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Becta**

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Offenders and E-Learning - A Literature Review

Prepared by The Hallam Centre for Community Justice

on behalf of Becta

October 2007

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PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This literature review has been prepared by the Hallam Centre of Community Justice at Sheffield Hallam University, on behalf of Becta. The literature review provides a summary of existing research and knowledge relating to e-learning in the offending learning sector with a view to developing a range of e-maturity indicators across the sector. The review also highlights linkages with current Government policy in relation to offender learning and skills.

The following key questions will be addressed:

- What definitions of e-learning/e-maturity exist within the literature?
- Which models of e-learning from other sectors (if any) could provide useful benchmarking and comparisons for offender learning?
- What are the specific characteristics and needs of offenders as learners? In what ways may e-learning address these needs?
- What are the particular features of the offender learning environment and how may these impact upon the potential of e-learning/developing e-maturity?
- How are learning and skills services currently being delivered to offenders?
- What is the Government commitment to developing policy in relation to e-learning for offenders and thus the development of e-maturity?
- What support and specific guidance has been made available to the sector to facilitate e-maturity?
- What is the availability of appropriate infrastructure and resources to facilitate e-maturity?
- What examples of good practice in e-learning in the sector are available? To what extent is this good practice evidence of e-maturity?
- What are the benefits (both potential and actual) to developing e-learning across a range of offender learning environments?
- What are the key barriers (both potential and actual) to developing e-learning across a range of offender learning environments and what needs to be done to ensure these barriers are overcome?

Based on the evidence gathered for the purposes of this review, a range of indicators of e-maturity across the offender learning sector has been developed and these are presented at the end of the review.

SEARCH STRATEGY

A thorough search strategy has been implemented for the purposes of this review, the key elements of which are outlined below:

- Extensive internet searching
- Sheffield Hallam University electronic journal databases
- Sheffield Hallam University library catalogue
- Additional 'grey' literature

One of the difficulties in attempting to ascertain levels of e-maturity across the sector simply by assessing the available literature is that there will inevitably be gaps. Frequently, initiatives undertaken in relation to e-learning within the sector will not be publicised widely nor comprehensively evaluated, thus without doing empirical research within offender learning settings it is difficult to 'know what you don't know'.

All relevant sources of information identified during the course of this review have been thoroughly reviewed and analysed. Where necessary/appropriate follow up correspondence has been conducted with authors of key pieces. There is very little academic, peer reviewed work in the area of e-learning for offenders and much of our material has been extrapolated via internet searching.

KEY FINDINGS

Definitions of e-learning and e-maturity

The term "e-learning" emerged from the recognition that narrower terms like CBL (computer based learning), CAL (computer aided or assisted learning), CAI (computer aided instruction), online learning and so on overlapped with and competed with each other without actually covering the whole ground coherently. Although these terms are all still current, especially in narrow domains, the term e-learning developed (credited to Jay Cross around 1998) as an all embracing term, to cover the nature and extent of the electronic technologies used in education, learning and skills, at all levels. Usage can vary according to whether being used for learning, teaching, the support of teaching and learning or the use of specific technologies. For example, in some contexts it remains equivalent either to "web-based" learning or learning employing the internet or networked technologies. Becta itself operates a wide and somewhat flexible definition, allowing effectively the possibility that any support or delivery of learning through any electronic device could be regarded as e-learning.

In 2001 the UK Open and Distance Learning Quality Council defined e-learning as:

"the effective learning process created by combining digitally delivered content with (learning) support and services." (ODLQC 2001)

e-skills UK, in considering the e-maturity of businesses, and the perceived benefits of e-learning, regards it as:

"the use of any technology across the learning process, including skills diagnostics, learning delivery, support, management, assessment, informal and formal learning." (e-skills UK 2007)

This is perhaps the widest definition of all, as it embraces "any technology", and does not specify digital technologies as such, but this is probably also merely a loose definition, as the substance of the report makes it clear that ICTs are the central focus.

E-learning therefore also incorporates newer forms or concepts of learning which have an electronic component, but are subsets of it. For example, "m-learning" is "mobile learning", with the implication that such learning is delivered through portable or remote electronic devices, such as PDAs, mobile phones and wireless-enabled laptops. Blended learning, which might in principle mean the combination of any two or more forms of learning or delivery, in practice means a combination of e-learning and more traditional learning tools and devices. **Mason and Rennie (2006)** list 180 "key concepts" subsumed within "e-learning". **Learning Circuits (2007)** list over 400 relevant terms in their glossary of e-learning.

In the UK "e-learning" is now conceived strategically, following DfES consultations on the concept of e-learning strategy in 2003, primarily following the vision of the Head of the e-learning Strategy unit, Diana Laurillard, (e.g. **DfES 2003**). The strategy was released in developed form as the Harnessing Technology strategy of 2005 (**DfES 2005**). Here the emphases are on efficiencies and innovation in teaching, learning and assessment, modernising the curriculum, personalising learning and developing the workforce and infrastructure. This strategy document looks to movements towards "ICT maturity" and an associated institutional self-assessment framework, but does not articulate the details of what might constitute "e-maturity".

In response to the strategy for e-learning, Becta developed both the e-maturity concept for schools, and the associated self-assessment framework (**Becta 2007a**), but the Offender Learning sector, as articulated by LSC (who took over OLASS in 2006) and NIACE who only recently began to adopt this approach, with few public documents articulating the concepts. The *e-enabling offender learning and skills (EEOLS)* programme within NIACE supported 49 projects in providing ICT to support particular learning initiatives for offender learning in different institutions. This recent programme (all projects were to report in 2007) was not articulated in terms of e-maturity, but e-enablement, although several of the guiding "areas of interest" (**NIACE 2006**) map onto e-maturity concepts in the Becta model.

The concept of e-maturity in part responds to the recognition that e-enablement is not of itself sufficient for good e-learning (or good learning). Whilst it is generally accepted that ICTs can positively impact learning, in many respects, including learner performance, it is also recognised that ICTs need to be properly embedded and properly used, that barriers to use need to be removed; and that ICTs of themselves are not a complete solution to many educational and training issues.

"E-maturity" is a much less widespread concept than e-learning, of central significance in Becta's approach to e-learning in the UK, but less firmly embedded outside this context. Becta's own definition is:

"Institutional e-maturity (sometimes described as 'e-enablement') is the capacity of a college or learning institution to make strategic and effective use of technology to improve educational outcomes." **Becta (2007b)**

E-maturity and e-enablement are concepts based on the notion of capacity and capability, that is the potential to perform in particular ways, dependent upon the availability of the electronic

pre-requisites of that performance. So, the concepts are not necessarily about the quantity, quality or functionality of electronic technologies, but about their embeddedness, appropriateness and readiness to deliver specific non-electronic performance. Central to this is the ability, readiness, willingness, enthusiasm, commitment, engagement of the workforce to operate ICTs as endemic to their educational culture.

So e-enablement is about the potential to carry certain non-electronic functions through electronic means, whilst e-maturity is a measure of the capacity achieved through those means. Such measurement therefore depends on the elements of (non-electronic) performance seen as key indicators of overall performance.

To enable educators to operate in an e-mature environment they require electronic functions and systems which support, deliver and enhance their working functions. Such systems may be discrete (e.g. non-networked PCs) but currently e-maturity is regarded as essentially dependent on linked, or linkable, technologies, through some form of network or connectivity. Terms such as “interoperability” (the extent to which data can pass between different software systems, and software systems can communicate with each other), “connectivity” (the extent to which hardware devices can connect and communicate) prevail, with the notion of the “learning platform” at the heart of current concepts of e-maturity.

A learning platform is an interconnected and interoperable collection of hardware and software which provides infrastructure and support for a wide range of learning functions, whilst appearing to users as, to a greater or lesser extent, a single system. Such platforms are generally characterised as Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) which offer a range of functions to learners and teachers, but not much to management and Managed Learning Environments (MLEs), a comparatively new term arising in 1999, which added learning management functionality to functionality for the delivery of learning. So, for example, a learning platform which offered ways to present lectures would be a VLE, but if it also contained timetabling information for those lectures, it would be regarded as an MLE. (In the US “Course Management System” (CMS) and “Learning Management System” (LMS) are the equivalent terms).

UK education has responded to learning platforms differentially. Core impact has been on learning and teaching practices and associated pedagogy, and wide user bases and networks of educators have developed in different sectors to explore and disseminate e-learning pedagogy. (An example of the kinds of issues on the ground is the systematic approach given in **Waterhouse 2005**).

In the UK MLEs and VLEs have secured more of a place in HE than FE and skills sector, adult and community learning, or schools, (e.g. **Becta 2003b**) and the JISC actively promotes HE’s use (e.g. **Liber and Holyfield 2003**). Most UK HE institutions of any size now have a VLE. The Becta 2007 Learning Platforms survey suggested 28% of schools had a VLE or MLE (23% primary, 49% secondary).

Of course, “delivery” and “support” are not distinct concepts: a teacher may use timetable information to determine what forms of learning are possible for a particular class in a particular context. The key notions in Learning Platforms is that increasing functionality, coupled with increasing integration of that functionality, creates more value and more potential at institutional level for educational organisations. In other words, the more e-mature an organisation was, the more educational functions it would have provided by, and integrated within, its learning

platform. Increasing functionality and integration offer educators increasing pedagogic potential, increasing support and, in the best examples, improved efficiencies and effectiveness.

