combinations was completed:

- i. "offender", "ex-offender", "foreign national ", "prison" and "youth offender" were paired individually with the following: "ESOL" and "English as a second language"
- ii. "foreign national" and "prison".

These searches yielded 154 studies. The abstracts were then read in order to judge whether or not the inclusion criteria were met resulting in 63 studies being selected for further reading. Eleven documents were found to be directly relevant and were included in this final review. As the area is so under researched it was not necessary to set any inclusion or exclusion criteria.

#### 4.1.2 Search 2

A second search was conducted using two search engines; Google scholar and Google. A key word and/or phrase search using the following terms and combinations was completed:

- i. "offender" and "ex-offender" were paired individually with the following: "ESOL" and "English as a second language"
- ii. "ESOL education in prison"
- iii. "foreign national prison and education"
- iv. "education of youth offenders with ESOL".

These searches resulted in 11 relevant documents. However, due to the size of the database and constraints on time the studies were limited to those conducted from 2004 to 2014.

A search of Google using the phrase "ESOL education in prison" elicited a further five relevant documents.

### 4.1.3 Search 3

Twenty relevant government and voluntary organisation websites were searched for case studies and reports. For a full list please see Table 1.

**Table 1: Websites searched for the review**

A4E
Bail for Immigration Detainees
Centre for Social Impact Bonds
Department for Education
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
Excellence Gateway
Hibiscus Initiatives
Justice Data Lab
Ministry of Justice
National Research and Development Centre of Adult Literacy
New Bridge Partnership
NIACE
NOMS
OLASS
Prison Translator
Prisoners Education Trust
QIA
Skills Funding Agency
Virtual European Prison School
Detention Advisory Service

### 4.1.4 Search 4

Finally, the reference list for the studies included in this paper, were reviewed for any additional studies relevant to the search criteria.

In addition, literature was recommended within the research team. As a result of all searches 43 documents were included in the final review and Table 2 provides a summary of the type of documents included.

**Table 2: Type of document included in this review**

	TYPE OF DOCUMENT	NUMBER
1	Empirical studies in peer reviewed journals	10
2	Reports (empirically based)	10
3	Web pages (including case studies)	8
4	Theoretical/commentary articles in peer reviewed journals	7
5	Policy papers	3
6	HMIP Reports	3
7	Government statistic publications	2
8	Journal article in non-peer reviewed journal	1



## 4.2 Meetings, telephone and email contact with professionals

Two conversations have been held with relevant professionals to support the review and recommendations. We contacted a key person from each of the four prison education providers in England (A4E, Manchester College, Milton Keynes College and Weston College). Two of the four were available for conversations within the time scale. Finally, the Bell Foundation advised us to speak to the project manager of the Hibiscus Initiatives project, which they fund. This is no sense a planned survey of all relevant people, merely an attempt to gather information within a limited time scale from key players.

## 4.3 Reports received from The Bell Foundation

To support the writing of this report the following documents were also used:

- I. The Bell Foundation Scoping Document
- II. St Giles Trust End of Year 2013-14 Report for The Bell Foundation
- III. Hibiscus Initiatives' Roma Literacy Programme report to The Bell Foundation.

## SECTION 5: FINDINGS

## Findings

The findings from the literature, professional conversations and documentations are presented under the four headings of Prevalence of ESOL Needs, ESOL Needs as a Risk Factor for Re-Offending, Current ESOL Provision and Challenges to Effective ESOL Provision. These four headings encompass the first five objectives stated in the tender. The sixth objective; that of where the current literature suggests further research is required is included in the Recommendations section. These four headings include Offenders in Prisons, YOI, and Ex-offenders.

As previously noted, this review shows just how little literature relates to the subject of ESOL provision for offenders or ex-offenders. Essentially, there is just one UK empirical research paper that addresses the subject of ESOL education in any depth (Dalziel and Safres 2005). The report from Lilama (the network for Linguistic Policy for the Labour Market) on language training for offenders and staff in the East of England was also very informative (LILAMA 2011). Beyond these two documents it was the literature on FNPs that helped to provide the wider context for language barriers experienced by offenders (HMIP 2006; Cooney 2013).