A key strand of e-maturity is therefore the development of workforce e-maturity. This is characterised by NAACE, in relation to schools, as embodying:

"high levels of ICT knowledge and skills, and a readiness to apply these to existing situations and new challenges. E-maturity is demonstrated when professionals apply ICT in strategic and discriminating ways, taking into consideration a balance of advantages and alternatives." (Davies and Adam 2007)

NAACE's work yields 24 characteristics of workforce e-maturity.

The e-learning Maturity Model (eMM) of **Marshall and Mitchell (2007)** attempts to address the whole range of e-maturity considerations and is applied widely in New Zealand and some UK HE institutions. It seeks to combine a wide range of benchmarks to provide a comprehensive set of measures (and associated methods) to establish "a means by which institutions can assess and compare their capability to sustainably develop, deploy and support e-learning." (**ibid p.1**) "Capability" is defined as the combination of processes in Delivery, Planning, Definition, Management and Optimisation in order to sustain developments in ICT in learning and key Processes, identified as: Learning, Development, Co-ordination, Evaluation and Organisation. These together divide into 35 subprocesses, as identified from their literature review of 377 items across 42 themes.

Developments of the eMM model are in use in 7 HE institutions in the UK. However, the Higher Education Academy and JISC place this methodology within the wider context of institutional benchmarking, where "e-maturity" is one concept competing with forms of "e-benchmarking". Five e-benchmarking methodologies are currently being assessed in different HE institutions, and the outcomes logged through meetings and a blog at **HEA (2007)**. The methodologies in use within the pilots are: eMM (**Marshall 2007**), ELTI (JISC sponsored "Embedding Learning Technologies Institutionally" at JISC 2007), Pick and Mix (**Bacsich 2006**), **MITS90 (Strathclyde 2006)** and ACU/OBHE (Association of Commonwealth Universities/ Observatory on Borderless Higher Education) (**ACU 2006**).

Becta's model of e-maturity is derived from business systems models of e-maturity (also prevalent in assessment of e-government, neither of which are reviewed here, but both of which are widespread internationally since about 2002), rather than quality and satisfaction in educational systems (**see, for example, Becta n.d.**)

This concept of e-maturity dependent on business models of development, capacity and quality enhancement, together with institutional strategies (such as procurement policies and associated cycles of funding) to deliver sustained quality of learning. Within it e-maturity is assessed on five dimensions:

- Student access, e.g. the extent to which learners of all types in the sector can access appropriate technologies for learning.
- Workforce skills, the extent to which practitioners' are equipped to deliver high quality e-learning, but also their practices, such as the extent to which they desire to deliver learning in particular ways.

- E-learning resources, the extent to which particular technologies are in place and consequently the e-learning activities that are potentially enabled. There may be issues around MIS and VLEs in offender institutions that differ from those in FE Colleges, for example.
- Management and strategy, such as the extent to which institutional leaders foreground and support e-learning practices, for example, the extent to which policies on staff development foreground ICT expertise. In offender institutions learning itself may vary in priority, making strategies for ICT in learning less straightforward than merely getting the best technology in place.
- Use across the curriculum, in accounts of e-maturity, this usually is a measure of the extent to which the entire “curriculum” is delivered through e-learning. However, in this sector the curriculum is not a clearly defined entity, so more appropriate measures would be to review both the subject areas and the levels of learning for each which are e-enabled.

So in the case of the FE and skills sector, and the adult and community learning (ACL) sector, including offender learning, there are competing models of e-maturity. In the schools sector the Becta commercial model, with procurement as a central element, prevails. In the HE sector, models are driven more by the HE quality agenda. The ACL sector is at the stage of exploratory projects to establish what might represent e-maturity in the sector and how it might be recognised and reproduced (**see NIACE 2007**). Its outputs are illustrations of practices that may contribute to the desirable transformations characterised as e-maturity. Mapping this work onto the Becta self-review framework suggested that for the ACL sector there were gaps in Becta tool (**NIACE 2007 p. 58**).

Given that NIACE does not yet have a fully articulated concept of e-maturity and finds the Becta self-assessment (as applied to schools and FE) has gaps, whilst the HE sector offers multiple models, it might make sense to review the extent to which the gaps in the Becta e-maturity model can be addressed through one or more of the competing HE models. However, the HE models are “whole institution” models, geared to supporting large infrastructures whose various information systems all support education, so such review would need to be sensitive to key institutional differences. This issue will be returned to in the final section of this review, in relation to the development of e-maturity indicators specific to the offender learning environment

Offender Specific Learning Characteristics and Needs

This section aims to outline the specific characteristics and needs of offenders as learners. It also incorporates an examination of the specific characteristics of offender learning environments and the particular barriers to learning which may be encountered by this group of learners. This will provide a comprehensive overview of important factors which may greatly impact upon current levels of e-maturity and also the ability for offender learning providers to become e-mature in the future. In other words it will provide the basic context within which e-maturity needs to develop and an introduction to the inherent challenges.

As identified by the **Social Exclusion Unit (2002)**, many prisoners have very negative and disrupted experiences of school, leaving with very few qualifications and low basic skills when compared with the general population. This is summarised in the table below:

Characteristic	General Population	Prisoners
Regularly Truanted from School	3%	30%
Excluded from school	2%	49% of male and 33% of female sentenced prisoners
Left school at 16 or younger	32%	89% of men and 84% of women
Attended a special school	1%	23% of male and 11% of female sentenced prisoners
Have no qualifications	15%	52% men and 71% of women
Numeracy at or below Level 1 (the level expected of an 11 year old)	23%	65%
Reading ability at or below Level 1	21-23%	48%
Writing ability at or below Level 1	No direct comparison	82%
Unemployed	5%	67% (in the week before imprisonment)

Furthermore, 62% of short sentenced male prisoners involved in drug misuse said they had spent more time unemployed than in work during their working lives and 58% had done mainly casual or short-term jobs during their lives. 39% of women prisoners had not worked outside of the home in the year prior to imprisonment and 23% had not worked for over five years.

(Adapted from Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

In addition to past negative experiences of learning (and perhaps partially as a result of this), offenders frequently have lifestyles which are difficult, chaotic and disruptive thus not conducive to successful learning. For example, the aforementioned SEU report highlights that:

- 60 - 70% of prisoners were using drugs before imprisonment
- Over 70% suffer from at least two mental disorders
- 20% of male and 37% of female sentences prisoners have attempted suicide in the past.

Taylor (2004a) argues that such extensive and diverse needs should be taken into account when considering learning provision for offenders. He states:

'A significant number of prisoners have a history of substance misuse; many have mental health problems; and few have a job or home to go to on release. Education must be an integral part of a holistic approach to assessing and resolving prisoners' needs'.

A large scale study of women offenders (**O'Keeffe, 2003**) clearly demonstrated that whilst managing the transition from prison to the community (from 'in to out') many other issues take precedent over accessing learning opportunities, the most significant of these being finding appropriate housing and rebuilding family relationships. This poses a significant though understandable stumbling block to learning achievement among offenders. Indeed the issue of

motivation to learn is key. **Taylor (2004a)** highlights the issue of motivation to learn among offenders and recommends thorough 'needs assessment' to ensure that learning is of the correct 'type' to ensure maximum engagement:

'Very many prisoners have had negative experiences of formal education, and simply shutting them in a classroom is unlikely to have any positive effect. In assessing 'needs', an assessment should be made of the styles of learning likely to work for that prisoner.... we believe that more should be done to explore and encourage non-traditional learning methods in prisons.'

The development of e-learning within the offender learning sector represents a valuable opportunity to explore such 'non traditional' methods as a means to overcoming barriers to learning for offenders. Indeed within schools, ICT has been shown to have a positive effect on learning. A recent study commissioned by the DfES to investigate the effects of information and communication technologies on pupil motivation found that overall the motivational impact of ICT was positive. In particular, ICT had a positive motivational impact on: engagement, research, writing and editing and presentation. Overall, there was evidence that ICT impacted positively on pupils' attitudes towards engagement with their school work and there was some evidence from pupils and school staff that behaviour in class was better when ICT was used (**Passey et al. 2003**).

Whilst clearly having acute educational needs when compared with the general population and also considerable additional needs, there is evidence to suggest that offenders can be motivated learners. The aforementioned study by **O'Keeffe (2003a)** highlighted that in spite of numerous barriers to accessing and sustaining education, employment and training, women offenders both in prison and the community were motivated to engage. Interviews with 346 women showed that engagement with learning was an important part of the rebuilding/resettlement process in terms of; providing an escape from their previous criminal lifestyle, achieving 'normality' and improving their self concept. An earlier study by the same author showed that of a sample of 77 offenders who responded to a survey on attitudes towards learning, 72.5% reported feeling 'positive' or 'very positive' about wanting to learn (**O'Keeffe, 2003b**).

The 2003a study also highlighted the potential for prison to increase motivation for learning and to engage a 'captive audience'. Women reported that prison provided them with opportunities to learn which they would not have had 'on the outside' due to childcare responsibilities and a chaotic lifestyle and learning was viewed as a mechanism to help women 'get through' their prison sentence (**O'Keeffe, 2003a**). Similarly, a learndirect prison project offering computer based learning resources into the custodial environment offered prisoners:

'Access to a different metaphoric space where 'pains of confinement' were lessened'
(**Wilson and Logan, 2007**)

Particular mention also needs to be made of the challenges inherent to providing learning in a custodial environment, and e-learning specifically. Drawing on the work of (**Garnett, 2005**) we can identify the following as key issues in defining the custodial learning environment:

- Learning will be dictated by resources available to support the Learning Offer in each prison and the specific characteristics of each prison. The various types of prison and

the length of time that inmate's stay there are the key determinants of the kind of learning provided.