### 5.1 Prevalence of ESOL needs amongst offenders and ex-offenders

We could not find published statistics on the prevalence of ESOL needs amongst offenders and ex-offenders, so explored figures for FNPs. According to the International Centre for Prison Studies' (ICPS) World Prison Brief, foreign-born prisoners are held to greater or lesser degrees in all parts of the world – a phenomena which reflects the general increased mobility of individuals or groups who are forced or choose to move away from their home countries and the preference of governments' policy between deportation or incarceration. Substantial variation exists across Europe as to the proportion of FNPs to national offenders held in prisons (Norway 30%; Switzerland 74%; Greece 63%; Belgium 44%; England and Wales 12.5%) (ICPS 2014). Given the increase in global migration and increased mobility across nation states, the potential number of learners needing or wishing to access ESOL provision is therefore strongly linked to and impacted by the global market place, the changing patterns of employment opportunities and the political climate in various parts of the world. From the prison perspective, these changes are borne out in the current demographic of foreign-born prisoners in England and Wales (as of 31st March 2014) with the highest proportion coming from Nigeria and Somalia (Africa); Pakistan and India (Asia); Poland and the Irish Republic (Europe) and Jamaica (Total West Indies) (MOJ 2014), variously indicative of areas of political instability, high unemployment, and sites of human and drug trafficking. As noted elsewhere, the prevalence of English as an official language in these countries highlights the complexity of identifying language needs and suggests that foreign national status is not necessarily indicative of a need for ESOL provision.

An analysis of individual prisons highlights how ESOL provision is accommodated with various regimes. HMP Pentonville is a local London prison with a high turnover of prisoners. At the time of the 2013 HMP Inspection (HMIP 2014) more than half the population were held on remand or for sentences of less than six months. Thirty-four per cent of the population were FNPs. In a questionnaire distributed to 200 male prisoners, 27% declared themselves to be foreign nationals but only 6% of the sample overall felt that they did not understand spoken English. Around 280 places were available for education – including some for ESOL education– but all courses were only available on a part-time basis. During the Inspection undertaken at HMP Stafford (July 2011), a medium sized Category C prison, 7% of the 188 prisoners surveyed declared themselves as foreign national, with 6% defining themselves as non-native speakers. Smaller numbers of FNPs meant that ESOL, along with art,

music and 'Moving On' sessions were taught in mixed groups of vulnerable and mainstream learners. Finally, it is interesting to note that although the number of FNPs may have doubled between 2000 and 2012 (and trebled since the early nineties) since 2006, the figure appears to have remained stable between 12% and 14% (HMIP 2006; Cooney 2013).

## 5.2 ESOL needs as a Risk Factor for Reoffending

As previously stated no literature was found which explicitly demonstrated ESOL needs as a risk factor for re-offending. One study in the US that examined a population of 124 Latino youth in New York described as 'delinquents' and 'non-delinquents'. Using elements of the Individual Protective Factors Index, language and ethnicity (along with other factors) were identified as significant risk factors for offending (Granville 2007). In a recent report commissioned by the City and Guilds Centre for Skills Development on offender learning in the community, specific references to ESOL needs as a risk factor are absent but the emphasis on low levels of literacy is something that could be drawn on for this report (Canton, Hine, and Welford 2011). The recommendations and characteristics of good practice in offender learning in the community should be used as a guide for any programmes.

## 5.3 Current ESOL Provision

### 5.3.1 Aims of ESOL provision

Since 2013, the OLASS 4 funding guide includes ESOL as part of the core curriculum along with English and maths to be provided by prison education departments (SFA 2013). The literature states a variety of aims which are included below in order of priority/how frequently they appear. However, what was evident from some of the most recent literature was a wish to move away from an emphasis on the 'churning out of qualifications' and an emphasis on the more holistic development of the learner with ESOL needs (NIACE 2013). Aims of ESOL provision included in the literature were to:

- i. Equip learners with the English they need to operate effectively within the prison
- ii. Allow learners to secure employment both within the prison and once released
- iii. Support in the attainment of formal qualifications
- iv. Develop a deeper understanding of their strengths and areas for development both personal and in terms of employment.

The following factors were reported by learners with ESOL needs in the Pathfinders study when asked about what had influenced them to start an ESOL course:

- i. To help with form filling and writing letters
- ii. To improve self confidence
- iii. To get onto the next level course
- iv. The opportunity to earn some money (Dalziel and Safres 2005).

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### 5.3.2 Characteristics of effective ESOL provision

As part of training delivered under OLASS 4, the Offending Learning and Skills programme, ESOL training includes the following components:

- i. Prison-related syllabus, based on the adult ESOL curriculum but using language, topics, functions and grammar relevant to the prison environment in order to enable integration, including access to prison services, work areas and other classes in education.
- ii. Authentic prison-related materials to support this syllabus (e.g. 'skills for prison life') including self-study materials for those unable to attend classes for reasons of security or demands of the regime, for example.
- iii. Self-contained classes to enable all learners, new and continuing, to learn something in each class, given the fast turnover of learners in remand prisons
- iv. Providing additional language support to enable English as a Second Language learners to access vocational training through embedded learning. This includes language materials, classroom support, and ESOL embedded in vocational syllabuses.
- v. Flexible provision (with its funding implications) to respond to sudden changes, e.g. a sudden increase in numbers of learners, or a sudden influx of a particular language group with widely varying levels of motivation.
- vi. Use of The Big Word translation service and Language Line interpretation facilities, translation of prison induction booklets and, in some prisons, development of digital induction training material or information pods.
- vii. Library provision including sufficient dictionaries and foreign language books.

Elements of the above were mostly found in published case studies on the web. At Holloway prison, for example, all ESOL classes were self-contained, dictaphones and tapes had been purchased to allow students on waiting lists for classes to begin their learning in order to respond flexibly to the frequent movement of offenders between prisons and a member of the education department met weekly with a representative of the FN group (Fisher, Harvey, and Fitt 2008). This case study also commented on how valuable staff found it to be able to refer learners to welfare sources of support such as those offered by Hibiscus Initiatives.

### 5.3.3 ESOL weekly provision and certification level

The literature highlighted some variation in weekly ESOL provision across different settings. Dalziel and Sofres, in their pathfinder study across six centres reported some settings offering 20 hours a week and others 16-20 hours. Half of the participants were on courses of 3-4 weeks and 27% were on courses that lasted 5-10 weeks. At HMP Pentonville, there was variation in the length of classes depending on level of study (Table 3). The 2014 inspection of HMP Send, a women's prison in Surrey, holding around 280 female prisoners, noted that while the prison was good overall (2014:6), the needs of women who would benefit from ESOL classes was not being addressed (HMIP 2014). Thirteen percent of the 138 women who responded to the Inspectorate's questionnaire self-identified as a FNP and only one formal ESOL session was run once per week.

**Table 3: ESOL provision across a week**

SETTING	TOTAL WEEKLY HOURS	TIME OF DAY
Pathfinder (Dalziel and Sofres, 2005)	20	Not reported
	16-20	Not reported
HMP Pentonville	E1 and E2: 25	am and pm
	E3: 12.5	am or pm

ESOL is currently only funded in prison at Entry level it is not funded at Levels 1 or 2. A4E prisons tend to put higher level English as Second Language learners into Level 1 Functional Skills, which works quite well for them, but they take longer to finish the course. A HMP Inspection of HMP Gartree, a long-term category B training prison also reported a similar approach. It was noted that while 15% of male prisoners were foreign nationals they could only study ESOL at Entry Level (HMIP 2014). Hurry et al. (2012) in their research found that one purpose built prison for under 25s offered ESOL from Entry to Level 2. There was greater variation with adult prisons, for example, in one case there were too few courses at pre-entry Level and prisoners were enrolled on courses at too high a level. In another there were insufficient ESOL courses running. The levels of achievement similarly varied, often due to the wider prison context.

A request was sent to the four main OLASS education providers, A4E, Manchester College, Milton Keynes College and Weston College, (Table 5) to gain some picture of the current numbers of learners of ESOL learners and the courses they were taking. Three of the education providers returned data for seven prisons + an unspecified cluster of prisons. We are unable to comment on the reliability of this data but have included them in this review as indicative. The data shows that for five of the prisons and the unspecified cluster, ESOL courses were taken by just 2-3% of all learners (Table 5). For all but one of the prisons, Entry Level 1 was the most common ESOL qualification. However, one provider made the point that there would be an unknown number of English as second language learners taking 'non-ESOL' courses. It was also not possible to identify these learners as they are not specifically recorded.

**Table 4: Numbers of learners on ESOL courses and qualifications across seven prisons and a cluster of prisons**

PRISON/ YOI	NO. LEARNERS IN EDUCATION (IN ONE YEAR)	NO ESOL LEARNERS IN EDUCATION (IN ONE YEAR) + (ESOL AS % OF ALL LEARNERS)	ESOL QUALIFICATIONS (CERT IN ESOL SKILLS FOR LIFE)	NO.(%) ESOL LEARNERS ON EACH QUALIFICATION
A Spokes prison	2840	97(3%)	Entry 1 Entry 2 Entry 3	92 (90%) 4 (4%) 6 (6%)
B	573	14(2%)	Pre Entry Entry 1 Entry 2 Entry 3	4 (16%) 6 (24%) 7 (28%) 8 (32%)
C	716	24(3%)	Entry 1 Entry 2 Entry 3	20 (65%) 8 (26%) 3 (10%)
D Spokes prison	925	85(9%)	Entry 1 Entry 2 Entry 3	57 (62%) 26 (28%) 9 (10%)
E Spokes prison	1914	34(2%)	Entry 1 Entry 2	33 (92%) 3 (8%)
F	1118	21(2%)	Entry 1 Entry 2 Entry 3	13 (57%) 6 (26%) 4 (17%)
G Hub prison	1673	268 (16%)	Entry 1 Entry 2 Communication through Art	Not provided
H Spokes prison	6741	968 (14%)	Pre Entry Entry 1 Entry 2 Entry 3 Level 1 Level 2	62 (16%) 126 (33%) 105 (28%) 60 (16%) 16 (4%) 10 (3%)
I (cluster of prisons)	75000 enrolled	720 (1%)	Not provided	Not provided

A request was made to Merle Gering, Rights and Records Officer, SFA, under the Freedom of Information Act. We asked for:

- i. Number of offenders in prison in England participating in an ESOL programme within one year.
- ii. Number of prisoners in for whom English is a Second Language participating in rehab programmes (such as drug rehab, anger management, or other rehab).
- iii. As an alternative to 2, number of Foreign National prisoners participating in rehab programmes (such as drug rehab, anger management, or other rehab).