- Most prisons have serious problems with drugs, alcohol and self harm. Prison staff involved in Education and Resettlement have to work against this background which often affects, or shapes the Learning Offer. As a consequence there are a range of responses.

These comments are backed up by research by NATFHE and the Association of Colleges who found that 45% of governors and 43% of education managers said that:

'Conflict with other regime areas hindered education in their establishment'.

In addition 34% of both groups reported uniformed staff showed a lack of commitment to prison education **(cited in Taylor 2004a)**.

Furthermore, **Taylor (2004a)** points out that:

'The wider prison regime can sometimes work against effective education' in the following ways:

- Due to regime constraints education sessions are often run in two 'blocks' of 2 and a half hours - it may prove difficult for prisoners to concentrate/be motivated for such long periods of time
- Prison learning environments are often noisy and disruptive, particularly where overcrowding is problematic. This may impact upon prisoners ability to learn.

A key problem for offender learning which has been highlighted by several authors is the high level of disruption which is often encountered due to the following factors:

- Prisoners serving short sentences may not be able to complete courses within the timescale of the sentence
- When prisoners are transferred between prisons (often at short notice) the learning started in one prison may be unavailable in the destination prison
- Once released from prison, offenders may not continue with learning they have begun due to factors already mentioned (motivation, having more pressing issues to deal with) or simply due to the unavailability of provision in the community, or lack of knowledge about provision in the community.

In the words of Taylor **(2004a)**:

'Flow-through, from custody to community, is one of the biggest challenges in prisoner education today....only 6% of prisoners continue with some form of education and training upon release.. Due to workloads, and other priorities within the prison, education staff often do not have the time or resources to ensure that prisoners nearing release are able to continue their education in the community'

Taylor, on behalf of the Prison Forum on Education Prison, highlights the need for the resettlement of prisoners to have a strong focus on education to ensure that community education can be explored as part of pre-release resettlement work.

Recent developments in the offender learning sector (e.g. the OLASS 'Campus Model' and the electronic transfer of Individual Learning Plans) have attempted to use ICT as a means of overcoming the issue of 'flow through' and these will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

In terms of challenges which specifically relate to implementing E-learning in prisons, in summarising the work **Garnett (2005)**, the following potential barriers can be identified:

- Governors have the ultimate responsibility as to what learning is made available in prisons. Garnett gives the example of Foston Hall (Women's YOI) where the Governor favours poetry and their ICT needs are not enshrined in the Learning Provider contract, so it is not supplied
- Lack of Common ICT Infrastructure and no minimum level of provision. There are frequently confused expectations around what ICT equipment will be provided and how it will be maintained
- The extent to which prisons are 'networked' with each other will dictate whether 'joined up' learning is possible (i.e. ICT courses able to be continued when prisoners are transferred between prisons)
- Lack of funding to implement ICT infrastructure e.g. library links and/or basic PC's
- Where prisons have stand-alone systems it creates (e.g. computers for staff internet access) these are often "islands of technology" which generate further maintenance problems
- Security is a key issue - prisons are very worried about any chance of their "Duty of Care" being breached. Even so most security conscious prison staff want good PC and Internet access as long as it is secure
- CD-ROM's are widely used in prisons but there is no coherent pattern to use or selection.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the key objective of penal reform within the OLASS sector may be at odds with the objectives of e-learning projects. In the words of **(Wilson and Logan, 2007)**:

'The most immediate barriers to be overcome (are) penal procedures, cultures and various organisational differences... a tension between the objectives of the project and the broader penal needs of the prison, whether genuine or perceived'

Despite the potential challenges to learning outlined above, it is crucial to recognise that a high value is placed upon the role of education and learning in reducing re-offending by the Government. Re-offending is clearly a pertinent issue when we consider that:

'Prison sentences are not succeeding in turning the majority of offenders away from crime. Of those prisoners released in 1997, 58% were convicted of another crime within 2 years. 36% were back inside on another prison sentence. The system struggles particularly to reform younger offenders. 18-20 year old male prisoners were reconvicted at a rate of 72% over the same period, 47% received another prison sentence' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002)

There is a plethora of literature which outlines the significance of education, training and ultimately employment in relation to effective resettlement and prevention of re-offending (e.g. **Crow et. al. 1989, Fletcher et. al, 1998, May, 1999**). The **Social Exclusion Unit (2002)** identifies education and employment as two of the nine key factors, which influence re-offending, according to a body of criminological and social research. Indeed, the report identifies being in employment as reducing the risk of re-offending by between a third and a half.

In its five year strategy for protecting the public and reducing re-offending, the **Home Office (2006)** outline their commitment to tackling this issue:

*'We are building strong partnerships across Government and beyond to address the many linked problems that contribute to offending, and in particular health (including drugs and alcohol), **education and employment**, housing, finance and social and family links'*

Furthermore the publication of the Green paper 'Reducing Re-offending through skills and employment' by the Home Office, DfES and the DWP, the Government outlines a commitment to:

'Intensive work-focussed support for offenders...and to work more closely with employers on work in prisons, aiming for more schemes where prisoners can train or work with an employer while in prison who may then employ them on release'. (HM Government, 2005)

It is clear that learning is considered a vital Governmental tool in the 'battle against crime'. Bearing in mind the challenges of delivering learning to offenders outlined above, it is crucial that systems of learning are adopted which will:

- address issues of lack of educational attainment and motivation among the offender population
- acknowledge the practical restraints of delivering learning within the confines of custody
- address the need for continuity of learning of offenders both in custody and the community.

Clearly e-learning has a part to play in helping to address issues of social inclusion but it should be noted that participation in ICT can itself be problematical in socially excluded groups. In its report, *Challenging the Digital Divide*, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation points to a number of key issues which impact on socially excluded groups use of ICT. For example:

Physical access to ICT - Throughout this review we point to difficulties for offenders in access to ICT not just in custody but also in the community. Offenders in the community, in common with other socially excluded groups, are less likely to have access to ICT and even where public access is available, Loader and Keeble (2004) argue that:

'The digital divide cannot simply be understood as an absolute measurement of exclusion from ICTs. What people use the Internet for and its perceived relevance to

their everyday life experiences influence not only levels of access but also different types of access according to socio-economic origins' Loader and Keeble (2004)

Computer skills and literacy - Access and use of the internet has been strongly associated with prior levels of educational achievement (**Loader and Keeble 2004**). Since the majority of offenders have low levels of educational achievement, it is likely that this will impact on their ability to engage with ICT for e-learning as well as other activities.

Thus while it feels that e-learning can help solve some of the particular problems facing offenders in their learning journey, access to ICT and general levels of access and skills will remain a challenge which will impact upon the e-maturity of the sector.

Englebright (2004) clearly outlines the potential role of e-learning in the resettlement agenda, for this socially excluded group:

'Given the rapid changes in technology, anyone serving a sentence of 1 year or more will have the added difficulty of coming to terms with new developments and learning how to use them. For many, there just won't be the opportunity or access to do this and so they will in effect become less employable and as a consequence will be more likely to re-offend'

In addition **Taylor (2004)** highlights the potential of e-learning to achieve 'a level playing field' for offenders within the job market, thus reducing social isolation :

'The continuing denial of access to the internet also further excludes prisoners from the labour market, where knowledge and experience of using the internet is now often required.....Allowing prisoners at least some access to the internet would give them the tools they need to compete in an increasingly technology driven employment market. It would also open up a wide range of previously unavailable learning opportunities – such as learndirect and many Open University courses' (Taylor, 2004a)

'The present ban on such communications not only limits the educational opportunities for prisoners, but also increases the isolation of ex-prisoners on the employment market. This issue requires urgent attention' (Taylor, 2004b)

Clearly, e-learning has the potential to address these issues of social exclusion, as highlighted by a number of commentators. Achieving e-maturity in the sector would result in workable and adaptable learning options for this 'difficult to manage' cohort. The body of evidence which highlights progress being made towards e-maturity is discussed throughout the remainder of this review. First though, it is necessary to briefly outline the policy context of the delivery of learning provision for offenders both in a general sense and also within the context of e-learning.

Mechanisms for Delivery of Learning and Skills to Offenders

The following section has two main aims:

- to map out for the reader *how* learning and skills provision is delivered to offenders
- to map out for the reader the recommendations which have been made by the Government with regards to *what* services should be delivered to offenders, with a specific focus on E-learning.

As has already been established in this review, improving offenders learning and skills has a key role in achieving the Governmental objective (under NOMS) of reducing re-offending and protecting the public. Indeed in the OLSU¹ document 'Delivery Plan - Improving Offenders Learning and Skills', Ministers state that:

'Education is an important factor in re-offending. The work we are doing in our prisons to rehabilitate, educate and prepare offenders for their return to society is critical in providing them with an alternative to crime.'

There is clearly a manifesto commitment to improving learning and skills provision for offenders, however the mechanisms for delivery are complex. A number of key documents are vital to understanding the Governmental vision regarding learning and skills for offenders and the development of e-maturity within the sector. These have been examined and the key points amalgamated in order to offer the reader the guide through the complexities of the offender learning and skills landscape. The complexities of the landscape are compounded by the relative newness of the OLASS (Offenders Learning and Skills Service) arrangements, national coverage only being completely implemented in July 2006.

Prior to 2004, at national level, the co-ordination, development and delivery of offender education was in the hands of the Offenders Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU) in the DfES, working in partnership with the Home Office, the Prison Service, the National Probation Service, the Learning and Skills Council and others. In January 2004, Ministers agreed to hand over responsibility for the planning and funding of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) across England to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)² to take on this responsibility in full from 2006. So they assumed responsibility for increases in the achievements of learners, securing high levels of sustained performance and delivering on key performance measures **(House of Commons, 2005)**.

As explained by the DfIUS³, OLASS is not a 'Service' in the traditional sense, it has no dedicated staff nor an organisational structure. Rather it can be seen as an 'umbrella' under which existing services are brigaded together and focussed to the particular needs offenders. The budget that meets most of the costs of OLASS is held by the LSC (with a significant sum controlled also by the YJB). OLASS contains within it a number of stakeholders⁴ whose aim is to act in a collaborative manner in order to meet the needs of offenders in relation to learning and skills **(adapted from DfIUS, 2007)**.

The overall vision for OLASS is outlined below:

"that offenders, in prisons and supervised in the community, according to need, should have access to learning and skills, which enables them to gain the skills and

¹ Offender Learning and Skills Unit - a partnership between the DfES (as was) and the Home Office.

² The primary goal of the LSC is to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to ensure we have a workforce of world-class standard. Their vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce (LSC, 2007)

³ Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (previously Department for Education and Skills - now made up of DfIUS and the Department for Children, Schools and Families)

⁴ Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), with the main operational focus coming from the LSC, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS, including HM Prison Service and the National Probation Service), the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and the Youth Department for Offending Teams (YOTs), Jobcentre Plus and the Connexions Service.

qualifications they need to hold down a job and have a positive role in society".
www.olass.lsc.gov.uk

By the end of July 2006, following a year long trial in three development regions, the LSC had successfully concluded the procurement of the integrated Offenders' Learning and Skills Service in all nine English regions, defined as follows:

- South West
- North West
- North East
- East of England
- London
- South East
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and the Humber

The models of procurement in all regions were defined by each Regional OLASS Partnership Board. They determined how the service should be delivered within their region, e.g. based on criminal justice areas or grouped by establishment type. The Partnership Boards are chaired by the LSC and members include senior representatives from the Prison Service, Probation Service, Youth Justice Board, Jobcentre Plus, Connexions and the Regional Offender Manager (ROM). The role of the Partnership Board is to oversee the strategic development of the service in a region and to ensure that the learning and skills needs of offenders are met, in order to help equip them with the skills they need to access sustainable employment and which meet the labour market needs of employers in the region in which they will be resettled.

The LSC is delivering the OLASS service to offenders in custody and in the community through a network of 22 lead providers in 37 units/areas of England. The service aims to support offenders through relevant and seamless learning and skills provision in both custodial and community settings (**Adapted from LSC, 2007**). The new delivery arrangements built on partnerships established in 2004 between the Learning and Skills Council and the National Probation Service to address the learning needs of offenders in the community (**DfIUS, 2007**).

The scope of the specification to deliver the integrated service was based on principles established in the "Offender's Learning Journey" (OLJ) produced by the OLSU in 2004. Separate versions of this document were developed for learning and skills provision for adult and juvenile offenders reflecting the need for a distinct service for juveniles. The document enshrines the main principles of the adult document but incorporates the specific requirements of the YJB, namely:

- YJB aim - the YJB aim is to prevent offending in children and young people. Engagement in education and training and acquiring the skills for employability is regarded as one of the most important contributory factors towards achieving this aim

- YJB Targets - three targets as laid out in its Corporate and Business Plan 2004/5 - 2006/7 that are relevant to the learning journey document:
 - ensure all YOTs and secure facilities achieve improvements in practice
 - Ensure at least 90% of young offenders are in suitable full time ETE during and at the end of sentence by March 2006
 - Help 80% of youth justice workers gain the Professional Certificate in Effective Practice (Youth Justice) by March 2006.

(OLSU, 2004b).

For funding purposes, private prisons are not part of the OLASS arrangements but those establishments are still expected to deliver a learning service which meets the Offender's Learning Journey Requirement. The OLJ along with the delivery framework which was developed concurrently and 'attempts to provide a roadmap for this learning journey' (**Garnett, 2005**) provides a 'blueprint' for the new offenders learning and skills service (OLASS). The vision contained within the Offender's Learning Journey is as follows:

- that offenders, in prisons and supervised in the community, according to need, should have access to learning and skills which enables them to gain the skills and qualifications they need to hold down a job and have a positive role in society
- that the content and quality of learning programmes and qualifications for offenders in custody and in the community are comparable for those in mainstream provision
- to widen participation rates so that at least 50% of offenders are engaging in learning and skills provision.

(OLSU, 2004a)

A number of indicators are outlined in the OLJ document by which success in developing offenders' learning and skills provision which fully achieves the Government's objectives will be measured. These are as follows:

- increase participation by offenders in learning and skills activity within prisons, by offenders in the community and beyond
- increase levels of achievement by offenders measured in terms of basic skills attainment, vocational training qualifications achieved and other demonstrable progression
- improve levels of employability measured by the number of offenders obtaining sustainable employment
- create a fully integrated service of learning and skills provision operating for all prisons and in the community by August 2006.

(OLSU, 2004a)

It should be noted that the arrangements for the delivery of learning and skills to offenders under OLASS has not been without its detractors. For example the work of **Garnett (2005)** has revealed that:

- Some prison staff have concerns that the new LSC-funded offender learning programme is too simplistic and doesn't allow enough range or local solutions to develop
- Those in the Prison Education Service also feel that a "top down" solution has been imposed and that Heads of Learning Skills are often working to an external agenda. In itself this is not seen as a problem as long as the local solutions that work are captured within the new proposals.

Also **Taylor (2004a)** on behalf of the Forum for Prison Education poses the following oppositions to the contracting out of prison education:

- Cannot see any visible benefit to prisoners from education being contracted out and believes that local education services could provide the same services equally as well.
- With a five-yearly cycle of competitive tendering, prison education staff understandably become concerned over their job security. Successful prison education can only take place when those responsible for delivery are contented in their work and feel a sense of security.
- A fundamental moral opposition to contracting out on the basis that it leads to a profit/loss, business-led approach to prisoner education. We do not believe that private contracting should feature in any aspect of imprisonment or punishment, as profit from punishment is, we believe, immoral. **(Taylor 2004a)**

In addition to the aforementioned 22 lead providers to whom funding was made available as a result of the initial procurement process, further funding has been made available more recent, specifically for e-learning initiatives. For example, an extensive consultation exercise was conducted by **Garnett et al 2006** in order to advise the LSC on how best to spend £2 million in prisons to e-enable offender learning in 2006/2007.

As a result of this process NIACE⁵ were contracted as the managing agents and funding of £100k was given to each LSC region. Kickstart TV (see later section) was given some funding and the rest was made available for projects in September 2006. A bid funding call in September 2006 resulted in 49 Project bids being funded across the criminal justice system. Bids needed to show how they matched to the Offender Learning Journey targets and were mainly concerned with developing small scale local practice **(Garnett, n.d)**.

In addition, new LSC funding has just been made available to organisations who do not already have OLASS contracts, for offender learning and skills work in the community. Grants for small projects directly relating to offender e-learning and skills work are available for:

- Staff time
- Staff training / development (linked to QTLS or professional CPD)
- Awareness raising of e-learning
- Resource creation (although the need for bespoke rather than "off the shelf" resources would need to be justified)

⁵ National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).

- Programme creation (i.e. financial capability; skills for life etc)
- Strengthening work done under RARPA, Pathways or the Offender's Learning Journey.

There will be funding available to allow up to three projects per region up to £11,000 (eleven thousand pounds) and a further two national projects for which there is funding of up to £25,000 for each project. Expressions of Interest forms have recently been distributed.

Source - <http://www.offenderlearning.net>

The Offender 'Learning Offer'

The Offender's Learning Journey document clearly sets out the 'learning offer' which an offender can expect to access. This is expected to be an 'end to end' learning service which will be personalised to his/her needs. It is not within the remit of this review to outline all aspects of the learning provision which is recommended by this document. However, in considering levels of e-maturity in the sector, it is significant that ICT is included as an integral part of the offender's learning journey. This element is summarised below:

- Learning providers are expected to be aware of new developments in the ICT arena and to incorporate them as appropriate in their provision of learning for offenders. Examples of this may include:
 - The new 'e-skills passport'⁶
 - The new IT qualification 'the ITQ'⁷
- Learners are expected to have the opportunity to gain ICT user skills, and be encouraged to use them to support their learning across the curriculum, based on emerging national standards
- Learning providers should ensure that programmes meet the needs of individuals, employers and the labour market. All programmes should provide appropriate progression routes to employment or further training.
- Learning providers should ensure that appropriately qualified and experienced teaching staff are in place. Staff should hold or be working towards appropriate FE teaching qualifications.
- Learning providers should ensure that assessment and verification arrangements meet the requirements of the awarding bodies. There should be at least one external verifier's report for each course per year. ALI/Ofsted reports should indicate good or satisfactory assessing and verifying.