They were able to supply the information shown in Table 6 on learners on ESOL courses in English prisons.

**Table 5: Offender learners on ESOL courses by level and age**

ACADEMIC YEAR	AGEBAND	ESOL TOTAL	ENTRY LEVEL	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2
2012/13	19-24	510	500	20	10
2012/13	25+	2,240	2,160	110	50
2012/13	Under 19	60	60	-	-
2012/13	Unknown	10	10	-	-
2013/14 August to April (Provisional)	19-24	290	290	10	-
2013/14 August to April (Provisional)	25+	1,360	1,290	80	50
2013/14 August to April (Provisional)	Under 19	30	30	-	-
2013/14 August to April (Provisional)	Unknown	-	-	-	-

Footnotes:

i. All volumes are rounded to the nearest 10

ii. Values below 5 are suppressed.

iii. It is not possible to directly compare provisional 2013/14 estimates with figures for previous academic years.

There are some anomalies in the figures provided. The total is less than the sum of the different levels. The reason for this is unclear, however, the discrepancies are small. The overall picture confirms that learners with English as a second language represent a small proportion of the entire prison population for England, estimated at 85,120 in 2012-13. They are also consistent with the data shown in Table 5, that almost all learners were studying at Entry Level.

There was no available information on questions 2 or 3.

As part of the FNP thematic review, 19 offenders reported that education and work were some of the most important activities they had completed to prepare themselves for release and resettlement. Just under half of interviewees reported that ESOL had been their most popular education courses.



### 5.3.4 Accreditation

The review indicated that providers and settings used different examination boards. HMP Pentonville reported using the NOCN Entry Level ESOL Skills for Life Qualification. It provided for flexibility and a rapid response to a fast changing prison context. The external assessment could be run internally and externally moderated with a two week turn around for certificates which was seen as essential for an average six week stay. Not needing an external examiner meant that the team could decide when to assess and a separate room was always available for assessment. HMP Wormwood Scrubs reported using the English Speaking Board to accredit their ESOL courses.

### 5.3.5 Online learning/resources

The use of ICT was commented on favourably by offenders and staff in the pathfinders report (Dalziel and Sofres, 2005). At HMP Bulwood Hall (since closed) the intranet was used to replicate the learning opportunities and information offered by the Internet. Server based computers were used to broadcast a menu-driven service to a television in each cell enabling multiple learners to address their own learning needs simultaneously. The initial focus was on ESOL, Skills for Life and ICT. Whitmoor prison operated a Moodle-type facility in addition to an in-house TV system (LILAMA, 2011).

### 5.3.6 Virtual campus

The Skills Funding Agency and NOMS have jointly worked on the development of a Virtual Campus (VC) and it has now been rolled out to all prisons. It is an important resource for the future though prisoners' access is still reported to be patchy. The VC is designed for self-study for offenders accessing dedicated secure PCs within the prison. It has also been piloted in the probation service. The content on the VC includes course materials (including English), learning resources and a job application facility. These are linked to external as well as internal job vacancies, and includes a 'CV Builder' which builds an e-portfolio of the offender which can be made available to potential employers. By 2011 there were 2,700 active learners across the UK, with a total of 7,000 since its inception (LILAMA, 2011). At HMP Lewes, the VC does include an interactive course in ESOL specifically designed for FNPs and includes targeted at vocabulary needed for in-prison jobs such as cleaning or serving in the canteen. However, more broadly, access, co-ordination with other support services, content and usability have been identified as requiring need significant improvement (Champion and Edgar 2013). Finally, a quick search of the Virtual European Prison School website did not elicit anything specific to ESOL education.

## 5.3.7. Staff development

### 5.3.7.1 ESOL Tutors

HMP Pentonville reported (SFA 2013) on the very successful setting up of a community of practice for ESOL tutors in order to share resources and teaching strategies. The group also addressed writing resources and lessons that helped developed a better appreciation of different cultures and nationalities between the prisoners. The community of practice has been extended to include teaching staff across the whole of the education department.

### 5.3.7.2 Wider prison staff

The literature on issues of staff development related primarily to the wider prison staff as opposed to ESOL tutors. However, Hurry et al. (2012), reported that where good working relationships existed between education and the wider prison staff, and where there was an emphasis on the importance of education across the organisation, education provision and outcomes are strengthened.

HMP Bulwood Hall had developed a series of language phrase booklets to support the prison officers with communications with prisoners with inadequate knowledge of English. These were subsequently used as supplementary resources in ESOL classes. The English sentences were numbered the same across all language booklets, making easier reference for staff and tutors. The booklets enabled some prisoners with poor English language skills to feel less isolated. However, the booklets made an assumption that a prisoner could read in their own language. Holloway also emphasised the importance of all prison staff and teachers being trained in language awareness and the use of simple English in instructions, prison signs and notices (Fisher, Harvey, and Fitt 2008).

Barkan et al. (2011) was the only empirical study available for this subject which reported on an EU funded study that provided online language teaching programmes to prison officers in three countries (Belgium, Greece and Germany) in five languages (Russian, Polish, Spanish, Greece and Turkish). The aim of the programme was to help overcome language and communication problems between staff and offenders. Findings were inconclusive partly due to the fact that although 504 staff took the initial needs assessment, only 176 took the course and even fewer (number not reported) took the final survey to report views of the experience. Some of the major challenges for participation in the learning/study included excessive workloads, no time available during the working day for study, limited access to the internet at work. In terms of learning the language participants expressed experiencing difficulties with understanding the meaning of new words without a dictionary, understanding dialogues, learning and pronouncing new words and phrases (Barkan et al. 2011). The Prison Translator is a coproduction of the European Prison Education Association (EPEA) and Prisons Canton Zurich (PCZ), designed as a direct response to the increasing need for the translation of key phrases commonly found across prison regimes. It offers open access to key issues such as reception, health, etc. in 20 different languages.

### 5.3.8. Whole organisation approaches

The Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) in its publication 'Whole Organisation approaches to Skills for Life: Making the Case' (prison version) highlights the need for ESOL training to ensure higher rates of employment (QIA 2008). As part of the Whole Organisation Approaches project, a simple framework was developed to embed Skills for Life in the planning, management and delivery of learning. The Skills for Life Framework likens the process of developing a whole organisation approach to a journey that starts with analysing local needs, and finishes with learners ready to progress to further learning opportunities. Each stage of the journey is represented as a 'stop' on the line. Each stop contains links to relevant information and to appropriate material.

HMP Holloway, in their case study, stressed the need for flexible funding in order to respond to, for example, the need for additional classes at times to meet demand and the needs of particular groups such as Roma women.

### 5.3.9 Innovative approaches to ESOL provision

#### 5.3.9.1 Peer support approaches - Language Partners and Ford Prison peer support scheme

An award winning Language Partners programme was established at Danville Correctional Centre in Illinois, USA, in 2011. Bilingual offenders are trained to become ESOL teachers for other offenders (Olinger et al. 2012; EJP 2013). Before the project was introduced, financial constraints had prevented any ESOL teaching. In the summer of 2010, Language Partners began training in TESOL and tutoring for a group of students and by January 2011 instruction began to a group of men who had tested at low and high beginning levels of ESOL proficiency. The programme draws on research to show the success of peer tutoring programme in prisons building, for example, on the experience of the tutor to help the new tutee adjust to the classroom (Steurer 2001; Franklin 2000). Such programmes offer obvious benefits to the tutors as well as the tutees and the ethos at Danville is one of a learning community of incarcerated learners, incarcerated teachers and volunteer teacher-trainers. The eight incarcerated teachers are responsible for the entire class of learners during twice-weekly, three-hour class periods. They perform the normal functions of teachers: creating lesson plans, designing activities, adapting readings, assigning and marking homework and motivating students. These teachers are supported by ten volunteer teacher-trainers who are members of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign community—instructors at the Intensive English Institute and graduate students and professors in various departments. The volunteer teacher-trainers provide summer training and ongoing professional development for the teachers in prison. They give feedback on lesson plans and instruction, run workshops and search for materials that the teachers cannot access. Offenders trained on the programme have also been involved in the co-writing of peer-reviewed articles for journals as well as a cook book, poems, essays and many theatre performances.

HMIP has described a related peer support scheme in HMP Ford as excellent (HMIP 2006). Six foreign national orderlies, some of whom spoke a number of languages were appointed to organise social groups and immigration surgeries to update prisoners on their immigration cases. Groups were advertised on notice-boards around the prison. Prisoners were able to drop in to a dedicated FNP office at most times, as at least two orderlies were generally available. The orderlies attended induction to encourage FNPs to seek them out, and also had good links with other orderlies in the prison, from whom they received numerous referrals. The FNP office contained a variety of easily accessible, translated information for the prisoners. The provision of an office for the orderlies gave their work a strong profile in the prison, and was a tangible demonstration of the commitment to meeting the specific needs of the FNP population.