In addition to the above two further areas of the learning journey are recognised as having a significant 'e-learning' element:

⁶ Developed by E-Skills UK which provides a single web-based gateway linking individuals requiring IT training to the myriad of training opportunities in the UK. The passport allows any individual in the UK to assess, log and improve their IT user skills against a framework of skills defined and recognised by employers.

⁷ Developed by the E-Skills UK and the Learning and Skills Council to improve the skills of those already in employment

Higher Education

Distance learning facilities will be required (to facilitate access to higher education for offenders), including individual open learning packages, as well as access to ICT.

Distance Learning, Resource-based Learning and e-learning

- Many offenders would welcome increased opportunities for independent study and e-learning which they could continue on transfer to another prison or on release into the community
- E-learning and distance learning arrangements can help ensure continuity of learning between different parts of their sentence and after release from custody into the community, so helping achieve the aims of the National Offender Management Service to create a seamless and coherent service.
- While the development of e-learning is limited by the security requirements of the Prison Service, we expect the e-learning agenda within prisons to alter and expand in the coming years in support of these wider objectives of learning and skills
- E-learning is equally important for offenders in the community and providers need to provide offenders with advice about, and access to, such services to ensure they can take advantage of them. National Probation Service and learning providers must have access to appropriate Distance Learning and e-learning provision.
- Learning providers will develop good working arrangements with the Library and Information Service. Library and ICT resources should be used by the learning provider to support distance or e-learning.
- Learning providers and the Head of Learning & Skills should set and achieve challenging targets for learners to engage in e-learning or distance-learning.

(OLSU, 2004a)

As already discussed, the Offender's Learning Journey is considered the 'blueprint document' for OLASS. It is clear from the above recommendations there is a commitment and desire to increase/develop e-maturity within the sector.

Governmental commitment to improving e-learning provision for offenders, is also reflected in several other work areas. Firstly the development of the OLSU's 'ICT Strategy for Offenders'. Within the OLSU Delivery Plan for 2004/05-2006/07 - 'Improving Offenders' Learning and Skills', it was acknowledged that:

'If we are going to realise our aspiration to deliver a high quality learning and skills service, at least equivalent to that available to people in the community, it is critical that the acquisition of ICT skills and electronic data capture are widely available in prisons. One of the key aims of the new learning and skills service is to increase opportunities in the labour market for prisoners by improving their skills - a continued lack of ICT skills among offenders will become an increasing barrier to achieving this outcome.'

The similar lack of ICT skills amongst instructors was also noted.

Key goals were identified in the plan as follows:

- a. to provide wide access for prisoners to develop ICT skills through the new qualifications being developed as a third basic skill;
- b. to provide the opportunity for prisoners to develop higher level skills and particularly vocationally specific ICT skills with a direct relevance to the labour market;
- c. to create a learning environment in prisons that increasingly encourages the use of e-learning.
- d. to improve the availability of management information and transfer of prisoner records (where we are in the early stages of considering an offender ILP⁸ that they, as well as their teachers and relevant personnel, can have access to over the internet and which will be accessible independent of the establishment they are in or the community provision they are accessing).
- e. enabling teachers and trainers to acquire the ICT skills and possess the facilities which will maximise their effectiveness.

(OLSU, 2003)

The OLSU ICT Strategy for Offenders builds on these recommendations by outlining eleven key components for facilitating the achievement of the goals of the OLSU through the implementation of a technical infrastructure. These are as follows:

- Providing secure web access for offenders in prison and in the community
- Capturing of ILP information and onward electronic transmission
- Improving the management of effective education within establishments and in the community
- Establishing a national framework for training providers
- Developing an Offender Learning Database
- Making available a national qualification i.e. an e-skills passport, to offenders
- Developing an education intranet for offenders
- Defining the ILP data and functional requirements for NOMIS
- Continuing development of the PICTA initiative
- Establishing interfaces with the main stakeholders
- Using business intelligence software to access management information

The strategy also encompasses standards and new contracts for training providers, as well as the management of education within establishments and in the community, and continues with the PICTA and E-skills initiatives. It is recommended within the strategy that the programme of work is owned and managed by the LSC and that the implementation period would be 2005 - 2009 (**Connellan, 2004**).

⁸ Individual Learning Plan

The work of Becta⁹ has also been instrumental in driving forward the learning through technology agenda. In 2005, the DfES published its e-strategy, 'Harnessing Technology'. The e-strategy sets out a system-wide approach to the application of ICT in education, skills and children's services to achieve a more personalised approach. The aim is, in five years time, by using a more strategic approach, to build the common ground that brings all education and children's service to the critical baseline of being able to use the technology effectively. The e-strategy has 4 main aims:

- Transform learning and teaching and help to improve outcomes for children and young people
- Engage hard to reach learners
- Build an open and accessible system
- Achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness

In partnership with the DfES, Becta will build commitment from key partner agencies and sector leaders to deliver the e-strategy.

(From <http://about.becta.org.uk>)

In addition to the above:

'A key area of work for Becta over the last few years has been to seek to understand the nature of Offender Learning and to identify ways in which ICT and E-learning could complement and amplify a developing Offender Learning Offer' (Garnett 2005).

Specifically, the LSC in 2005 asked Becta to develop a co-ordinated approach to the embedding of ICT and e-learning in LSC funded Offender Learning by:

1. Influencing the development of the overarching OLSU ICT Strategy
2. Assisting the development of the e-learning implementation plan of the above strategy
3. Providing prioritised recommendations to the LSC for funding interventions in the Offender Learning Sector for 2006/7 (see previous section) and 2007-9 having consulted with appropriate stakeholders.

(Garnett et al 2006)

The previous two sections have clearly demonstrated the way in which the drive towards e-maturity within OLASS has been gaining significant momentum over the past few years and the ways in which this has been reflected by Government policy. The next section outlines examples of good practice to be found within the sector.

⁹ Becta (British Educational, Communications and Technology Agency) is the lead Government partner in the strategic development and delivery of its e-strategy. Becta leads the national drive to improve learning through technology. They also support the education sector to make the best use of technology so that every learner in the UK is able to benefit from its advantages and achieves the best they can (<http://becta.org.uk>)

CURRENT E-LEARNING ACTIVITY AND EVIDENCE OF E-MATURITY IN THE OFFENDER LEARNING SECTOR

The following section will outline key activities and innovations in E-learning for offenders which have recently been piloted/are currently being piloted in the sector. As noted in an earlier section, the term 'E-learning is loosely defined' and for the purposes of this review such innovations may include:

- Both 'low tech' and 'high tech' initiatives (i.e. ranging from those using TV and radio, right through to those using learning platforms across learning institution)
- 'Micro level initiatives (i.e. using computers to teach offenders new skills within a classroom)
- 'Macro level initiatives (i.e. systems of technology being used to manage offender learning services more effectively)

An outline of each initiative is provided and where possible (i.e. where sufficient detail is available) this is followed by a summary of the barriers and benefits encountered in their implementation. This is by no means an exhaustive list of initiatives (to produce such a list would have been impossible within the remit and time constraints of this review). However it is hoped to provide the reader with a balanced flavour of e-learning activity within the OLASS sector and this will in turn enable the development of e-maturity indicators across the sector.

National Extension College – Television Pilot Project

This project has adopted a low-tech media-based approach using an established form of communication - TV. The project has worked with the BBC to devise two short and accessible basic skills courses based on mainstream broadcast material (Rick Stein's "A Taste of the Sea" and "Big Strong Boys"). Courses involved working through workbooks with a 'disguised' basic skills element - mapped to the Adult Literacy and Adult Numeracy Core Curriculum and also mapped to Level 1 NVQs in catering and construction. The project was piloted in two adult prisons, Norwich and Wormwood Scrubs, and in one Young Offenders Institution, Rochester.

Barriers/Problems encountered	Benefits/Successes
Learners did need tutor feedback and support and could not be left simply to work through a course on their own.	Courses were short and accessible (good way to attract new learners). No-one was 'watching them fail' and they were able to conceal any need for basic skills support from their fellow prisoners.
Younger prisoners are the most difficult group to please and they want material specifically designed for their age group.	Strong emphasis on employability (focus on activities leading to prison work)

Barriers/Problems encountered	Benefits/Successes
	In terms of targets for purposeful activity, it transforms passive leisure behaviour into education, including at times when there is no prospect of any other sort of education being on offer.
	Prisoners valued being able to work on their own in their cells and being able to repeat sections at their own pace.

(West, 2005)

Kickstart TV pilot project

Although this initiative is not specifically directed at offenders, it's target group was 'skills for life' learners and many offenders are likely to fit into this category. This is a useful example of how community based offenders may access 'e-learning'. The initiative explored the use of interactive digital TV (iDTV) as a learning delivery medium to learners either within their own home or potentially in the workplace.

The service was menu driven and consisted of text, still images, graphics and multiple choice questions with video and audio available on broadband platforms. The content was created, managed and published via a PC based content management system and based on a range of template screens.

Barriers/Problems encountered	Benefits/Successes
Further development work is required to upgrade the pilot service into a fully functional application suitable for roll out within the education service and more widely.	75% of learners who responded to the question described themselves as 'not currently engaged with learning' (i.e. from target group)
Strategies to ensure future funding, promotion and support of the service need to be explored.	Concerning callers to the learning advice line, more than 9 out of 10 were not engaged in current learning.
Further research is required to see if iDTV can be used for specific or specialised types of learning, e.g. offender learning and what the advantages of this may be (but looks promising)	In a follow up survey 92% of learners rated the service as 'OK' or 'better' (8% did not answer the question).
	Content can be updated by non-technical staff.
	Content can be 'archived' and republished as required ensuring it is current, flexible and responsive to feedback.