### **5.3.9.2 Offender learning in the community**

ESOL received very little attention in the report, 'Offender Learning in the Community' apart from two positive single case studies referenced (Canton, Hine, and Welford 2011). The first was attendance at an employment workshop which 'forced' the learner to improve their English, although they felt that further support would be needed to gain employment. The second was a highly educated learner who was involved in Skills for Life as a means of developing her skills in English. She spoke extremely highly of her experience and in particular the general emotional and personal support gained through this process.

The New Bridge partnership which provides resettlement support and advice for FNPs was well received by prisoners and has been reported as an example of good practice from HMIP (HMIP 2006). At HMP The Verne a distinct FNP pathway had been written into the prison's resettlement strategy ensuring that the specific resettlement needs of FNPs were addressed. Similarly to HMP Ford, a wide range of translated information was kept on a computer database and made available to prisoners as required.

The difficulties of providing meaningful interventions for foreign nationals (and potential English as second language learners) are exacerbated by a lack of background information that begins at the start of the judicial process. Arresting officers are not required to automatically ascertain nationality of offenders. Pre-sentence reports (PSRs) are not required for foreign nationals, meaning that lack of background information often precludes a community supervision order. This (according to Canton and Hammond: 2012) may relate to an inaccurate assumption on the part of various agencies that foreign nationals will not or cannot comply with community orders. They note, however, that according to the London Probation Trust (2011) that 'foreign nationals as a group are slightly more likely than UK citizens to complete their community sentences successfully'. This positive outcome offers a potential route in which to embed engagement with increased language skills.

The difficulties of identifying foreign nationals and their specific needs is further exacerbated by the disparity between various case management systems (i.e. the protocols for charting the details and progress of an individual) The Prison Service, for example, records nationality but not immigration status. Probation records nationality and (sometimes) immigration status but nationality may be self-declared. Such confusion does not aid any effective intervention and might be seen as adding to an already confused picture.

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## 5.4 Challenges to effective ESOL provision

The challenges to providing more effective ESOL provision were identified at three levels. At the first level organisational challenges exist with respect to the provision of education and training for all prisoners. The second level was how these are further complicated by a prisoner having the status of foreign national in prison. The final level is concerned with how national system changes present challenges to effective ESOL provision.

### 5.4.1. Recognised education challenges for all offenders and ex-offenders

The challenges faced by education and prison staff in providing education and training to all prisoners are well documented. Some of these include:

- i. Numbers continually arriving and leaving which present logistical challenges to any programme (Dalziel & Sofres, 2005; LILAMA, 2011).
- ii. Dalziel and Sofres reported in 2005 that Individual Learning Plans (ILPS) were regularly not transferred between prisons. However, more recent literature would suggest some improvement in this situation but no robust evidence is available. The system of Managing Information across Partners, MIAPs, to support the recording of information has also been reported as not yet fully reliable (Hurry et al, 2012).
- iii. Many prisoners still feel the pressure to work rather than study as education may not be as financially rewarding. Moreover, for ex-offenders in the community, if classes take up more than the allocated provision per week, for example, with the 'add-on' of an ESOL module, then state benefits may be affected.
- iv. The pressure to achieve qualifications and an over reliance on basic skills has been seen by some professionals in prison of putting at the risk more holistic approaches which are valued by prison educators (Hurry et al. 2012).
- v. Sentence planning appears to be problematic in terms of read-across between various stakeholders involved in the management of FNPs. The Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorate (CJJI) report on offender management in prisons (2013) noted that in terms of sentence planning, 'poor communication between Offender Management Units and Education Departments meant that neither was likely to know what was in the other's plan'.

### 5.4.2. Challenges presented by having English as a second language, and/or the status of FNP

Having English as a second language, and/or being a foreign national adds many layers of complexity to the experience of prison and rehabilitation. Some of these include:

- i. Prison Rules 32 states that 'Every prisoner able to profit from the education facilities provided at a prison shall be encouraged to do so' while Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 2012-006 Prisoner Employment, Training and Skills 'aims to ensure that all prisoners receive information advice and guidance, an assessment of their learning needs and that they are able to access relevant employment training and skills opportunities, at the appropriate time during their sentence'. The inclusivity of such statements suggests that the needs of foreign nationals and those requiring support for language skills would be taken into account. However, as there is no comprehensive account of how many prisoners with English as a second language attend classes, it is not possible to say how far this remit is being met.
- ii. The number of languages in any one classroom or prison setting.
- iii. The relevance of teaching materials to specific groups. For example, shopping, socialising, and travel, used in the ESOL teaching and learning materials (Excellence Gateway) Entry 1 learner materials from the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum may have little relevance for a foreign national prisoner learner for whom English is a second language.
- iv. The differences in length of stay in the UK before imprisonment, for example, some prisoners have been in the UK for years, are orally fluent, have families in the UK, and are familiar with British culture. Others may have been convicted soon after their arrival and speak no English at all, let alone write it (Dalziel & Sofres, 2005; LILAMA, 2011).
- v. Most FNPs do not know whether they will be given leave to stay in this country after their sentence, which means that they and staff do not know what language or other skills they will need on release. This places a further emphasis on the importance of ILPs being kept up to date in order to respond to the changing context for an offender. It is also another reason why perhaps bite-sized chunks of learning have become common. For some offenders, the emphasis is on preparation for life after release but for others, developing the skills they need within the prison is more urgent, although both are potentially useful.
- vi. We were informed in one professional conversation that ESOL is not supposed to be offered to those FNPs who face deportation on release. Up until now a 'blind eye' has often been turned but things are beginning to tighten up, especially as data collection is becoming more detailed and funding (from the SFA) is being reduced. Also while the regime may know who is and who isn't staying beyond the end of their sentence, it is less likely that prison education departments have an interest in such data and to the immigration status and profile of students attending ESOL classes.

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- vii. An additional challenge for the learning and teaching of some learners with English as a second language is their lack of literacy in their primary language. Collier and Thomas (2001) applied the findings of their longitudinal study (1982-2001) of 'linguistically and culturally' diverse school students to the education of offenders in correctional settings. The study particularly focussed on students with no literacy in their primary language. They concluded that, particularly for this group, education in both languages would ensure greater academic progress. They supported the embedded approach for all students with English as a second language, but that this group also required additional instruction in both languages (Collier and Thomas 2001).
  - viii. The level of offenders' literacy in their primary language varies considerably. Some people may have literacy difficulties in their mother-tongue even before they attempt to master English. HMP Pentonville estimated that this group numbered 10% of their prison population (OCN 2012). This has implications for ESOL teaching and the training of prison staff more widely.
  - ix. Programmes and policies that can be beneficial for UK offenders, for example, the Cambridge Family Ties Project, can have little or no impact for FNPs who are far away from their families (Richards et al. 1995). This project relied, for example, on face-to-face contact which was not possible for the FNPs. This again indicates the importance of specific programmes for, at least, some learners with English as a second language.
  - x. Similarly, courses around re-settlement/ housing or offence-related programmes in the community are geared to English speakers not to those who need/want ESOL provision, thus barring them from accessing courses and programmes to help them progress. Prison education departments do not 'hand over' prisoners to outside colleges. Post-release conditions and interventions are part of a prisoner's overall sentence plan but, as noted in the CJI report (2013) cited above, sentence planning and offender management for foreign nationals was considered to be 'poor'. It follows that ESOL provision post-release might be assumed to be less than adequately thought through.
  - xi. There is a lack of information for prison staff about the welfare and cultural needs of FNPs. Some prisons have developed local policies and organised commissioned support often from the voluntary sector (Cooney, 2013).
  - xii. One US empirical study with the Michigan Department of Corrections demonstrated clearly the very real practical challenges of implementing a new ESOL course across 17 designated programme sites (Emmenecker 2003). Some of the issues encountered during the study included; teachers finding it difficult and time consuming to adapt materials, insufficient time to teach at the required different levels and no preparation time for the programme.

- xiii. It is difficult to establish an accurate picture with respect to the challenges of recruiting and retaining sufficient ESOL teachers. Some sources indicate significant problems with recruitment and/or retention (Fisher, Harvey, and Fitt 2008; Dalziel and Safres 2005). The case study at HMP Holloway prison (2008) mentioned that ESOL tutors could get better paid and more regular work with local FE providers. One of the prison education providers commented on the difficulties of ESOL staffing in the context of fast moving policy initiatives. However Hurry et al. reported that all education departments in their study were confident that their ESOL staff were appropriately qualified. A 2009 report from the NRDC highlighted that there were currently 7,624 ESOL teachers (2,741 FTE) in the UK. In recent years in both literacy and numeracy there has been an increase in the number of teachers and in the amount of provision. However, in ESOL, the study showed that there has been less growth in the number of teachers and a decrease in the amount of provision. There is substantial regional variance in the number and type of teacher training programmes being delivered across the UK. For example, there is only one integrated (teacher training and specialist ESOL) ESOL qualification available in the North East, compared to 17 in London. Where there is a limited offer of integrated pathways in a region, new teachers either have to take the longer route and complete two separate courses or travel to another region in order to find a suitable course (Cara, Casey, and Mallows 2009).
- xiv. A lack of flexibility on the part of examination boards was identified as a barrier ten years ago but recent case studies would suggest some improvement with this situation but perhaps it is not completely rectified (Fisher, Harvey, and Fitt 2008; Dalziel and Safres 2005).