Barriers/Problems encountered	Benefits/Successes
	Literacy and numeracy learning is immediately relevant and appropriate to adult learners (based on topics such as job skills, home and family, health and leisure) and does not overtly label learners as 'basic skills learners'.
	Effective in reaching hard to reach groups
	Advice line running concurrently has been a success

Adapted from Taylor et al (2006)

Telfi Project

This initiative has offered training measures for prisoners through e-learning in 6 Austrian prisons. It involved the use of personal computers and learning software to offer courses on 'IT basics', 'German as a foreign language' and language course in English.

The work was mainly self study but at least once a week a trainer joined learners to offer support. A prison education server was installed in order to facilitate learning.

Barriers/Problems encountered	Benefits/Successes
Vital to get the right ratio of trainer presence and self study.	High flexibility
Group dynamics and coherence are vital for the success of e-learning courses.	Trainees can decide on their own pace.
	Attractive to clients who are not engaged by traditional teaching and learning methods.
	Serves to widen options for offenders not substitute already existing training
	E-learning also provides general knowledge/confidence on IT which is a vital competency in both professional and private life.
	Learners get a comprehensive support package, including group sessions to work on labour market re-integration and social competency.

Adapted from <http://www.telfi.at>

E-BEEP

This is an example of e-learning within the Youth Justice sector in the South East Region. The project was funded by the European Social Fund and the LSC between December 2003 and December 2004. E-BEEP is a Croydon YOT based initiative designed for young offenders aged 15 to 18 who are not in education, employment or training. It aims to significantly raise numeracy, literacy and ICT skills using e-learning (as opposed to paper based learning and traditional methods) while offering support for progression into employment and training. It also incorporates a personal development programme aimed at raising self-esteem, identifying strengths, setting SMART goals and using action plans.

Initial assessment for numeracy and literacy skills at point of entry forms the basis for individual learning plans with clear learning outcomes; Regular testing and review prepare participants for nationally recognised City & Guilds qualifications at level (one, two and three) in numeracy, literacy and ITC skills. Interactive whiteboards linked to audio-visual sources like a DVD, camcorder, digital cameras and CD players provides the framework for blended learning. Computers will play a critical role in delivering learning using appropriate numeracy, literacy and ICT software.

Benefits/Successes

- Use of electronic equipment to introduce novelty, retain interest and sustain motivation for learning
- Internet access, computers provide links to the local learning network and the employment market. Participants can complete application forms, CVs and letters as part of the job search or further education component of the project.
- Each participant had an exit plan that includes employment or further education. The project links with local partners like the Connexions Service, Local Education Authority, local training providers and the voluntary sector to ensure that completer's progress from NEET to EET.

Source:

<http://www.offenderlearning.net/files/Successful%20bid%20summaries%20formatted.doc>

London Advice Partnership

This project aimed to make a direct and positive contribution to the successful learning journey of at least 400 inmates of Feltham Young Offenders' Institution/Remand Centre. The project developed a website for use with clients in Feltham as a model of delivery to be extended to the other seven London prisons. The site offered a resource for clients due for resettlement within the community, Personal Advisers delivering Information Advice & Guidance (IAG) and lecturers from Kensington & Chelsea College (KCC) delivering learning as part of the Offender Learning & Skills Service (OLASS). The site offered:

- E-mail facility for clients to post questions to Personal Advisers delivering IAG in Feltham
- Information on learning provision delivered by KCC in Feltham
- Interactive careers guidance information and resources
- A stand alone IT resource for learners to use with minimum supervision

- Links to other relevant sites (Job Centre Plus, LearnDirect)
- CV writer
- Video clips with mock interviews and advice on interview techniques.
- The project linked into the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) POLARIS initiative in London worked in close partnership with the three colleges delivering OLASS learning in London prisons.

The dedicated website will enhance individuals' learning providing access to emailed IAG support and sites such as Jobcentre Plus and LearnDirect and enable Rainer to support the learners on-site.

Source:

<http://www.offenderlearning.net/files/Successful%20bid%20summaries%20formatted.doc>

Prison Radio Project

The above project was launched in July 2006 in 2 prisons in the West Midlands. The main aim is to use the medium of radio to improve the skills and education of prisoners. The project is being developed in conjunction with the newly established Prison Radio Association, the BBC, the Learning and Skills Council and South Birmingham College. The initiative aims to provide a valuable communication source throughout the prisons offering information, advice and support for prisoners. It is anticipated as the project moves forward it will provide a useful outlet for staff to broadcast programmes on key issues including resettlement, disability, diversity and suicide prevention. It also intends to equip prisoners with the skills and confidence necessary to find work upon release, critical in reducing re-offending. Basic skills such as numeracy, literacy and IT skills can be gained, essential for successful reintegration into society upon release. Participants can also train for an accredited radio production qualification in partnership with South Birmingham College.

PRA are currently engaged in providing 2 week Radio Production taster sessions at six Prisons in the West Midlands. These sessions are designed to engage educationally hard to reach offenders in learning and to enhance their basic skills. These taster sessions are being evaluated to test the potential for using radio training in the prison service as a tool for embedding Skills for Life and Basic Skills, thus adding value to current prison education provision.

The project is currently being evaluation by the Hallam Centre of Community Justice. The evaluation is in its early stages.

Source: <http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/news>

Red Kite Learning Pilot Project

The aim of the Red Kite Learning pilot project was to provide employment, training and education (ETE) brokerage support and access to vulnerable and disadvantaged women, a particular target group was women offenders in the community. The support was designed to take the form of web based resources including a web site with interactive employment and training resources utilising interactive and user involvement resources. One of the key

objectives of this project was to empower women to use ICT to improve their employability skills.

Benefits/Successes

- Successfully accessed the core hard-to-reach target group the service was designed to engage through their development of excellent partnerships with local programmes already working with this target group of women
- The beneficiaries of this project reported feeling more confident in their attempts to secure employment and training
- The beneficiaries responded well to the holistic nature of this ETE brokerage Programme's empowering practices

(Wilkinson and O'Keeffe 2007a)

Inside Job at HMP Downview - Media for Development

Media for Development is a not-for-profit organisation that uses different media to reach, engage and empower isolated communities. The EQUAL funded Inside Job project aimed to re-engage disaffected learners by delivering a unique and intensive educational experience in prison in addition to promoting and providing supportive work experience opportunities in the media sector. In doing this, the project established a multi-media production centre in the prison as well as an offender-led radio station, TV station and newsletter. Accredited training courses in radio and TV production were delivered and offender-led audio/visual support packages, addressing issues relevant to offenders, were produced for use in other women's prisons.

Barriers/Problems encountered	Benefits/Successes
Technical challenges arose specific to providing media-based courses in prison - these included access to technical equipment and lack of internet access	Outputs from the Broadcasting Unit have begun to make inroads into the whole Prison community and break down some barriers within the prison
Access to module material had the potential to be compromised by problems of internet access	Programme has successfully re-engaged many disaffected learners
	Processes and outputs of the programme have had significant effects on changing the attitudes and behaviours both inside and outside prison
	Programme has successfully enhanced prison staff's ownership of the project and formation of working partnerships

(Wilkinson and O'Keeffe 2007b)

learndirect ESF Pathways Project

This project was the first concerted effort to introduce computer based learning resources into the custodial environment on a large scale and it appears to be one of the few which has been comprehensively evaluated at the time of writing. Indeed, the evaluation has clearly demonstrated the potential for internet learning within OLASS.

The project involved the development of an ICT system which provided access to over 400 learndirect courses over a two year period for offenders in 20 prisons and 4 probation areas. The system, delivered units towards Level 2 qualifications in Skills for Life (in literacy and numeracy), ECDL and CLAIT to learners who were in the last two years of their sentence. Over the two year trial 2,820 learners were engaged on over 12,838 courses (**Wilson and Logan, 2007**). The Project finished on 31st December 2006. Since this time Ufi¹⁰ is currently examining ways of mainstreaming this activity and has secured continuation funding for the 20 prisons involved and for probation based activity in the East region.

Barriers/Problems encountered	Benefits/successes
Tension (whether real or perceived) between project objectives and broader penal needs of prison.	Robust security system - 100% system success rate, with no breaches of the on-line system's security.
Lack of knowledge led to some prison staff perceiving the project as 'risky'.	Course completion rate of over 92% - High motivation levels reported.
Lack of consideration on how the system would fit into prison education curriculum - needs to be much more collaboration between providers and the prison.	Computer based education enables prisons to make best use of limited resources.
Not all establishments had benefit of in-house expertise and some staff felt under-supported.	Prisoners could gain access to a different metaphoric space where 'pains of confinement' were lessened.
Prisoner movement and transfer without warning is a particular problem where the same provision is not available at the receiving establishment.	Peer support within classes was observed which may have increased motivation.
	Quieter learning environment away from 'disruption' of education department - 'can get head down and study' - preferred to 'normal' classes by learners.
	Most technical issues were overcome quickly by learndirect.