### 5.4.3. System level challenges

- i. In May 2009 a Service Level Agreement between NOMS and the former UKBA formalised the 'hub and spoke' arrangements for holding FNPs in a limited number of prisons. The intention was to offer better provision and smoother transitions towards removal. This arrangement identified six 'hub' prisons which would hold a majority of FNPs and a greater number of 'spoke' prisons which would hold more than one hundred FNPs. An evaluation of this approach and how far it works in reality has yet to be conducted (CLINKS 2010). There is very clear evidence in the literature of the importance of family support and contact for effective resettlement (Prison Reform Trust 2013). To what extent are FNPs being moved around the system to the detriment of those with family ties in the UK? For those prisons that operate as hubs there may be challenges in maintaining sufficient ESOL teachers and immigration service representatives to meet the needs of the higher levels of FNPs. These are questions that would benefit from further investigation.



- ii. It is too early to judge any implications for ESOL provision of the Transforming Rehabilitation Agenda (MOJ 2014). It was not possible to identify FNP's being named specifically as a target of the rehabilitation programme (MOJ 2013). The offenders covered by the new system will come under four categories including; all adult offenders sentenced to a Community Order or Suspended Sentence Order, adult offenders released on licence from custodial sentences of more than one day, offenders sentenced as juveniles who subsequently transition from the youth to the adult system and offenders who transfer in from another jurisdiction and whose sentence means they are subject to supervision either as part of a non-custodial sentence or after release from custody. However, there are some initial concerns that the "payment by results" system will mean that more challenging groups will not receive the same access to support as those considered least likely to reoffend (Prison Reform Trust 2013). It is also acknowledged that even should deportation be a possibility for any foreign national offender, rehabilitation remains an ethical responsibility to ensure the well-being of the public in any nation (Canton and Hammond 2012). Finally, a very recent report from the Royal Society of Arts presents a thoughtful and evidence based approach to the changing rehabilitation context (O'Brien, Marshall, and Karthau 2014).

## SECTION 6:

# COMMENTARY ON CURRENT BELL FOUNDATION PROJECTS

## 6. Commentary on current Bell Foundation Projects

The voluntary sector has a long tradition of providing a range of services to offenders and ex-offenders. The benefits of these projects are widely acknowledged but their efficacy, especially in comparison to other providers remains limited (Meek and Gojkovic 2013). The current Bell Foundation projects provide support to offenders and ex-offenders and despite the limited evidence base, it was possible to identify from the two reports and conversations held with Hibiscus Initiatives, examples of good practice. The St Giles Trust Project, for example, very much draws on the evidence which shows the benefits and value of projects that utilise a peer-to-peer support approach (Olinger et al. 2012). The Hibiscus Initiatives Roma Literacy Project addressed the needs of a group, many of whom were not literate in their own language. As previously mentioned this is a group (weak literacy in first language) with ESOL needs where there is uncertainty about pedagogy and this project could help to shed light on teaching methodology and the curriculum. The involvement of staff and volunteers of the same nationality during the teaching sessions and on activities effectively meant that teaching was happening in two languages; an approach that does have some evidence base for support (Collier and Thomas 2001). It was evident that both projects also drew on the wider evidence base for effective ESOL practice including, for example, using materials from the outside world and using native language for clarification (Condelli and Spruck-Wrigley 2008).

## SECTION 7: CONCLUSIONS

## 7. Conclusions

As early as 1995 having ESOL needs in prison was described as a 'prison within a prison' (Richards, 1995:201). Almost twenty years later, based on the absence of evidence, it is a challenge to say with any degree of certainty, the extent to which this situation may have changed. There are two over-riding issues which have become apparent during the course of this review. The first, relates to just how under researched, as a subject, ESOL provision is for offenders and ex-offenders. The other relates to how the subject is intricately related to wider prisons issues, including the status of FNPs, which all need to be considered with respect to long term programme planning.

This review confirms the dearth of research literature and national data for offenders and ex-offenders with English as a second language. This includes the numbers of these learners, their demographic and profiles, effective ESOL pedagogy for this group and finally research methodologies that would enable greater rigour in findings and therefore efficacy of different intervention programmes. Therefore, this review is very timely and the findings support The Bell Foundation's identification of this area of work as requiring pressing attention.

It is also clear that any further research and related programmes will need to be mindful of the challenges of trying to address ESOL provision in isolation from the wider prison context. The most immediate of these issues being the context for foreign national offenders and ex-offenders in the UK. There is yet, for example, insufficient current data that identifies how many of this group have English as a second language. The provision of ESOL could be more effectively strengthened if this wider context was addressed. Nevertheless, despite the challenges, the recognition that ESOL needs can and do exacerbate all other problems faced by offenders and ex-offenders (Barnoux and Wood, 2012) reminds us of the urgency for this subject to receive greater attention by all those concerned with their welfare, education and rehabilitation.

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