¹⁰ Set up in 1998 by the Department for Education and Skills to deliver the Government's vision of a 'University for Industry' - now the largest single provider of learning and skills within the UK Further Education sector. Ufi was responsible for launching the learndirect network in 2000 (Wilson and Logan, 2007)

Barriers/Problems encountered	Benefits/successes
	Two establishments implemented a 'hold list' where learners committed to learndirect can request to stay at a particular prison until they have completed their learndirect course

POLARIS (Programme for Offender Learning and Resettlement Information Services)

This project has been set up by NOMS Offender Information Service to develop and implement a technical infrastructure which can be used directly by offenders to deliver e-learning services securely within education departments in prisons. It is currently in its first stage which involves installing a proof of concept network. It is to be trialled in seven prisons in the London Area; HMP Holloway and HMP Wormwood Scrubs, HMP Bellmarsh, HMYOI Feltham, HMP Brixton, HMP Pentonville, HMP Latchmere House. Consideration will be given to bringing Wandsworth within scope at a later date. A phased approach is being adopted and as of September 2007, HMP Wormwood Scrubs is already actively delivering services to offenders, HMP Holloway and HMP Feltham are commissioned and preparing for delivery.

(Potter 2007; E-Guides Conference 2007)

Polaris is still in its early stages but its anticipated benefits are as follows:

- All e-learning content sources will be accredited to ensure that they meet the Prison Service security standards.
- Central management operate so that when offenders move between establishments, they can continue their learning.
- Internally hosted services can be delivered across the infrastructure to all establishments.
- Infrastructure can be managed centrally, reducing the reliance on learning, resettlement, technical and security staff locally.
- Services can be delivered seamlessly across the estate, duplication of effort is reduced and new services can be introduced simply and cheaply which leads to an improvement in the effectiveness of delivery.
- Supports the OLASS 'Campus model' (discussed later on in this section)

Barriers to success or problems are as yet unknown but may include:

- In order to overcome security fears need 'buy in' from the top.
- Effective communication across the prison estate will be the key to success.

E-Guides Conference (2007)

An evaluation of POLARIS is planned to begin in October 2007 and run for three months. This will be an independent review managed and carried out by NIACE together with specialist assistive technology consultant and an ex-governing governor from the Prison Service **(Personal correspondence with Potter, 2007)**.

PICTA (Prison ICT Academy)

This is a joint project between the DfES and the Prison Service and is under the control of the OLSU. It provides prisoners with ICT based self paced learning opportunities that lead to current commercial, vocational and academic qualifications in computing. All qualifications are modular and learners can mix and match. They include CISCO and CompTIA-certified courses and the ECDL as well as qualifications in basic and key skills and 'soft skills' such as CV preparation. An ILP¹¹ is drafted and then offenders develop self supporting learning communities with 'timely interventions' from trained staff. The project also has an on-line 'assessment on demand' strategy. There are 23 PICTA prisons nationwide (as of March 2007). More prisons in the UK are keen to join the project if the government funding becomes available and the success of PICTA in UK has inspired similar projects in other European countries (e.g. Italy, Germany, Hungary, Portugal).

Benefits/Successes

- There are 23 PICTA prisons nationwide (as of March 2007) which work in 'triangles' so as to offer each other support and allow continuity of training if prisoners are moved from prison to prison.
- Individualised approach to learning – thus maximising outcomes.
- Transferable Electronic Individual Learning Plans.
- Vocational training in a market with recognisable market skills gaps.
- Ofsted and ALI compliant (five positive reviews).
- Group responsibility for learning and peer mentoring emphasis.
- Offers good opportunities for staff development.
- Positive feedback from learners – increased confidence levels.
- Provides inmates with the same learning environment they would receive commercially through an interactive, 'hands on' experience.
- Strong focus on preparation for outside world/improving prospects – all employers now need a basic level of computing competence.
- Also improves self employment prospects.

Sources: www.dfes.gov.uk/offenderlearning/uploads/documents/PICTA.doc,
<http://www.niace.org.uk/online/Documents/Elaine%20Morris%20PICTA%20OLSU.pps>,
<http://www.picta-lewes.blogspot.com/>

In addition, **Garnett (2005)** highlights the following benefits:

- PICTA prisons have the bonus that they are developing computer maintenance skills in staff and offenders and that they build their own PCs
- Best use of e-learning is the self-paced learning design of the PICTA project. This provides computer-based resources used in a supportive learning environment with assessment on

¹¹ Individual Learning Plan

demand in an 11-week course. Self-paced collaborative approach to learning with tutors acting as “animateurs” rather than lecturers.

The 'Offender Learning Campus'

The model proposes a radical new way of delivering offender learning and has arisen from proposals contained within the Green Paper 'Reducing Re-offending through skills and employment': Next Steps'. Whilst not specifically an e-learning initiative, it is anticipated that the effective use of ICT will be fundamental to its implementation and success. Two test bed regions - the West Midlands and the East of England - have been selected as the two 'test bed' regions for the model starting operation in summer 2007. Subject to trial operation being successful, it is likely that the campus model will be put in place across England as the current round of LSC contracts comes to an end in July 2009 (DfIUS, 2007). The primary aim of the model is to develop 'centres of excellence in offender learning' (HM Government, 2005).

Key Features of the model

- To create an alliance between a range of training providers, based on the offender learners on the campus
- To create new centres of excellence in understanding the needs of offenders and developing the most effective methods of delivery
- A strong focus on inclusion, to overcome offenders' barriers to employment
- A focus on jobs as a key way to reduce re-offending, by including employers and Jobcentre Plus in the campus
- Involving staff from mainstream providers in delivering learning and skills to offenders
- Additional support for offenders in transition between institutions, or between custody and community to support.

(Adapted from HM Government 2005)

This approach would be developed in order to meet skills shortages in regions, improving the likelihood that skills development would lead to employment and reduce reoffending. It would also contribute to a culture of entrepreneurship and business start up in disadvantaged communities (where many offenders originate) through a fully developed self employment option. It is also anticipated that the model will result in a wider and more focused choice of provision and will represent a significant move towards 'seamless progression' for offenders in prisons, across prisons and in the community, with easy access to offender records, including learner records available electronically.

(Adapted from Wilson and Hudek, 2006)

Wilson and Hudek (2006) outline the following potential benefits of the model:

- Focus on reoffending through skills and employment should result in significant cost saving to society generally through a drop in custodial costs
- Safer, more prosperous communities and a greater public confidence in the justice system
- Offender's commitment to learn, gain skills and find work may result in offers of intermittent custody or a faster track to a spent conviction.
- Better chance for offenders to find and keep work

- Supply of potential recruits to employers in local area, thus reducing skills shortages.

And key areas for development are outlined as follows:

Activity is needed to ensure progress in the following areas:

- Stimulating employer demand
 - A tailored and targeted approach is needed in order to recognise the diverse needs of employers
- The detail
 - Need agreements to make clear the rights and responsibilities for the offender, in particular the relationship with the sentence plan
- Getting buy in from front line staff (providers, probation, prison staff, offender managers, local authorities)
 - Timing is critical - clear sense of momentum needs to be established whilst not overwhelming staff with too much change.

Murphy (2007) clearly outlines the crucial role which ICT/e-learning plays in the development and implementation of the campus model, in particular the role of the internet in promoting joined up working among stakeholders to work towards reducing re-offending. In particular, he recommends that any campus needs a community website where professionals and ex-offenders can share information, discuss and collaborate. It can contain supportive resources and the opportunity for discussion. He highlights that a website is only likely to be successful if people feel they have a common interest and 'know of' one another. The campus approach will need effective promotion through a range of media, (e.g. direct mail or a 'road show') to inform the relevant community.

This review has been able to find specific evidence of how the model is currently operating in the test bed regions, it is still very early days. However, it is certain that the implementation of the campus model more widely will make a significant contribution towards e-maturity in the offender learning sector. The model proposes an altogether more sophisticated model of learning, in line with joined up thinking. An external evaluator has been appointed to ensure best practice from the test beds will be captured, making sure lessons learned are shared with stakeholders involved in delivering offender learning and skills.

Source: <http://www.a2mediagroup.com/print.php?a=15168>.

Individual Learning Plans - the OLASS ILP Data Project

The **House of Commons Education and Skills Committee** announced in **2005** that:

"The transfer of records across prisons is a disgrace." There should be an urgent delivery of an electronic system for the transfer of records" (Paragraph 122)

Bearing in mind that the system of preparing and implementing ILP's is a contractual requirement for LSC lead providers, as specified in the Offender's Learning Journey, this issue clearly needs addressing. As a response to this criticism, the LSC acknowledge that:

'The ability for lead OLASS providers to create consistent ILPs and to have the technical capability to access all such relevant learning and learner data for both the LSC and across the offender estate is critical to the success of the integrated OLASS,

to avoid duplication of assessment and to ensure accuracy of information and continuity of learning' (LSC, 2007)

Significant progress is being made in this area. For example, the three development regions involved in the procurement of the integrated Offenders' Learning and Skills Service adopted an interim, electronic ILP system, developed by Tribal as part of its "Maytas" software package. This system enabled the information on offender learners collected by the LSC lead providers to be transferable across and between the prisons and probation areas within those three regions.

This system was always planned as an interim solution pending the development of a national system. Due to the inherent complexities involved in designing a national electronic ILP system which would be a) suitable for use in all 9 procurement regions and b) compatible with the developing NOMs system (C-NOMIS), the LSC realised that providers in the 6 new development regions would need to have a temporary mechanism available to them to develop their ILPs, and, importantly, to have some functionality that enabled transfer of data to the LSC and within the offender learning estate.

Therefore, the LSC national office team, in conjunction with NOMS and the DfES developed an interim solution which involved developing a "core" ILP or Learning Summary Record derived from the best examples currently in use. This was made available via an electronic template capable of being transferred via secure email within the criminal justice system.

However, in order to provide a more long term solution, the LSC commissioned its own preferred IT solutions provider, Xansa, to undertake the necessary work to procure a national system (this is known as the OLASS ILP Data Project). Following an evaluation of the technical options available for the system by NOMS, Probation Service, HMPS and the YJB, the OLASS ILP data project team were aiming to put out Requests for Proposals to potential suppliers by the end of January 2007. Following this, it was anticipated that the 'winning' contract would be awarded in April 2007 and a limited trial of the system would begin in August 2007.

The key principles for the system are:

- A central data store—the data entered into the ILP system will be held in a central database, rather than the data being "transferred" across the criminal justice estate. The database will be interrogated every time a record is retrieved for the offender.
- A flexible approach—to allow users to utilise areas of the system in a way which meets their requirements.
- Easy to use—to encourage uptake with a minimum of problems
- Single point of entry—as a general principle, the aim is to capture data once, at source and make it available electronically to other relevant systems without a need for re-keying.

(Adapted from LSC, 2007)

Despite extensive searching, it has not been possible to ascertain whether or not the trial has actually begun. However, the procedures outlined above demonstrate a clear commitment to

driving forward this innovation, using technological solutions to address the significant problem of lack of continuity in offender learning.

In addition to the initiatives outlined above a body of work which is worthy of note in relation to e-learning and offenders has been produced by Lisa Englebright of NIACE (**2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007a, 2007b**). Her work includes both research reports and reports based on conference discussions, as follows:

- Practitioner views on overcoming social exclusion through on-line learning
- Practitioner views on approaches to prison education using e-learning
- Offenders views and experiences of learning (both male and female perspectives and comparisons between the two).

Her work offers a useful insight into a range of issues inherent in achieving e-maturity among socially excluded people and specifically in the offender learning sector. In addition to conducting survey work in prisons she has usefully captured the practitioner perspective.

The table below provides a summary of the key benefits and key barriers to e-learning which she has identified within this body of work:

Barriers	Benefits
Offenders' lack of confidence in themselves and their skills	A sense of achievement when skills and confidence improve.
Lack of motivation/interest to make use of the e-learning services	A way of improving future employment prospects – ‘making up for ‘missed opportunities’ to progress and learn
Need for support and an understanding of the need for computer skills in terms of learning and work	Will help establish and prepare the offender for their eventual release - for effective resettlement offenders need to be given the skills to enable them to use internet appropriately and effectively
A lack of basic computer skills	A flexible way to learn if implemented effectively – can work at own pace, have control (but learner support is still vital and practical issues need to be addressed e.g. how to allow in cell learning when cells are shared and overcrowding is an everyday issue)
Lack of access to technology	Using the internet to learn can remove barriers which may be a challenge for women in particular for example childcare also both men and women can fit it around work

Barriers	Benefits
Can be a lack of face to face support	ICT use has practical 'lifestyle' uses such as shopping online
Can be expensive not just infrastructure and capital for equipment but also costs for staff time and training - may be imbalances in funding	Offers opportunities for training and development for staff working with offenders
Offenders may have distractions from learning – other basic needs may take priority	May increase scope for learning at a 'higher level' (i.e. beyond Level 2)
E-learning needs to be demystified – not just about computers	Has potential to improve communication - increased contact with family so help maintain relationships (especially with children).
Flexibility in opening times needed at learning centres in the community	Offers informal opportunities in which to practice and develop their literacy and language skills
Staff training and development is essential	Online learning has the potential to remove some of the barriers socially excluded people encounter in accessing learning
Lack of basic skills, not knowing how to use the equipment may affect confidence	
Fear of misuse - fears around offenders using the Internet need to be properly identified and addressed	

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This review has attempted to pull together current thinking and knowledge around the implementation of e-learning for offenders across OLASS. The review has highlighted the various definitions of e-learning, largely developed within educational sectors, and also definitions of e-maturity. In doing so, this work has identified e-maturity as being concerned with the 'embeddedness' of ICTs within learning environments and the appropriateness and readiness of institutions to deliver learning via such technology.

In relation to the offender learning sector, a number of key issues have been identified which impact upon the ability to deliver learning effectively in a general sense, and in relation to e-learning specifically. Offenders as learners are a socially excluded group who frequently have negative experiences of and therefore negative attitudes towards learning. In addition, the often disrupted nature of offenders lives results in learning of any type being demoted in terms of priorities, when compared with the general population.

Learning within a custodial environment poses significant challenges, not least around the *centrality* (or lack thereof) of the learning agenda. When a student engages in learning within an FE college, the primary aim of that institution is to provide a learning experience. When an offender enters a custodial environment, that institution has a multitude of functions (ensuring security, addressing drug and alcohol issues etc) of which learning provision is just one. This may impact upon learning provision and experience in a number of different ways - learning may not be prioritised at a strategic level, resources may not be allocated to facilitate learning, there may be conflicts between the provision of learning and the broader penal needs of the prison.

This review has highlighted that the very nature of the offender learning landscape dictates that e-maturity within OLASS is developed across a range of environments. Not all offenders are sent to prison and the vast majority of prisoners are released at some point. Thus e-maturity within prisons and also community settings must be considered. Whilst prisons may offer a 'captive audience' for learning, ensuring the *continuity* of this learning has been identified as a key challenge of OLASS, in particular ensuring that programmes of learning can be transferred between prisons and between prison and the community.

From studying relevant case studies and examples of e-learning within the sector it has been possible to identify the numerous ways in which e-learning can make a significant contribution to overcoming the challenges inherent within OLASS. Specifically, e-learning may assist with motivational issues and access issues in addition to offering workable solutions to problems of continuity. The Government has demonstrated a keen commitment to the development of e-maturity across OLASS and this has been (and continues to be) reflected in a number of policy documents and support for a number of key initiatives in both the delivery of offender learning at a micro level and also in the management of learning delivery at a macro level. Whilst significantly behind in its sophistication when compared with other sectors (e.g. FE) it is encouraging that this shift is occurring despite the considerable barriers and challenges which are specific to the sector. E-learning is increasingly becoming recognised as integral to the learning journey of offenders both in custody and the community and this is reflected in the number of new initiatives being developed and funded. In examining these initiatives within the context of this review, it has been possible to make tentative moves towards assessing the level of e-maturity across the offender learning sector by developing a range of e-maturity indicators.

INDICATORS OF E-MATURITY WITHIN OLASS

We have reviewed the e-maturity indicators developed by Becta, as outlined in this review and also the E-maturity Framework for Education (EMFFE) and, we feel that these provide a sound basis for a framework for OLASS. However in accounting for issues specific to the OLASS sector, we feel it appropriate to consider some additions/amendments to these indicators. However, in accounting for issues specific to the OLASS sector, it has been necessary to amend/add to these indicators. It must be acknowledged that due to the relative lack of sophistication in e-learning provision across the sector, the indicators presented below are unrefined and should be viewed as interim indicators which will be developed in the light of future work.

In summary, based on the evidence presented in this review e-maturity within OLASS can be assessed across the following dimensions:

Indicator	Description
Accessibility	The extent to which e-learning is promoting social inclusion and widening the participation of offenders across a range of learning environments. Also the extent to which e-learning is increasing the employability of offenders thus increasing equal opportunities in the job market
Continuity of Learning	Extent to which learning and learner records are being effectively managed between custodial establishments and between custody and the community. Extent to which e-learning is enabling offenders to experience a 'seamless' learner experience.
'Joined up' working	Extent to which provider of education services to offenders both in custody and the community demonstrate a commitment to facilitating e-learning for offenders and work in partnership to achieve this common goal
Provision of technical infrastructure	Extent to which offender learning environments are providing the appropriate infrastructure to facilitate e-learning, in particular the provision of cohesive learning platforms as opposed to 'islands of technology'. This incorporates the appropriate and adequate allocation of resources.
Provision of appropriate e-learning environment	Extent to which appropriate e-learning environments are offered to offenders which are not unreasonably restricted by custodial regime considerations (e.g. sharing of cells, lockdown)
Provision of effective risk assessment procedures	Extent to which offending learning employs strategies to overcome fears of security risks in relation to e-learning which appear to be endemic, particularly within custodial settings

Role in curriculum development	Extent to which e-learning is embedded within the wider offender learning curriculum - will be largely influence by the role which is has in the learner provider contract and the and resettlement agenda more generally.
'Buy in' at strategic level	The extent to which Prison Governors and Heads of Learning and Skills prioritise e-learning relative to the additional penal needs of prisons. The extent to which high level staff communicate the necessity for e-learning to 'on the ground' workers and foster positive attitudes to e-learning throughout organisations.
Commitment of resources	The extent to which those working at a strategic level are prepared to allocate resources to e-learning within the sector and the extent to which this is distributed appropriately between custodial and community settings.
Development of workforce skills	The extent to which organisations show commitment to developing the skills of the workforce thus enabling the facilitation of truly effective e-learning. This includes creating a knowledge and awareness of ongoing developments in the ICT arena and ensuring training opportunities for workers.

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